Developing the 21st Century Musician: A Case Study of Applied Tuba and Euphonium Studio Models at American Universities

Chasse Benjamin Duplantis
Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College

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DEVELOPING THE 21ST CENTURY MUSICIAN: A CASE STUDY OF APPLIED TUBA AND EUPHONIUM STUDIO MODELS AT AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts in The School of Music

by

Chasse Benjamin Duplantis
B.M.E, Southeastern Louisiana University, 2010
M.M., Louisiana State University, 2012
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ABSTRACT

Musicians navigate an ever-changing career landscape that requires a strong set of ancillary skills in addition to their assumed musical mastery. A successful 21st century career, musical or beyond, demands versatility and command of skills that may include communication, innovation, adaptability, and higher order thinking skills. This document explores the applied professor’s role in introducing the aforementioned elements as well as musical versatility, critical thinking, and skills in collaboration, pedagogy, research, entrepreneurship, and business. Finally, it will examine how or even if the combination of these skills affects student success. The reader will find interviews with successful tuba and euphonium artists who have developed these co-curricular skills with the goal of determining which skills are most important, where they acquired these skills, and how/if they implement them into their pedagogy. As a corollary, I conducted a survey investigating the pedagogical models of the applied tuba and euphonium studios at major US universities. The data provides examples of current tuba and euphonium curricula, highlights the co-curricular skills being taught, and shows the various pedagogical implementation methodologies. Further, to show a functioning model, I conducted a case study of Dr. Joseph Skillen’s studio at Louisiana State University to illustrate a structured approach to the incorporation of co-curricular skills into an applied music curriculum.
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Career-seekers in the music profession navigate an ever-changing landscape that causes musicians to possess skills that are ancillary to performing. I have identified successful artists on my instruments who have developed these co-curricular skills and I have interviewed them to determine where they acquired these skills. As a corollary, I have investigated if these skills are part of the pedagogical models incorporated in the applied tuba and euphonium studios at major US universities.

Success in the 21st century, even outside of the music field, demands versatility and command of a wide range of skills that include communication, innovation, adaptability, and higher order thinking skills. Many of the leading companies in the world demand their employees to be critical thinkers, effective collaborators, innovators, and communicators. ¹ Those in the modern workforce must easily adapt to new situations, cultures, and forms of communication, all while being more productive and innovative.² In my experiences, careers in music are no different. However, the most successful artists exhibit an abundance of these traits.

In this document I will explore what it takes to be a successful musician in the 21st century and the applied professor’s role in introducing elements that will impact their students’ success. Some elements include critical thinking, communication, collaboration skills, innovation, superior performing ability, flexibility in genres/ensembles/performance venues, pedagogical skills, research skills, flexibility and exposure to entrepreneurial options, and business skills. Due to weekly one-on-one meetings applied professors have the ability to impact the lives, paradigmatic knowledge base, and careers of their students. The unique bonds created

² Ibid, 2.
between applied professors and their students creates an opportunity for evaluation and introducing these skills in a customizable way. This one-on-one situation is often seen as more effective than the reach that a professor can have in a classroom setting.

University applied studio professors are constantly confronted with important curricular decisions. One of the most fundamental decisions is to determine how the applied studio professor will foster necessary ancillary skills in their students. This decision will frequently shape the rest of a pedagogue’s curricular design. A successful pedagogue enters the teaching space with a wealth of performing experience, repertoire, and a strong teaching ability. Essentially, they know what to teach and when to introduce each topic. It is my belief that applied professors can do more to prepare our students for 21st Century music careers.

In order to illustrate the necessity for a diverse skill set, I conducted a case study on Dr. Joseph Skillen’s studio, interviewed several of the leading performers, pedagogues, and artists in the tuba and euphonium field, and administered a curriculum survey to other tuba and euphonium instructors at universities across the United States. The Skillen case study highlights a model that encourages the development of co-curricular skills that are ancillary to performing. The artists I chose to interview have experienced success in their careers and possess a combination of performing excellence and ancillary skills. This model is reflected in the pedagogical model used in the applied studio at Louisiana State University. Finally, in an effort to establish the current state of tuba and euphonium pedagogy throughout the United States, I have conducted a survey sent to 237 collegiate tuba and euphonium or low brass studios. The

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data collected from the curriculum survey presents information that includes types of degrees offered, background information on the studios, co-curricular skill inclusion into the teaching model, technology implementation, and pedagogical information (specifically correlating to the teaching of co-curricular skillsets). This data will provide examples of current tuba and euphonium curricula, highlight the co-curricular skills being taught, and different methodologies of implementation in applied tuba/euphonium programs across the United States.

The rest of the document will be in the following segments; Chapter 2: Stating the Case for a More Diversified Applied Studio Curriculum in the 21st Century, Chapter 3: Summaries of Interviews, Chapter 4: Curriculum Survey Summary, Chapter 5: Case Study of the Applied Studio of Dr. Joseph Skillen. The case study chapter will contain an overview, personal experiences, current and former student statements, and a summary of an interview with Dr. Joseph Skillen, and lastly an appendix that contains all interview transcripts and data collected through the curriculum survey.
CHAPTER 2.  THE CASE FOR A MORE DIVERSIFIED APPLIED STUDIO CURRICULUM

We’ve been doing things this way for so long, we know it is right.
– Howard Gardner

One of America’s leading education researchers, Howard Gardner, states that educational institutions change very slowly. The opening quote identifies a sentiment that I have encountered far too often. If we examine the history of education in America, it is obvious that there have been several instances where fundamental changes were a necessity. For example, there was the rise of the American common school in the middle of the 19th century and the commitment, in the middle of the 20th century, to educate all Americans regardless of race, gender, social class, or ethnicity.5

Throughout the early 20th century [public] schools were designed to create compliant workers, due to the need for factory workers. However, 21st century schools should seek to create students who are ready to solve interesting problems and lead.6 Today’s society certainly has no shortage of highly competent musicians; therefore, we do not need universities to solely create more competent musicians.7 This is why we believe that the current pedagogical model steeped in tradition needs to be augmented to expand the basic, expected foundation and incorporate the development of co-curricular skills. The case study conducted on Dr. Skillen’s studio will reveal that he has begun adapting his applied studio model and is educating his students to think beyond their instrument.

7 Ibid, 8.
Expanding the applied curriculum to encourage the development of co-curricular skills addresses many of the issues that students will encounter upon entering a 21st century job market. It is Dr. Skillen’s belief that applied professors have been preparing students for their last job of their career, while neglecting to foster the skills that will allow them to obtain their first job. As previously stated, in any given musical market one could assume an abundance of qualified musicians capable of playing at a professional level. Educators, then, are challenged to expand their student’s skill set to prepare for this modern reality. Simply stated, exemplary performance on the tuba or euphonium will not guarantee success. Rather, educators should cultivate diversified skillsets that include uniqueness, creativity, and innovation to create a foundation upon which students can build. From that foundation, students must then learn to connect with audiences that would not normally seek them. Seth Godin believes that success in today’s society is dependent upon those connections. “Ultimately, anyone we would like to connect with does not know that (a) in advance, we are really good at [tuba] and (b) after they hear us, they cannot tell the difference between someone who is unbelievably off the charts good at the [tuba] and someone who is incredibly good at [tuba].” The connection the audience perceives as unique is what will allow the artist to be remembered.

While I believe that being an exemplary performer is an absolute requirement in today’s market, those who are most successful possess co-curricular skills ancillary to their performing ability. Music performances are easily accessible with today’s technology. Anyone can instantly access any performance, at any time on multiple platforms. The challenge this creates is perfectly defined in “Grammy’s Tend to Focus on Heroics in Singling Out the Jazz Solo,” by Ben Ratliff.

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8 Skillen. Presentation.
9 Godin, 6.
Ratliff’s article, featured in the New York Times, discusses the lack of scarcity in our current market. The Recording Academy votes yearly on the best jazz solo, and on any given year there are approximately 70,000 jazz solos from over 5,000 albums that can be considered for this award. Mathematically, any one individual has a one in ten-thousand chance of being nominated and a one in seventy-thousand chance of even winning this award.

The challenge for educators today is unprecedented. In the 19th century, scarcity created value. This value was due to the fact that in 1805, live performances of any given symphony were typically only heard once by audience members. Even those at the premiere of “The Rite of Spring,” likely only heard that piece once. Due to the change in technology, any piece of music performed by any number of orchestras is instantly available through portals such as YouTube, Spotify, Apple Music, or Naxos. The scarce commodity of hearing a music performance is gone due to the previously mentioned platforms. This means that we need to develop, and cultivate within our students, skills beyond performance. As an example, it is possible for one of our students to win a blind audition with the New York Philharmonic, Boston Pops, or the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. However, if we do the math, there are not enough positions for all of the tubists who want this very same opportunity. If we account for all of the qualified students being produced by the finest music schools across the United States, there are not enough positions available each year to account for those students want a performing position with an orchestra. Ultimately, as pedagogues we should do more than prepare our students to place second at an orchestral audition that only takes one tubist or to simply be a replaceable part in an ensemble.

11 Godin, 3.
12 Ibid, 6.
Even other music disciplines, such as voice and percussion, encounter similar curricular decisions to help their students gain a necessary breadth of knowledge. At the Percussive Arts Society International Conference (PASIC) in 1998, Phil Faini, former professor at the University of West Virginia, participated in a panel discussion where he addressed the drastic changes in the percussion world during his career:

Well, if you look at what has happened in percussion education, I mean, it used to be that basic percussion was the orchestral batterie that you trained on, and then the orchestral excerpts, and then all of the sudden Latin-American instruments came into the scene and you were called upon to learn to play bongos… After the Latin-American instruments came in, then the drum set became important because in music education you had to know something about stage bands and you had to know how to teach kids how to play the drum set…Then improvisation came into it. (Panel Discussion 1998, 3)

This quote specifically addresses performance, but also the ever-changing dynamic that exists in the music community at-large. Pamela Nave discovered that many percussion studios across the country utilize one of three methods in their pedagogical models – totalization, specialization, and/or middle ground. The totalization approach places equal emphasis on core instruments, specialization emphasizes one instrument, and middle ground is a combination of the two.

During the 1998 PASIC convention, Professor Emeritus John Beck, Eastman School of Music contributed to a panel discussion entitled “Total Percussion or specialization: College Percussion Curricula in the 21st Century.”

It is the responsibility of the percussion teacher to see that all aspects of the student’s percussion knowledge are covered in the four-year program. The...repertoire...and all percussion instruments must be covered to ensure that the student is ready to face the professional world...It’s important to keep all options open for that time when there are no job opportunities for the specialty instruments...Having knowledge in only one area can mean a period of struggle for the performer. (Panel Discussion 1998,2)

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13 Nave, 3.
14 Nave, 9.
This directly addresses the challenges 21st century musicians will encounter. Professor Beck specifically states the importance of preparing our students for any potential performing opportunity. It is the duty of applied professors to serve our students by preparing them to enter a constantly changing landscape, through a model of totalization that maximizes student potential. Other percussion professors, such as Fernando Meza and Anthony DiSanzo, believe that the purpose of employing a totalization approach accomplishes one of their main goals of preparing their students to “…go into the World and perform in a wide variety of musical settings allowing him/her to make a living in the area of performance (and possibly teaching).”15 This philosophy further emphasizes the need for a holistic curriculum that prepares students for anything that they may encounter. Tuba and euphonium students at LSU are required to “specialize” on their primary instrument (sometimes both), as well as develop a “totalization” of skillsets that will prepare them for any future opportunities.

Reaching further, to maximize student successes in the 21st century, we should also cultivate different mindsets. Howard Garner, whom I referenced at the beginning of this chapter, believes that educators need to cultivate three different types of 21st century minds; the disciplined mind, the synthesizing mind, and the creative mind.16 I believe creating each of these types of minds in students, and in ourselves, will play a vital role in the successful development of co-curricular skills.

The disciplined mind features two distinct connotations of the word “discipline.” One being having mastered a discipline (performance, pedagogy, audio engineering, videography, website design, research), while the other is continued, disciplined practice to remain at the top

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15 Nave, 9.
16 Bellanca, 10.
of your field, as it is generally accepted that it takes ten years to master a discipline.\textsuperscript{17} As previously stated, education and music are ever changing environments. As disciplines evolve over time, individuals must continue to educate themselves, their students, and acknowledge that mastery of more than one discipline is at a premium.\textsuperscript{18}

The synthesizing mind is one that can decide what is important and worth paying attention to; and then able to put this information together in ways that make sense to oneself and, ultimately, to other persons as well.\textsuperscript{19} Those who can synthesize for themselves, will rise to the top of the pack. Additionally, those whose syntheses relate to others will become invaluable teachers, communicators, and leaders.\textsuperscript{20}

Those that possess the creative mind are trend-setters and think outside the box. In our society we have come to value those individuals who attempt new things, monitor whether they work, cast about continually for new ideas and practices, and pick themselves up after an apparent failure.\textsuperscript{21} Gardner explains why this is so important:

Creators must be eager to take chances, to venture into the unknown, to fail, and then, perhaps smiling, to pick themselves up and once more throw themselves into the fray. Even when successful, creators do not rest on their laurels. They have the motivation again to venture into the unknown and to risk failure, buoyed by the hope that another breakthrough may be in the offing, able to frame an apparent defect as a valuable learning opportunity.\textsuperscript{22}

To summarize, these three types of minds work in harmony. Discipline involves depth, synthesis entails breadth, and the creating mind features stretch. Moreover, synthesizing is not possible without some mastery of fundamental disciplines, and creation is unlikely to emerge in

\textsuperscript{17} Bellanca, 11.
\textsuperscript{18} Bellanca, 13.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid, 14.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid, 16.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid, 17.
the absence of some disciplinary mastery and an ability to synthesize. Essentially, it is not possible to think outside the box unless you have a box.\textsuperscript{23}

As I state in my thesis and will discuss in the case study, it is crucial that our pedagogical models incorporate exposure to and development of co-curricular skills. Examples of co-curricular skills are, but not limited to, performing on a secondary instrument (with equivalent performance standards as a primary instrument), audio engineering (recording/editing), videography (recording/editing), research skills, entrepreneurial skills, technology projects (such as building an app), chamber ensemble skills, pedagogy skills, instrument maintenance/repair skills, writing skills, listening projects, job interviewing skills, improvising, and composing/arranging. The rest of this document will explore how applied professors provide students with experiences that will create value. Essentially, our job is to help our students create art that would be missed, in a professional sense, if they were to no longer produce their art.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{24} Godin, 11.
CHAPTER 3. INTERVIEWS WITH 21ST CENTURY MUSICIANS

There’s no question, you’re already really good. There’s no question, you’ve done the hours, that you’ve put in the practice. Got that. The question is, will you choose to matter.

– Seth Godin

Summary of Interviews

In the several interviews with leading professional musicians and pedagogues in the tuba and euphonium field, I discovered their pedagogical ideas and models feature many similarities. The artists interviewed were Adam Frey (University of North Georgia, International recording artist), Andrew Hitz (Shenandoah Conservatory), Gretchen Renshaw-James (Hendrix College, Seraph Brass), Matthew Mireles (St. Mary’s University, San Antonio Brass Band), and Demondrae Thurman (Indiana University, Samford University, Sotto Voce Quartet). It is important to note that the two most common themes amongst the entirety of the interviews are:

1. That musicians in today’s market must excel at their art and 2. Be versatile, or well rounded, while not compromising the integrity of quality. Simply put, excellence is the minimum standard and any additional skill sets that one possesses must be equal in quality to their primary skill set.

Furthermore, as stated by everyone that I interviewed, as an applied professor their goal is to give their students the skills and ability to be able to be successful.

The response that I believe most accurately represents the most common theme amongst all interviews occurred while interviewing Andrew Hitz. He began our interview with the following statement:

I talk an awful lot about entrepreneurship, branding, networking, marketing, and all of that stuff, [but] if your art, whatever that art is, whether it is classical tuba, or Spanish guitar, or poetry, or whatever…if your art isn’t phenomenal, then all of your marketing, branding, networking [that you do], isn’t going to mean anything.25

All of those whom I interviewed state that high quality performance is the basic expectation of 21st century musicians. Additionally, Andrew Hitz presented his thoughts on the current state of the music field by stating that creating media has never been easier than it is today, thus increasing the difficulty of “being noticed.” In support of this point, he stated that he believes it is easier to get out of a semi-final round of an audition or competition than a preliminary round, due to the sheer number of musicians competing for these positions.26

Now the problem is that since anyone can make those things, how do you get noticed? That’s why it is easier to get out of the semi-finals of an audition, everybody is a baller at that level, but god, getting out of that round is easier than getting out of an open cattle-call of 140 people all playing the same 3 excerpts that last 12 seconds each.27

In addition to being able to perform at the highest level, all of these musicians believe that versatility is becoming more of an expectation. However, the importance of excellent quality in additional skill sets cannot be overstated. “I think, first and foremost, you still need to be exceptional at your craft. So, whatever it is that makes you the musician that you are, you have to be really good at it…There is no room for a lack of excellence for the 21st Century musician.”2829

There are many challenges associated with developing ancillary skills to performance, such as extra time, research, and dedicated practice in additional areas. While these can be negatives associated with a model that encourages development of ancillary skills, I believe they are outweighed by the potential benefits this model offers. Throughout the rest of this chapter,

26 Hitz. Interview, 77.
27 In my own experience, I have taken auditions and participated in competitions that consistently have featured well over fifty musicians. Though I have experienced success in many competitions, I have also experienced the challenges advancing that Hitz discussed during our interview
29 As an example, I have chosen to learn tuba in addition to my euphonium playing. In my practice, I do not alter my expectations, rather, I demand a higher level of expectation when playing tuba. It is my belief that there should be no disparity between primary and additional skill sets.
and the case study of Dr. Skillen’s applied studio, I will discuss the importance of developing ancillary skills and possibilities for curricular design. The remainder of this chapter will be broken into the following subheadings: Important Traits for the 21st Century Musician, Role of the 21st Century Applied Studio Professor, Integration of Co-curricular Skills into the Applied Studio, Co-curricular Skill Development, Student Outcomes, Technology Implementation and Benefits, New Teaching Methods and Future of Pedagogy, and Overcoming Opposition. As I summarize each question from the interviews, I will use information provided by the interviewed artists to highlight important ideas and concepts.

**Important Traits for the 21st Century Musician**

As stated above, each interviewed artists believes that the most common traits for 21st Century musicians are those of excellence, versatility, and for students to have a holistic musical foundation. Each interviewee has their own unique approach to helping their students develop these traits.

As previously stated, the most fundamental concept that was discussed is creating art that is excellent. Thurman believes that 21st century musicians must, first and foremost, be excellent at their craft because there is no room for a lack of excellence in the 21st Century. 30 Renshaw-James also emphasized the importance for her students to develop versatile skill sets beyond performance on a primary instrument while also advocating against the idea of being “a jack of all trades and master of none.” 31

Beyond their performing ability, these artists, as teachers, include a wide array of skill sets in their applied lesson curriculum that emphasize the importance of a structured philosophy

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30 Thurman. Interview, 86.
that teaches the whole student.\textsuperscript{32} As an example, in his capacity as a professor at UNG, Frey incorporates elements of music theory, history, and technology. Similarly, Mireles tailors his instruction to cultivate skills such as communication, writing, research, forward thinking, and creativity. He believes that developing these skills in his students will allow for them to be successful in the multitude of pathways available to 21\textsuperscript{st} Century musicians.\textsuperscript{33} Today, it is important that musicians look for opportunities to create their own work, and tackle the challenge of getting noticed in today’s market.\textsuperscript{34} Therefore, Thurman stated that 21\textsuperscript{st} Century musicians must also possess patience. He explained that in today’s society, there are less “cookie cutter” type jobs available, thus the necessity for ancillary skill sets. Patience is a necessary skill set because of the challenges associated with developing co-curricular skills, such as devoting time to the development of multiple skill sets simultaneously.\textsuperscript{35}

All of these artists acknowledged that the job market is getting more complicated. Many of the personal experiences these artists gained through their education or careers have influenced the creation of an applied studio environment that seeks to create versatile students. Renshaw-James discussed how the ever-changing landscape in music has impacted her education and career. As she sought to become a collegiate professor, she began to discover the importance of versatility, noticing that many collegiate teaching positions required multiple duties. Therefore, she worked diligently to develop multiple skill sets such as tuba performance, research skills, writing skills, and conducting along the pathway to attaining her goals.\textsuperscript{36} Andrew Hitz began to lay the foundation for his career post-Boston Brass after spending 14 years as the

\textsuperscript{32} Mireles, Matthew. Interview. December 14, 2018. 105.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid, 105.
\textsuperscript{34} Frey, Adam. Interview. January 11, 2018. 64.
\textsuperscript{35} Thurman. Interview, 87.
\textsuperscript{36} Renshaw-James. Interview, 97-98.
tubist for this quintet. He began to develop marketing, promotion, and technology skills that would allow for him to develop his “portfolio career,” which is a career that utilizes multiple avenues of skills. Through his experiences, he has been able to craft a pedagogical structure that allows for him to influence the future careers of his students.\(^{37}\) Frey also provides his students with experiences that will allow them to excel in today’s ever-changing landscape of the music job market. He creates versatility through experiences such as performing a single piece in several contrasting styles, performing in chamber ensembles, organizing performances, arranging music, and communication skills.\(^{38}\)

**Role of the 21st Century Applied Studio Professor**

The role of the 21st Century applied studio professor is a broad topic. All of these artists strive to exhibit the characteristics that they believe students should possess. Additionally, it is paramount that the applied studio professor, first and foremost, understands their strengths as an educator to create as much overlap between their skill set and the goals of their students.\(^{39}\) At a minimum, applied professors should be aware of trends in the field, students’ goals, and have fundamental content knowledge as students rely on them as role models.\(^{40}\) Many of these artists utilize a diverse approach to develop a foundation of skills that will allow their students to be able to be successful.\(^{41}\)

One of the roles the 21st Century applied professor will encounter is establishing a level of expectation in students by holding them accountable for their actions and to high professional

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\(^{37}\) Hitz. Interview, 77.  
\(^{38}\) Frey. Interview, 64.  
\(^{39}\) Hitz. Interview, 78.  
\(^{40}\) Renshaw-James. Interview, 97.  
\(^{41}\) Thurman. Interview, 91.
A component of Frey’s philosophy is to teach his students the difference between the expectation, and preparation of, “A-level” and “B-Level” work. He summarized by saying:

…we have got the role [of] teaching them how to play, teaching them how to be adaptable, teaching them how to be a professional, and then I think one of the final roles is to teach them how to have…sort of to have the mental capacity as to how to get work, and how to communicate. Whether that be with conductors [or] colleagues, and to look for opportunities.43

The above quote nicely summarizes the four expectations that Frey utilizes in his pedagogy; performance, adaptability, professionalism, and communication skills.

Another role of the applied professor is to offer opportunities that will allow students to gain necessary experiences, while working towards achieving their goals. The relationship between applied professor and student is critical to student musician development.

So, a studio professor, I would hope, is doing more than meeting with the students in a lesson and prescribing etudes, scales, or repertoire for the student. It really should be an opportunity for the students to view the professor as the person that is in the industry that they want to get to and be a colleague of in that area. Then, try to just [encapsulate] all of the experiences that the professor does in an effort to not only view it, but absorb it, and become part of it.44

In support of his philosophy, Mireles provides unique and engaging opportunities to his music education students such as having them attend professional meetings. He believes this allows them to experience the type of communication and interpersonal skills required that they would otherwise not experience.45 Hitz also incorporates unique experiences, influenced by his portfolio career, into his applied curriculum to encourage his students to capitalize on many undiscovered opportunities in the 21st Century. His students explore and experience the creative process through composition, arranging, website building, listening, and other creative
assignments. “The thing is you cannot learn about basketball by reading about basketball. You have to get a basketball, get in front of a hoop, and you have to start shooting right? That’s how you get better at basketball. So, doing things is the real broad answer.”

As applied professors, these artists all believe that establishing goals with their students is a first step to developing individualized instructional approaches. However, there are greater lengths that applied professors can go to in an effort to be kick starters. Renshaw-James stated that her applied professors were instrumental in providing opportunities for her to experience growth and development. She attributes her interests outside of euphonium performance directly to encouragement from her first applied professor, Velvet Brown. Hitz utilizes goal setting to reverse engineer a pathway of instruction that will help students develop skills to attain their goals. Ultimately, he believes that the most effective pedagogues understand how to attract the kind of students they work best with, are self-aware, and able to adapt to their student’s goals.

Another role of the applied professor is to be malleable and understanding. Due to the increased demand of versatility and adaptability, today’s students may not solely focus on tuba or euphonium performance. For example, students may seek to also develop composition or audio engineering skills. Applied professors can begin to help students cultivate and develop specific skill sets. As an example, a current student at Indiana University informed Thurman of his previous experience as an audio engineer, therefore, Thurman contacted a colleague that could provide him with practical experience to develop and improve this skill set.

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46 Hitz. Interview, 79.
47 Renshaw-James. Interview, 97.
48 Hitz. Interview, 78.
49 Thurman. Interview, 88.
50 Ibid.
and adaptability become more common, applied professors must be flexible enough to help students meet the market demands.

**Integration of Co-Curricular Skills into the Applied Studio**

As professors in the 21st century, these artists incorporate co-curricular skills and create individualized, holistic student plans that are influenced by their own personal experiences. Frey believes the formula to success is working to provide his students with unique experiences, opportunities to teach, perform in a variety of different styles and settings, and opportunities to collaborate with as many musicians as possible. He believes that the ideal program for tuba and euphonium students in the 21st century offers many opportunities for solo, chamber, and ensemble performances, engagements with guest artists and teachers, masterclasses, and providing as many real-world experiences as possible.

