

**Jeff Reynolds**

**A Comprehensive Workbook**

*for*

**Bass Trombone**

*and*

**Tenor Trombone with F-attachment**

**Cherry Classics Music**

# JEFF REYNOLDS



## BIOGRAPHY

**JEFF REYNOLDS** - Bass Trombonist is a graduate of California State University, Long Beach (BM 1967) and was bass trombonist with the Los Angeles Philharmonic from 1969 until 2006. During these years he has performed under Music Directors Zubin Mehta, Carlo Maria Giulini, Andre Previn, Esa-Pekka Salonen, and guest conductors including Vladimir Ashkenazy, Pierre Boulez, Erich Leinsdorf, Simon Rattle, Kurt Sanderling, Yuri Temirkanov, and Franz Welser-Most. He has been a regular speaker at the concert preview series “Upbeat Live” with the Philharmonic. His experience also includes performing with most of the symphony orchestras of the Los Angeles area.

Mr. Reynolds has been a member of the Summit Brass, California Brass Quintet, the L.A. Brass Society and the Hollywood Trombones. He has been heard on soundtracks for all of the major film studios and has performed on recordings for labels such as CBS/Sony Classical, Crystal, Deutsche Grammophon, London, Philips, RCA Red Seal, Sheffield Lab, Summit Records, and Telarc.

Mr. Reynolds plays Getzen and Conn model Bass Trombones along with his trusty Minick “G” Great Bass Trombone. He has been known to play acoustic bass and a 5-string electric bass guitar in a rock band.

Mr. Reynolds has long been a champion of the Moravian Trombone Choir and was music director of the group for 25 years. Now in retirement in Nevada City, California, he teaches, composes and arranges. His hobbies include model trains, truck camping and ‘Jeeping’.

Since leaving the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Reynolds has continued as a musician, but in a far different vein. His newest hero is Peter Hallock, the just-retired director of St. Mark’s Compline Choir in Seattle. Compline, in practice since 379 A.D., is the seventh and final “office” of the monastic day; a short prayer service sung and chanted by the Brothers, essentially saying goodnight to God. As a consequence, Jeff has assembled four Compline Choirs. He now directs, arranges, composes, and engraves music for Compline, having engraved around 1000 pieces for Compline with his trusty music software.

Most of the music for Compline uses black and white note heads with no stems, no meter, no rhythm, and few bar lines. It is visually an updated version of Gregorian Chant as you will see on the final pages of this workbook. The choirs he directs are an ATTB, a soprano-free Compline choir of mostly men, including counter tenors; an SSAT all-women's one-of-a-kind choir called Voces Angelorum; yes, there are tenors; an all-male, ATTB quartet called Renaissance Man; an all-Reynold’s family choir - AATB quartet with his wife Jean (an alto), his counter tenor brother James and his basso son, Matthew, leaving Jeff singing and chanting the tenor part. Currently the website for all these groups is: [www.trinitycomplinechoir.org](http://www.trinitycomplinechoir.org)

# **A Comprehensive Workbook**

*for*

**Bass Trombone and Tenor Trombone with F-attachment**

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*Dedicated to my trombone teacher and musical hero*

**Robert Simmergren**

*with great appreciation*

# FOREWORD

by

**Ben van Dijk**

Wow! Reading through this new method by Jeff Reynolds, I realize how many of his wonderful ideas have become part of my life as a musician. I had the great pleasure of studying with Jeff in the mid 80's. Two intense summers in Los Angeles enjoying Jeff's tameless energy, his knowledge of the (bass) trombone, music in general, and his friendship.

This book contains what I received as a "musical-health" diet during two long California summers under the direct coaching of Jeff himself. The knowledge I learned was a turning point in my musical life.

In this method, Jeff's ideas on breathing, use of air, warming-up, awareness, sound quality, slide technique and much more is documented in a clear and convincing way, never losing the musical-vocal approach I remember so well from our sessions together. The text is so readable and understandable and the note-examples are clear and in good balance with the text.

The method is filled with great general thoughts which are so useful in our career as musicians. Thoughts on how to practice, how to prepare for an audition, or smart-playing versus dumb-playing are just a few of the many eye-openers for all of us!

The ideas contained in this method put me on the right path and reading this book, I now feel the same inspiration as I felt working with Jeff so many years ago.

