

By Kevin Sanders, University of Memphis &
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The Beginning

As we were asked to co-write this article, we could not imagine a better way to start a review about a regional ITEA conference than by tracing its roots. So we called up the "Paganini of the Tuba" himself, Dr. Harvey Phillips, and what we learned was immense. Attending the Southwest Regional Tuba Euphonium Conference (SWRTEC) in Los Angeles was special, but following the conversation we had with Mr. Phillips, it became clear just how much of a national and international treasure ITEA has become!

What was the initial vision or mission of T.U.B.A.?

Harvey Phillips: It was initially established to emulate the social functions that William Bell used to have for his tuba students and brass associates in New York City on 7th Street at McSorleys—the oldest tavern in NYC. McSorleys was a popular hangout spot for everybody, especially musicians. We use to meet at the Cooper Union as well, you know across the plaza across from Carl Fisher Publishing Company, and the only place in NYC where President Abraham Lincoln gave a speech (today its know as the Cooper Institute and that would have been The Cooper Union Address in 1860). It was one of Robert Ryker's (former principal tubist of Montreal Symphony) students that came up with the name Tubists Universal Brotherhood Association...and I hosted the first conference in 1973 May 22–26 at Indiana University. The list of artists included Roger Bobo, Don Butterfield, Rex Conner, Floyd Cooley, Barton Cummings, David Gannett, Thompson Hanks, Donald Harry, Arnold Jacobs, Wes Jacobs, Howard Johnson,



Robert Ryker, Tommy Johnson, James Self, Paul Kryzwicki, Abraham Torchinsky, David Kuehn, Robert Tucci, Rich Matteson, John Turk, R. Winston Morris, Lesley Varner, Robert Pallansch, Lewis Waldeck, Daniel Perantoni, Herbert Wechselblatt, Harvey Phillips, Constance Weldon, and William Rose.

What are you most proud of to date in reference to ITEA?

HP: Our increase of literature—I have commissioned over 200 works myself, not to mention the brass quintet works commissioned by the New York Brass Quintet (original members, Robert Nagel and John Glasel trumpets, Frederick Schmidt horn, Erwin Price trombone, and Harvey Phillips tuba). I would love to see more done with tuba and euphonium solos with strings.

What are your dreams and hopes for the future of ITEA?

HP: More jobs at colleges and universities—no other instrument has experienced such a Renaissance. In 1960 there was one full time teaching job for a professor of tuba in the United States and that was for Rex Connor in Kentucky. The next year Indiana University hired William Bell. So in 1961 there were two full time teaching positions for tuba, and today we have over one hundred in the United States.

The Planning Stage

The Southwest Regional Tuba-Euphonium Conference (SWRTEC) was held at Biola University Conservatory of Music in Los Angeles. The event was a huge success thanks to the vision and organization of hosts Beth Mitchell and Dave Holben. Beth



(L-R):
Pat Sheridan,
Zeewoong Munn,
David Holben,
Beth Mitchell,
and David Childs

did a fantastic job organizing the "Tribute to Tommy Johnson" concert in 2006, and over the past year she and Dave arranged for a talented field of artists and diverse topics for the conference in Los Angeles.

The Assembly

Each of the artists and participants of SWRTEC show that the commitment level of tuba and euphonium players across the globe is astonishing. When described with adjectives these instruments don't draw the attention of words such as sexy, smooth, light, romantic or beautiful, but ask any tuba or euphonium player about those same adjectives when these instruments are played and all of a sudden those words seem to fit like a glove. It is this sort of tight knit fit that has propelled the initial mission of ITEA into the realm of fraternal brotherhood that is unprecedented.