One of the most unique experiences I have learned about through this research was provided by Adam Frey. In a sense, he is a pioneer that has worked to promote the euphonium in any avenue possible, including his efforts to expose his students to unique, new, and interesting performance opportunities. The previous two school years his students participated in a research conference, a first for any music project at UNG, an institution that desires to have music as an integral part of campus research and events. Since the first project submission in the 2017-2018 school year, Adam has worked with the organizers to develop a rubric by which music performances and projects can be graded.

Renshaw-James, similarly to Frey, strongly encourages the pursuit of music education degrees due to the degree requirements. She emphasized the importance of developing teaching and pedagogy skills, in conjunction with the conducting skills required by the music education

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curriculum. She also encourages her students to gain fundamental knowledge of audio and video recordings due to the increasing technology dependency. Finally, she feels that her ability to arrange for different mediums has been a crucial component in her career and aims for her students to develop these skills. In addition to her student’s goals, she strives to create versatility through developing a multitude of skills.

Through these interviews, as previously stated, I discovered that many of these artists pedagogical influences stem from their current career experiences. As an example, Mireles currently serves as a college professor, solo performing artist, recording artist, chamber musician, and conductor of the San Antonio Brass Band. Many of the skills he expects of his students, he exemplifies those traits in his own career.

Co-Curricular Skill Development

The musicians that I interviewed for my research all possess skills that are ancillary to performance on a primary instrument. These skills include conducting, chamber ensembles, business and marketing skills, audio recording or editing, entrepreneurial skills, research and writing, and performance on a secondary instrument. The unique thing about all of these artists is that they developed their ancillary skills in their own unique ways.

Frey states that his skill development derives from two factors: 1. “On the job training” and 2. Capitalizing on an opportunity and need. Similarly, Andrew Hitz’s development of his skills follows a similar trajectory to Frey’s. When he decided to no longer be a performing member of Boston Brass, he began to gain his own experience in “on the job training,” creating a website, blog, social media accounts, and Pedal Note Media. Conversely, Renshaw-James development is attributed to opportunities while at Pennsylvania State University, the University

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52 Frey. Interview, 66-67.
of Arkansas, and Michigan State University. Her applied professors were instrumental in providing opportunities for her to experience musical growth, development, and refinement of her many skill sets. In a similar way, Mireles sought to develop these skills early on in his career, when he realized that performance opportunities for euphonium players are limited. Essentially, the only guaranteed full time euphonium performance positions are military bands, a career path that was not of particular interest to Mireles. Lastly, from a very young age, trombone, conducting, and chamber skills have been a genuine interest and an integral part of Thurman’s musicianship. He stated, “The things you know me to be good at now, I have been doing since high school. At no point were these things I thought I might do in order to be successful in music.”

Artists like Frey and Hitz began to broaden their skill sets through self-created opportunities. Frey realized during the recording of his first two albums that he could develop the skills necessary to edit recordings himself. He purchased Pro Tools and began honing his audio editing skills, eventually editing his own solo recordings. Similarly, he developed his skills in arranging through creating his own arrangements of music he wanted to play on the euphonium. Frey’s most notable accomplishments may be that he created the IET Festival and the Euphonium.com publishing company through realizing there was a need for those services. When the IET Festival began in 2004 there were 14 participants. Since, the festival has grown to over 120 participants. He attributes the success and longevity of this festival to his skills of organization and adaptability.

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53 Renshaw-James. Interview, 97-98.
54 Mireles. Interview, 107.
55 Thurman. Interview, 89.
Additionally, Frey capitalized on an opportunity upon noticing a need for a place to sell euphonium and tuba music. He stated that he would often receive emails asking where music from his recordings, such as the *Euphonium Concerto* by Vladimir Cosma or *Fantasy Variations* by Yasuhide Ito, could be purchased. Thus, his publishing company and store was created. A company that once started with six or seven titles has blossomed into an inventory of over six-hundred titles that have served over five-thousand customers.56

Similarly, Hitz created opportunities through platforms and podcasts such as Pedal Note Media, a digital media company specifically designed to educate, entertain, and inspire music teachers.57 Through this company, Hitz has created a variety of pathways for him to continue to develop his skill sets that have allowed for him to have his portfolio career. Podcasts such as “The Brass Junkies,” “The Entrepreneurial Musician,” “ICadenza’s Creative Careers,” and “Modern Musicking,” along with his brass recording project are a few of the media productions generated by this company.

As previously mentioned, Thurman’s ancillary skill development has always been part of his musicianship. Throughout the entirety of his education, while euphonium performance has been his primary focus, he spent a significant portion of his time focusing on many other skills. Similar to how he developed his ancillary skills, he believes these skills should be developed through genuine interest, rather than “trying to cultivate a career.” He stated that being well-rounded will not guarantee that one will have a career. In our discussion, he stated that he believes that his ability to perform on trombone was a factor in winning his first collegiate teaching position.

56 Frey. Interview, 67-68.
57 Pedal Note Media. Website.
So, when I got my first job at Alabama State, my job was to teach Low Brass, and the reason I believe I got the job was because I could play the trombone so well. The euphonium playing was what was expected but the fact that I could play the trombone at a high level was a bonus. So, when I got there I taught low brass, and along with the Director/Dean of the School of Music, we started the Wind Ensemble and that is when my conducting career started. It was because I was in the right place, at the right time. They didn’t have a concert band that met year-round. So, we started one together.  

Comparable to Thurman’s development, Mireles possessed many of his ancillary skills early on in his career developed out of genuine interest. He realized that he enjoyed working with people, which contributed to his decision to pursue a career as an educator and conductor. Conducting affords him the opportunity create music and educate while leading large groups of musicians. Additionally, he realized early during his education that performance opportunities as a euphonium player would be limited and decided to continue to refine his skills to allow for him to achieve his future goals.

**Student Outcomes**

An effective educator is one that has both specific and broad defined student outcomes and works to have their student’s actions align with their goals. Through establishing student’s goals with him, Hitz is able to help them attain their skills through various assignments. For example, if a student’s desire is to become a high school band director, they should be encouraged to develop skills in arranging, pedagogy, teaching horn lines, networking, apprenticing, or explore different areas to gain experiences in a variety of outlets.

As a musician, it’s pretty hard to play a sad song if you’ve never had your heart broken. To play something scary if you’ve never been terrified. Part of this is just having life experience. It’s not like, “how is this thing going to help you directly or overtly make you a better elementary music teacher?” It is intentional behavior that is moving you as a human towards your goal. Sometimes it is specific resume stuff, other times it’s a musical level, other times it’s a human level.

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58 Thurman. Interview, 89.
59 Mireles. Interview, 107.
60 Hitz. Interview, 83.
A common goal amongst all of these artists is to ensure that their students possess the skills necessary *to be able to* win a job. While the ultimate goal amongst these artists is similar, each have their own methodology in helping their students attain their goals. For example, Thurman believes he accomplishes this through teaching his undergraduate students how to practice and have them fall in love with music, not the instrument. Additionally, he teaches his graduate students that they have not learned to practice, not fallen in love with music, or are not on track to possess the skills that an advanced degree suggests.

Contrarily, Frey establishes goals in his applied studio teaching to create a unique approach for each student. As an example, he works to give his music education students experience to develop their resume by providing connections with directors. This allows for opportunities to teach in the public schools and development of aspects of pedagogy that will help them when seeking employment. Conversely, if a student’s goal is to become a collegiate professor, he seeks to build their reputation, develop versatility, and encourage developing skills such as conducting, music theory, or music history.

**Implementing Technology**

There are many benefits associated with utilizing technological advancements such as smart phone apps or software. These artists specifically cite positive improvement in practice, teaching, organization, effectiveness, immediacy of feedback, and a greater understanding of music. The remainder of this section will describe the many different ways these pedagogues implement technology.

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61 Thurman. Interview, 91.
62 Ibid.
63 Frey. Interview, 69.
64 Ibid.
Frey stated that the immediacy of feedback provided by technology has provided the most positive impact on student outcomes. Recently, through a University sponsored grant, Adam was awarded the opportunity for each of his applied students to utilize an iPad throughout an entire semester. One of the unique, and most beneficial, aspects he discussed was the opportunity for students to recorded their practice to observe attacks, releases, dynamic contrasts, and varieties in articulation. This allowed students to more easily discern the necessary differences, make immediate adjustments, and improve practice habits. Additionally, in utilizing technology in his teaching, such as the Tonal Energy Tuner (TE Tuner) app or decibel meters, they can immediately depict the differences in articulation styles or dynamics.

Whether that is from the decibel meter, tonal energy, visual recording app, or the tuner and stuff like that. When you have the feedback of what you’re doing right or wrong, your success is going to be so much more dramatically higher. When you don’t have that feedback, and your feedback is only in the one hour lesson each week, it is a lot tougher.65

While Hitz is not the largest proponent of technology in his teaching, he did reference ways in which technology has improved his practice, teaching, organization, and effectiveness. The most beneficial technology that he utilizes in his teaching is the TE Tuner app, Evernote, or Google Drive. One of the most interesting uses of TE Tuner that he applies with his students is through the analysis portal of the app. He often records students playing a difficult excerpt at half speed and increases the playback speed to two-hundred percent. He believes that there is a difference between hearing a professor or performing artist play a difficult passage versus the student performing the same passage at the written tempo. Technology has essentially made for

65 Frey. Interview, 72.
the many devices, such as a stand-alone tuner, metronome or decibel meter, he utilized during his time as a student obsolete.66

Renshaw-James, much like Hitz, incorporates technology into her pedagogy mainly through the use of the TE Tuner app through the analysis portal. She discovered through Seraph Brass rehearsal recordings that she often sounded behind the pulse. In her own practice, she was seeking to improve the immediacy of her sound and articulation. She began utilizing the TE Tuner to simultaneously display soundwaves, practice with a metronome, and focus on creating immediate sound. Due to her success implementing this in her own practice, she began utilizing this with her students, as well as teaching them how to utilize different aspects of the app to increase immediacy of improvement.67

Like many modern applied professors, Mireles uses the standard smart phone apps on his phone such as TE Tuner, other metronome apps, drones, and recording apps. However, he also utilizes iReal Pro, which he describes as “a band in a box.” He compared the functionality of this app to the CD that accompanies the Jamey Aebersold Jazz improvisation books. The iReal Pro app “simulates a real-sounding band that can accompany you as you practice, and also lets you collect chord charts from your favorite songs for reference.”68

Thurman describes his applied teaching style as more “old school” as he does not extensively incorporate technology. While he does utilize some smart phone apps on his phone for tuner, metronome, and recording purposes, he typically relies more on his “tried and true” pedagogical methods. However, he did discuss his use of real hip-hop drum beats into his teaching of rhythm. Through utilizing real hip-hop beats versus synthesized beats, he is able to

66 Hitz. Interview, 83.
67 Renshaw-James. Interview, 100.
68 iReal Pro. Website.
encourage active listening in any environment, as well as teach the complexities within the beat that can aid in understanding more complex rhythms.\textsuperscript{69}

**New Teaching Methods and Future of Pedagogy**

One common trait amongst musicians is the desire to constantly improve themselves. All interviewed artists described ways in which they have recently improved their pedagogy to enhance student outcomes. These artists attribute their pedagogical foundation to the time spent with their tuba and euphonium professors. Their influences have allowed them to be effective and know what will resonate with their students.\textsuperscript{70} Each artist has been able to implement new methods into their teaching to allow students to develop skills that are essential to career survival. Additionally, many of their pedagogical implementations derive from discoveries in their own practice, and in turn, incorporate them into their pedagogy.\textsuperscript{71}

Hitz stated many of his pedagogical concepts that resonated with him when he was a student remain at the core of his musicianship. However, he continues to seek new ways to develop his pedagogy that will allow his pedagogical approach to be multidimensional. Additionally, he has incorporated additional elements into studio class that promote the enhancement of skills such as business, listening, and writing skills. Hitz believes while performing for colleagues is an essential part of student musician development, there are many other skills essential to career survival that should be developed in the applied studio.\textsuperscript{72}

One of the additional discoveries I learned of through these interviews involved the implementation of a method to help students increase musical understanding. Mireles has

\textsuperscript{69} Thurman. Interview, 92.  
\textsuperscript{70} Hitz. Interview, 77-78.  
\textsuperscript{71} Renshaw-James. Interview, 101.  
\textsuperscript{72} Hitz. Interview, 85.
recently implemented a projector to display the full score during ensemble rehearsals to increase understanding of musical functionality. He states “It is important to be able to visualize the score for two reasons: 1. a lot of students have never read a score before and 2. once they know how to read a score they can see the music visually and know how it all functions.” This has allowed for his rehearsals to be more efficient and for his students to gain a better understanding of the music they are performing.73

As previously mentioned, some of the new implementations into their pedagogy derive from discoveries these pedagogues have employed in their own practice. As an example, in his own practice, Thurman has recently been focused on the relationship between the mouthpiece and the embouchure. This has affected his approach to teaching since he previously believed that many of the challenges players face such as missed notes, tone production, or range issues were related to ear training deficiencies. Through years of experience, his philosophy has shifted into thinking there is a direct correlation between these challenges and the relationship between the mouthpiece and the embouchure. His instruction has begun to shift more to conceptually driven aspects such as how the buzzing surface changes for register, air direction changes, or use of the buzzing surface.74 Renshaw-James also described two habits of her practice that have entered her applied instruction. She described her discovery of the importance of airflow and buzzing as integral components of her practice. As she began to notice the impact these two focuses created in her playing, she began to adapt her teaching to emphasize these two concepts.75

As pedagogy continues to evolve and adapt to the ever-changing music landscape, these artists are beginning to employ new assignments that will enhance student abilities beyond their

73 Mireles. Interview, 111.
74 Thurman. Interview, 92.
instrument. Listening assignments are a common how these artists go beyond teaching their instrument. Hitz incorporates an assignment he calls “tune of the week” and a semester listening lab that require students to write observations on provided and specific listening criteria.\textsuperscript{76} Thurman further emphasized the importance of enhancing listening skills by described his three-dimension process to develop active listening skills. First, he encourages listening beyond determining whether one likes or dislikes music. Second, he expects students to explain why they like or dislike a certain piece of music. He believes that as part of determining why, it is important to analyze the music in an attempt to understand the music on a deeper level. Lastly, he encourages his students to determine what specific aspects of music they and attempt to employ it in their own performance.\textsuperscript{77}

As we continue to progress through the 21\textsuperscript{st} century, Renshaw-James believes that the idea of versatility will become more of a common place amongst musicians. Along with many others, she has noticed trends in the field of musicians creating their own path, due to fewer, as Demondrae Thurman calls, “cookie cutter” jobs. The musicians that she notices are creating their own path all feature a variety of skill sets that include entrepreneurial and marketing skills. She has had the opportunity to cultivate these types of skills in her own career through her work with Seraph Brass.\textsuperscript{78} Additionally, we discussed innovative initiatives such as the \textit{Running Start} program at Michigan State to “prepare students to creatively channel their passions into vibrant careers,” through events and workshops, entrepreneurial and performance opportunities, career coaching, amongst a plethora of other opportunities.\textsuperscript{79} This endeavor is also being implemented

\textsuperscript{76} Hitz. Interview, 82.
\textsuperscript{77} Thurman. Interview, 93.
\textsuperscript{78} Renshaw-James. Interview, 102.
\textsuperscript{79} Michigan State University.
at other music schools across the country such as the DePauw University School of Music and the Lawrence University Conservatory of Music.

**Overcoming Opposition**

It is crucial that collegiate courses and applied studio curriculums begin to develop in a way that are going to enhance student successes. It takes a tremendous amount of planning and work to accomplish things that will enact positive change. I believe that these artists have worked to create such changes in their own careers. Being a self-starter and creating new opportunities allows for musicians to experience success. Frey stated that opposition will always be present, however, working to overcome the roadblocks is what has generated his success.  

Through creating his own work in creating the International Euphonium and Tuba Festival (IET), and creating his own publishing company Frey believes he has been able to minimize the opposition he has faced. Initially, upon creating IET, Emory University allowed him to utilize facilities and host the event free of charge. As previously mentioned, this festival rapidly grew from 14 participants in 2004, to approximately 50 in 2007, and ultimately over 120 in 2018. However, as the festival grew, the road block of logistically managing the number of participants created staffing and facility issues that endangered the festival to continue. Through Adam’s diligent efforts, planning, and compromise, he was able to overcome the obstacles that endangered the continuation of the festival.

As the music landscape continues to shift in the 21st century, Thurman believes one of the inherent challenges facing musicians is performing new music. Demondrae stated that he has noticed that many [young] students struggle to perform music that they cannot hear prior to their

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80 Frey. Interview, 73-74.
81 Ibid.
practice/performance. This is an issue that modern professors will face with more regularity as the amount commissions and new music continues to increase. Additionally, due to the importance of well-rounded skill sets and the increasing commonality of students that seek to perform on more than one instrument will provide more challenges for the modern professor. As a student-centered teacher, he strives for his instruction to come from a knowledgeable place where he can take the student to the next step.\textsuperscript{82}

\textbf{Conclusion}

Modern applied professors have already begun to adapt to the idea that versatility is becoming a more common expectation through including co-curricular skills, implementing technology, and constantly seeking to develop their pedagogy. It appears that the interviewees agree that it is an important role for the applied professor to create a diverse approach that will allow for students to develop skills ancillary to performance. Some of the themes that I observed through these interviews, are also reinforced in the data I collected in the curriculum survey (introduced in the next chapter). While these artists did not complete the curriculum survey, there is a strong correlation between their pedagogy and those skills that are deemed important through survey data in the next chapter.

\textsuperscript{82} Thurman. Interview, 95.
CHAPTER 4. STUDIO CURRICULUM SURVEY SUMMARY

As part of my research, I conducted a curriculum survey to discover the different types of pedagogical models in applied tuba/euphonium or low brass studios across the United States. The curriculum survey was sent to 237 tuba/euphonium or low brass professors or instructors at 206 American institutions and have received a total of 64 responses (27% response rate). The remainder of this chapter will summarize the data received divided into the following subheadings; types of music degrees offered, applied studio data, co-curricular skills incorporated into applied teaching, technology implementation, pedagogical advancements, and observations.

Types of Music Degrees Offered

Figure 1, shown below, indicates the different types of degrees offered amongst the institutions at which the respondents currently teach.

Figure 1. Degrees Offered

The “other” category includes the following degrees: PhD in Music Education, Bachelor of Music Business, Music Technology, Doctor of Arts, Master of Arts in Art Administration,
Bachelor of Science in Sound Recording, Bachelor of Composition, Theory, and History, and PhD in Composition and Musicology.

**Applied Studio Data**

The approximate total of tuba and euphonium students taught on an annual basis by those whom responded is 874 students, with an average of 13 students per studio. Figure 2 indicates the size of each applied studio of the responding professors/instructors, grouped into integrals of five students per studio.

![Bar chart showing the number of students per studio.](chart.png)

**Figure 2. Students per Studio**

In gathering data to learn about the different types of studio environments, the survey included the following questions:

1. Do you have a studio class?
2. How many times a week does this class meet?
3. For what length of time does this class meet?

Figure 3, below, shows that fifty-six of the applied studio professors that responded have the opportunity to teach a studio class, while eight do not have regularly scheduled studio class meetings.
Figure 3. Applied Studios with a Studio Class

The vast majority, forty-four of the responders (68.75%), meet with their studio once a week for either class or ensemble rehearsals and ten (17.1%) of the professors that responded to the survey see their studio either two or three times per week. Additionally, there are three professors that responded that stated they have studio class one to two times per month, while seven do not have a studio class meeting at all.

Figure 4. Meetings per week for Studio Classes
The range of time that these professors meet for studio class ranges from one to three hours per meeting. Thirty-three of the studios (51.5%) meet for a length of 0-1 hours, twenty-four studios (37.5%) meet for 2-3 hours, and one studio meets for 2-3 hours per week. As previously stated, seven of the studios (10.9%) do not meet for a regularly scheduled studio class. Figure 5 illustrates this data.

Figure 5. Length of Studio Class Meetings

Co-Curricular Skills Incorporated into Applied Teaching

An overwhelming 98.4%, 63 of the 64 responders, believe that co-curricular skill development is an important component of the applied studio. Figure 6, below, highlights the skills that each of the respondents stated that they incorporate into their applied pedagogy. Based on the research, however, 81.25 – 84.38% of respondents teach chamber skills, listening skills, large ensemble excerpts, and pedagogy, 34.3 – 56.25% teach writing skills, instrument maintenance, improvising, musician wellness, research skills, entrepreneurship, composition/arranging, and performance on a secondary instrument, and 1.6 – 25% teach audio engineering, video editing, or other co-curricular skills.
Figure 6. Co-Curricular Skills Included in Applied Teaching

In examining the data, the responses can be grouped into three tiers. The first tier features the most commonly taught skill sets; chamber, listening, large ensemble excerpts, and pedagogy with 52, 52, 53, and 54 (81.25 – 84.38%) selections respectively. The second tier of most selected skills were performance on a secondary instrument, improvising, composing/arranging, entrepreneurship, instrument maintenance, research, writing, and musicianship wellness all ranging between 22 – 36 (36.3 – 54.25%) selections. The third tier is the least selected of the included list of skills was audio engineering, video editing, and other. There were 14 (21.8%) professors stated that they seek to develop audio engineering, 5 (7.8%) stated that they incorporate video editing into their applied curriculum, and there were 8 respondents that submitted a skill set in the “other” category not included in the provided list of skills. These additions were statistically insignificant (1.6% of respondents) as there was only one of each of the following skills: focus and breathing, music technology, conducting/ear training, drill writing, professionalism, job material development, music theory, and transposition.
Implementing Technology

As technology has continued to develop, it has increasingly become a common component utilized in applied studios. Fifty-eight (90.6%) of the sixty-four respondents currently utilize many forms of technology in their instruction, while six of them stated they do not extensively incorporate technology, beyond the use of a standard tuner or metronome. On the next page, I have included a list of the different types of technology that respondents indicated they use.

Figure 7. Use of Technology

As part of the survey, information was also collected as to what types of electronic teaching tools are being used. The two figures below, figures 8 and 9, indicate the discoveries that I made through the survey. The technology implemented in applied studios includes a wide array of devices, software, smart phone apps, and online resources. Figure 8, contained on the next page, indicates the different types of smart phone apps or online resources that teachers utilize in their instruction, while figure 9 indicates the many different types of software (computer programs) or hardware (stand-alone devices such as tuners, metronomes, or recording devices) that teachers utilize in their instruction.
Figure 8. Smart Phone Apps and Online Programs

The most commonly used smart phone apps are clearly tuner/metronome apps. There were many different apps that are utilized across the respondents. The most common apps were those specifically used for tuner/metronome function. Tonal Energy Tuner was the most common app specifically cited, twenty-three total. Other apps with similar functions included are: Time Guru, Dr. Bettote, Tempo Advance, and Better Ears. Several other smart phone apps that are statistically insignificant, but are worth including are: Drum Beats+ (or similar drum machine apps), note taking apps (such as Evernote), Amazing Slow Downer, Meditation, Recording apps (such as iTalk or HandyRecorder), forScore, Cello Drones (or other apps specifically designed for drones), Practice apps (such as Modacity), and SpectrumView+. Additionally, online resources such as YouTube, Spotify, and Sound Cloud are used by many to find reference recordings.

Other forms of technology such as software, online programs, and hardware were specifically reference as components incorporated into applied pedagogy. As previously stated, Figure 9 indicates the different types of additional forms of technology used.
Figure 9. Software and Traditional Hardware

Many of the responders believe that technology has improved their pedagogy throughout their career. Information is more easily accessible, apps can serve many different purposes, thus eliminating the need for stand-alone devices, and organization is much easier through platforms such as the Google Suite and note taking smart phone apps. Many of these professors believe that technology helps students to grasp concepts faster, which speeds up the learning process, and enhances many of the traditional concepts and methods.

Co-Curricular Skill Implementation and Pedagogical Advancements

The biggest pedagogical changes appear to revolve around the addition of technologies and the improvements it allows. While the traditional fundamental aspects of pedagogy have essentially remained the same, having things such as SmartMusic and YouTube, for example, provide opportunities that accelerate student learning. Additionally, those whom responded indicate that having the ability to provide a sound analysis through a smart phone app, such as Tonal Energy or SpectrumView+, allows for students to receive immediate feedback. Specific
uses of the sound analysis are immediacy of sound, clarity in different types of articulation, dynamic contrast, resonance of sound, amongst many other different benefits.

There are several different methods that those who responded to the survey use to incorporate co-curricular skills into their pedagogy. Many professors/instructors state that they include these skills as a standard part of their applied lessons or studio class, but do not list many specific or structural details that explain implementation. Conversely, there were responses that included several different assignments professors utilize to enhance co-curricular skills such as listening assignments, arranging projects, chamber ensemble requirements, or lectures that cover a variety of topics such as instrument maintenance, pedagogy, or history. Skills specifically cited as structured assignments correlate with the responses highlighted in figure 6. Many of the responses indicate structured implementation of the co-curricular skills that were most selected as those included in the applied curriculums. The assignments included in their responses emphasize their belief of the importance of listening skills, pedagogy, chamber skills, and large ensemble excerpts.