Ben van Dijk

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **MY LIFE'S WORK**

Most successful bass trombonists of my generation grew up with a connection to, or were products of a famous music school or conservatory located in the eastern half of the United States. I was not one of those. My main trombone teachers were Robert Simmergren at Long Beach State; Roger Bobo, from whom I learned about phrasing and solo playing; Robert Marsteller, from whom I had a lesson every 6 months for two years and learned all about tone production and orchestra playing; and George Roberts, whom I emulated but, alas, would never give me a lesson. No matter. Just listening to his Capitol recordings from the 1950's was instructive enough. When I asked George whom he emulated, he was quick to respond, "Frank Sinatra".

What we have here is my life's work as a brass player, teacher, and singer. Throughout my playing career I was driven to be the best I could be. My motto is, "Anything worth doing is worth doing to excess."

The main thrust of this workbook is for bass trombonists and tenor trombonists with an F-attachment. Since I was not part of the big-time music school club, I had free reign to dream up exercises that addressed certain aspects of brass playing, thinking outside the box, because I didn't know there was a box; from pre-warm-ups, to warm-downs and everything in between. Each section of this workbook deals with a specific area that, hopefully, allows the player to enhance, refine, and focus his/her tone production, technique and musicianship.

Jeff Reynolds – January 2013

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge my low brass colleagues in the Los Angeles Philharmonic, from whom I learned how to strike the right balance, and especially Ralph Sauer, the smartest section leader ever, and the finest editor of all time. Ralph had his hands on this manuscript and helped tighten it up into a credible product.

My learned colleagues over my 38 years in the “Phil” included:

Robert Marsteller  
Byron Peebles  
Miles Anderson  
Roger Bobo  
Sonny Ausman  
H. Dennis Smith  
Ralph Sauer  
Gene Pokorny  
Norman Pearson  
Jim Miller



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*Los Angeles Philharmonic Low Brass Section - 1984*

*Ralph Sauer, Sonny Ausman, Jeff Reynolds, Byron Peebles, Roger Bobo*

## **PRE WARM-UPS FOR BRASS PLAYERS**

The idea is to get your air, and then air and embouchure operating with the mouthpiece before you actually play the first notes of the day on the instrument. This has many physical and psychological advantages. When you do finally get to the instrument, you feel almost warmed up already. We start with just air and air control.

### **THE FIVE BLOW EXERCISE**

Make a pseudo embouchure and blow air out 5 times. Each time the aperture gets smaller and more constricted. No buzzing, no mouthpiece, no instrument.

1. The **FIRST** blow (*fortissimo*) is a quick blow, exhaling all of your air, one whole breath in one to two seconds through that rather open aperture. It is good to be enthusiastic here. The shape of the moving air should be more like a cinder block, not a football.
2. The **SECOND** blow (*forte*) pushes the air out through a smaller aperture, slightly slower, still one entire breath, lasting about 2 to 3 seconds.
3. The **THIRD** blow (*mezzo forte*) is slower air yet, smaller aperture yet, one entire breath, lasting about 4 to 5 seconds.
4. The **FOURTH** blow (*piano*) is slower yet, lasting about 6 seconds.
5. The **FIFTH** and final blow (*pianissimo*) has the smallest aperture and slowest air yet, one entire breath, lasting about 10 seconds.

Each time, you want the size of the aperture to resist the flow of your air.

**F.I.S.T.** (Fat Incredible Straight Tone) is another air exercise, this time using the fist of your hand.

- Start with your teeth together, putting the thumb side of your fist up and on your lips to make a slightly leaky seal.
- Lean your head back, puff your cheeks, and blow (not buzz) against that fist, slowly dropping your jaw and hinging your head forward until your lower lip drops off your fist.
- Repeat up to five times. This puts your air in exactly the right place, according to adherents to the Alexander Technique.

### **MOUTHPIECE BLOW**

Grasp the mouthpiece by the shank and cover most of the end with half of your hand. Nothing should actually touch the cup except your lips. Squeeze your hand enough to choke off most of the escaping air. Find the “dent”

where the mouthpiece places on the lips and blow into it with your regular embouchure. No buzz, just air pressure. Four or five blows should be enough.