The hours spent in the practice room and on the world's music stages are often challenged by airport jokes such as "should have picked the flute" and "you can get a degree in tuba?" It's these stereotypes along with an intense amount of pride, dedication, and resilience that makes it easy to say yes when asked to participate in an ITEA conference. Whether it's local, regional or international the opportunity is met with the same integrity. The overall goal is approached with the idea that reverence should be given to these instruments and that success is the only option. Driven by passion and achievement the list of artists that commit to each ITEA conference is always a true testament to the dedication these musicians have for their art form regardless of a recession, as is evident by the list of artists that were assembled for SWRTEC, and

these included Patrick Sheridan, Jim Self, Norm Pearson, Loren Marsteller, David Childs, Bill Reichenbach, Kevin Sanders, Doug Tornquist, Steve Call, Fred Greene, David Holben, Joe Jackson, Chuck Koontz, Jeff Malecki, Angelo Manzo, Beth Mitchell, John Van Houten, Richard White, the L.A. Philharmonic Low Brass Section, The Presidio Brass Quintet, Charlie Warren and his Dixieland band, The Golden State British Brass Band, and the L.A. Metro Brass Band.

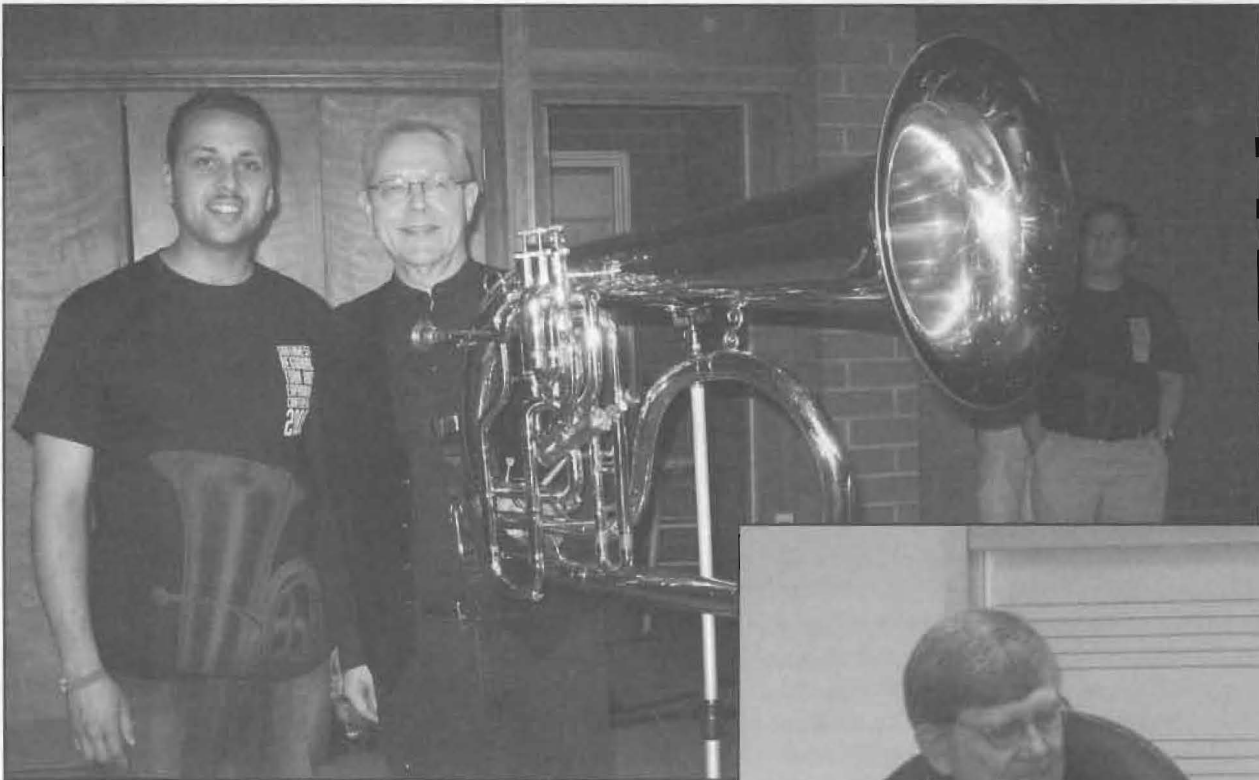
The Conference

The Conference opened up on Thursday with a picnic meet and greet, followed by opening recitals featuring Loren Marsteller on the ophicleide, bass flugelhorn, and baritone horn and tubist Doug Tornquist performing two world premieres, accompanied by mixed chamber groups. Each day of the conference started with a BLAST & HONK playing session and the exhibits opening promptly at 8 am. The exhibits had something for everybody, showcasing new instruments, CDs, and compositions and arrangements. Friday featured the euphonium and tuba mock auditions in the morning and clinics on "The History of the Tuba Family," "Confessions of a Working Quintet," "Dixieland Band: From the Bottom Up," and "Hustle & Flow: Everything They Didn't Tell You in Music School," by presenters Richard White and Kevin Sanders, with a book release date of Spring 2010. Saturday featured a clinic, "Recovering from Focal Embouchure Dystonia," and a panel discussion, "Life in the Studios," with Jim Self, John Van Houten, Fred Greene, Doug Tornquist, Bill Reichenbach, and Dick Nash.

Filled between these fantastic clinics were incredible solo recitals. What stood out about these performances was that so many featured compositions were written in the last three years or showcased the tuba as soloist in eclectic chamber music settings. During both days of the conference, participants were treated to the tuba-euphonium ensembles of Pasadena City College, Northern Arizona University, University of Southern California, and Bob Cole Conservatory at Cal State Long Beach providing some light dining music throughout lunch and dinner.