Additionally, there were responses in regards to pedagogical development to addresses the complexities in the current music field. These complexities present the necessity for a wider array of skills to meet market demands. Teachers are beginning to acknowledge the necessity to possess skills ancillary to performance. Simply put, teachers are beginning to explore ways to prepare their students for jobs other than solely playing in an orchestra or military band. Focus on entrepreneurship and creativity are important topics amongst current professors/instructors. The consensus among many of the respondents is that utilizing technology, new methodologies, and developments in their pedagogy have helped their students experience improvement more quickly.
Observations

Much of the data that interested me revolved around the co-curricular skills that are incorporated, the implementation of those skills, technology utilized, and pedagogical advancements. As expected, the most commonly taught co-curricular skills were chamber skills, pedagogy, listening skills, and large ensemble excerpts. However, given the popularity of media platforms such as YouTube, Vimeo, SoundCloud, Spotify, and various other platforms, I anticipated receiving more responses that indicated applied curricula were incorporating video and audio engineering skills. Furthermore, many survey respondents indicated that they frequently use sources such as those mentioned above to find reference recordings, yet, there are only a small number of professors exposing their students to skills that will allow them to create their own media.

While there were several responses that indicated that there was a structured approach to the inclusion of a few co-curricular skills, many of the responses did not indicate that there is a structured approach to include student development of skills such as audio engineering, video editing, writing/communication skills, research skills, or many other skills that go beyond performance on the instrument. Many responses indicated that these skills are addressed in lessons, classes, and lectures by the professor, or that they are student driven additions. Although there were several responses that outlined specific implementations of co-curricular skills, these responses only highlighted the most common skills, rather than including a wider array of skills.

Technology has been a great addition into my arsenal as a collegiate instructor and I believe that it greatly enhances my instructional approach. Through the various forms or technology use in my pedagogy such as Evernote, Google Classroom, Tonal Energy, Drum Beats+, recordings (through apps like Tonal Energy), and various other means, I believe that I
am able to help students achieve immediate success. Additionally, through my research, interviews, and the survey conducted, I have begun to explore and implement new technologies into my pedagogy. For example, I am currently utilizing Google Classroom as a means of students submitting practice videos or scale assignments in an effort to provide students with a more constant source of feedback. I have also started exploring some of the smart phone apps that I discovered through during this process. As I become more comfortable with the functionality of these apps and learn how they can benefit performance, I will to include them into my teaching.

The next chapter will outline the model that Dr. Skillen utilizes in his applied studio teaching at Louisiana State University. During studio class, in addition to performances, Dr. Skillen has also incorporated a variety of topics for projects and presentations. These topics traverse all of the skills outlined in question number 7 from the curriculum survey. The next chapter will illustrate how this model can be replicated.
CHAPTER 5. CASE STUDY ON THE APPLIED STUDIO OF DR. JOSEPH SKILLEN

At the end of their studies, my students will not only learn to perform well on their instruments, but they will also learn to value creative expression and practice it on a daily basis. I want my students to be capable artists who apply their skills and knowledge to every aspect of their future careers, especially careers that we have not yet begun to imagine.

– Joseph Skillen

Overview of Dr. Skillen’s Applied Studio Model

The applied studio at Louisiana State University is unique for several reasons, most notably, due to a model that Dr. Skillen implements to exposes his students to all of the skill sets included in the curriculum survey. Through a traditional four-year degree, in addition to mastery of performance skills, students in his studio will be exposed to topics that explore skills such as audio and video recording, arranging/composition, electronic exploration, secondary instruments, creating a smart phone app, pedagogy, interview, entrepreneurship, business, research, writing, oral communication, instrument maintenance, and listening skills. Many of Dr. Skillen’s current and former students attribute their ability to adapt to many circumstances directly to their time studying at LSU. Through his systematic approach of incorporating several different skill sets into his applied studio curriculum, Dr. Skillen has been able to consistently keep students engaged in a “versatility mindset” and the process of developing co-curricular skills.

The philosophy behind incorporating these skills into his pedagogy is his belief that “the time students spend in his studio [should be] an asset to their future career.”83 Within the last four to five years the structure and application of these skills into the model was much more organized and streamlined. A combination of semester long projects, presentations, and performances were scheduled on a four-year rotation, giving each student an opportunity to experience the entire scope of this model. Dr. Skillen states:

83 Skillen. Presentation.
There are many aggregate skills required to be a successful musician. While I cannot teach mastery of each of these, I can offer exposure so that you will begin to understand what else you might need to learn in order to have this skill at your disposal in the professional world. To that end, each semester we will explore some of the skills that I consider to be especially valuable to the modern musician.\textsuperscript{84}

Below, I have included a table that includes the semester schedule of performances, presentations, and projects incorporated into his pedagogical model. The design of this model is to encourage students to explore many different avenues beyond their instrument. Each member of the studio is required to complete each component during the course of the semester. Performances and presentations occur during studio class, which meets once a week. Presentations seek to develop research and oral communication through musically relevant topics. Additionally, the semester project is a large-scale research project that focuses on gaining experience in applying skills in adaptability. The remainder of this chapter will focus on the structure and implementation of this model in the applied studio of Dr. Joseph Skillen from the perspective of himself, my own personal perspective, and the perspective of current and former students.

\textsuperscript{84} Skillen. Syllabus.
Consider the “performance” column from the above table. It is safe to assume that these topics are traversed within the standard canon of any applied studio across the country. Focus on mastery of performance is, and should be, a requirement within the applied curriculum. However, what makes the studio at LSU unique is the inclusion of the presentation and project topics designed to encourage versatility and adaptability. Through my own participation in these presentations and projects, I was able to develop skills such as research, writing, oral communication, entrepreneurship, listening skills, instrument maintenance, audio and video recording, arranging, electronic exploration, performance on a secondary instrument, creating a smartphone app, pedagogy, interviewing skills, business, and marketing skills. Based upon the data collected in the previous chapter, via the curriculum survey, there are [possibly] very few

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85 Skillen. Syllabus.
studios that also feature an approach offering exposure to all of the co-curricular skills listed in the survey.

Many of the topics covered in the semester project and performance categories of this model derive from Dr. Skillen’s desire to create a model that will allow his students to develop a portfolio-type career. As an example, during my sixth semester of my DMA studies, the studio was assigned the task of creating a smart phone app. The project was structured to feature several checkpoints throughout the semester. The first checkpoint featured a proposal of an idea, [hypothetical] timeline for development, initial estimate of budget, and those with whom one could collaborate to develop the app. The second checkpoint of the project required a description of the app, functionality, cost of developing the app, expected launch date, and further development of the app. The final checkpoint required illustrations of the app, description of how to use the app, and then future plans for subscriptions and continued development. Producing the actual app was not the goal, but this example highlights the philosophy of continued exposure to versatility and exposure to learning new skills. These project skills would continue to be honed in subsequent semesters viewing the topics in the “projects” column from Table 1.

Additionally, studio class presentations are geared towards developing skills such as research, writing, and oral communication which are essential to the holistic development. An example would be the project that focused During the semester, each student within the studio is assigned an aspect or sub-category within the semester topic. For example, if the topic is historic organology, sub-categories may be the ophecleide, serpent, saxhorns, invention of the valve, Wagner tuba, cimbasso, helicon and sousaphone, or instrument manufacturers. In this example, students would be expected to deliver a 7-10 minute presentation providing specific details on their topic, including dates, people, manufacturers, locations, or any other information that is
pertinent to completely inform the studio on a given topic. These communication skills would continue to be honed in subsequent semesters viewing the topics in the “presentations” column from Table 1.

**Joseph Skillen Interview Summary**

Dr. Skillen’s teaching philosophy, at its core, attempts to teach concepts of instrumental mastery, mastery of expression at an artistic level, adaptability, and skills he believes are essential to success. His primary objective through his pedagogical model is to guide students to “find things that they value, find resources for those things, and find ways to convey its value and methods of learning those things to others.”\(^{86}\) While the core concepts of mastery have been consistent throughout Dr. Skillen’s experience as an educator, the adaptability component is a recent addition. Through introducing important concepts and skills for evolving artists, Dr. Skillen aims to encourage his students to think beyond their instruments. Furthermore, Dr. Skillen understands the long-term career trajectory upon which students embark during their collegiate studies and he teaches for the long haul. For example, he stated that this year’s freshman class will retire in approximately 2065, and it’s impossible to predict what their future will be like, given the rapidity of change in the music field.

During his nearly 30 years of teaching experience he has noticed that one of the most prominent changes in his teaching has been the ability to focus on the legacy that a thirty-year career, or longer, can have. As an example, Dr. Skillen referenced the legacy of his first collegiate tuba professor, Professor Winston Morris, who has been teaching at Tennessee Tech University since 1967. Prior to teaching at TTU, Morris studied with Bill Bell, whom likely began his tuba studies in the 1920s. Dr. Skillen stated that Professor Morris working in a place

\(^{86}\) Skillen. Interview, January 11, 2019. 114.
for fifty-one years has given him the opportunity to reflect on the impact that a legacy, such as his previous mentors, can have.

The adaptability component of Dr. Skillen’s pedagogy has been a relatively recent addition to his applied curriculum. In the early stages of his career, he believed that mastery of the instrument was the primary responsibility of his position. Throughout his teaching career, he has realized that is a 19th Century, though currently prevalent, teaching philosophy. He stated:

That is the industrial revolution speaking loudly: let’s just make one thing, make it really well, but it will improve until you get to the point that everyone is doing the same thing. And, then we reach the point where we have passed the pinnacle and everything looks so similar and you have to figure out how to create something that is different enough to be noticed while the mastery trajectory is still so…pinpoint sharp in studios across the world really.87

Dr. Skillen has realized that the job market has begun to adapt to the over-saturation of the field with highly competent musicians over the last 30 years.88 Thus, he has incorporated the adaptability component into his pedagogy to expose his students to co-curricular skills that will allow them to discover new ways in which they can find success as an “outlier” or “portfolio” artist.

To meet the “outlier” needs of his students, Dr. Skillen has adapted his philosophy on the role of the applied professor – which is potentially very influential – and in the process has necessarily redefined his definition of success. Previously, he believed a successful studio was one that placed students at the top of competitions. However, he has come to realize that success is a construct. Each individual is in control of how they view their expectations and can, then,

87 Skillen. Interview, 116.
88 Ibid.
create their own definition of success. The pedagogical model that Dr. Skillen has begun to utilize over the past four years places a heavier emphasis on the skills that one can develop throughout their studies, while still working to attain a level of mastery on their instrument. He believes that success as a studio teacher is defined by the teacher’s comfort as an artist, as a teacher, as a mentor, and as an example of all of the above. Dr. Skillen has recognized that the world is different today than it was even twenty-one years ago when he began teaching at LSU. Through his perpetual curiosity and leading by example, he has shown his students a number of the things that are possible for musicians in the 21st Century.

Much of the adaptability component that Dr. Skillen has incorporated into his applied pedagogical model derived from his time leading an entrepreneurship program at LSU. Eventually, he began to incorporate those elements into his applied studio teaching. He began to construct an applied studio model that incorporated the instruction of skills he believed to be critical for musicians entering the job market. The result is a model that on a regular basis engages students in assignments that seek to develop transferrable skills, such as communication, writing, intellectual curiosity, pedagogy, research, marketing, and business skills. Through incorporating projects and presentations in musically relevant topics, students are able to simultaneously enhance skills such as research and oral communication. Additionally, through the semester projects and presentations, he is able to provide his students with a foundation of knowledge upon which they can build a future career.

Dr. Skillen has discovered through these projects and presentations he has piqued the interest of many students. As an example, a current student has recently expressed interest in

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89 Not every student needs or wants to win a competition to prepare them for the life that they want. Not to mention, competition winners will also need to create portfolio careers for themselves anyway.
running a music store and becoming an instrument technician. This interest stems directly from the semester studio class presentation from the previous fall semester. With this knowledge, Dr. Skillen stated that he plans to connect him with people who are currently instrument repair technicians, focus instruction from the mindset of an instrument repair technician, encourage an open dialogue that goes beyond the mindset of being a performer, while continuing to teach that student holistically.

The most interesting aspect of our interview occurred when we discussed the future of pedagogy. While he stated that no one can predict the future, he can see a possibility that the method by which music is delivered will be drastically different at some point in the near future. He stated that he believes the delivery platforms that exist (YouTube, Spotify, etc.) may cease to exist through some “bubble burst,” leaving a desire for music without a primary delivery platform. Once this bubble bursts, he believes that there will be premiere value placed on local artists. These musicians will be sought after, becoming embedded into the community, and developing their own following within their sphere. Thus, part of the reason that Dr. Skillen has begun to incorporate the adaptability component into his pedagogy. He seeks to prepare his students to be artists in multiple ways to generate income. He believes there will be a convergence of market forces, partly mixed with educational forces, partly mixed with people’s demand for wanting to have music will redefine what music teaching is going to be. He ended our interview with a very interesting thought about the future of tuba and euphonium pedagogy:

What does it take to be legitimate? You need concertos. Okay, we’ve got a lot of okay concertos, don’t have a lot of great ones, but we’ve got a lot of them. So, that’s something. We’ve got a body of repertoire, I’ve got books on my shelf that I was part of help in writing that proves we have repertoire now… We can’t keep riding this horse, though, because we’ve reached a point of diminishing returns if we are only speaking to ourselves… we need to start having a broader conversation about “now what?"90

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90 Skillen. Interview, 127.
This is the genesis behind creating an applied studio curriculum that utilizes the adaptability component. As previously mentioned, Dr. Skillen exposes his students to a variety of topics through projects, presentations, and performances as a means to encourage his students to think beyond their instruments.

**Student Experiences**

Having known Dr. Skillen for 14 years, since 2005, I have had the opportunity to see his teaching style from many different perspectives. While I was a music education student at Southeastern Louisiana University, I regularly sought to take private lessons with Dr. Skillen. After completing my Bachelor’s degree, I became a student in the applied studio of Dr. Skillen for my Master’s and, eventually, Doctor of Musical Arts degree, spanning a total of six years. Through my time in his studio, I have come to know many of Dr. Skillen’s former students. I have interviewed six current and former students asking three specific questions to learn how their time studying with Dr. Skillen has influenced their lives and careers. The three questions asked were meant to gather broad influences within their careers, specific elements of teaching influence, and what co-curricular skills do they attribute to their study at LSU.

The most common sentiment shared between all of those whom I interviewed is that we all share an appreciation for the lessons and experiences gained as students in Dr. Skillen’s applied studio. We all attribute many of the skills that we possess directly to his instruction, through his multifaceted pedagogical model that utilizes projects, presentations, and a variety of performances to expose his students to skills that he believes are paramount to success in the 21st century. While many of us have experienced this model in different forms, from infancy to its current state, the one common element through all of these interviews is that his approach to the applied studio is unique. Additionally, his students believe that many of their experiences have
even manifested in many different, non-performance avenues. The rest of this chapter will
explore experiences of current and former students, as well as my own personal experiences.

Dr. Skillen’s holistic investment in each student directly influences their desire to become
better musicians, students, teachers, and citizens. Through working closely with Dr. Skillen as
one of his Graduate Teaching Assistants, I have been able to observe him in many different
teaching environments, such as the private lesson setting, studio class, and master classes. In
observing his interactions with every member of his studio over the last three years, it is obvious
that he understands the needs of each individual student. This manifests itself in many ways, but
most importantly, his current and former students strive to provide the same level of care and
attention to developing the entire student, not just a performer.

**Influence of Dr. Skillen’s Studio**

The most common element of Dr. Skillen’s pedagogy that was reiterated through
interviews with current and former students and my own reflections is Dr. Skillen’s holistic
commitment to his students. He understands that teaching life lessons, holding people
accountable, having high standards, and educating his students beyond the instrument will leave
the most lasting impression. Through encouraging a growth mindset, always being opening
minded, and willingness to tackle new challenges, Dr. Skillen’s former students have been
successful in many different avenues of their lives. As an example, Brian Gallion explained
that his experiences at LSU have directly contributed to his success in his current roles as the
Advertising Coordinator for the International Tuba and Euphonium Association (ITEA) and as
the Program Director and 21st Century Community Learning Center Grant Director for Kid’s
Orchestra of Baton Rouge.

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Andy Larson describes his time working with Dr. Skillen as consistently motivating and inspiring. He stated that he believes that Dr. Skillen aspires to live his life exhibiting characteristics that set a great example for his students.\textsuperscript{92} Skillen says, “We, as professors, should never underestimate our potential to improve the lives of our students, and the lives of those with whom they come in contact, by teaching to the best of our ability at all times.”\textsuperscript{93} All of the interviewees for this portion of my research expressed influences extending beyond performance, and even outside of music. Additionally, Andy explained that when he was teaching at the University of Akron, he seamlessly incorporated many of the experiences gained at LSU. As an example, he programmed repertoire he conducted or performed as a member of the LSU brass choir and tuba/euphonium ensemble.\textsuperscript{94}

Current students, such as Thomas Gusewelle, express that being in the applied studio at LSU has led him to develop ancillary skills, such as marketing or avenues of ways to approach things that aren’t through the instrument. “Dr. Skillen definitely encourages thinking outside of [normal expectations], and seeks to make his students well-rounded and develop their skills outside of just playing the instrument. The biggest impact is his ability to point students in the right direction, provide knowledge, and the introduction into the skills that [they] will need to possess in order to be successful in any avenue.”\textsuperscript{95} Through constant encouragement and guidance, former students such as Brian Gallion attribute much of their success directly to interactions with Dr. Skillen. Brian has said yes to many things throughout his career that he believed he was not well equipped to handle, such as the Advising Coordinator with ITEA. He

\textsuperscript{92} Larson. Interview. February 6, 2019. 139-140.
\textsuperscript{93} Skillen. Teaching Philosophy.
\textsuperscript{94} Larson. Interview, 144.
\textsuperscript{95} Gusewelle. Interview. January 7, 2019. 137.
stated that Dr. Skillen taught him how to research, synthesize information, and utilize problem solving skills to tackle any obstacles he would face. 

Additionally, former students emphasized that Dr. Skillen has always been open-minded and while willing to explore other areas, he always worked to maintain a high level of expectations. Justin Clarkson stated that many of the experiences he had during his time at LSU strongly contributed to his success in his Master’s and DMA programs. He stated that

I walked in already having papers, and some of the papers I wrote for him, I submitted for Master’s and Doctoral submissions for applications. That side was really cool. In fact, he had me do an excerpt book. I had to research the excerpt, listen to recordings, talk about the recordings, challenges of playing it, and actually play it. All of this came together with the research and the musicianship aspects together, played a big component for Master’s auditions.

Additionally, Danny Chapa, another former student of Dr. Skillen’s, explained that during his time at LSU he learned critical thinking skills, problem solving skills, goal setting and how to utilize these lessons, a fundamental pedagogical foundation, amongst numerous other skills. In his current position of Adjunct Faculty of Low Brass at Stephen F. Austin State University, he has begun to realize the importance of mentorship to younger students, especially developing the aforementioned skills.

Through various aspects, Dr. Skillen’s applied studio philosophy has certainly allowed for his current and former students to develop versatility. Most importantly, though, the main influence constantly reinforced by these students, is that we believe we are more complete musicians and people for having experiences generated by this model.

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96 Gallion. Interview, 146-147.
Personal Teaching as Influenced by Skillen’s Pedagogy

These former students described many experiences that have contributed to their strong pedagogical foundation. Allen Carpenter, current DMA student in his studio, has recently assumed an adjunct teaching role at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. Allen explained the experiences provided in the LSU studio has allowed him to realize the importance of these skills. This semester Allen is planning to include presentations in studio class to begin to cultivate research, oral communication, and writing skills. As another example, in my current position as Adjunct Instructor of Low Brass at Southern University, I believe that my studies at LSU have largely contributed to the foundation of my teaching philosophy and core pedagogical model I employ. Much of my philosophy stems from interactions, observations, studies, and the additional components incorporated into the applied model with Dr. Skillen. An example of his teaching he utilizes in his pedagogy is that he guides students down a path of discovery. “Rather than simply providing an answer that would solve a problem for you, he teaches you in a way to discover how to get better or solve the problem yourself.”98 This is an example of teaching that I utilize in my applied studio. Additionally, this school year I have incorporated semester projects that seek to expose students to and develop pedagogy and practice techniques. As most of my students are music education majors, my goal is to provide them with experiences that will allow them to begin to establish fundamental teaching skills.

Some of his former students mentioned more specific elements that they utilize in their instruction. Justin Clarkson explained that he believes that Dr. Skillen’s teaching has become part of his own teaching. He recalled a recent experience of Dr. Skillen traveling to South Carolina to do a masterclass. Upon observing Dr. Skillen teaching he vividly remembered

98 Gusewelle. Interview, 137.
thinking “Oh my god, that’s right, he’s the one that taught me that!” Justin describes his own teaching as a very structured, progressive model. As an example, he begins to develop a fundamental foundation through the use of technical skills, followed by incorporating etudes and exercises that will supplement fundamentals, next incorporating solos, and finally he specifically focuses on developing musical ideas and expression. Similarly, Andy explained that one of the most lasting, specific influences of Dr. Skillen’s teaching he admires is the ability to uniquely convey pedagogical concepts. Andy also recalled being challenged to perform portions of solos with several different interpretations, supplemented with verbally communicating his intentions. He believes this has allowed for him to maintain a fresh approach to his tuba performance and teaching.

Additionally, Danny discussed his plans to create his own warm-up packet that is heavily influenced by the Technical Skills Exam that Dr. Skillen utilizes in his applied lessons. Dr. Skillen adapted this exam from Phil Sinder, his tuba professor during his doctoral studies at Michigan State University. He plans to incorporate exercises that focus on tone production, articulation, flexibility, and finger coordination. He also explained methods of analyzing music and how it has influenced the way he teaches his current students. He recalled a specific experience when working on Torstein Aagaard-Nilsen’s 4 Lyric Pieces:

He had me work on the articulations only, and just focused on one thing because there is a lot of information on the page. First was articulation, then dynamics, rhythm, and so forth and all of those things are really exaggerated [in this piece] so I was able to put all my attention on just that one thing. When I finally put it together it completed the whole picture. Going through that process was crucial and that is one example that sticks out to me, of many, that really helped me figure out how to learn, teach myself, how to analyze and break things down.

99 Clarkson. Interview, 134.
100 Ibid.
101 Larson. Interview, 142-143.
Brian Gallion also explained how experiences in lessons with Dr. Skillen manifested in his own teaching. He described a specific step by step procedure, say-blow-buzz-play, to developing the ability to multiple tongue. Brian also explained how developing the ability to deconstruct a performance problem has manifested itself into his current position with Kid’s Orchestra.103

Co-Curricular Skills Shown in the Lives of Current and Former Students

In many ways, the assignments that are part of this curriculum, were my first experience with co-curricular skills. During my master’s degree I began performing on a secondary instrument, gained my first experience with arranging, was exposed to research and writing skills for the first time in an applied studio environment, refined pedagogical skills, performed in a chamber ensemble for the first time, and learned fundamentals of audio recording due to the variety of assignments in his studio, amongst myriad other skills. As I progressed through my master’s degree, through observing his teaching I began to develop pedagogical skills that would allow for me to begin to establish my own teaching philosophy and pedagogical foundation.

Through many of the semester presentation and projects, Allen Carpenter believes that he has gained valuable experience in developing a multitude of skills. Specifically, he now has a greater understanding of the process of how to research works prior to writing. Previously, Allen would tackle the entire process simultaneously, and he has now realized how to lay the groundwork that is necessary prior to writing. “You can chase a research rabbit for two or three months before you realize that’s not where you’re going to go. Through watching him edit, that really helped me to develop those skills.”104 Thomas Gusewelle specifically mentioned studio experiences that directly contributed to his development of non-performing skills. Through

103 Gallion. Interview, 149.
working closely with Dr. Skillen on many different projects such as arranging and transcription skills, entrepreneurship ideas, audio/video skills, performing opportunities, and research/grant writing, he has been able to experience success. An example of his success can be seen in his audio engineering business. Even though Thomas had prior experience, working with Dr. Skillen really helped him refine his skills and develop business skills that have allowed him to pursue this further.105

As previously mentioned, all of these interviewees, have experienced this model in many different stages from its infancy to the current state. They have expressed that they believe his ability to adapt his pedagogy allows him to stay ahead of the current trends in the tuba/euphonium field. They notice that he has constantly modified the studio parameters to allow for students to remain competitive in any market. A former student of Justin’s is a current member of the LSU tuba studio and has described a recently assigned project. Through various conversations, Justin learned of a semester assignment geared towards creating a semester video journal that the student could track his progress through regularly, self-recorded submissions.106

Further, Brian Gallion explained experiences that stretched his organization skills, logistical managing skills, and creative mindset. The first of these experiences occurred during his DMA Chamber recital. Brian stated that he was encouraged to pursue a program that would allow for him to gain new experiences. Through this program, Brian was able to develop skills that have, as previously stated, enhanced his ability to be successful in non-performance related avenues. Brian also expanded his creativity through a lecture recital that merged artwork created by his grandmother and his own compositions. This experience laid the groundwork for a future

105 Gusewelle. Interview, 137.
106 Clarkson. Interview, 136.
project that he would commission to combine a live action movie to accompany a tuba solo. In conjunction with the New Media + Animation Department at Southeastern Louisiana University, Brian premiered this movie commission while performing Ben McMillan’s *Tomes of Hardened Steel* and *Tomes of the Wanderer* at an ITEA Regional Tuba and Euphonium Conference in Alabama.¹⁰⁷

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¹⁰⁷ Gallion. Interview, 150.
CHAPTER 6. SUMMARY

As stated in Chapter 4, although 98.4% of those that responded to the survey believe that incorporating co-curricular skills are important, there are [potentially] only a few that feature the same opportunities that are present in the studio at Louisiana State University. Studio professors that replied to the survey predominantly, 81.25 – 84.38%, focus on skill development of chamber, listening, large ensemble excerpts, and pedagogy, while only 36.3 – 54.25% include skills of performance on a secondary instrument, improvising, composing/arranging, entrepreneurship, instrument maintenance, research, writing, and musicianship wellness. However, versatility and adaptability are not only skills that current students will need. It can be contested that all musicians in the 21st Century will need to possess these skills. Current professional musicians who perform with orchestras, military bands, or other types of performing ensembles across the United States also teach, record, communicate, arrange or compose, amongst a wide variety of other skills. Simply put, performance on an instrument alone is not an attainable career.