### **BUZZING WITH MOUTHPIECE (AND TUBE EXTENSION)**

Trumpet players need not use a tube extension, as their bore size is small enough to cause sufficient backpressure. For horn, trombone, euphonium and tuba players, it's best to fit your mouthpiece with a plastic hose, maybe with a reducer hose inside, to create a smaller bore size than your mouthpiece bore. Horn players can use a 5/16 inch or 3/8 inch plastic hose about 3 inches long. Trombonists can use 1/2" or 7/16 inch hose with a reducer inside, about 4 inches long, to make the bore at some point smaller than the bore on your mouthpiece. With tubes, shorter is better. Why? Longer tubes create their own overtone series, which you must muscle around. With this new fixture, buzz some music. What music? I recommend music of any kind that is medium to low register for your instrument, mostly slurred, always *pianissimo* up to only *mezzo piano* and not more than three minutes at a time. For decades I "buzzed" with the tube in the car on the way to Philharmonic rehearsals. The idea is make your buzzing more focused and tone hotter, by increasing the vibrating potential of your embouchure. What happens if you buzz loudly? Your tone gets stiff and coarse, with a brackish quality. What happens if you don't use a tube extension at all? Your embouchure tends to sphincter towards the center of your aperture to find support against the lack of backpressure on the air column. You wind up with muscle bound chops that are difficult to move easily or supply any kind of acceptable tone.

### **THE "THREE PRESS"**

With the mouthpiece in the instrument, apply it to your lips, in the normal playing position finding the exact right embouchure dent where you normally play, and press down on your lips for one second; double the normal pressure, and remove the instrument from your lips. Repeat several times with a couple seconds in between. What does this do? It helps clarify your response when you tongue a note. It's all about response.

### **SOME THOUGHTS ON TONE PRODUCTION**

There are two basic aspects: Air control and Lip vibration.

- For a more focused tone, consider using ISO-BREATH. This is the simultaneous pushing of air and holding it back at the same time. This is done through air direction, (also called air angle or air leverage) and aperture size and shape. This is where the resonance and focus of the tone actually happens.

- Louis Van Haney called the ideal air for trombone players the WET BREATH. Think of the fog you put on your glasses when you want to clean the lenses. Air comes up the back of the throat, and in a high curving arc pushes against the roof of the mouth before sliding down through the lips.
- To play higher notes, aim the air through your lips more downhill with a smaller aperture. You leverage the air downhill. This is mostly controlled by the blade angle of the lower lip.
- To play lower, aim the air straighter into the mouthpiece with a larger aperture. On pedal tones, the air may even approach uphill through the lips.

### **LOUD IS LOOSE!**

- The louder you want to play, the slightly looser your embouchure should become and the farther back from the lips you want the tongue to actuate.
- For soft playing, push your air through a small aperture. Just don't let much air out. This is quintessential iso-breath.
- Practice the first five or ten minutes of your first playing session with a mute. Any mute. A practice mute is good. This gives your air something to "lean against" in the initial playing time.

### **STUTTER TONGUE FIXES**

- Use the "rhythm ahead" method, spreading out the tension before you play. Try thinking two up-beats: 3, 4, play. Toe taping helps here.
- Use the "1/2 after the beat method" moving your note to a half beat later, or one beat later to reduce the tension buildup for the first note to before the first note.
- Play looking at your embouchure in a mirror for five minutes early in your practicing. Look directly at your embouchure and chin to transfer the tension to a visual focus.
- Use the mouthpiece and hose before playing the instrument and transfer all the production feel to the instrument.
- Try to stutter. This is called Symptom Prescription, and is like a double negative. It's difficult to stutter tongue when you set out to do it.
- All of the above methods try to fool the psychological condition known as stutter tongue, a malady suffered by more than a few bass trombone and tuba players.

## HOW TO PRACTICE

One of the least understood aspects of improvement on a musical instrument is learning how to practice. It is amazing to me how many of my students over the years have not a clue as to how to improve. They initially figure they can just beat the music and the instrument into submission by playing things over and over again the same old way, getting the same result. Others with a very high talent residual feel they can get better just by picking up the instrument, and somehow by osmosis improve by the seat-of-their-pants. Some very talented ones do improve with very little effort or thinking, but most of them fall by the wayside, as there is no challenge for them.

In the summer of 1971, I had a chance conversation backstage at the Hollywood Bowl with the great choral maestro, Roger Wagner. I casually asked him, “To what do you attribute your success as a choral conductor?” Without missing a beat, he said, “That’s easy: two things. **Know what you want, and know how to get it.**” We had a good laugh at the time, but later on the real importance of that seemingly innocuous statement started to sink in. No advice in my life has made more of an impact. I wound up telling this little story to my students. So, with that in mind, here are some practice ideas:

1. Decide what your musical goals are on the instrument.
2. Decide how you are going to get there.
3. Decide what are the poorest and weakest parts of your playing.
4. Decide to systematically attack the weakest areas, before going to less weak areas.

