

**THE
CONTEMPORARY
TUBA**

BY

BARTON CUMMINGS

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PREFACE

In writing this book, there were two thoughts in my mind. First, and admittedly a selfish one, to make others aware of the fact that over a period of years, I have been involved in a rather extensive way with the performance of new music and that many of the compositions that have been written for me are now appearing regularly on recital and other programs featuring tuba soloist. Second, it was to celebrate publicly the efforts of the many composers that I have worked with over the years and to bring their music out in a different way and to thank them for their efforts.

This approach makes this book somewhat limited in scope, but not, in value. I have purposely limited the discussions of the various new techniques to those that I have been directly involved with. In some few cases, to illustrate a particular point, I have used other compositions that I have played, but had no hand in the composing of.

In regard to scope, I fervently hope that this volume will spur others into action and that they will in turn take the time and effort to produce another volume and another volume, culminating in what might be a series of books that will give a complete picture of what has and is taking place in composition for the tuba. There are many new and exciting approaches being taken to tuba performance and hopefully those involved with these approaches will take the bait and run with it.

Obviously there will be criticism of my "Yankee Isolationist" approach as there is no mention of the activities of our colleagues in Europe or other areas. This was my idea in writing this book and still remains so. No book on such a subject and no book containing a bibliography of music is up to date at any time. Publishers release new works daily and one must choose his material and accept the fact that by the time of release there will be a new library of materials that should have been included in both the text and the bibliography. So it is and so it must be and this is where I leave it.

This book would not have been possible without the help of many people. First and foremost are the composers. We as tubists would be still struggling with the materials that most of us consider frivolous and without too much musical merit. The composers of today, and not just those mentioned in the book, but all of the rest who have contributed significant and lasting compositions, have made it possible for us to present significant musical recitals that are met with critical acclaim and this in turn has allowed us to be recognized as artists in our field. Second, and this is my personal moment, I owe a debt of gratitude to Harvey G. Phillips without whom I would have never gone forward and harassed composers into willingly write for the tuba. My early contact with this man, made me realize that there were vast fields that needed to be explored. Let us never forget that FIVE STUDIES FOR TUBA ALONE, by David Reck, was written for Harvey Phillips and that this composition is the first real serious attempt to explore different directions for tuba composition and performance. Finally, I want to thank all of those tubists that I have come to know over the years. Even in times of controversy and after, there is still in my heart and ever shall be, the underlying feeling that we are tuba players and indeed, "very special people."

INTRODUCTION

The traditional use of the tuba and piano has been around almost as long as the modern tuba. The literature for this combination is a little overwhelming when compared with the number of compositions for tuba and other combinations of accompaniment. With few exceptions, the early literature is substandard in every sense and borders on the trivial. It is unworthy of performance, publication and indeed, to even be considered music. This music, more than any other reason, has held the tuba and the tubist to a rather mundane and meaningless existence.

The past twenty years has seen a widening of the efforts of the tubist to seek out composers and to seek out better and more significant compositions for the instrument.

These collaborations have explored and exploited the total range and technical capacity of the instrument and the performer. These explorations have opened up new directions in compositions for the tuba and many new techniques for achieving new sound sources. They have also explored new ways in which the tuba may be used in combination with other instruments, in ensemble with itself, with tape, and in solo performance. Tuba with solo voice and with mixed chorus has also been looked into.

These innovative techniques can be grouped into six major categories.

1. **MULTIPHONICS**--The simultaneous production of more than one pitch on one instrument.
2. **VOCAL SOUNDS**--These include (non multiphonic) shouting through the horn, speaking syllables (ZZZ, SSSH, CH, KKK, TTT, ST, etc.) into the horn, singing and not playing, coarse growls.
3. **PERCUSSIVE EFFECTS**--Tapping the horn with objects (pennies, dimes), palm pops by slapping the open palm on the open bore of the mouthpiece, key clicks, fingernail tremolo on the horn, and hand clapping and foot tapping.
4. **COLOR FINGERINGS**--Using different fingerings on same pitch thus changing the timbre and intonation of the pitch. Also includes half valve playing.
5. **MOUTHPIECE ALONE**--For buzzing and actually playing pitches as well as approximate pitches.
6. **EXTENSION OF TRADITIONAL TECHNIQUES**--This is the use of different vibrato speed either in strict measurements or at varying fast and slow or narrow and wide variations, flutter tongue, pedal tones, glissandi, extremes in upper register, changing oral cavity using vowel formations (A, E, I, O, U), and by using many of the techniques normally associated with jazz such as rips, bends, falls, and improvisation.