Through the culmination of research including interviews with leading tuba and euphonium artists, a curriculum survey, an interview with Dr. Skillen, interviews with current and former students, and my own personal experiences within Dr. Skillen’s applied studio, I have been able to draw a few conclusions worth noting. First, it is apparent that the concept of versatility has become an expectation amongst modern day musicians. This idea is validated through the ideas presented by the artists I interviewed, as well as the fact that studio teachers across the US are beginning to expand their applied lesson instruction base to include a variety of different skills. However, as previously stated, I believe that there is more that applied professors can do to create more versatile students.
Consider the annual number of students that are taught by those whom responded to the survey, approximately 875 students yearly. Since 2015, there have been very few positions that are specific to tuba performance positions such as the Seattle Symphony Orchestra, Louisville Symphony Orchestra, St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, Washington National Opera, and the Naval Academy. Additionally, there have been few euphonium openings such as the Army Field Band, the Army band at West Point, and the Air Force Band in D.C. Given the current state of the job market in the tuba and euphonium field, roughly 1% of the students (whose professors replied to the survey) will obtain a position that solely relies on performance, such as an orchestral tubist or military band musician.

The statistics of approximately 8 performing jobs for the approximately 875 students accounted in the survey are alarming for many reasons. There are an additional 142 tuba/euphonium or low brass studios across the US accredited by the National Association of Schools of Music, not included in the data. Based on the data collected, the average size of the studios across the respondents is thirteen (13) per studio. If we extrapolate the collected applied studio data, and assume that there are thirteen students per studio in all 206 institutions, it is not farfetched to think that there may be approximately 2,700+ students in tuba/euphonium or low brass studios across the United States currently pursuing a music degree in some capacity. Therefore, given the state of the job market (8 performing positions in the US) combined with the extrapolated approximate number of students, only .29% of current students studying music will earn a position which solely allows for tuba or euphonium performance. Dr. Skillen’s model seeks to help the remaining 99+% attain success.

The data above supports the statement that there are simply not enough jobs that will allow our students to have a career solely as a tuba or euphonium performer. While the artists
interviewed and the respondents to the survey did indicate that they believe co-curricular skills are important, and include them to some degree, the overwhelming majority of skills that are included into these applied models are pedagogy, large ensemble excerpts, chamber skills, and listening skills. These skills, while important, are only the beginning of creating versatility in our students and will not allow for students to be successful in positions other than those less than 1% of all tuba or euphonium students will obtain. Thus, the reason that Dr. Skillen has adapted his applied curriculum to include skills such as audio and video editing or production, research, writing, communication, creativity, innovation, composition, arranging, business and marketing skills, amongst many others.

Further, as evidenced by the current and former students of Dr. Skillen, all believe that they have developed skills to allow them to experience success beyond, and in addition to, tuba or euphonium performance. While performance on the instrument is still Skillen’s primary focus, he understands that success is not solely generated by his students winning competitions, orchestral positions, or military band positions. Rather, his structured approach to include non-performance related skills into his pedagogy has successfully manifested itself in many different avenues and allowed his students to easily obtain portfolio careers. The students interviewed, along with those who were not, have successful careers in avenues such as advertising, non-profit organizations, firefighting/EMS, Medical Doctors, Lawyers, and a wide array of other positions. I believe that the model that Dr. Skillen utilizes allows for students to truly develop versatility, and adapt to any challenges that may present themselves.
APPENDIX A. INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

Application for Exemption from Institutional Oversight

Unless qualified as meeting the specific criteria for exemption from Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight, ALL LSU research/projects using living humans as subjects, or samples, or data obtained from humans, directly or indirectly, with or without their consent, must be approved or exempted in advance by the LSU IRB. This form helps the PI determine if a project may be exempted, and is used to request an exemption.

-- Applicant, Please fill out the application in its entirety and include the completed application as well as parts B-F, listed below, when submitting to the IRB. Once the application is completed, please submit the completed application to the IRB Office by e-mail (irb@lsu.edu) for review. If you would like to have your application reviewed by a member of the Human Subjects Screening Committee before submitting it to the IRB office, you can find the list of committee members at https://sites01.lsu.edu/wp/committee-human-subjects-screening-committee-members/.

--- A Complete Application Includes All of the Following:
(A) This completed form
(B) A brief project description (adequate to evaluate risks to subjects and to explain your responses to Parts 1&2)
(C) Copies of all instruments to be used.
*If this proposal is part of a grant proposal, include a copy of the proposal and all recruitment material.
(D) The consent form that you will use in the study (see part 3 for more information.)
(E) Certificate of Completion of Human Subjects Protection Training for all personnel involved in the project, including students who are involved with testing or handling data, unless already on file with the IRB. Training link: https://phrpp.nihtraining.com/#/login

1) Principal Investigator: Chase Duplanisis
Rank: Graduate Student
Dept: School of Music
Ph: 2817971802
E-mail: cdupls9@lusu.edu

2) Co-investigator(s): please include department, rank, phone and e-mail for each
*If the Principal Investigator is a student, identify and name supervising professor in this space
Dr. Joseph Skillen
School of Music-Galante Endowed Professor of Tuba and Euphonium
(228)578-2646
jspillen@lusu.edu

3) Project Title:
Developing the 21st Century Musician: A Case Study of Applied Studio Models at American Universities

4) Proposal? (yes or no) NO
If Yes, LSU Proposal Number
Also, if YES, either
☐ This application completely matches the scope of work in the grant
☐ More IRB Applications will be filed later

5) Subject pool (e.g. Psychology students)
(professional) musicians, applied music professors
*Indicate any "vulnerable populations" to be used: children <18, the mentally impaired
pregnant women, the ages, others. Projects with incarcerated persons cannot be exempted.

6) PI Signature: Chase Duplanisis
Date 11/7/2018
(no per signatures)
** I certify my responses are accurate and complete. If the project scope or design is later changes, I will resubmit for review. I will obtain written approval from the Authorized Representative of all non-LSU institutions in which the study is conducted. I also understand that it is my responsibility to maintain copies of all consent forms at LSU for three years after completion of the study. If I leave LSU before that time the consent forms should be preserved in the Departmental Office.

Screening Committee Action: Exempted
Signed Consent Waived?: Yes or No
Reviewer Signature Date 11/7/2018

Continue on the next page
APPENDIX B. CURRICULUM SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. What is your name? (Answers not included in document)
2. At what institution do you currently teach? (Answers not included in document)
3. What type of music degrees are offered at your institution?
   a. Bachelor of Music
   b. Bachelor of Music Education
   c. Bachelor of Music Performance
   d. Bachelor of Music Therapy
   e. Bachelor of Arts
   f. Master of Music Education
   g. Master of Music Performance
   h. Doctor of Musical Arts
   i. Other
4. What is the average size of your studio?
5. Do you have a studio class?
   a. How many times a week does this class meet?
   b. For what length of time does this class meet?
6. Do you believe that developing co-curricular skills is an important component to incorporate into the applied studio model?
7. What co-curricular skills ancillary to performance do you include in your applied teaching (including studio class)? Check all that apply.
   a. Performance on a secondary instrument
   b. Improvising
   c. Chamber skills
   d. Audio engineering
   e. Video editing
   f. Composition/arranging
   g. Entrepreneurship
   h. Instrument maintenance/repair
   i. Research skills (ex. Important teachers, performers, organology, etc.)
   j. Pedagogy
   k. Listening skills
   l. Writing skills
   m. Musician wellness (hearing, injury prevention, Alexander Technique)
   n. Large ensemble excerpts (Orchestra, Band, Other)
   o. Other
8. In what ways do you incorporate co-curricular skills into your teaching?
9. Do you use electronic tools in your teaching?
   a. What types of technology, apps, or electronic tools do you use?
10. How has your pedagogy changed or remained the same throughout your career (for example, are you using new teaching materials, more or less technology, new methodologies, etc.)? How has it impacted student learning outcomes?
APPENDIX C. CONSENT SCRIPT

Curriculum Survey Consent

My name is Chasse Duplantis. I am a doctoral candidate with Louisiana State University. My supervising professor is Dr. Joseph Skillen. You can reach me at 281-797-1802 or cdupl29@lsu.edu. You can reach Dr. Joseph Skillen at 225-578-2646 or jskille@lsu.edu. The purpose of the following survey is to gather information about the different pedagogical models that exist at universities in the US in low brass studios. To participate in this study, you must need the requirements of both the inclusion and exclusion criteria. To be included in this survey, you must be a current faculty member over a low brass or tuba/euphonium studio at a United States University. There are no known risks to completing this survey. Subjects may choose not to participate or to withdraw from the survey at any time without penalty or loss of any benefit to which they might otherwise be entitled. By continuing this survey, you are giving consent to participate in this study. The results of this survey will not be published with any identifying information. This study has been approved by the LSU IRB. For questions concerning participant rights, please contact the IRB Chair, Dr. Dennis Landin, 225—578-8692, or irb@lsu.edu.

Interview Consent

My name is Chasse Duplantis. I am a doctoral candidate with Louisiana State University. My supervising professor is Dr. Joseph Skillen. You can reach me at 281-797-1802 or cdupl29@lsu.edu. You can reach Dr. Joseph Skillen at 225-578-2646 or jskille@lsu.edu. The purpose of the following interview is to gather information about the different pedagogical models that exist at universities in the US in low brass studios. To participate in this study, you must need the requirements of both the inclusion and exclusion criteria. To be included in this survey, you must be a current faculty member over a low brass or tuba/euphonium studio at a United States University. There are no known risks to completing this interview. Subjects may choose not to participate or to withdraw from the interview at any time without penalty or loss of any benefit to which they might otherwise be entitled. By continuing this interview, you are giving consent to participate in this study. This study has been approved by the LSU IRB. For questions concerning participant rights, please contact the IRB Chair, Dr. Dennis Landin, 225—578-8692, or irb@lsu.edu.
APPENDIX D. INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Adam Frey Interview Transcript

Consent Script

CD: What do you believe are the most important skills for musicians in the 21st century to possess?

AF: So, for me, I think that adaptability is one of the very first ones. That can be from adjusting to a situation, maybe a schedule change, repertoire, personnel, needing to adjust a part, uh, and also being ready to do whatever the conductor needs you to do. Whether that is faster or slower, louder or softer, as a player. You know they seem like very straightforward things, but most of the time players don’t have the ability to do it and be comfortable with what they are doing. They tend to be a little bit stressed. And then, the other aspect is versatility. And, this involves both, or a lot of the things you are talking about with skills on our instrument, but versatility to do other aspects of the jobs. Whether it’s to organize a gig, arrange music for a gig, concert, or yourself, having the ability to be knowledgeable about music theory, history, or technology as far as teaching a class at a university. And then, versatility in a broader scope being able to do any business aspects and being able to understand those. Being that is dealing with contracts, professional organization, and communication skills.

CD: Yep. I agree. So, what is the role of the applied studio professor to be in the 21st century, in terms of adaptability and versatility, like you just talked about?

AF: Well, I think that so many students, whether it is a situation of the regimented schedule in high school, having parent’s sort of manage them, in an overly paternal situation, or maternal situation, I think that when they show up and ask them to change or do an adjustment, we see this so quickly in the private lessons. So, my role is to teach them to be a flexible musician. A lot of the times one of the things I’ll try and do is technique to have them play one piece of music in multiple different styles. I use an over simplification of pirate song and love song. So, you will take something that is obviously, sort of, up tempo slightly detached piece, and we play it in a slow legato style. And we have to make it believable. So, my role is to teach them how to do that. I think the other thing that I try and do, in my role as a studio professor is to teach them professionalism and hold them accountable. Explain to them when their preparation is not at a level that would get them not hired or hired in the future. I talk a lot about doing a level work versus b level work. B level work doesn’t get you invited back, you know. And that is what a lot of people don’t think about. But, trying to teach them how to do A level work is very, very important. And so, we have got the role as teaching them how to play, teaching them how to be adaptable, teaching them how to be a professional, and then I think one of the final roles is to teach them how to have, uh, sort of to have the mental capacity as to how to get work, and how to communicate. Whether that be with conductors, colleagues, and to look for opportunities.

CD: I am taking some quick notes. So then, how do you, the question then is, can you describe the ideal tuba/euphonium program that would best serve twenty-first century tuba/euphonium
students? So, I guess what I am looking for is how you incorporate the skills you just talked about into your pedagogy?

AF: Well, I mean, for me, pedagogy is the aspect of, of teaching the student. And, that word I tend to use when we talk about playing our instrument. I sort of try to use the idea of entrepreneurship or mentorship when I talk about those non-musical aspects. I understand pedagogy is about how you teach, but I feel like they are two different, separate components. But, for me the ideal tuba euphonium program is one that has a lot of opportunities for the [students] from a solo aspect, chamber music aspect, and from an ensemble aspect. And then the other thing is that it puts them in contact with a lot of different perspectives. I am a very, very big fan of having in guest teachers and encouraging my students to have lessons with other teachers because I feel like that is where you get a lot of different information. I know that some studios prefer to keep, sort of like, you take lessons with one teacher and your focused on really doing only exactly what they say. I look for a broad perspective on that. And then, the final thing on that would be that it is also, sort of in an area where the students can get out and get real world experience. Whether that is teaching in the public schools, gigging with pop or jazz or weddings, and that they just have the opportunity to mix with other young musicians.

CD: Cool. So, then, are there any skillsets, besides performing, that you encourage, like maybe the stuff we talked about earlier, in your studio/applied lesson teaching?

AF: So, yes, each semester I make my music majors do an arranging or composition assignment. It is very open ended but it really gets them thinking. The minimum requirements are that it has to be 3-5 minutes and it has to involve their instrument in some way. And, um, a lot of times I have gotten pop music charts, some very interesting vocal repertoire that one of my euphonium students heard a vocalist sing and they transcribed it for euphonium. I had one student that did a euphonium quartet version of *Rhapsody in Blue* And, um, this was an extra arranging project. I had other students that their arranging projects have turned into things that we have performed at the IET Festival. And others that have even been published. So that is a really cool thing. Arranging is one skill set that I encourage. Another skill set is sort of about managing a chamber group. Um, you know, booking gigs, you know, uh, a student that is in charge with communicating with a band director, setting up a time, making sure everyone shows up, making sure the music is picked, and stuff like that. Those seem very simple for, you know, older students that have done that. But, for some of the younger students, it’s a skill they have never had because their HS band director told them everything that they needed to do, there was no personal responsibility and it was a group mentality. So, developing that individual mentality is important.

CD: Any other things, or are those the big ones?

AF: I think those are the two big things, I think looking for opportunities is a little bit of an unusual skill set, but looking for competitions or auditions they can do, whether they are traditionally for pianists or violinists or string players, you know if they are open to tuba, euphonium, or trombone. Also looking for collaborations that are a little bit more unusual. Like one of the things we have done at the University of North Georgia is the low brass group partnered with the vocal jazz group so we got a totally new audience. I have encouraged some of
the quartets, low brass quartets to play prelude music at the choir and band concerts, again to expose and give them a performance opportunity. But, also expose them to new audiences. So, looking for opportunities like that. Another unusual one is, that our university is very research, they host two research conferences each year where students present, and they have never had music groups perform. So, I called the organizer and they were sort of like, music is unusual, and I said yes, but it is its own type of research. So, out of that, we did that for the first time last year, and now I helped design a whole rubric of how they can grade music ensembles that want to present at these research conferences, and uh…

CD: What kind of things are they presenting?

AF: Well they are presenting work about performance, but the research folks generally have never looked at performance as research. What I explained to them is we are researching how to play our instruments, uh, it’s just different, you know. Scientists are spending time in the lab testing different techniques, and you know, different chemical reactions. Well, you know we figure out how Bb mixes with B-natural and spend a lot of time finding how things work best. It is just a little bit different. The interesting thing is that now there is a big desire, at least at our campus, to have music involved and they sort of know how to evaluate it and appreciate it from the research side of things.

CD: So, I guess, I was going to follow up, and it is kind of cool that you went there and I was going to ask if you did any, even if they were minor, research projects with your students. If you encouraged writing of any kind, or did any presentations that require communication and public speaking. I was going to follow up and ask that. So, it is neat that you brought that up.

AF: Yeah, and actually we do one thing with that. At our Octubafest and Spring Euphoria events, I am strongly encouraging slash pushing my students to do the introduction at the beginning of the concert and for their pieces. Again, it doesn’t seem like a big deal, but, most of them really don’t have really good public speaking skills and yet you’re going to need them. So, we are working on those quite a lot. And then, we have a barrier for lower division to upper division lessons and as part of that they have to play a piece of standard repertoire and have to do a little 2-5 minute spoken presentation about why that piece is significant, what pedagogical things they learned, maybe share a couple of practice techniques on how they explain how they mastered the piece, and stuff like that. That’s interesting again, because most of the time people don’t have great communication skills and we are working on that.

CD: Good. That is awesome that you got to the research thing, because its like we were on the same wavelength there. So, one of the things I admire about your career is the diversity that you bring to our field. Besides being a world class performer, you have marketing, advertising, publishing company, the, uh, IET Conference, not conference, camp. And so, where did you learn these skills you have at your disposal and when did you begin to utilize them?

AF: So, I am an avid learner, okay? So, a lot of this goes back to some of the first recordings that I did. I watched the engineers using Pro Tools to do the editing and, uh, sense I knew the music so well, I knew exactly where they needed to do the edit points and splices and stuff. I remember after one session that cost me a lot of money [I thought] “I can do that on that software. How
hard can it be?” So, I downloaded the trial, started messing around with it, and have been doing audio editing with Pro Tools, since I think, the third CD “Little Buckaroos.” So, it was just about watching and learning and then developing the arranging skills came out the same way. It’s that I wanted to take pieces and make them for euphonium and tuba/euphonium ensemble. I just started doing it and I learned, you know. I make an arrangement, we read through it, it would sound bad, and I would ask what was wrong. “Oh, you’re writing thirds below Bb below the bass clef staff, that’s a no-no.” Don’t put anything closer than a fifth that low, unless you want it to sound muddy. Then, you know, you learn about what works well. So, it’s a little bit “on the job training.” As far as the IET Festival, that has been 16 years running now, and each year I am learning different things. I try to learn on a regular basis. The things that I can do better, things that work more smoothly, and stuff like that. But, there’s a lot of people who think they know how to do things their way, and they don’t learn. I’ll say at least with my festival that a lot of times people think that I have a very, pretty strict [way] with things, but I will say that my strictness is based off of 15 years of experience. Which a lot of people don’t have 15 years of experience running a festival with 120 people, 12 faculty, and over 200 private lessons, and I think 45 masterclass performances. So, you know, there’s a lot of things that are learned on the job.

CD: Right. I don’t know of, for sure in our field, your festival, the IET festival is the only one of its kind. I mean, there’s little ones, but…

AF: Yes, certainly one that has been running as long.

CD: Right, I know Ryan Robinson has his thing in Oklahoma, but it’s brand new right?

AF: The Besson Boot camp? Yes, that has only been around for one year. But, most of the camps have shown up, they happen for a couple years, and then you know, it’s tough to make it work and have successful quantities of students, and for the faculty to be enthused about coming and working because it is hard work. But, if it is well organized I think the staff appreciate it, the students appreciate it, and it is a great experience.

CD: Oh yeah, I still think about the times I went out there for the festival. It is kind of a landmark event in my young career and is something that I still look back on. It was crucial to my development during my undergrad.

AF: Yep. By the way, on an unrelated note, I was at the Audi dealership and was talking to the sales person and the gal had gone to Southeastern Louisiana. So, we talked about Hammond, and it was quite funny. She was like “I am so impressed.” I told her that I played a concert at the big theatre downtown. It was really funny.

CD: Wow. Small world. So, two other questions, kind of along the skill set thing. So, the euphonium.com publishing thing, how did that come to be, what are the, how did you develop that?

AF: So that’s out of seeing an opportunity and need and then moving forward with it. Of course, what everybody sees now is the finished product. But, the euphonium.com store all came out of
that people would email me and ask “Where can I buy this music because they don’t have it at JW Pepper or the music store here?” So, I would generally direct them to order it from overseas and all of a sudden, I thought “Why don’t I just sell some of this stuff?” And it started out with about 6 or 7 pieces. Like the Cosma Concerto the Ito Fantasy Variations when it was still only published by the composer, and you know, just a couple other small things. But, now, its more than 600 titles and I think we have more than 5,000 customers all over the world. But, it is more of the service. The sheet music industry now is a very, very low margin and high pain in the butt factor. Everybody wants their music tomorrow, and they don’t understand that there are a lot of publishers that are closed for three weeks over Christmas, and that stuff doesn’t show up and it takes time. Then, when I point out to them that we are the only store, other than the publisher that carries this piece, and they don’t know that. And there is a reason, because no other music company wants to deal with a publisher that is really slow. So, um, but the summer camp with IET that is the same thing. There really weren’t a lot of really good summer camps for euphonium and tuba. So, I decided that I wanted to make something. And it started with 14 people in 2004 and last year we had 128. So, yes, it is pretty outrageous, and they really heartening thing about that for me and how you’re adaptable, going back to what I talked about at the beginning, is that we made adjustments, shifted things, and the people that have been coming for 5-6 years in a row, we have gone from 70 people to about 128 and they say it doesn’t seem like there are that many people there. And that is great because the thing just runs more smoothly and easier and it is well thought out. Um, and so I take a lot of heart from that. But, that is about seeing an opportunity and being adaptable and making adjustments for success.

CD: Okay, the last thing about this, obviously there is a lot of marketing and advertising that goes along with this. Was there anything, um, that helped you develop that ability to market really well?

AF: You know the funny thing is I actually think my marketing is actually quite poor. I need to spend a lot more time doing advertising and marketing. Especially in what is happening now. Thankfully we have a good customer base that we get fliers to, and we have good word of mouth, uh, but, you know, I can totally do much better with trying to get, um, people that are better on Instagram and doing videos and stuff like that. I have a limitation of time. I am trying to have a better team to help me with it. And, they are doing a good job, but it is tough. As far as marketing, I don’t think there are any skills that I learned or developed, it was basically tell people about interesting stuff. And if it is good stuff, and they listen, then they will show up. If they show up it is good, because the “A level work” we talked about before, then they will come back and tell other people to come.

CD: Okay. It’s crazy that IET has blossomed to, you said, 128, because back in 2007 and 2008 when I was there I think, you were…

AF: It would have been 50 or 60 at most.

CD: Yeah, and I think I remember you saying you wanted to cap it at 50 because you were trying to figure out how you were going to handle more than that. So, in ten years, that’s a more than doubled…
AF: I think one of the big keys about that is that I think through all the different scenarios and try and play out, sort of like a chess game. So, if we add another twenty people what are we going to do? Because it is crowded at lunchtime. Or its too much moving in the big group ensemble now, or it is too tough to transport 120 people out to a church to play a concert. So, you know moving the Wednesday night concert to the campus, changing the lunch room to a different location worked out fabulously, um, you know there’s all these things that each one of those decisions that I think through. “Okay, if I do A what is going to happen to part B, C, and D?” A lot of times people have solutions for problem A, but they don’t see what the downflow is going to be. “Oh, if you do this it is going to create this problem right here, and another one right there.” So, I think that is one of those things that has helped me be successful with the festival, in addition to having a great team of helpers. But, we see these things before they happen.

CD: It sounds like one of the, probably a skill set we haven’t talked about, but just logistics and organization seem to be something that you would probably say is one of your strong suits.

AF: Oh, definitely. My wife jokes that she always knows when camp, when I am doing something with camp because I have this huge excel spreadsheet with all these different colors, everything is so, the flow and they layout between me and the guy that helps schedule lessons, Andrew Geocaris and Jason Casanova. Those guys, man, we make that week and we are, we look over that schedule and check it, and check it, and check it, and then when there aren’t any problems we’re are so happy. 200 private lessons and only 2 were double booked, you know like a scheduling snafu. That’s great because that’s less than 1%, which is huge, you know. So...

CD: Cool. Um, so back to teaching, and thinking about your position as an applied professor. Do you have broad outcomes in mind for your students when they graduate from your institution? Are they different for undergraduate and graduate students?

AF: They’re going to be unique to each student. Let’s say somebody is having just a general Bachelor of Arts major, then whatever is successful for them, meaning like are they going to go into a different field, and is there goal just to play for fun after they graduate and do accounting. So, uh, the other broad outcome for someone who is doing a Bachelor of Music Education is their goal to get a graduate assistantship, which if that is their plan, I have been really successful with that and helping kids find graduate assistantships. If it is to go ahead and get a job straight out of undergraduate, I try to help them build their resume by doing teaching out in the schools and think about unique aspects that will make them employable. And then, if they are a graduate student we look at how they can build their reputation, you know, amongst the community and start getting real work like building their lesson teaching studio if that is going to be one of their components of success early on. If they want to go into college teaching, then we look at how we can build their versatility as not just a euphonium or tuba player, but maybe they play all three low brass instruments, maybe they do a minor in conducting or a minor in music theory or history. So, they are very unique, but very goal oriented and the big summation is, succeed at what your goal is.

CD: So, how do you develop your goals with each student?
AF: I mean, uh, for me it is saying “Hey what are your dreams and aspirations? What do you see yourself doing and what is going to make you happy?” And it seems like a very simple question, but for a lot of the kids, it is doable it just depends on what their work ethic is, and how much they want to hustle. And the kids that hustle are going to succeed as long as they listen to their teachers. And if the kid is lazy, or unfocused it is going to be a problem, but normally even with the lazy and unfocused students, I actually, this is a very proud thing for me, I feel like I am very good at steering them in a way, uh, that they are having some goals and succeeding at them and are adjusting what their target is.