As a brass player, I measure a player’s success using what I call the **PPAP** principal.

***P**reparation*

***P**atterns*

***A**ir*

***P**erseverance*

Let’s look at these one at a time.

**PREPARATION** is keeping focused on all of the items that make a player successful. These include: a good teacher, a good instrument, a remote place to practice (out of doors, away from people and buildings is my favorite), a large and varied library of music, being around the best musicians you can (usually at a big-time music school), listening to the best live music you can and many other preparations.

**PATTERNS** are very important to success. Try to constantly set up patterns in your life and musical life that allow you to win. For instance, I always have a pencil handy when playing or practicing. If I make a mistake once, I try to make some mark to remind myself never to make that same mistake again. My parts wind up being cleanly, but thoroughly edited. I try to reinforce the good habits and un-reinforce the bad or losing ones. This is a conscious act. Set up patterns to win.

**AIR** is what makes a wind instrument work. Control of air on a wind instrument is to be constantly refined and modulated. Air is not all, but it certainly is the most important part.

**PERSEVERANCE** is sadly a rare quality in today's society. If a player keeps preparing with gusto, setting up patterns to win, all on a sea of controlled air, it is difficult not to be a success in life. Notice I said life. Only a few are destined to be great soloists, great orchestra players, or great teachers, but anyone who has the discipline to follow the course will reap the rewards in all aspects of their life. I have had many students who were very excited about playing (with only a modicum of talent), but moved on to become fabulous in other fields because of the PPAP they learned in music.

## HOW TO PRACTICE TO PERFECT TECHNIQUE

What follows is a simplified, no frills, attack plan for technique

1. **PLAY** through entire work, movement, page, etude, study, excerpt, solo, or section of the work under scrutiny, up to tempo.
2. **MARK** in pencil, with parentheses or brackets the four to six worst spots.
3. **PRACTICE** only those spots, starting slowly and gradually increasing speed.
4. **REPEAT** numbers 1, 2 and 3 above.

If you repeat nos. 1, 2 and 3 and find the same spots are bad, you didn't learn them. Go back to no. 3. If you get to number 1 a second time and find the hard parts go much better but the JOINTS in and out of them are rough, move your brackets out to accommodate the joints. The second time through the piece, secondary bad spots may show up. If so, repeat numbers 1, 2 and 3 above.

If you find you have bracketed the entire piece when played up to tempo, you should retreat to a more moderate piece that you can handle. Choose an easier piece.

The truth is that we like to practice what we can already sound good on. If we don't sound good on something, we avoid it like the plague. The lesson is: practice what you don't like to practice first. For instance, it is easier to play legato on the bass trombone than it is on the tenor and other higher brass instruments. I don't spend a lot of time practicing legato. I spend time practicing fast technique, high register, and efficiency; things that are not natural to me. The problem is, what is difficult for us is not as pleasant as practicing things we sound good on. Practice what you don't like to practice and you will improve faster.



## SIX TIMES A DAY - A PRACTICE MODEL

### **Practice Smart to Beat Retroactive Inhibition\***

One of the fastest ways to raise your playing level on a brass instrument is to practice “smart”.

Things to think about are:

1. Get right into your session. Don't dawdle or be in a place where you can be distracted. Have all your music, stand, mute, water, other tools and parts ready to go.
2. Focus on one area or aspect of playing at a time.
3. Get into the habit of playing the first five minutes of your earliest daily sessions with a mute. Your tone production will be the better for it.
4. Practice what you don't like to practice. We gravitate toward what we already sound good on, and away from what we don't sound good on.

### **First Session - 15 to 20 minutes – Pre warm-ups and Warm-up time**

Five Blows, F.I.S.T., mouthpiece blow, mouthpiece with tube buzz and “Three Press” are some good pre-warm-ups to get you rolling. Start with quarter and half notes in the middle register, all with tongue (no lip slurs yet) at *mezzo forte* and *forte*. Stay in this area a little longer than you want to with aerobic, solid tone production. No long tones yet. They are anaerobic and come at a later session. Play slurs and longer tones near the end of this session, moving into higher and lower registers. It's important to set your tone production solidly in the middle register before moving on to the extremes.