Los Angeles Philharmonic Trombone Section with tuba mock audition winner Steve Carron



Student Erick Quintanilla with Jim Self and the Fluba

Steve Call and a helicon



Additional Highlights

As with any successful event, diversity was the overall star of the conference in that there was something for everyone from solo recitals, orchestral low brass sections, brass quintets, tuba-euphonium quartets, tuba-euphonium large ensembles, Dixieland bands, brass bands, lectures, seminars, vendors, and even outdoor concerts.

Jim Self with Bill Reichenbach and friends provided the participants with some swinging, cool and hip jazz. A few hours before Jim Self and friends took the stage the participants were entertained by a Dixieland Band Concert "From the Bottom Up" by Charlie Warren and friends. Witnessing the foot stomping and head bobbing around the room, there was a clear indication that the audience was grooving to the music.

The whole jazz experience showcased just how diverse the tuba has become. Prior to this, participants were treated to a recital and masterclass "Confessions of a Working Quintet" by the Presidio Brass Quintet (Scott Sutherland, tubist) where they emulated a symphony orchestra with their rendition of *Ruslan and Ludmilla Overture* by Mikhail Glinka. What a treat as the sounds of the trumpets matched the light fluid motion of the first and second violins as the low brass covered the viola, cello, and bass parts as if it were originally composed for brass.

The euphonium and tuba mock auditions were well attended and competitive. The winner of the euphonium mock audition, Leanne Stamp was awarded an opportunity to perform in a masterclass for euphonium soloist David Childs. Leanne performed at a very high level, and David Child's instructions created obvious improvement. Norm Pearson, principal tuba of the L.A. Philharmonic, ran a fair and professional audition process for the tubas. This would not be an ordinary ITEA mock audition

final round in that tuba finalists would perform their excerpts with the low brass section of the Los Angeles Philharmonic. This was the real deal as the screen came down and the concert hall was open to the public. The two finalists were David McLemore and Steve Carron, and the winner after an initial tie vote of the final round was Steve Carron. Congratulations to all the mock audition participants and the winner Steve Carron.

No conference would be complete without a Grand Finale Concert filled with stars, and SWRTEC was no exception. Zeewoong Munn (tuba) accompanied by the L.A. Metro Brass, Pat Sheridan (tuba), and David Childs (euphonium) with the accompaniment of the Golden State British Brass Band brought the house down and the performers rewarded the crowd with an encore. Each performer displayed virtuosic talents and inspired performers of all ages!

Conclusion

Bravo to Beth Mitchell and Dave Holben for bringing together so many great artists and such a diverse array of masterclass topics. It was truly an historic weekend for the Southwest Region of ITEA. 🎶