CD: So, one of the things that has kind of happened in society is we have become more and more dependent on technology. And, whether that is good or bad, I don’t know. But, I find that I am using some sort of technology in my teaching. So, I am curious if you use electronic tools in your teaching and if so, how these materials impacted the effectiveness of your teaching?

AF: I do use some electronic tools, and the funniest thing about electronic tools, and this is the summation I learned from them, is that it changes the lesson from me as a teacher telling a student something but maybe they can’t hear it, comprehend it, or they are not aware of it, and so they don’t believe me. When you bring technology into it, they can, it’s a neutral third party that tells them they are playing out of tune or it’s a neutral party, like one of the things I like to use is a decibel meter that measures how loud and soft. So, they can’t argue with the decibel meter. It is either loud or soft or it has contrast. Yet without that, you know, neutral third party a lot of times you can say to a student, “Hey, that really is not forte and it is not different from your mezzo piano.” They will look at you and nod like “Oh, yeah, Dr. Frey, you’re right. I’ll try harder later.” But, you know they don’t believe you. But, if you put up that decibel meter and they play a phrase and it says 80 db and they play a phrase that goes to forte and it only goes to 83 db, then it’s like “Hey dude, that is not a big enough difference at all. You need to be in the high 90’s for it to be forte.” Of course, decibel meter depends on where it is placed and what the room is like, so the numbers can change dramatically, but you need to see the difference in there. And, then, the other technology that I like to use is a visual recording program so you can see what the attacks of notes are like, what the releases are like, what the quality of sustain and legato and short is, and when they can visually see the difference between a staccato, normal, and tenuto they believe, because again, it’s a neutral third party. If you tell a kid a note isn’t short they may say, yes, it is. And you can tell them no, it’s not, and then, if you, again, bring in a neutral third party and record them and it shows, you know, a quarter inch block on the screen, and then it shows a half inch block, they will be able to tell the difference that one is longer than the other, you know? And, uh, when they can see that visually, and it’s not run through the filter of a teacher, you know, because it’s a neutral third party that they can’t argue with. Then, man, it’s so much more effective.

CD: Right, I think that helps too, you know. In my teaching through the TE app, and pull up the analysis and have your student do a decrescendo, and they get to see it, and ask them if it is even. And you can show them that it isn’t an even decrescendo or crescendo, or like you were just saying with the length of notes, or contrast and style of notes. I mean, it’s all right there, and it’s visible, and I think that it really makes a difference.
AF: And, but, I’ll say this, and it might make me sound like an old man, but you know what? If you talk with the people what are successful, I find that when my teacher told me, when Dave Randolph told me something, I just absolutely believed him. I respected him as a musician and I think this goes the same with Dr. Joe and stuff. Our teachers, we respected them, we listened to them, and if they told us something needed to be softer, shorter, louder, longer, we believed them and just did it. It wasn’t a thing of “Hey, I don’t think you know what you’re talking about, or I don’t think your perspective is right.” You know? It was just, you do it. And I think those are the people that you see are successful and having successful careers. Um, you know, so it is intriguing that we have to go to this next level of technology. It is great because we can see it and explain it to the kids, but I also feel that it is a shame that we have to go to that level of convincing them about the truth in their playing.

CD: Maybe it is just my experience but, I haven’t dealt with, with that aspect. For me, and where I am at, I am teaching adjunct at Southern University here in Baton Rouge. The students there, it is sort of an extra thing like “Oh wow, that’s cool. I get it now.” So, it is more of a supplemental tool for me, and I haven’t had them question anything, um…But, I guess I can see scenarios where that can happen.

AF: Yeah, I think that, at least for me I see it in a lot of different places and it could be unique to me, but when I talk with other teachers in general, they sort of talk about the students that, you know, listen and do what they say, and they are having success. And there are students that question and doubt and it’s like “Hey, you’re paying me to be your professor, so…get on the boat.”

CD: Yeah, I wasn’t doubting, I was just saying in my experience, I haven’t gotten that yet. I have only been teaching one semester adjunct at the collegiate level.

AF: Oh, they still like you. You’re in the honeymoon phase. Just wait until you get to about year, about a year into it and you have repeated yourself a lot because the students aren’t listening and making progress and you’ll start to get it.

CD: Maybe that’s it, I haven’t taught long enough. Have you recently implementations of some new teaching methods or goals? Have you experienced some new outcomes because of those?

AF: I would probably say, we have an iPad proposal program at UNG, where you can basically write a proposal and they will loan your entire class iPads to use for the semester. So, we did that and did a lot of technology stuff that, uh, we were just talking about. And, I think the outcome was very, very good. The kids were able to improve and they knew what was happening, and they recorded themselves regularly. I think that is really the main thing, um, but I will say this much. We returned the iPads at the end of the semester, and some of the kids use the same techniques, you know, on their iPhone or personal iPads, but some of the other students have just gone back to the way they used to practice, so…

CD: So, when they had the iPad they practiced differently than they do now?
AF: Oh, yeah, they practiced better because they had the instant feedback, you know. Whether that is from the decibel meter, tonal energy, visual recording app, or the tuner and stuff like that. When you have the feedback of what you’re doing right or wrong, your success is going to be so much more dramatically higher. When you don’t have that feedback, and your feedback is only in the one hour lesson each week, it is a lot tougher.

CD: Oh! I was going to ask if there are any specific apps that you use?

AF: I use Tonal Energy, there is a stock decibel meter program that you can use, for visual recording Zing has one called handy recorder which is great, um, let’s see what’s the other one’s I’ve got on here... I use iTalk which is a good one, there is a program called Read Rhythm that I like. It is rhythms and you tap it, and I like to use it with younger students that are a little bit unstable with you know their rhythm and uh, yeah, those are the main ones that I like to use. There’s the, what is it, the awesome slow downer app, that you know you can use and stuff like that. And, the acapella is a fun one to do multi track, but I don’t use that one that much. I used it for a couple days, but then I got distracted by my 6 year old and 2 year old and I haven’t gone back to it since.

CD: Kids, they can be so distracting.

AF: Oh, my goodness, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.

CD: Mine is 15 months, it’s crazy. He’s all over the place now. So, the read rhythm app, is that sort of an app mainly for rhythmic development?

AF: Yes, yes. It is basically, it shows you a rhythm and there’s a metronome and you tap on one part of the screen. Then it grades whether you are in time or not. It shows a green dot if you’re in time, early is a blue dot, and then if you’re late it is a red dot. And, uh, last time when I had it, when I downloaded it, it was a free app. So, pretty good.

CD: I am going to look into that. And everybody that I have asked this question to has had some unique answers and apps and stuff. So, I have been able to look into a few different things.

AF: What are some of the other interesting ones you have heard of because I am always trying to learn too.

CD: Yeah, so I talked to Matt Mireles and he said he uses, uh, Frozen Ape, it’s not Frozen Ape but..

AF: Oh yeah, it’s a metronome app. Yeah, that was the original metronome I used. I like that one.

CD: He said he also uses, iReal Pro, umm, and I’ve got a list somewhere but I have been able to look into a couple things. I’ll compile a list and send it to you. So, this next question is interesting. How do you see the future of music teaching, specifically tuba/euphonium studio
teaching, evolving in the future? Are there steps we should be taking now to move in that direction?

AF: Um, I just think about looking for what, how people are going to get jobs in the future. It’s just, you know, there’s so many different things that we need to get a job. And the job market is just getting more complicated, you know, so how is it evolving in the future? I think people are going to have to start looking for new opportunities and how they are going to create work versus taking what’s happening now. Because, there is a limit to the number of jobs. There’s more getting degrees than there are jobs, so, if we are just trying to get the same job as somebody else, it’s just not going to happen. I mean, I worked for 18 years as a soloist and I have just been at UNG in a tenure track position for the last two and a half years, so, um, you know, it’s a little bit different.

CD: I agree. It’s interesting because a lot of the people that I have talked to have sort of said the same thing. When I interviewed Andrew Hitz for the same project and he said he believes it is easier to get out of the semi-final round of an orchestral audition than it is to get out of the preliminary round, or the first round, just because of the sheer number of people because everyone that shows up to that audition is going to be good, and it’s that much harder to be noticed now in a group of, you know, 60 people that are going to show up for an audition that it is to get noticed in a group of 5 or 7.

AF: Yeah, exactly, yes.

CD: And he kind of hinted at another thing too, that there are more people graduating and being trained in music than there are jobs available for college teachers or for orchestral jobs or military band jobs, so the versatility piece is becoming increasingly important.

AF: Definitely.

CD: And then, the last question is, have you faced opposition in your teaching methods, and opposition may be a strong word, or other innovations in your career? How did you work to overcome those barriers?

AF: Opposition? Never.

CD: Right? Everything goes smoothly and as it should.

AF: No. I mean, I feel like, me personally, I have, opposition is a strong word, but push back you know? Oh, this is a tough one, especially since I am going on the record, uh, I just say that there’s always opposition, I mean, and because people are so competitive in our field that there’s always people trying to either want to beat you for a job, or that think they can do better. And, um, I think the thing as far as overcoming that is if you create your own opportunities, you don’t have to take work from somebody else. I have always been a huge, huge, huge believer in creating new opportunities, whether that is going to do work in South America, going doing work in Asia, working with new conductors, new festivals that happen to involve euphonium or getting them added to brass festivals, making IET, which actually employs tuba and euphonium
players and stuff like that. So, I mean, there’s always going to be opposition to development, but I think if you follow traditional paths, it is going to be tough because you are limited in what the job opportunities are, but if you’re creating the opportunities then it is huge. As an example, just to look at in the state of Georgia, you know I am very familiar with the situation here. The number of euphonium specialists now is outrageous, especially if you look in the past four years. When I originally moved back here there were no euphonium specialists in the state. And then, I convinced Georgia State to hire me. Shortly thereafter, or a little while after, Columbus State hired Martin Cochran, as a euphonium specialist. Then Kennesaw State hired Martin Cochran [as well]. Then, when I left for University of North Georgia, GSU hired Jason Casanova, Kennesaw State hired Paul Dickinson and Jason Casanova, Jacksonville State hired Jason Casanova. I know I’m using those guys as an example, I think Western Carolina had an adjunct euphonium specialist for a little bit of time. I don’t know of the current status now, but you’re seeing this on a more regular basis of, that there is work that is being created, and so, I feel really good about that as far as, if, you know, if you have opposition to getting a job because you’re competing against other people, look for places where you can create your own work and your own niche. Another great example of that is Bill Pritchard. You know, he’s here in town and he’s carved out a niche playing sousaphone in jazz groups, funk groups, church groups, klezmer music, all sorts of crazy stuff, and electric amplified tuba. So, you know, creating those opportunities are huge, you know. There’s always going to be opposition, whether its band directors that don’t want you to do things, or other people don’t think they’re important. But, I keep finding solutions, and if someone puts up a roadblock I find a way around it, and try to be judicious.

CD: Well, that was the last question that I had planned for you…

AF: Good. Make sure and edit any words or quotes on that for me so that they are nice to everybody.

CD: Sure, I don’t think you said anything that wasn’t nice, so…

AF: Well, good, I was successful. That discussion could go a variety of different ways.

CD: Well, you know, I mean, I guess the framework for that question, um, just stems from I guess, I just talked to Dr. Joe about it and it’s going to go on record, so I guess it’s okay for me to say it. Um, it was, here he is incorporating a lot of different skill sets into the teaching beyond just performing on the euphonium or the tuba, and, um, it’s a little bit difficult to put that into the model just because so many people don’t. At least, don’t include it to the level that he does. Um, like he’s got three different categories of things – performances, presentations, and projects that are incorporated into the studio class model. So, studio class isn’t just playing instrumental solos and ensemble rehearsal. In studio class, everybody presents, everybody researches a topic, everybody speaks and presents that in front of the studio. There is a semester project that we all do. Some of the project topics are audio recording, doing that on your own, record, edit, and submit it and go through the whole process by yourself. There’s video recording, arranging, creating an app was a couple semesters ago. We all went through a hypothetical scenario of creating an app. We had to develop our own idea. There’s a pedagogy project where you teach someone else in the studio at various points in the semester and work to develop your pedagogy skills. He is employing things in the model that I don’t think a lot of people are doing, in an
effort to make us more versatile and adaptable to be successful in any situation that may arise when we graduate from LSU.

AF: Yes, I agree.

CD: Yes, so there’s been a little bit of opposition, he said, from some of his colleagues maybe because it’s a lot of extra work involved to add that into your teaching. And that is where I was going. Maybe you have done something that you have gotten push back on because it isn’t “normally” something that is done at that place.

AF: Correct, correct.

CD: I didn’t know if you experience anything like that.

AF: Oh, yeah. All the programs that I have been to, you know, like the IET Festival, the administration at Emory wanted to… the band guy was for it for the first four years, and then as it got bigger, the actual concert hall people tried to shut it down. They wanted that thing gone. They didn’t want anyone in there with … but thankfully it was during a little of a financial crisis and the VP of Finance was like “You’ll let the tuba boys use the building.”

CD: [laughter] Tuba boys…

AF: Yeah, that’s not what they called us, but I just made a joke about it. But, uh, you’ll let them use the building because they’re paying a bunch of money and uh, other schools and programs will want to do a 2-day festival. “Oh, well gosh, that’s going to cause a lot of scheduling headaches” [is they typical reply]. Even though it’ll be great for the students, and um, and so those are a couple examples of that. Or [I’ll ask] “Hey can you provide a pianist for this concert for Octubafest concert.” [And they will reply] “Oh, we don’t do that for any other studio.” So, I just ask if any of the other studios ask to do a clarinet concert or a flute specific concert? So, then I just ask them to worry about that when they cross that bridge when we get there. I want my students to have an experience and if someone else wants to do it, too, then we can deal with it later. But, just because no one else had the idea, don’t shut mine down, you know?

CD: Yes. This is what I was wanting to get. So, it sounds like for some things, like the piano thing, it seems like it is very student centered, about the students and you want them to have an experience is important for their degree and this is what I need, for my students…or, then, you were saying for the IET thing finances came into play and you were basically saying the way you got through the opposition is paying for the space. You weren’t asking them to give it to you for free.

AF: Yeah, and most places, like with the summer camp, most places will let faculty use spaces for free. But, we paid for space at IET since, uh, I think the first two years when we used the old, tiny music building, I think we didn’t pay. But, as soon as we moved into the new building we paid top dollar every single year.
CD: Okay. So, it is just navigating your way around how the finances are going to allow you to have the event?

AF: Yeah, in that particular case. And again, they put it up as a road block. It goes back to the concept of, if someone puts up a road block you just figure out how to go around it. They put up a road block on that initially and they tried to raise the fees. They said no you can’t do it, and I can’t remember what other things happened. But, I just worked to overcome the road blocks through various means for me to still host this event.

CD: Well, thank you for your time. I really appreciate you being a part of this.

AF: Absolutely, thank you!

Andrew Hitz Interview Transcript

Consent script

AH: Great.

CD: What do you believe are the most important skills for musicians in the 21st century to possess?

AH: Most important skills are, well, first of all it goes without saying, but I’ll say it anyway. I talk an awful lot about entrepreneurship, branding, networking, marketing, and all of that stuff, and if your art, whatever that art is, whether it is classical tuba, or Spanish guitar, or poetry, or whatever, if your art isn’t phenomenal, then all of your marketing, branding, networking in the world isn’t going to mean anything. So that is really important to clearly state. But, in addition to being the best in the world at what you do, I would say the ability to market yourself is the most important skill you can have. What I mean by that is being able to identify who your potential customers are, what need it is that you are filling for them, and what need it is they need filled that you are the person or your group are the people the best people in the world to fill that need for them. That can inform the actual art you make, the words you use to describe it, in marketing terms it’s called copy, you know the copy that you use, the words you use or don’t use, the venues you hang out in, whether that is social media channels or traditional advertising. It basically informs everything. Because, obviously, you need to know who you are talking to, correct? You would use different words for a three-year old than you do for a middle school student and a DMA student. It isn’t just the concept, but it’s also the words you use and how many words you use. I have never started a middle school lesson by talking for 20 minutes, but I have started many DMA lessons for 20 straight minutes because it’s things that are important that you won’t learn anywhere else in school. And so, yeah, marketing in a broad sense is the most important skill we need today. The simple reason for that is that the barrier for entry for all of this art has never been lower. Anyone can write a book and get it distributed. I can write a book and self-publish it today, and like, tomorrow, you in Louisiana could buy a copy. It was not that long ago, well there was no 24-hour turnaround, but I would have had to have a book deal with a major publisher, you would have needed to live near a bookstore, and there were no tuba authors at bookstores anyway. Anyone can record an album, anyone can make a movie, anyone
can make a, uh, film short. Now the problem is that since anyone can make those things, how do you get noticed? That’s why it is easier to get out of the semi-finals of an audition, everybody is a baller at that level, but god, getting out of that round is easier than getting out of an open cattle-call of 140 people all playing the same 3 excerpts that last 12 seconds each.

CD: Yes, absolutely.

AH: The signal to noise ratio is really challenging with everybody in the pool. So now, the challenge is how do you get found?

CD: So with all that being said - what do view the role of the applied studio professor to be in the 21st century? More broadly: describe the ideal tuba/euphonium program that would best serve twenty-first century tuba/euphonium students?

AH: So, I like the question, but I am going to give you a little bit of a non-answer. Just in the sense that I don’t think there is a model for, uh.. Put it this way, I’m always, I don’t just host a podcast, because oh by the way, this is a problem people have, but I wouldn’t be the one to solve it for you. People ask why I don’t host a podcast on how to win an orchestral audition, because if anyone digs deeper they will see I took the Oregon Symphony audition in 1998 and didn’t advance and that’s the end of your orchestral audition resume. Why are you hosting this? And guess what? I know an awful lot about it. I know a lot of people who have done it. And in my tiny, my young way, I won NRO. I won NRY twice, I sub with New World and Civic. I did have orchestra success and then it stopped because I stopped trying. So, I’m not the guy to do that. But, there should be studios where if you want to, if all you want to do is, uhh, replace, I was going to say Mike Roylance, but he’s not old enough. If you want to replace Gene Pokorny, you want to replace Gene Pokorny. Math tells you it’s not going to be you, but don’t let me tell you that, or any other specific person. There should be a place where you can go just study that. I don’t think everyone should be into entrepreneurship, or everyone should be “well-rounded,” or have a portfolio career. But, I do believe, to that end, when you’re investigating, especially if you’re a DMA student, I am going to ask you what you want to do with your career. And, if it is the type of thing I can best help you with, then, yeah, and if you’re a good fit with me also then let’s do this. But, if your single goal is to replace Gene Pokorny, then what the hell are you doing coming to study with me. You know? I could do a great job, but I couldn’t do a phenomenal job. You could talk to people who have actually hung out in that sphere and won. So, for me, as you know, it is important to teach the student in front of you, like I said. I also think that applies for college studios as well. I tend to want to work most with the oddballs and weirdos that used to navigate towards Sam Pilafian back in the day. I just passive aggressively compared myself to Sam, and I’m not, just to be clear. But, in terms of, you know, again Sam wasn’t the guy to go to if you just want to win an orchestral audition. Guess what? He’s had students who have had success, Craig Knox, and there are others who have won that. But, Sam is the guy who like, makes you compose your own etudes, and he makes you arrange stuff, and makes you play in a Dixie band when you’ve never played in one before. He’s got some, well, I should say that Joe Skillen has got some Sam Pilafian in him. You know? In terms of, just, the well-rounded thing. Which can be a BS over used term that means you dabble in everything. But, no, Sam would like make you get great at a whole bunch of different things. But, I don’t think every teacher should be like Sam. I think every teacher I would want to study with would be like Sam or Rex Martin
who was more in the orchestral world. He was 34 when I started working with him, and he had already been on 80 orchestral recordings.

CD: Wow.

AH: Yeah, I know, right. Well, there you go. But he also taught me a bunch about freelancing, and about sight reading, and about networking, and about professionalism and a lot of stuff that complemented my education with Sam really well. So, I think a great tuba and euphonium studio is led by someone who knows they are not the best teacher for every student out there. And, by the way that doesn’t mean, guess how many students Joe Skillen would not be able to teach well? Zero. That guy can teach anybody, anything. I mean that. He’s a phenomenal musician, he has a passion for music and education…I was going to say kids, but you’re not exactly sitting in the back of a car in an adjustable car seat. But, you know, college students. He’s passionate about all three of those things. But, there are some, there’s a subset on a vin diagram of people who are going to study tuba/euphonium where Joe is one of the best, you count on one hand, teachers in the world for that student. But, there’s others where he’s like one of the 50 best teachers for that student. Which is still remarkable, you know, who do you think he’d rather teach? He’d rather teach the one where he is THE dude for that person. You know what I’m saying. A good teacher, you know, will help to attract the right kind of people, and will turn some people away, not necessarily rejecting them, but you know, you’re also auditioning at NEC. And all the other factors are the same, the parents are loaded, and tuition doesn’t matter, whatever. Yeah, if you want to go sub with the BSO, go study with Roylance, don’t study with me. So, a self-aware teacher I think is really important. So, uh, yeah, that’s a roundabout answer.

CD: So, it sounds like you’re saying the teacher needs to be able to adapt to what the student wants to achieve.

AH: Absolutely. That’s how I view my studio. I ask every student at the beginning of their freshmen year and I always heck back in with them. I always put it in a wise-ass way, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” You know, I like saying that to a Master’s or Doctoral student, because you already are grown up. I want specifics. Now let’s reverse engineer this and figure out what the skills are that are going to be necessary for you to not just be in the running for that job, or by the way to create that thing. It isn’t just jobs here. It’s not just working for someone else. But you’re going to be one of the best people in the world, you’re automatically going to be on the short list for “Fill in the blank.” I get a lot of calls for freelance quintet work because that is something that I can, but if you need me to sub in Kennedy Center Opera and it is some insanely soft stuff, I can do that, and play the crap out of it on a big tuba, but, I’ve got to dial that up. I’m going to wake up early that morning, and be like “Okay, some serious s*** is going down today.” Whereas quintet, if you told me I’m playing in a quintet at Carnegie Hall, not that I’d be like “Whatever,” because I’ve actually never played there, but I wouldn’t be nervous, like my first instinct would be “Where is my suit? Is it clean or at the dry cleaner?” It wouldn’t be “Oh my God, I’ve got to get my music out, and blah, blah, blah.” I’ve done that a thousand times, you know. So, you’ve just got to get on the short list. By the way, it isn’t your opinion whether you are on the shortlist of not, it’s everyone else’s opinion of whether you’re on the shortlist or not. That’s where most people, by the way, fall short. This is a different topic, when most people are looking for college teaching jobs, man, there are a bunch college teaching
jobs where I could never even, like, if I submitted my resume, they would delete the email because I have one college degree and that’s it. But there are also a whole bunch of them, there are some that are looking for an orchestral person, with like, that has played in Cleveland, or Chicago, or Boston, or San Francisco, or whatever, and if, that is the case, you think if me and Jeff Anderson, if he’s ready to leave and I don’t believe he is, I’m just making things up. But, if we both apply you think they are going to hire me? No, they are going to hire him. But, if they are looking for someone who is a chamber musician, then I am suddenly on a short list for tuba. If they are looking for a chamber musician who is deep into entrepreneurship, then I am on an even shorter list. And, again, it isn’t like you can wait for a job, but there is, you could name a few criteria that would get specific enough where I could rise to the top person on paper. That’s what you need, you don’t need to just be one of 70 people and hope to get an invite and then go nail the shit out of your recital and teach really well. Because, chances are you won’t even be given the chance to nail your recital, because again the math, how do you get from 70 to 4. Like, that is hard. Anyway, next question.

CD: This goes back to what you were discussing before - what skillsets, besides performing, do you encourage in your studio/applied lesson teaching?

AH: Some, I think that, um, so the term portfolio career is a term I like to use. Which is that, um, you know, back in the day, I basically had one income stream because I was on the road so much. 95% of all my money was made from Boston Brass. Now, I might have 15 income streams. It might be 20. Some of those like only 4-500 bucks a year. Others of those are like $20,000 a year, it just depends on what it is. The biggest one I have is Shenandoah, is teaching, and I just teach a day and a half a week adjunct. But, add all those up, and I guarantee you would trade places with me, at least just financially. You would do that quickly. Even though you wouldn’t take, or drop what you’re doing for any one of those, unless you’re an idiot. Does that make sense? The portfolio career means you just have a whole bunch of stuff and make a little bit, and the cool thing about the portfolio career is that when you start making money on xyz, then you can put more time and resources into that and if this other thing is not making you money you can lay off of that. There’s a push and pull there that you are in charge of. But, in terms of the portfolio career I encourage students tocompose, arrange, have a website, which if you don’t have one, your first one will suck and the second iteration of it will suck a little less. And, you know, etc. it’s not an easy thing to nail at first. So, thinking of as many, and you have to figure out that if you have no interest in composing, like none at all, guess how many dollars I have ever charged someone for arranging? The answer is zero by the way. But, the creative process of that is important. There is a lot there. I could have students start writing blogs or host a podcast. Figure out where your passions lie by getting curious. And, uh, yeah, you cannot learn how to market by reading or hearing me talk about how to market. Now, I would hope, because I consider myself um, expert is kind of a strong word, but I know a whole lot about that, but if you listen to my podcast I will give you some really good ideas. The thing is you cannot learn about basketball by reading about basketball. You have to get a basketball, get in front of a hoop, and you have to start shooting right? That’s how you get better at basketball. So, doing things is the real broad answer. It is important that you actually do stuff and not just think about it or read about it. You could always get one more source to teach yourself how to do this, that, or whatever. You could always get one more piece of advice and you’re never going to actually know all the stuff to have a great website. It’s literally impossible. You’re never going to watch
enough YouTube videos where you’re going to learn to play with a Dixie band. You just have to do it.