### **Second Session - 30 to 40 minutes - Technique and Tonguing**

Start with lip slurs and flexibilities for a few minutes. Practice selected studies and etudes with an emphasis on tongued (non-legato) etudes. Again, start in the mid register but move quickly into more extremes of speed, range, volume and difficulty. Have a variety of six to twelve etudes and studies going at a time. Some of these can be very anaerobic.

### **Third Session - 20 to 30 minutes - Solos**

You don't just practice solos. You become a soloist, always striving like a fine Shakespearian actor to become the music and communicate with your audience. Always have a few solos that you are working on, including one or two that are above your level, but something to strive for without damaging your ego. Rotate your stock. Brass players are some of the dullest musicians in the world, so always compare your music making and musicianship to world-class, non-brass players. Singers, string players, and some woodwind players come to mind. Have a distinct and detectable style for each piece you are working on, especially if it is on a recital of many pieces.

### **Fourth Session - 15 to 20 minutes - Orchestral Excerpts**

Keep expanding and refining your list. Have a distinct style for each one. Remember that air does the work, and keep your tongue wide and back. Warm-down and "benders" at the end of the session.

### **Fifth session - 15 to 20 minutes - Discipline time**

Choose focused, specific exercises, designed to push the extremes of effort or repetitiveness. This can be the time to include: range building, endurance, long tones, legato studies, *piano* and *fortissimo*. It can be a quiet time, a slow time, or a "roar like a lion" time. Play "benders" at the end of this session.

### **Sixth Session, 15 to 30 minutes - Grab bag**

Take your pick of the above as needed for recital preparation, audition prep, chamber music prep, solo prep, orchestra prep, and flexibility prep. Once or twice a week skip sessions 2 to 5 and just play two or three hours in a row as your day's practice.

## **SLIDE AHEAD**

While watching and listening to my colleague, the late H. Dennis Smith warming up with some legato scales, it came to me in a flash: "Your slide arrives before the note sounds!" This innocuous discovery changed my whole way of thinking about the slide mechanics and legato on the trombone. His slide arrived ahead of the sound of the note change, like watching an old movie where the soundtrack was out of sync with video. I made "Slide Ahead" part of my own playing and my legato playing was the better for it \*\*.

\* Retroactive inhibition is simply the law of diminishing returns. The longer you practice at a time, the less improvement you receive as you go on.

\*\* Go to the last page to see the "Slide Ahead" visual aid sign used in my studio.

## STABILITY VERSUS FLEXIBILITY

Below is a short comparison of practice techniques used for playing:

1. Solid, long, and loud, as might be expected in an orchestra, or audition for same, or in a band or large brass ensemble
2. Soft, flexible, flamboyant, responsive playing required of soloists and players in small chamber music such as quartets or quintets, or playing in mixed groups with strings, woodwinds, or voices.

### STABILITY

- This also includes techniques for what I call the comeback trail; the way back from a vacation or time off from the instrument.
- Warm-up *mezzo forte* or *forte* right away, mostly on half and whole notes, *sempre tenuto*, in an aerobic manner, tonguing every note with no lip slurs (see warm-up sheets).
- My favorite style of tonguing is what my students coined the, Goofy tongue, or Duh tongue. The pop or valve location is farther back and wider on the top of the tongue, not forward as usual, with good air compression behind the tongue. It is the glottal action or valve action of the tongue that actually blows your chops into shape the quickest.
- Warm-up in the middle register a good while to set the basic tone production before moving outward.

### FLEXIBILITY

- Warm up softly, with many lip slurs and a minimum of tongued notes. Soft long tones are okay. When you do tongue, keep it close to the lips. Get right into lip slurs, moving to extremes of register right away. Many short, fast notes, scales, and arpeggios are helpful.
- Do many “lip benders” during this session. Play “surfacy” and proceed into fast, mosquito-like technique in all registers.
- Some soft buzzing with the mouthpiece (and tube extension if required) playing large register jump slurs with no tongue.
- Stay away from orchestra excerpts, bands, and playing next to someone with a big, loud tone who can’t play soft.
- Associate with non-brass players, like soloists, singers and chamber music players.
- Short practice sessions (20-30 minutes), but up to six sessions per day.
- Set up as many solo engagements as you can, playing recitals, concertos, solos at church, and record yourself.

These are not absolutes, but directions of travel. I know players that actually fit these extremes of tone production and attitude. Most players fall in the middle, not too stable or flexible. The point is to evaluate your own weak areas as a player to see which direction you should travel.