CD: I had a second line gig once and my brain was going a thousand miles an hour because I had never done that. It’s a perfect description.

AH: Right? And that’s completely irrational. Because it’s low pressure, it doesn’t mean it doesn’t matter or you don’t take it serious. Not at all. I wouldn’t take it any less serious than playing at the Kennedy Center last week. But, uh, its like, you know the guys at the Kennedy Center Honors Orchestra if I had played the same wrong accidental three times I’m literally never getting hired to play that show again. That’s it. The budget for that show is millions of millions of dollars and any pre-records we were doing with me playing a wrong note is not any good. I’m literally burning money from some production thing. So, yeah, the second line things is a little more supportive than that. And, yet, you have to put yourself in the line of fire to experience that brain rush to actually do it. So, yeah, you’ve got to do stuff. Do it, do it, do it.

CD: One of the things I admire about your career is the diversity that you bring to our field. Besides being a world class performer, I notice that you also have a wide variety of skillsets at your disposal. Where did you learn these skills and when did you begin to utilize them?

AH: The…

CD: So, you were talking about marketing, the ideas for your podcasts, where did you cultivate some of these ideas or where did you develop these skills?

AH: In, around the beginning of 2010, I realized I needed to make some life changes and get off the road. Boston Brass wasn’t getting along very well and the road is a hard place. I don’t need your prayers for getting to travel the world and getting paid really well to play the tuba because that is everyone’s dream. But, after a while it gets a little bit old. I was away from my wife all the time. I decided I wanted to try and do some other stuff. It was a very conscious conversation I had with myself. Not in an ego way, but in an ability to charge other people money way. I realized that I had a lot of name recognition in our little corner of the world. I certainly don’t have a problem walking through the airport screaming at me like I am Harrison Ford, that’s for sure. But, I had a lot of name recognition as Andrew Hitz the tuba player from Boston Brass and I had significantly less as just Andrew Hitz. I realized if I took the tuba player from Boston Brass off of the active part of my name I was going to be a lot less in demand. That’s when I ramped up a whole bunch of stuff. That’s when I started Andrewhitz.com, my blog there, professional twitter, my Facebook page, and I started ramping up all that stuff. I started seeking out solo engagements, um, and that’s when I started talking to Lance about … which of course has become Pedal Note Media. That was the moment when I realized it. So, I actually had a full 4 years for the most part. This was in December 2009 and I got out in December 2013. I had four year ramp up of Boston Brass thing and my side hustle stuff. I didn’t have kids yet, or a kid yet, and I was able to do that. That is also probably, not coincidentally, when I got the George Mason job, the Gettysburg college job. A lot of things started to click because I started to worry about not just Boston Brass stuff.
CD: So, I was going to ask, you’re saying you developed your website and blogging, where did these ideas come from? Are these ideas you had on your own or are these things someone else said they needed you to do?

AH: No, nobody said I need you to do anything. You know, the only thing people said was I need you to show up at this day and time and play the tuba and we’ll pay you really well for it. Which was great. But, I knew I wanted to get off the road. So, I’m no longer looking actively for people in California who all have the bucks to pay me to come play the tuba in a week. Not that I would turn that down, but that is the thing you have to be active about. The problem, again, you’re on the road for half the year, so, I didn’t know, you don’t get to decide when you’re going to get to be a father even when you have a wife who is on board, too. There is a lot that goes into it. It was actively trying not to do that because I was on the road the whole time. There were several things I was putting off, which I was just waiting on a lot of stuff. I just decided I was done with the waiting. I started the blog. I have always been able to teach because when you study with Rex Martin and Sam Pilafian off and on from 14 through 24, if you can’t teach you’ve got serious problems. I had those ideas already and I could teach in a masterclass. I just started writing them down. The first day I posted something I think my dad read it because I told him it was up and he read it. But, um, you know, there was nobody reading it because nobody knew it was there. And, uh, I just started and figured things out. At first, my blog was, well blogging has changed over the years I would post photos on it sometimes and it was sort of a personal thing, but that’s what twitter has become in a lot of ways, and Facebook. Things are constantly morphing. But, there’s basically no one that will never be say “I need you to do fill in the blank.” Of course, that’s an exaggeration, but you should never wait. You should never wait for someone to actually say “I need you to do this thing,” because they don’t know that you can do that thing, then why am I going to ask you? I will find someone that has already done it or is trying it.

CD: Well, I was just asking in terms of when you were a student somewhere. For instance, Dr. Skillen has us do a variety of different projects around different things. Two semesters ago we had to create our own idea for an app. So, that was the genesis of that question. I wanted to know if anyone said to create a website as a project for studio or a blog?

AH: Got it. Yeah, you’re not keeping in mind that I’m 43. So, uh, when I finished school I was 25 and, um, put it this way, the same year I got out of school Boston Brass hired a web developer to design our website and we paid, uh, we paid her $3,000 to develop the website.

CD: So, the whole website thing was pretty new then?

AH: Yeah, yes. Correct. Exactly. There was not the ability to be able to make things so easily, at all. But, then Wordpress and blogging were newish. People were doing it, but it was newish when I started doing it for random dudes like me who can’t code at all. So, yeah, I wasn’t on the cutting edge, but a little bit forward thinking. But none of that was from school.

CD: So, some of the projects that we do for the studio are audio recording, video recording, composing/arranging, electronic exploration, creating an app, pedagogy, and listening assignments.
AH: That’s awesome.

CD: So, those are semester long projects, he has 8 different topics.

AH: I’m going to tell my studio about this. I make them do tiny listening and writing assignments, and they act I am making them write a dissertation.

CD: There are also presentations that are meant to develop public speaking and research skills. I could have been more specific earlier when talking about those skills. Anyway, do you have broad outcomes in mind for your students when they graduate from your institution? Are they different for undergraduate and graduate students?

AH: I have one overriding desired outcome, which is the exact same for every age and every degree, which is that their actions over the 2, 3, 4, or 6 years, that their actions are aligned with their goals. That is my main goal for every member of my studio. And, you’re allowed to change your goals five minutes later, five months later, five years later, whenever, and in fact if your goals never change that’s pretty rare. Most people who say their goals never change are not very self-aware. Every once in a while, there are those who say this is what I’m doing, and it never waivers, and that’s what they do, and good for them. But, in general, that’s just someone who is not re-evaluating. But, I like to view it as a vin diagram, or one circle is where you want to get and one circle is your actions and we want as much overlap as possible. Your actions should be pushing you towards what you want to be doing. So then, for each student it is completely different. Even within music education, some music ed majors want to be, if you want to break into a big school and be a HS band director and are way into marching band, then you need to be doing stuff with major programs. You need to be writing, working with horn lines, and apprenticing and networking in that specific realm. And I know less than nothing about writing for marching band. I have never marched a step in my life. My HS didn’t have a marching band, I didn’t do it in college. I have nothing against it, I’m just not the dude to ask there. But, that is a very different set of skills, and the network is going to look very different than someone who wants to be an elementary general music teacher. Those are very different things. And within the degree, you have to do some things that aren’t exactly what you want to do, and I get that, but you shouldn’t be spending, unless it’s going to pay you money and that’s going to help pay the bills, do it, and if you have no desire to teach marching band ever, then don’t volunteer marching band camp, it will take a month of your life that you will never get back, ever. Right? So, don’t do that. That is time that you are spent not doing something else that will be relevant to your career choice. So, I always try to get people to make sure that what they want to do is aligned, and they are taking steps, let me rephrase this… I have found many college students who, they don’t say this but, they act as if they are under the impression is working hard. It’s like the tasteless bumper stickers that say “Jesus is coming, look busy.” Where as long as you’re working really hard, like I am busy 18 hours a day at school, but it doesn’t matter how hard you’re pedaling. I don’t think Jesus, you know, if you believe in that biblical view, I don’t think he’s only going look at the sheer number of hours you worked. I’m guessing it’ll be slightly more nuanced than that and maybe I’m wrong. But, it’ll be “What work did you do?” You don’t want to be on a bicycle that is in the wrong gear and you are pedaling and turning those pedals over
100 times a minute and you’re not going anywhere up the mountain because you’re in the wrong gear.

CD: So, it’s just making sure your students are just doing the things they need to do to be successful in whatever avenue they want to go?

AH: Yes, and part of that is, just to clarify, part of that is trying new things, that don’t necessarily seem like they have anything with what they are doing to figure out if they like it or not. That’s part of it. A big part of being a musician or a teacher is interacting with people that are like you or not like you. As a musician, it’s pretty hard to play a sad song if you’ve never had your heart broken. To play something scary if you’ve never been terrified. Part of this is just having life experience. It’s not like, “how is this thing going to help you directly or overtly make you a better elementary music teacher?” It is intentional behavior that is moving you as a human towards your goal. Sometimes it is specific resume stuff, other times it’s a musical level, other times it’s a human level. But, all of the other times it is just taking care of yourself, and it can be a real badge of honor for musicians and a lot of college students. Sometimes, it seems like it’s about who can sleep the least and brag about it, who can drink the most coffee or red bull and brag about it, etc. Which isn’t really sustainable.

CD: Being that technology has become a large part of society, do you use electronic teaching tools in your teaching and if so, how do you feel the availability of these materials impacts the effectiveness of your teaching?

AH: I don’t use a ton of electronics. All of my students have tonal energy tuner and I have them utilize the [not discernable] function. I have them record something in half time and then through the app have them speed it up to 200% so they can hear themselves playing a really difficult passage perfectly, even though they can’t yet. It’s one thing to hear Joe do it, but it’s another thing to hear your tuba and your face do it. Right within the app is everything that I used to have to drag into the practice room separately – a decibel meter, a metronome, the slow down thing Rex used to have a reel to reel cassette recorder in his office that he could go to half speed. I utilize the drones a lot, I have the students play along with tracks as well. The other stuff is just organizational. Use Evernote, use google drive, or whatever you use get organized with your practice. A goal that is not written down is just a wish. So, now, you can write that down and access it from anywhere, absolutely anywhere, and most students don’t do that, by the way. The vast majority of students, I am past the age where I jump up and down and stomp and snort and beg and plead with them to do that kind of stuff, I tell what’s going to work best and they either do it or don’t do it. Now, there are absolute requirements that I have, and if there aren’t then there are grade, which I tell them as a student, that’s your job. And, you might very well have 2 or 3 other jobs, but your job is getting good grades at LSU, and that is your job right now. At least one of them. So, in terms of getting super organized with your practice sessions, my students know what they need to do and they are going to do it or not. But, I do know you’re going to be a lot better and are going to have a lot better chance of having a happy life by making a living through music if you do this thing, so it is up to you whether you do it or not.

CD: I guess this question ties into what you were just saying, have you recently implemented some new teaching methods or goals? Have you experienced some new outcomes?
AH: Teaching methods, yes, I try to stay fresh with all of my pedagogy. In fact, I am going to be chirping in Dr. Skillen’s ear, because I want to hear about this stuff, for sure, what you're talking about with the various semesters is fascinating to me. And, that is way more organized than I am, so it is like, there is a dude I can learn from right there. And it makes sense, he has been doing it a long time, he’s full time, and it makes sense that he is more organized than I am. But, that doesn’t mean I can’t be more organized, even in my adjunct teaching role. We just had a trumpet search and had 4 candidates that we brought in, and I have stolen something from each one of the 4 of them that I have already implemented in my teaching. Just a different way to say something. So, I don’t tend to have any major, although talking to Dr. Joe may be a major shift, but it’s more of just finding better, newer, or different ways. The stuff that really resonated with me as a student I will never forget as long as I live, but that doesn’t mean it’s going to resonate with you. It doesn’t mean it won’t, but it doesn’t mean it will resonate as loudly as it did with me. At that point Rex Martin stopped talking about it, because it’s not good teaching if the student gets it, the light bulb goes off, and you keep talking about it. Move on to the next thing. So, yeah, I am always trying to improve things along those lines.

CD: So, with improvement in mind, how do you see the future of music teaching, specifically tuba/euphonium studio teaching, evolving in the future? Are there steps we should be taking now to move in that direction?

AH: Hmm, I am not sure if I have much of an answer that is specific to tuba/euphonium. I would have to think about that. To me, teaching one thing is the same as teaching another thing. Now, the specifics and tactics and all that are different, of course. But teaching is teaching. You need to figure out what is going to resonate with your student and do that and say that. Technology is absolutely, I was just talking about this, I used to have, and still have a stand-alone decibel meter, stand-alone Dr. Beat, stand-alone tuner, and yeah, those three things got used with regularity with me and now it’s all on my phone. I do use other apps and dabble with them but Tonal Energy is on that is just great. So, I do believe that technology, you know my partner Lance is way into technology. That is his jam, he loves it, he is way into music and technology and how things are going. It is something that I am interested in, in theory. But that will never replace, tomorrow there is no chance that I will wake up and rather than listen to the news about the politics and the state of the world, which is terrifying right now, but it is important to pay attention to, and baseball free agency, and American history, and my things that I am way in one, it will never pay attention as much as Lance does, because that’s his jam. That being said, I do know there’s some stuff coming down the pike, that I don’t know the specifics of, that are going to fundamentally change… You know, one thing we actually make an assumption about is, who says it’s just a private student on the side or a student in college, who said the master/apprentice relationship has to be once a week and has to be one hour and it has to be just the pupil and the teacher. That’s kind of a lot of assumptions, right? And I’m not saying they are bad assumptions, but we have been doing it that way for a long time, and you would probably agree that it would be weird if we are still doing it that exact set of circumstances in 500 years, right? I mean, something is probably going to change. And as a teacher, I only teach like one day a week in the DC area at my wife’s school with 6 or 7 students. They are only once a week, never group lessons, they stop for the summer. There’s just a lot of assumptions, Technology is going to help
us, I don’t think we are too far away from being able to get the same experience as sitting next to Joe Skillen for an hour and you could be in Topeka and he could be in Baton Rouge. I think that is coming. Online lessons are very different, obviously, than in person. There is still a lot of value to them, but it’s very much not the same thing. Is it going to be holograms? I don’t know, but there is some obvious potential for real, seismic changes on that front.

CD: I might be biased on this, but I think that Dr. Joe is definitely on the cutting edge of pedagogy. I think where I am going with this is, do you think there anything that we should be doing to change that master/apprentice model. Obviously, it will still exist, but is there any way that we can make it better? What are some things that you might be doing that other people are not doing?

AH: I, not different that everybody, but different than some, I spend a significant portion of studio class talking about music business stuff. Which, I don’t think, I don’t see how, we spend so much time right now playing the Gregson for each other, which I don’t think is a bad idea, because playing for your colleagues is good for you. It is terrifying and really good for you. But, I do believe that rather than playing for everybody 10 times a year, playing 7 times a year and learning really essential skills for business and career survival on top of that is much more important than getting more of the performances. If it is a zero sum game. This semester I did a Zerkel version of the tunes of the week, where there is a set of pieces for band and for orchestra and everyone has to listen to 12 for the semester and write a piece on it. I have done a studio listening lab in the past, which is where I have my students, whoever the student of the week is, I will assign them articulation, for example, and they will have to come up with an hour long playlist (YouTube, Spotify, whatever) but an hour long list about articulation. It can have all tuba or no tuba. It could be Tibetan throat singers or whatever. Someone else will have phrasing, tone quality, tone color, whatever. Other than that, I am not as nearly, you know one of the problems being adjunct, is that I don’t get paid that much and am not there that much and but I’m not just hanging around or have enough students to be trying stuff. So, good on Joe, because someone in his position he could get away with avoiding pushing things forward because he is tenured and can have his job until he decides he doesn’t want it anymore. And yet, he is pushing things forward because he is Joe. The reason why is because of who he is, and I think he owes it to us because he is forward thinking and he is doing that, which is good.

CD: That last question I have is have you faced opposition in your teaching methods or other innovations in your career? How did you work to overcome those barriers?

AH: Opposition is probably a strong way to put it for what I have experience. This semester I taught Brass Lit class, in the past Brass Lit class was basically drop the needle test, and I don’t like those tests because they have nothing to do with anything that is relevant to anything anyone has cared about. And they take a ton of work. So, I didn’t want to do that. Instead, the final project of this class was to build a database of trumpet, horn, trombone, euphonium, and tuba music of different levels, etudes, solos, etc. There were three options, one was going old school, one was drop the needle, which is stupid. The second, each student comes up with their own database, which there were only 5 in the class. The third one was, I was able to in a cool way, given a blank slate on how to teach the class, so one thing was team work and also delegating being on a team and being a cog. I got some push back from some students who are used to the
traditional rubric of “If I do this by this date, I get an A.” This is much more about communication, making them do presentation, so I and working on their public speaking skills. And, I haven’t gotten push back on any of it, but I can tell from a couple of them that it is an unconventional class that is teaching them real life experiences that is going to translate to them being better members of the music community. Sometimes, students don’t like that. There are some students that want to know how much to memorize and when is the time that I have to spit it back out so that I can get an A and move on to the next class. They aren’t being malicious about it, but that has been their existence their whole lives. So, I have gotten some push back, but I reminded them, just last week since we’re in the weeds at the end of the semester, that the options were the drop the needle hell or each of them doing their own database which would be 5 times as much work as they are doing now.

CD: It sounds like you have made the course less about getting a grade and more about learning things that are going to benefit them in the future.

AH: That is exactly what my intention was. And to that point, you can, it’s not like you can’t instantly find a good list, but you can google what a good high school horn solo is. It has never been easier to find information anymore. That problem is what you do with the information – how you convey it, when you convey it, who you convey it to, what venue you use, what platform. Some people love podcasts, some people would never listen to one. Some people read print books other people want blog posts. There is room for everybody, but acquiring the knowledge of age appropriate brass literature has been done hundreds of times. If this was a computer simulation and I was running the music program, the Brass Lit course would be a seminar that’s a week long. We would meet twice to talk about it.

CD: Because you can find what you need to know at the snap of a finger?

AH: Yes, exactly. There would be a couple of links that I would throw at them and then I would spend an hour talking to them about how to look for pieces and what to look for and then we would be done. So, yes, I feel like I am a little innovative in that regard, where I try, within the structures that I am allowed to…You know, if I had done what I did and there was no database, I would get in trouble. You know, there needs to be a paper trail. It also needs to be about Brass Literature. It isn’t fair for the students to sign up for a public speaking course, only, and it has nothing to do with Brass Lit and they signed up for Brass Lit. So, I am always keeping the students in mind and thinking about what skills they need to acquire.

Demondrae Thurman Interview Transcript

CD: The first question I have for is what do you believe are the most important skills for musicians in the 21st century to possess?

DT: That’s a great question. A really great question. I think, first and foremost, you still need to be exceptional at your craft. So, whatever it is that makes you the musician that you are, you have to be really good at it. So, if that is composing, playing the euphonium, or playing the tuba; you have to be a good composer, a good euphonium player, or a good tuba player. There is no room for a lack of excellence for the 21st century musician. Also think that the 21st century
musician has to be patient, more than musicians in the 20th and even 19th century because there is less, sort of, cookie cutter jobs for the amount of people that are trained in music. So, patience is one. You have to be well rounded in the 21st century as a musician. Meaning you have to be able to do more than one thing really well. I still argue that the one thing that you are supposed to do well that you have to do at a really high level. And, the other things that you do really well, also have to be such that other people will perceive them as THE thing you did really well. So, when I say well rounded, I don’t mean be able to conduct and beat time, you have to be a conductor which means you study scores well, you speak well in rehearsal, you have good rehearsal technique. So, you have to be well rounded and excellent at all the things you are supposed to be well rounded in. I think the modern musician needs to be technology savvy. They need to produce a website, be savvy with social media, in terms of marketing and promoting oneself once there is a product to promote. I think lastly that the 21st century musician needs to understand the fact that it may take a while for a single thing to be the way that they earn a living. It will take multiple things to earn a living and I think that is something the 21st century musician needs to be comfortable with because, as I mentioned earlier there are less what I call cookie cutter jobs [available]. Which means here is the job description, you apply for it, you get it, and the rest is history. There’s less of that now for the number of students, or people, who are trained in music.

CD: Yes, it’s true. I think Dr. Joe is getting at exposing his students to a variety of different things in the hopes that one or two things stick, so that, like you said you can make all those things great. If you are going to conduct make it great.

DT: Right, exactly. That is difficult to do. In a sense you’re having to devote what would be the amount of time for one thing to more than one thing. And, so, being efficient and being really, I guess, well studied is the difficulty. There is no time off, per se. It is hard to find a time where I am not thinking about those things that make me relevant. Even in situations like I’m in my car listening to hip hop, I am analyzing the beat structure and the hemiolas, everything. I am always “on”, which luckily, I like to be “on.” I don’t mind thinking about it the majority of my day.

CD: Yes, that’s good. So, with all of that being said, the different skill sets that you just discussed; What do you view the role of the applied studio professor to be in the 21st century? More broadly: describe the ideal tuba/euphonium program that would best serve twenty-first century tuba/euphonium students?

DT: Sure. I still believe the studio teacher’s primary job is to create and churn out the best musicians that they can. The reason I say that is because the way that music degrees are structured now, the music students spend the majority of their focused time in the applied studio. So, I still believe my primary focus is to make the best possible musician that I can in the amount of time and that occupies the lions share of my energy in the applied studio. The reason is I don’t feel like I know enough about those other things in many ways to be on an expert level in discussing it. I can only suggest that you might consider some of these things. I don’t feel qualified to talk about these things. So, while making the musician is my job in the applied studio, I feel the 21st century applied professor has to be malleable in that their students may not focus the entirety of their time on the things that you think are the most important for them. I think that is the biggest change that older professors are having to make. That the private student
may say “In addition to my practice on the tuba, I am studying composition with the top teacher in the field.” [The applied professor needs to] understand that is something that that person has the right to do, and understand that it is going to take some time away from what you might consider the tuba time in order for that student to flourish in that area. And that is where I feel I have been successful in understanding that the euphonium or tuba is the primary focus, but it is not the singular focus and it is adjusting to that level of thinking that I think the modern professor will have to adapt.

CD: So, then, are there any things or skill sets, like I mentioned at the beginning of our call, besides performing that you do encourage in your applied lesson teaching?

DT: I don’t actually. The only thing I encourage is listening in depth. I have a structured way that I talk about listening, to live and recorded music. I also stress in my students to not think of music always as a reference. What I mean by that is to try to make sure that my students don’t just listen to the music that they are playing. Listen to music to comprehend music not just the stuff that you’re working on. That is probably my biggest challenge. If students show interest in other skills, I will suggest that they further them. But, if students don’t, I don’t make them. The reason I don’t is because I don’t want anything in music to feel like work. It should feel, it’s going to be work, but it shouldn’t feel laborious or like a chore. It should be done with enjoyment and with art and the pedagogical notions in mind. Not necessarily to try to cultivate a career, because even if you’re well rounded in all these things, it doesn’t mean that you’re going to have a career. So, I don’t really have my students seek out other opportunities. For instance, I have a current student, who I learned just a couple weeks ago has experience as an audio tech, and I [thought] dude, let’s get you in contact with the people here at Jacobs so that you can possibly get the TA or intern in that. It’s great and that is the way I handle it. I don’t ask what other things in music that you have an interest in. It needs to come out in a natural way as opposed to what I feel like might be casting doubt by asking “Hey, what else can you do other than play the tuba or euphonium?” I don’t want that put that doubt in motion with my students because I believe that the brain is the thing I am training the very most to get the musician I want and the person who is going to be the most successful.

CD: I don’t know that I have ever felt doubt with Dr. Skillen presenting things to us. Like, he’ll assign a project, one semester it was to create an app..

DT: I think it is brilliant, I really do.

CD: Right, it never felt contrived, and I thought it could be a neat experience that we could have fun with and gain valuable knowledge from. One semester was to do an audio recording project and we had to pick something to record at various stages and we had to use audacity or pro tools to work with the recording, and edit the recording for the project. It was more to expose us to things that could be additional skillsets at our disposal rather than it being contrived.

DT: I think it is great, and I’m just saying I wouldn’t have the wherewithal to critique that work. I wouldn’t want someone to do it if couldn’t offer good feedback, as opposed to just saying “That was a cool experience, what did you think?” that would be my response to it, because none of that stuff would I be able to have any expertise or be able to offer additional help at all. I think
the fact that he is exposing you to it, and it could show you another part of your musicianship that you wouldn’t have discovered otherwise. I’m just saying the reason I don’t do it is because I can’t offer any feedback. So, it isn’t a negative, at all, it is actually a positive.

CD: So, again, like I mentioned earlier, one of the things I admire about your career is the diversity that you bring to our field. Besides being a world class euphonium player, you have other things that are at your disposal; trombone playing, conducting, chamber skills. Where did you learn these skills and when did you begin to utilize them?

DT: That is the question that I have been waiting for you to ask. The things you know me to be good at now, I have been doing since HS. At no point were these things I thought I might do in order to be successful in music. That is the, rub is too strong a word, but that is where I feel like the diversity piece in music has gone sort of sideways. Because these were genuine interests and passions that I had that I decided to cultivate without thinking of them in any kind of career way, you know? Really until I was a senior in college, and when I auditioned for the marine band and they found out I was fat when they moved the screen, I thought I was going to have a career as a euphonium player in one of the service bands because that’s what we were taught to think. But, at the point where I learned you have to have military specs in order to be in the military that was it for me. I was never going to be 165 or whatever you have to be at 5’9”. That wasn’t in the cards. So, at that point it became, well, maybe I’ll study trombone, not get a degree in it, but go practice more and study with a teacher and win an orchestra job. The whole time I was still taking conducting lessons with one of the primary ensemble conductors because I was curious about it and interested in it, not because I thought it was going to make me more marketable, per se. So, I studied conducting both junior and senior year of college and both years of my masters and all three years of my doctorate I was in a conducting studio. So more than I was in a tuba/euphonium studio in my whole college career. And with trombone, while I didn’t study every semester, I played trombone in multiple ensemble since my freshmen year of college. If you take it all the way back since 10th grade when I learned the instrument so I could play it in marching band. I have always been doing it, it wasn’t anything that I thought I needed to do, it was stuff I wanted to do. So, when I got my first job at Alabama State, my job was to teach Low Brass, and the reason I believe I got the job was because I could play the trombone so well. The euphonium playing was what was expected but the fact that I could play the trombone at a high level was a bonus. So, when I got there I taught low brass, along with the Director/Dean of the School of Music, we started the Wind Ensemble and that is when my conducting career started. It was because I was in the right place, at the right time. They didn’t have a concert band that met year-round. So, we started one together. And the rest is history.

CD: So, the things you have, it wasn’t because you felt you needed to, it was because you wanted to do it?

DT: Yeah…it was things I was interested in, they weren’t out of necessity, they were desires, things I wanted.

CD: That is how tuba is with me, I picked it up a little later than you did with trombone and conducting, but, it was something I wanted to do, I liked the rep and wanted to play it.
DT: See, to me, that makes all the sense in the world to do it that way. That is why I wouldn’t force a second thing on a student. I talk to my euphonium players about it all the time. And in many ways, I was one of the first euphonium players to be hired in the way they are being hired now. Meaning you can do multiple things. Remember my first job was a low brass job. Those jobs went to trombones and tuba players got tuba/euphonium jobs. So, euphonium players were left out in the woods, but now there are a lot of us who have full time teaching jobs, see Jamie Lipton, see Matt Mireles, see Ben Pierce, but all of us had to cultivate some other kind of skill. Whether it was out of necessity for someone like Jamie, and to a certain degree like Ben, or it was something you just did like it was for me. So, that sort of became the way, but mine was on accident.

CD: And it seems like there’s a lot of people now who are trying to diversify, it almost seems like, for the sake of diversifying.

DT: Yeah, and that doesn’t necessarily surprise me. That makes it hard but, I do understand why we have to do that and the fact that it should be substantiated and I feel like in my case, by simply accepting that my students might have a secondary interest outside of the euphonium…by simply accepting that I am doing the best I can do to cultivate it. Does that make sense?

CD: Yes, it totally does.

DT: Yes. It is tough for me to push those things because I don’t know enough about them. I wouldn’t have thought to have you make an app. That’s brilliant. I wouldn’t even have that thought. I say a lot in lessons like “If I were a better studio teacher, I would have you do this, and this, and this.” I say that a lot, and the reason I say that is because I don’t want to monitor those things because I don’t feel like I should turn what I view the opportunity to train the musician into the opportunity to train a technician of some kind of whatever the case might be. But, I’ll mention it so that it, in that tongue-in-cheek way, if I were better, I would make you do these scale patterns, or this, or blah, blah, blah…Basically saying this is stuff you should be doing, I don’t want to monitor, I just want it to show up in your playing. So, I say that often, but I try to keep my focus in the studio about music making and what it takes to be successful as a musician. Meaning, you have to be good at this, that is my primary job at this for you, and you have to be a person that people want to be around, but I don’t want to monitor those things.

CD: So, I think I know where this next question is going to go, but…

DT: [laughter]

CD: …because a lot of what you have said, but, do you have broad outcomes in mind for your students when they graduate from your institution? Are they different for undergraduate and graduate students?

DT: Yes, and no, and yes, kind of. So, yes, they are different by degree. With undergraduate students, I don’t necessarily establish tangible goals for them. I want them to learn how to practice, that is the main objective. I want them to, if possible, fall in love with music. Those are the goals I have for them, just in a broad brushstroke. I want them to learn how to practice and
fall in love with music, not in love with the instrument, in love with music. With graduate students, I teach them in such a way that shows them they haven’t fallen in love with music, or that they haven’t learned how to practice, or they are not on track for what an advanced degree suggests that you should be able to work in this field. SO that is the sort of long term goal for graduate students, it’s to make them able to work in the field. Not to find them work, but to make them to have the ability to work in the field. Because, that is what an advanced degree suggests. You should be able to move to a town, set up a private studio, start teaching. You should be able to show up on a gig where sight reading is involved and not fall flat on your face. You should be able to be a threat, if not win, playing audition, if one shows up. With a doctorate, you should be able to do all of those things, in addition, to be able to win a college teaching position. I want to put you in a position to be able to do those things rather than have them be goals. Because, you can, a lot of people with a finished doctorate will not be employed by a university and will not win a playing job because of their degree of excellence. That is the thing that as an applied teacher I have the most control over. I feel like that is the primary part of my job, to make that happen or suggest that a student does not have it and try to figure out why, so that maybe they come up with the conclusion that this is the wrong path or they need to do something else. They have my full support either way, but they come to that conclusion on their own and they go at it at their own risk, which I bring out as much as I can. Does that answer that?

CD: Yes, and it’s kind of where I thought you were going to go, in that it would be performance centered and helping them to get ready to take on that job whatever it may be.

DT: But, not to win it. Those are different things. If you were to ask Dan Perantoni that question, he would say “I’m preparing that person to win the next job.” That is not what I am doing. I am preparing them to be able to win the next job. That is very different.

CD: Right, that’s what I meant.

DT: No, I just want to make sure that is clear. Because I don’t want to ever seem like I promise a student that they will win a job. I can say “You’re strongly on the right path, I think you’re going to hit based on the way things are going.” Usually I am right about that, I haven’t been wrong about that yet and when I tell a student [I think] they’ve got it, or have a strong feeling... and because I can say it with a certain confidence based on our relationship and how I know the field to work. Does that make sense?

CD: So, thinking about pedagogy and trying to incorporate new ways into how we are teaching, being that technology has become a large part of society, I am just curious if you use electronic teaching tools in your teaching and if so, how do you feel the availability of these materials impacts the effectiveness of your teaching?

DT: I’m still pretty old school, I use the Metronome on my phone, I guess you can count that, and I also use the recorder on his phone. I still believe in those tried and true methods. My tuner is on my phone. If I were more tech savvy, I would probably use wav files more. Record and put it into audacity to show crescendo/decrescendo, rate of speed, and all of that thought that kind of thing. But, I feel like I would have to study that to be good at it, and to be honest, I just haven’t made the time to study it to be good at it. But, I would use things like that. I also use hip hop
instrumental tracks in my teaching for time keeping rather than using a metronome all the time. I want to teach placement of rhythm rather than just rhythm. Where to put things and the time that it takes to…the duration of notes, and I find that hip hop tracks helps me to better talk about placement because usually in a hip-hop track there is something that is usually right there in the beat where I want students to place something [like a] clap sound, the snap sound, whatever it would be. Then they clap or snap in that spot, and that is the same place as that Vivaldi rhythm, and it gives a better reference of things.

CD: I use the Drum Beats+ app, which is very similar to what you are talking about. There are different folders, like a hip-hop folder, or heavy metal folder and I use different beats all the time to help instead of a regular metronome.

DT: Yeah, and I think that is cool. The only reason I use actual hip hop is because they are listening to that. I am trying to get them to, as I said earlier, I have a three-step process for listening and I am trying to get them to listen, even to their pop music with some kind of detail so that it isn’t just on while they are cooking or playing Fortnite or whatever. I want it to be an active experience as opposed to a passive one.

CD: So, have you recently implemented some new teaching methods or goals? I would like for you to touch on that three-step process for listening if you don’t mind.

DT: I don’t have any new teaching goals or techniques. I think the one thing that I have started to cultivate in my teaching, I have always been about it, but I am checking it out more is the relationship between the mouthpiece and the embouchure. I am more sensitive to that in my latter years of teaching than I used to be. Because, the issues we mostly run across as players are related to the mouthpiece and the embouchure, meaning chipped notes and things like that, I think they are more related to the embouchure than I used to think it was. I used to think it was all ear related, but sometimes it’s the marriage of equipment isn’t quite right. So, I check that out a little more than I used to. So, I have a process which I take students through, that I think need to. So, if they play the euphonium, I have them buzz the mouthpiece to see where the natural buzz wants to be and I try to get the same feeling in the mouthpiece. Or if tuba players are too tense in their playing, which I often find to be the case, or can’t focus enough to play high, I have them play on a smaller mouthpiece to see where their embouchure really wants to vibrate and I tweak from there. You know, top lip vibrating on the bottom lip, get the corners to be firmer, airstream downward. I talk about the buzzing surface of the embouchure being squarely inside the rim, I don’t want any of it touching the rim if you are going to play as efficiently as you can. I check a lot of that out, particularly with my undergraduate students. That’s about it in terms of concepts and techniques that I would consider new. It’s not new, it is just something that I have focused on a little bit more. So the listening thing, I just talk about listening in three dimensions. There is listening to like something or dislike it, the initial reaction to listening, then there is listening to figure out why you like or dislike something, and then there is deciding how you are going to use it in your own musicianship, in your own way of thinking about music. What about these attributes that you dislike that you could avoid in your own playing, in your own music making. What about the things you like that you could utilize in your own playing or become more knowledgeable about. So, for instance, let’s say you are listening to a Baroque piece, for example, and there is a particular chord progression that you really like. Analyze it, figure out
what it is doing that you like, there’s a bunch of V/V’s in a row that resolve on the dominant, the [intensity]. Figure out what other kinds of things in music do that, like sequences, and all of a sudden you can make sequences feel a certain way because you can reference a piece you love and now you can create that same feeling in your own playing with a different piece. Or things that you dislike…I really hate the abstract nature of this piece, I can’t quite understand it…can you analyze it to see what’s going on, and maybe, you see what you didn’t understand is how it was put together, or the performance rather than the piece itself – find another performance, if your feelings don’t change you might just not like that type of music. So, we try to avoid that type of music in concert presentations, because until you are able to do this better, you won’t present that music in a very good way, it will sound like you don’t like the music because you don’t have a way to process it yet. Keep listening and listening until you can utilize what you like and dislike about music as opposed to keeping it at the surface level – “I don’t like this so I won’t listen to it or I love this so I am going to listen to just this all the time.”

CD: Okay. That’s a new way of thinking about it for me.

DT: But you see how that, to me, that is instructional as I can be about how to listen and why you should listen. To me, that is where I feel like I have gained, maybe, the most information I have through listening, with the combination of the studies that I have had. That is the perfect marriage. Listening to music and relying on my academic study, that is including the applied studio to make that listening experience go further for me than it would have otherwise.

CD: So, how do you see the future of music teaching, specifically tuba/euphonium studio teaching, evolving in the future? Are there steps we should be taking now to move in that direction?

DT: That’s a great question…The biggest [change] that I am starting to see is accepting the fact that students aren’t going to necessarily subscribe to what I think of now as, and it sounds terrible, but, good music. There’s going to be music that student’s want to play that I am not necessarily going to think is the right thing for them, nor will I think it is worthwhile music. And that sounds very judgmental, but that’s going to be the thing that we will have to adjust to. There will be students who come in to you writing music and wanting to play their music on performances and you don’t think it’s good music, and you don’t think they should be doing it yet…but, by telling them not to do it, even in the nicest way, it will look like you are taking away from their thing. So, I am bracing myself for that. I am bracing myself for the fact that students may come in playing instruments that I don’t think are good quality instruments, because there are so many relatively good, not good instruments being made. And, so, talking to students about equipment will get tougher as well. I also think in studio teaching we also have to brace ourselves for the necessity to reference music. It is going to be difficult to teach students music without someone ever having played that piece before. There is a real tendency now for students to not want to play something if they can’t have heard it first. That I find as a studio teacher now to be very difficult, because, I still play a lot of things for the first time. Meaning that there is no reference recording for…and I have to be the one to come up with the way for it to go, you know? With maybe the aide of the composer and maybe the aid of a MIDI file, but not a person actually making the music happen. Those are decisions that I have to make by myself. So, bracing myself for those things. [I am] also bracing myself for people wanting to study
multiple instruments, at the same time, because the diversity piece is more important now than it used to be. I still like feel like, particularly for the undergraduate degree, that learning to be a musician still is the primary focus, but that is a hard sell.

CD: Okay, food for thought.

DT: It’s just, and I know you know this, but this is just the way I think about it. It’s just my opinion, and I am seeing it play out, to a certain degree, particularly at Samford…whereas at IU I still have that card-carrying euphonium guy that doesn’t want to play trombone, doesn’t want to do conducting, doesn’t want to do anything but prepare a [military] band job. And, I don’t have a problem with that either, as long as they know that the chances of that are slim, just because the number of jobs and the number of people who want them. It doesn’t mean they are not capable, but just that it is a harder road. As long as they are comfortable with that, then I am going to teach them the way they want to be taught, through my lens. So, I have no problem with that, because the student has made the decision to charter this path, and I am totally fine with that.

CD: Yeah, I was talking with Andrew Hitz earlier this week and he thinks there should be a place for that. There should be a place for people who only want to do orchestral stuff, for them to learn to do that and not every place needs to, you know, have this versatility aspect added to it. But, with that being said, versatility is still important.

DT: See, to me, when you say there should be a place, I don’t always think it’s a place, I think it’s a person that can train you in this way.

CD: And, actually he did reference that, and that is what I was meaning. He said, if you have a student that wants to do “X”, Dr. Joe might be one of the five best teachers for that one student, but, you might have student “Y” where Dr. Joe is one of the 50 best students because of what that teacher wants to achieve. I think that is what I was getting at, that there is a right person for every student.

DT: See, I think that there can be a person who is in the top 1 for everything that you want. You know what I mean? Dr. Joe could be in the top 5 for all of those things, and that is where I think one can get into trouble. Because, I don’t know enough about Dr. Joe, just to keep using him, to know that he is not this, or not that. How can I…what do I have to judge that on? Is it his success of former students? Is it his playing? Is it my judgement of his playing? Is it my judgement of a one on lesson situation with him? What gives me the right to say what kind of teacher he is, or isn’t? That is where I feel like students get into a lot of trouble, because every student that gets into Julliard and studies with Joe Alessi doesn’t win an orchestra job. That’s what he is typecast to do. And, there’s some people who won an orchestra job. You see what I’m getting at? It doesn’t always have to be that. The last two winners of major tuba auditions studied with me. But, no one in the field considers me a tuba teacher. Right? The last two major jobs were won by former students of mine. I’m not saying their other teachers didn’t help them, of course they did. But, they just so happened to go through my studio. That’s the thing that they both have in common. So, there can be a singular person for everything. And, that is why I talk about excellence so much. There is excellence in everything. I think there is excellence in teaching, no
different than excellence in performance. There are some of us who are really excellent at both. Music is music. Excerpts are easier music than concertos.

CD: Yep.

DT: There is nothing in an excerpt that is harder than the middle of the road euphonium concerto or trombone concerto or tuba concerto or flute concerto. Music is Music.

CD: So, the last question I have for you is if you have faced opposition in your teaching methods or other innovations in your career? How did you work to overcome those barriers?

DT: Yes, I have. Particularly when it comes to changing equipment and changing embouchures. I have received a lot of opposition for people not wanting to do it, people not choosing to study with me because I suggest they need that to happen in order to be as good as they can be. I don’t try to overcome it, honestly. What I do is recommend them to teachers who I don’t think would take them through that. You know, teachers who I know on record don’t like to mess with people’s faces, who I think are really good teachers and have turned out really good students. That’s my reference point. I tend not to decide that I am not going to do that or fight a student on it. What I’ll do is say, understand that if you don’t want to, then we are working under these parameters. If that’s cool, then that is what we will do. So, we can craft the repertoire to disguise it and do a lot of things to keep it from showing up, but know that isn’t the reason were not able to play this piece and this piece and I don’t know a way to make you better without changing these things. So, rather than saying I am changing, it is more like adapting to what the student wants. I really pride myself, Chasse, on being student centered. I am about the learner. But, I have to come at it from a knowledgeable place, a point that the student must believe that I am the person that can take them to the next step and if I don’t feel the student can do that, then I feel the relationship is all screwed up. Then I have to get them to someone that can get, can have their vision in mind, because mine can’t change because it would be disingenuine.

CD: I guess that is where you are getting at when you say there is one best teacher for everybody?

DT: It could be, yes.

CD: So, I mean a loose correlation maybe, but at least it is part of it where you realize you might not be the best teacher for this person because of, this “x” thing.

DT: Yeah. The way they think about music, or something in their background, or whatever the case might be. I am willing to concede that I am not a good fit for this person and I am going to work tirelessly for that person to find them someone that works well for them. I have suggested to multiple students that they should transfer based on our relationship, working relationship, that I am not getting the best out of them and they are not being able to take what I give. That’s okay. That’s why people get divorced, that’s why people change jobs…a lot of things change because the relationship doesn’t work well. I’m alright with that and I try to get to that place as soon as I can, too, because I don’t want a student spinning their wheels and wasting their money to work with me if the relationship, the marriage, isn’t going to be good for that amount of time. I am
really honest with myself, because where it comes across as a failure, I feel like I am doing my best to help that student succeed, so it’s not about me.

CD: Well, that is awesome. That is all I had planned for today.

DT: Do you have any follow up questions? I may not have answered everything thoroughly. You asked very good questions, and I felt in some ways they were leading questions, and I may not have addressed some of the direction you wanted them to go, so I am happy to expound on things if you have a more specific way to ask it.

CD: No, I kind of followed up throughout with things that I wanted to clarify or talk about. I think I got the information I was hoping to gather, so, we’re good. Thank you.

Gretchen Renshaw James Interview Transcript

CD: What do you believe are the most important skills for musicians in the 21st century to possess?

GRJ: I think the idea of being versatile is important to me and it is important for students, because the landscape of the music world, and the world in general, seems to be changing so much that the wider variety of things you can offer, the more easily you will be able to adapt whatever is going to come in the music world. So, for me, that ended up being having this conducting degree, or pathway, to add to my tuba and euphonium because in my own job searches I was looking and seeing what jobs were out there, and there were so few jobs that were tuba/euphonium specific jobs. So, that was something that played out for me in a really positive way. Being versatile and having this other skill really helped me to get my foot in the door in the collegiate realm.

CD: So, you just think that it is important for all musicians to work to possess that versatility.

GRJ: I think yes, to some extent. Now, I say that being aware of the whole jack of all trades, master of none thing. I don’t want that, and I’m not trying to advocate for that. But, I think possessing a variety of skills is helpful to at least get started. I think one of my own big ideas is for me to start off being able to offer a lot of different things and perhaps, in the future, being able to zero in on one or two things that I would like to specialize in and be able to perfect. That is kind of the transitional phase I find myself in right now. But, it just seems that with the large number of musicians that are getting advanced degrees that are going after the same few jobs, in order to make yourself, well, in a position to be able to earn a living, it seems that being able to do a number of different things, at least to get started is a really smart pathway.

CD: I agree. So then, with the versatility aspect in mind, what do you view the role of the applied studio professor to be in the 21st century? More broadly: describe the ideal tuba/euphonium program that would best serve twenty-first century tuba/euphonium students?

GRJ: I think that, honestly, I am going to draw a lot on my own experiences, and in particular my first teacher, Velvet Brown at Penn State. I always think of her as the person who kickstarted me
being involved in a lot of different things. Her role for me was to suggest “Oh why don’t you think about this?” or “Oh, why don’t you try that out?” So, in addition, she was the one who was really starting to look ahead for me to help me know that if I was going to go on the college teaching pathway, here are some good things to think about. She was the one who considered the possibility of me playing tuba. She suggested it to me and explained why it would be a good idea. She was there person who started me on the tuba. I already had euphonium and she helped me to add tuba. I think what that comes down to is that the professor needs to be plugged in to what’s happening outside of his/her own walls, being aware of the student’s goals, and being knowledgeable, to some degree, of what it would take for the student to achieve those goals. Along with that encouraging the student to have a focus that is not so narrow that the student pigeon holes themselves into such a specific career field that would be extremely difficult to break into, so to speak. I think it is a matter of the teacher looking out for the student’s interests, what they are wanting to do in the future, and what they are to help that student get a broad base of skills.

CD: One of the things that Dr. Skillen does here is that he has 24 different topics of projects, performances, and presentations that each student completes by the end of their 4 year degree if they are an undergrad. So, some of the skill sets he encourages us to possess are recording, videography, composing/arranging, electronic exploration, pedagogy, creating an app, listening assignments, and entrepreneurship. With those skill sets in mind, what skillsets, besides performing, do you encourage in your studio/applied lesson teaching?

GRJ: Well, one of the things I want to throw it out there to make sure that you know, so far, they have all been non-music majors. So, what I am going to say in response to your question is what I would do if I had a studio of music majors because obviously the needs of a music major are different than the students that I work with. For a music major, I would absolutely, first and foremost, if I were in a school that offered both music education and performance degrees, I would basically insist that all of my students pursue a music education degree. I guess that would fall under the category of teaching and pedagogy in general. So, then, conducting because there are so many people who would end up conducting something at some point that it would be a great skill set to have. I absolutely agree with you on the recording, you mentioned the recording and video and having basic skills doing that kind of stuff to build your portfolio to get yourself out there. One other thing I would probably push would be arranging skills, because that has been important to me for getting things published and getting some things out there, but also when I am working with my band sometimes I have to rearrange parts for different instruments. So, having knowledge of different instruments has been beneficial for me.

CD: One of the things I admire about your career is the diversity that you bring to our field. Besides being a world class performer, I notice that you also have a wide variety of skillsets at your disposal. Where did you learn these skills and when did you begin to utilize them?

GRJ: I think honestly, it started with Velvet. She was the one who got me to be proactive in exploring things other than playing the euphonium. I was very much about the euphonium in my undergraduate degree. That led me to do some minor level conducting lessons during my master’s degree at the University of Arkansas, which was technically a euphonium degree, even though I was also doing tuba there. I also ended up giving a recital, a conducting recital, and
actually ended up conducting the orchestra by the end of my time there. That is what gave me the materials in that background to be able to do an actual Master’s degree that I did in conjunction with my tuba DMA at Michigan State. So, that is how I approached that. Kind of gradually getting my foot in the door, so to speak, and gradually gaining experience so that I could be a viable candidate for a master’s degree. Velvet again was the beginning of the arranging thing. Early on during my undergraduate degree she had every single person in the studio do an arrangement, at least something small, for the tuba/euphonium ensemble to give us experience doing this. I found that I really enjoyed it. So, I did probably more arrangements than I was required to do because I thought it was fun and the experience was really helpful. She was also guiding me and showing me that it could be a useful skill to have down the road. The recording thing was again, really because of her. Early on she was encouraging me to be a part of competitions, and as you know so many competitions in the tuba/euphonium world require a recording to get into the competition. So, going through the process of entering competitions forced me to learn about how the recording process works. I didn’t just want to sit back and let someone else take care of it for me. I wanted to learn how the process worked, so I developed some basic knowledge of how that happens.

CD: Are you speaking about editing recordings?

GRJ: Uh, yes, of course. We are doing recordings live, but there are still some little tweaks you’re going to make. Like cutting off the first two seconds and the last two seconds. Knowing where to place the microphones, and that kind of stuff. Learning from the people I was working with about those kinds of things. So, I think those are kind of the main things. The ITEA Journal was being in the right place at the right time. Ben Pierce was just taking over being the overall journal editor when I was at Arkansas studying with him. In a lesson one day he said “Hey, do you want to have a job working with the ITEA Journal?” and I said “Yes, I think that would be a positive for me.” So, I signed on as a news editor and now it is more specifically the new hire stuff. So, sometimes stuff like that just falls out of the sky.

CD: So, with the ITEA Journal stuff, you have written some articles and things for the journal. Was there anything you did whether at Penn St. or Arkansas before your dissertation, because obviously that is research intensive, but were there any things you did to develop research skills prior to your DMA?

GRJ: I think the beginning of it was the Simone Mantia project that I did. Again, that was a Velvet Brown driven thing. There was a thing called “Summer Discovery Grants” at Penn St. that gave funding to do research related projects during the summer. I just so happened to play in a concert community band with a guy who had a collection of Simone Mantia materials from the early 1900’s. He told me there were so many things that I could do with the materials, so I started with archiving it. So, that process began me getting involved in research. I think honestly after that it was mostly coursework I was taking that prepared me for dissertation level research. You know, everyone has to take a graduate level research kind of class at some point during their graduate degrees. And then my coursework at Arkansas and Michigan State, the musicology classes had a fairly heavy amount of research involved in the papers we were writing for them. For me, a lot of the learning happened in the coursework I had to take.
CD: Okay. That question stems from, like I mentioned earlier, the presentations we do as part of the studio here. So, one semester the presentation topic for the studio will be important teachers. So, everybody is assigned an important teacher, and then every student has to research that teacher and present that information to the studio. I didn’t know if there were any projects like that you were exposed to along the way.

GRJ: I think the closest thing I had to that was that Velvet did, primarily for the grad students, but she allowed undergrads to be a part of it, she would do tuba/euphonium pedagogy or literature courses. Ben Pierce did that at U of A as well. There were times throughout those classes where we had to research the history of the tuba and euphonium. That was as much for our own information as much as helping prepare for the U of A comprehensive oral exams, the thing we had to do at the end of our degree. So, I guess there was a little bit of that kind of stuff in there as well.

CD: The next question is, do you have broad outcomes in mind for your students when they graduate from your institution? Are they different for undergraduate and graduate students? I guess now that I know that you aren’t teaching music majors, this will probably be hypothetical.

GRJ: Even in the band I only have one or two music majors in the group. My, music department really primarily serves non-music majors. So, for what it is worth, the goals I have for them is to grow the knowledge and appreciation of music from both a performing and listening standpoint. Ultimately, I hope that they have the tools and the inspiration and enjoyment to keep playing, where they go after Hendrix. That is my basic goal for them. If, hypothetically, for undergrad and graduate students that outcomes will largely be driven by what the students want to do. Because, the needs will be different if they are wanting to do different routes. For undergraduates, I mentioned before that if I were to be in the position to do so, I would practically require all of my students to do an education degree so that they have that pedagogical and educational background to use. Beyond that, for graduate students, really beyond the music education thing, that is the one strong thing I keep coming back to because it really depends on what the student wants to do. It becomes an individual plan. Like if you want to go take military auditions then I am going to suggest that you go work with these people because they are specialists in the field. That would be what I would suggest for those types of situations.

CD: I want to dive a little deeper. So, if you were to be at a place that had more music majors, when students graduate from your institution what do you hope they are able to do?

GRJ: Do you want me to talk specifically about the performing aspect of things, or just kind of everything?

CD: A generalization would be fine.

GRJ: Okay. I think would come back to the versatility thing again. I would hope all of my students would possess a variety of skills that they could use so that they could go after their primary goal. Say that is to be a High School band director, or something like that. They could go after that, but they may also have other things they enjoy doing, and can do and can offer.
From a grad student perspective, it would be a similar thing, but maybe being more specific about performance skills they would absolutely need to have if they are going to be heading into a DMA program for example. That kind of stuff would revolve around versatility of playing abilities. Can this person do the orchestral stuff, solo stuff, and chamber stuff? Perhaps even a tiny bit of jazz if that were to be called upon. It keeps coming back to the versatility aspect for me.

CD: Are there electronic teaching tools in your teaching and if so, how do you feel the availability of these materials impacts the effectiveness of your teaching?

GRJ: I recently got this giant speaker in my office. I use that all the time in my lessons. So, primarily it is for basic stuff like a metronome, playing drones, having students play along with those things and use them as a practice tool to develop their time and intonation. More specifically, you’re probably familiar with the tonal energy app, and as long as I can convince my students to spend the 4 or 5 bucks to buy this app… I just use it all the time in lessons and eventually I wear them down, and they eventually agree that it would be a very useful thing. Specifically, one of the newer kinds of things I have used with that app is the analysis tool where it shows you the sound waves that you are creating as you are playing. Have you seen this part of it?

CD: Yes, I use it all the time.

GRJ: So, I was drawn to use it in a new kind of way when we were doing some Seraph Brass rehearsals over the summer and I was hearing myself being a hair, and I mean a hair late. Primarily at the start of entrances, but in general that’s where I was sitting. But, I use the analysis part now, I turn on the metronome in the app itself so I can see the vertical clicking lines. Then I play along with it and I can actually see if I am playing a perfectly in time or if I am a little bit behind. I have started using this with my students recently too if I need to visually prove to them how they are doing in terms of their time. Of course, there are other uses like steadiness of tone, intonation, and all kinds of things. I feel like are far more possibilities that I can learn from TE, but that is where I am now.

CD: Have you heard of the Drum Beats+ app?

GRJ: I have not. What does that one do?

CD: It has over, I think, 300 different drum beats. So, a lot of them are free, but you can buy additional packages that have different drum beats. I actually use this with a lot of my students because it is a lot more fun to play scales, exercises, or even solos with a drum beat behind you rather than the constant repetitive clicking of the metronome. It just helps to instill a sense of groove. It was something that Dr. Skillen was pushing me to purchase for a long time when I started my DMA here. Boston Brass came down and Sam Pilafian was working with our quintet and put on the drum beats+ app and told us we needed to use it. I bought it the next day. It is awesome and I use it more than a regular metronome.
GRJ: That is awesome. I love what you’re saying about the whole groove thing as opposed to just playing in time. So much of what we are doing is reliant on the idea of having a groove as opposed to just having a click.

CD: Yes. I am working on Pearls for a recital in February and there is a samba groove in the app and I put that on instead of just a metronome. It really helps with the field of the piece and it helps the piece dance more, so to say. So, continuing with the pedagogy thing and working to constantly develop, have you recently implemented some new teaching methods or goals? What are they and have you experienced some new outcomes?

GRJ: Yes, I think this would still be recent enough that it would be relevant. Honestly, one of the most recent things has to do with the TE thing, like I was telling you. On a bigger picture scale, it was last year it was that I started using certain books with every student in my studio, now my studio is only 4 or 5 people, so keep that in mind. However, in my own practicing I was realizing how important airflow, in general was. When I first started at Hendrix and was learning the job, it was really difficult for me to practice on a regular basis, quite frankly. So, one of the discoveries that came out of this for me was that I learned to rely more on what my air was doing instead of what the lips felt like. Because, in that first year, I could pretty much guarantee that those lips weren’t going to feel good. Simply because of how the practice schedule was. So, that lead me personally to rely on this book called Flow Studies by David Vining. Are you familiar with that book, by chance?

CD: Yep.

GRJ: Super. So that became something I used as essentially as the basis of my warm-up. So, last year I decided that I was going to take my students through that entire book. So, no matter what they would come out of Hendrix and have something that they could use to keep themselves in some kind of basic playing shape and could do it while relying on airflow. Which, like I said, has become the most important thing to me. So that is probably the biggest pedagogical thing change or update that I have made. Along with that mixing in other things that seemed to be needed in some of my students. So for some students mouthpiece buzzing is really effective. So it is using the Vining as a basis and supplementing other things that are important. And, now that I am thinking about the mouthpiece buzzing, that has also become a really regular thing for all of my students because it has become a really regular thing for me. So, it seems, as I am talking this out that my pedagogy is very much based on whatever I happen to be doing on the tuba or the euphonium that seems to be successful for me at that time. Then, I usually have my students do the same thing in some way.

CD: You mentioned the David Vining Flow studies book. I use that one but not as frequently as I use the Wolfgang Guggenberger Basics Plus. Are you familiar with that one?

GRJ: Yes, I use that one too.

CD: Yeah, I have been using that one every day with my students because it is a lot of those simple air flow things in there. So, it is a book I use pretty heavily. But, yes, the flow studies book is great too.
GRJ: There are some things in the Vining that are a little complicated, but I assign it to my students for them to work on for a week and they get through it. It is very manageable.

CD: How do you see the future of music teaching, specifically tuba/euphonium studio teaching, evolving in the future? Are there steps we should be taking now to move in that direction?

GRJ: A first thought would be that I think technology will continue to be widely available, as the younger generation of tech friendly tuba/euphonium friendly teachers begin to enter the field, I think we are probably going to see a large majority of studios using and relying on a variety of technology to help students be successful. So we are already talking about these apps that we use, and I could envision continued emphasis on having studios set up with ways to record and have instant playback, perhaps having visual tools along with the recording and playback so that they can hear and see what they are sounding like. I think the technology thing is a big thing in general so it makes sense that you are thinking and asking about that. Otherwise I think that, as has been a theme, the whole idea of being versatile seems to be really important. I have been reading or hearing things about the idea that there is a big gig economy, and while those full time positions might be fewer and farther between, a lot of people are able to make things work by putting together a wide variety of gigs. So, not only versatility being able to do, all those different things and create an income for yourself, but also the entrepreneurial skills and marketing skills that go along with making that happen. That is something that I have learned a lot with Seraph Brass and working with Mary Bowden, who is the founder of that group. So, I think that is some of the things looking forward. It seems like there is increasing talk about the marketing and entrepreneurship things these days. Which seems to make a lot of sense.

CD: I am going to add a question here, just piggy backing off of what you just said. Are there any ways, or ideas you have, to expose your students to different types of entrepreneurial or marketing skills that would make them more versatile? Are there any ideas that you have?

GRJ: Honestly, I started developing some knowledge of that world by seeing soloists or guest artists or chamber groups come to my different schools and talk about those things. I forgot what group it was, but they came to Michigan State, but they actually did a workshop with us. [They did a hypothetical scenario where we were to] Imagine you are creating your chamber group, how would you promote yourself, what photos would you have, what would your message be?” That I remember being a pretty impactful thing, so an interactive entrepreneurship workshop that was led by a visiting group. One of the things that Michigan State is doing, and has done a lot since I left is a program called Running Start. It is really geared towards these kinds of external and extra skills, some of the things it sounds like Joe Skillen is having you work on and think about. So, that is one specific example of a school that has invested in a program that is dedicated to these kinds of things. Those are ways that I can see approaching some of this kind of stuff.

CD: What was the program called?

GRJ: It is called Running Start. I think they have a Facebook page. This may be on the college of music website, too. One of the things they were already doing while I was there, was that they
had “Running Start” grants. Which they gave opportunities for students to do something outside of or above and beyond their typical degree work that wouldn’t only be beneficial for them and the people they were working with, but also really good in terms of giving that student something extra on the resume or CV that might set them apart as they move forward into the job market.

CD: I will definitely check that out.

GRJ: Yes, it is really super. It is really, really smart. They have a person who they have hired, a full-time person, to run this thing. It is an investment, certainly, but it is really positive.

CD: Part of the reason I am doing this document is that, Dr. Skillen obviously as he is approaching the student teaching feels that something needs to change from the typical conservatory model where we show up play excerpts and play solos and you’re going to leave and be really good at playing tuba and that’s it.

GRJ: I totally agree. I am so glad to know and learn that this is his approach. Not only for your sake, but for all of the students going through his studio at LSU. I totally agree that you cannot get by doing one thing really well, anymore.

CD: That is something that Seth Godin… Have you read his speech he gave at Carnegie Hall?

GRJ: No, I don’t think so.

CD: You can get a transcription on Andrew Hitz’s website. That’s where I found it and read it. You talk about the versatility and he talks about that a lot in his speech that he gave there. It has been a fundamental component of my research for this type of thing because he says we shouldn’t be preparing our students to place fourth at a cello audition that is only taking three cellos. What are we preparing that student for if that is the only thing they are working towards? They might win a job with the New York Phil, but if they don’t what are they going to do?

GRJ: Yes, exactly.

CD: That is the whole catalyst behind what Dr. Skillen is doing. He wants his students to be successful no matter what they choose to do and he is giving us the skill sets to be successful.

GRJ: It is interesting that you are mentioning this. My husband, actually, kind of fell into that pathway, so to speak. He has become really good at the trumpet and has gone straight through his degrees, got a Doctorate in trumpet, started off with a BA, got a Master’s degree in trumpet and DMA in trumpet and he really struggled for a number of years with trying to land a full-time job. SO, he is just now actually completing a Music Ed degree at UCA, which is fortunately right here in our same town, so that he can increase his versatility and range as a teacher and ultimately have a license that is going to allow him to teach in the public schools. Honestly, that’s one of the reasons why I wouldn’t want to let an undergrad do a performance degree It is something that I am passionate about. I did a performance degree as an undergrad and if I have
one regret from an educational standpoint it is that I wish I had finished the education degree that I had started. Especially now that I am conducting.

CD: It is interesting that you bring up that example, because, another thing that Seth Godin talks about is that if we think about...let’s use tuba as an example... All of the people who are graduating with tuba degrees in the US alone and the number of orchestral and military performance spots, the numbers don’t equal out. There are way many more people graduating with performance degrees or advanced degrees than there are spots available every year. Even if you include teaching positions in that, the numbers still don’t check out. There is not enough work for everybody. That’s another reason behind this. You have got to offer your students and work with them to make them more versatile.

GRJ: And helping young students understand, that is something my husband and I have talked about. I talked this morning a lot about how much Velvet did for me in terms of pushing me to look into other things and get involved in different things and unfortunately, that was not my husband’s experience as an undergrad student. Even through his MM and DMA he was working with teachers who did not necessarily push him, suggest to him that he should be doing other things so he would be a viable candidate for a college job. That is one of the things that, I feel so bad for him that, that was his experience. So, everything that you are talking about, thinking about, everything that Joe Skillen is doing is absolutely what I think needs to happen in terms of how do we get the college students to be aware of what the world is really like our there and how do we prepare them for it.

CD: The last question I have is have you faced opposition, and opposition might be a strong word, in your teaching methods or other innovations in your career? How did you work to overcome those barriers?

GRJ: I don’t think that I have really faced any opposition. At my school Hendrix is super, super supportive, and very thankfully they are supportive of my travelling with Seraph Brass, and there has never been a situation where anything I am trying to do from a teaching or pedagogical standpoint has been problematic. I can’t think of anything where I have had a challenge.

Matt Mireles Interview

CD: What do you believe are the most important skills for musicians in the 21st century to possess?

MM: Do you just want a few or…

CD: Whatever you feel it is important for musicians today to have at their disposal.

MM: As far as important things go, I think it is very important to have a sense of drive and passion for music and all that music does. For instance, there is some satisfaction that comes along with a person performing a piece music. A self-gratifying experience. But, music has a broader scope as far as its impact on the world and community. I think it is important that musicians know and have a passion for what they want to do with music as their identity or
career, because ultimately there is a lot of different things you can do in music. If you have the passion for it, then, you can have…that is the big scope is that passion leads to success. I think students sometimes get into music because they can’t find something else they want to do or couldn’t find anything else. But, it’s really hard to have some success if they don’t carve out their own future or path. I think gone are the days where you can just sit alone in a practice room, practice all day, and win an audition and that is your job for the rest of your life. Music has [recording cut out] Even orchestral musicians that win a job, they are expected to do work in the community through education programs, serve on a board of directors, or serve in an advisory capacity, or do research. There are a lot of different things involved than just playing your instrument or singing. It is important for the musicians first and foremost to have that passion for the impact music can have on a community. Now, getting more specific, I usually tell my students that it is important that they have good interpersonal skills to where they can collaborate with many people, meet people and work well with them…

CD: So, sort of like networking?

MM: Sure, that is another detail. But, it is important that...At St. Mary’s we talk about teaching the whole student. For instance, I teach them specifically in euphonium and band, but I also tailor some of our work to where they are good speakers, writers, well-read in history, politics, math, science, or literature...Because, like I said, nowadays there isn’t one path and that’s what you do. In music, you need to carve out your own identity and your own impact on society. So, in order to do that, it takes a lot of, like you said, a lot of specific skills put together. So, obviously your musicianship is almost a given because everyone is a good musician and very talented. So, if you don’t have that you are very behind. But, then, you need to know how to be a forward thinker, how to be creative in not only the musical process but also your career path. I don’t think anyone really has set out to do one specific thing, like, I didn’t set out to become a professor at St. Mary’s University and Director of Bands. I had a lot of things in mind, opportunities were presented and I was able to get this job and it opened me up to doing stuff with a brass band, I started a summer band camp, etc. I was able to do that because I am well organized, I have my own standards, I have a passion for music and what it can do for me and other people. Does that help a little bit?

CD: Yes, and I kind of want to dive a little deeper into what you just said. You mentioned that you can’t just have one specific path in your career, being an orchestral musician for example, that isn’t the only thing that you are going to do in your career. That is the fundamental principle behind this document and my research, because I realize that is the case. Andrew Hitz and Seth Godin state that math doesn’t work out to say that Chasse is going to win a job with the President’s Own Marine Band, so what am I doing to do if that doesn’t work out? So, what are ways that you work to develop some of those ancillary skills in your students?

MM: So, I’ll speak to that but, first to dive deeper, or if I can add something. Your example is if you win a job with the Marine Band. Let’s say you do win a job with the Marine Band. Even that, even if it is your path and you get it, which like you said the math doesn’t add up, you’re not just sitting there playing your instrument. You’re a member of the military, you do run out concerts, you’re going to be teaching kids, because if you’re anything good of a musician, someone is going to want to learn from you in some capacity. Someone is going to want to know
how you did that. It’s up to you to know how to teach them. But, also, when you are in the band, you’re not just playing you have administrative duties and the ability to be a leader takes a lot of extra stuff. But, back to your other question…Can you state it again?

CD: Sure. What ways do you work to develop some of those skills in your students?

MM: Okay, so, first and foremost, my freshmen students, when I meet with them for the first time in the semester, I have them write me a short paragraph on their goals – long term and short term. Sometimes they are simple and just say they want to be a band director. I just want them to be able to state, in writing, the first time they come to me what their goals are. Because, I used to have a golf coach tell me “If you don’t aim, you’ll never get there.” So, I try to do that with my students. Also, once I know what their goals are, then I can tailor their instruction that way.

CD: So, almost like a reverse engineer thing? Like I want to get into the Marine Band, to use that example again. You just work backwards from there and tell the students what the need to have at their disposal to A) get that position and B) if you do get it these are the things you need to have to be successful in that position.

MM: Absolutely, [reception cut out] and I tell that to my band students all the time. What are our goals? What do we want? And to quote Nick Saban, “This is the process to get there.” Then, we focus on that process. If you don’t have an aim, you are just working aimlessly, so I have them [establish their goals] at first. As far as…Let’s say for example some of my music education students. What I do with them is take them along with me to different meetings or contests so that they can see some of what I call the adult interactions. For instance, if I go to a Board Meeting, a student can come with me to observe what people in the industry do, how they talk, what language they use, what are the rules in a meeting, etc. I take them along as an apprentice type thing. That’s another thing I like to do. As far as work ethic goes, I usually encounter that a lot of students will let me know what they want to do, I’ll show them how to get there, but the last little ingredient to get there is to have the discipline to get there. That is another little challenge as far as helping the student really learn how to structure their own discipline to do the right things. High school exposes students to a lot of different things, whereas college they get to choose what they want to do, and I try to show them what they need to do and it is up to them to be able to put that into action. Ways I subtly help them with that is I will give them some assignments, I wouldn’t say lofty assignments, but they definitely need to occur faster than they are used to. For instance, I can tell how good of a player they are, so I will give them repertoire in plans to do for a recital on a piece that is a little challenging for them. This increases their musicianship as they are working on it, but also, it shows me if they are working on it in a timely manner, efficiently, are they advancing at the rate that they should. Recitals go along with repertoire to help with different things.

CD: What do you view the role of the applied studio professor to be in the 21st century? More broadly: describe the ideal tuba/euphonium program that would best serve twenty-first century tuba/euphonium students?

MM: Broadly in the fact that, what I tell my students in both the euphonium studio and the wind ensemble music education majors, is that music is very much an apprenticeship type industry
where you can read books about it and practice on it, but it really takes work with an individual
to really gain all of the experience that you need and all of the knowledge that you need. So, a
studio professor, I would hope, is doing more than meeting with the students in a lesson and
prescribing etudes, scales, or repertoire for the student. It really should be an opportunity for the
students to view the professor as the person that is in the industry that they want to get to and be
a colleague of in that area. Then, try to just [encapsulate] all of the experiences that the professor
does in an effort to not only view it, but absorb and become part of it. That is what helped me, as
far as I was a student. I would follow the San Antonio symphony players, or chamber ensemble
rehearsals, attend meetings for the non-profit organizations, and just be there is different than
taking a lesson from them.

CD: I notice, especially in our field, like I mentioned at the start of our conversation that people,
in our field especially, are a lot more versatile than they used to be. When I think of people like
Demondrae [Thurman] and all of the things he has at his disposal, and someone like you;
euphonium, trombone, conducting, chamber ensembles, or Andrew Hitz; tuba, Boston Brass for
14 years, entrepreneurial stuff, podcasts, etc. People at the top of our field are a lot more versatile
now. So, is there anything you can do in your position now to help your students become more
versatile?

MM: Well, yes.

CD: And, do you think that is important?

MM: I can tell you that as far as my Music Education students go, like in their conducting class,
I give them podium time as undergrads and my euphonium students too. There is just something
about leading an ensemble as a conductor, it takes a lot more skill than just playing in the
ensemble and knowing your music. There is a lot involved with leadership, communication,
planning, efficiency, and many other things. But, as far as being versatile, I make sure my
euphonium students can do simple stuff like play trombone, playing in the jazz band, chamber
music. It’s easy stuff they should be doing anyway. As far as extra stuff it is very important that
they are well spoken about music, that they write well, work well in groups, be a leader, and like
you observed, the reason why everyone is becoming more versatile because there isn’t just that
one job. If you’re a cyber security major, they can pluck you out of school and you can just do
that one thing, but as a music major you have to carve your own path yourself. That’s why
people have been trying to be more creative like Andrew Hitz with his podcasts or people doing
the touring chamber ensembles.

CD: I’ve mentioned it a couple times, one of the things I admire about your career is the
diversity that you bring to our field. Besides being a world class performer, I notice that you also
have a wide variety of skillsets at your disposal. Would you be able to speak to where you
learned these skills and when you began to utilize them?

MM: As a euphonium player, you should probably know pretty soon that your performance
opportunities are very, very limited. So, it is important to figure out what you want to do. A lot
of students will really go for a military ensemble and that is their job they want. For me, I have
never auditioned for one before, because I just didn’t want to do that. So, I did know, however,
that I liked working with people. I tell my students all the time that you’re not in the music business, you’re in the people business. Music is the kind of thing that brings people together and can really make impacts emotionally and on a community. That is why I really got into conducting. If I do a euphonium recital, I can make some music with a pianist or as a conductor in college I was collaborating with the students but also helping better themselves as musicians for the purpose of having better concerts which moves more people. That was a choice I made early on where I wanted my career to go. Now, to work on that, I have read a lot of books on leadership. I like to read biographies on presidents, CEO’s, people of influence, and see what I can gain from their experiences and their lives. A lot of them have similar traits of leadership, so on my own I like to study those. As far as in preparation for a lot of the things that I do, one of the things I really tell my students to do that I was never good at was asking questions. As a student I used to be shy about asking question because I thought I was already supposed to know certain things and I didn’t want to look dumb. But, it is important to be inquisitive because you have got to love music and it shouldn’t matter on when or if you should have learned something. I just tell my students that you have an opportunity here where you are working with myself and other professors at St. Mary’s who are in the industry and have gone through everything you are trying to go through and you shouldn’t hesitate to ask a question to get advice on something you may be going through.

CD: It sounds like you’re just trying to cultivate a sense of intellectual curiosity in your students.

MM: There you go. If I had a better vocabulary I would have said that.

CD: I got that from Dr. Joe, so I’ll give him credit for that. Credit to Dr. Joe. Do you have broad outcomes in mind for your students when they graduate from your institution? Are they different for undergraduate, or if you work with graduate students, then graduate students as well?

MM: I don’t work with any graduate students. At our school, well in our department we only have undergraduates.

CD: So, what are the broad outcomes you have in mind for your students when they graduate from St. Mary’s?

MM: I always try to make sure they realize exactly how much change they can affect as musicians… [reception cut out]… and how much it has affected their own lives. But, I can tell you that when I was in Oklahoma I could just see how these band programs in these little rural towns in Oklahoma would absolutely uplift these communities. These are small towns where, basically the school is the largest entity in the city, and I would go to this band concert and it seemed like the whole town would be there. That is just the scope of, I just make them realize what a band program does. It brings all these parents together, pools resources together, allows students to be a part of something bigger than themselves in an artistic manner. That’s the most…[reception]…Nowadays, the aim for students is to be geared towards science and technology, music though, can really be more thought of as a mental health…That’s why I tell them we are in the people business because we can obviously help people grieve, come together, be happy, help people move on, and students will see that in the broader scope. Then once they
graduate I want them to still have that in their head and become a real leader at affecting change in the world.

CD: So, just developing a sense of passion, understanding the change that they can make, and working to help them to possess leadership skills that are going to allow them to be successful in whatever they are doing?

MM: Yes, that’s very important.

CD: Being that technology has become such a large part of society, are there any sort of electronic teaching tools in your teaching and if so, how do you feel the availability of these materials impacts the effectiveness of your teaching?

MM: To be honest with you, the more technology advances, there will always be people who think that it has gone too far. For instance, it’s an actual fact that once newspapers were printed on paper, people thought that technology was too advanced and thought that people should be talking to each other to hear the stories rather than reading the stories on their own. That is just an example. Having said that though, technology can be a real resource that we haven’t had in the past. For instance, I like to use, when we’re working on intonation or tuning in lessons I like to use the TE App, and give the student a drone and they can tune their note or any interval against that drone easily. Before, people used to have use a CD in a player to play the drone, which would only last for a certain length of time, which is obsolete now. You can use a drone for any note you want. I do that with the band, too. We have a tuning day, where I go around the ensemble with the speakers in the wall and we all tune against a drone.

CD: Do you use any other functions within that app? I know there’s the drone, the tuner, the metronome, and the analysis portion where you can record and see the sound waves and such.

MM: Yeah, I haven’t explored it to its full capacity as far as teaching my students. I have in my own playing with the sound waves to see how immediate my sound is.

CD: But, with your students, you have not used that?

MM: Not yet, but I definitely will since I use it in my own playing.

CD: Are there any other things you use or is that the biggest technology thing you use?

MM: Well, as far as recordings go music streaming is controversial, but it is so readily available. But, it’s all mp3’s so you are not really getting the full spectrum of the sound that it should be. Have you ever looked into that stuff?

CD: What’s that?

MM: The difference between an mp3 and an actual CD sound. The mp3 compresses it and you lose some of the nuance that goes into mastering it.
CD: I know just the person here I am going to talk to about that. One of the students in the studio, his name is Thomas, he has gotten really big into audio engineering recently. He is actually the person who did my last couple of recordings for me. He has done a ton of research and is pretty knowledgeable, so I’m sure he would have some insight.

MM: Yeah, ask him about that. Let me see what else technology wise…

CD: Like, I use the Drum Beats+ app as a metronome with my students, I’m not sure if you’re familiar with that or not?

MM: No, I haven’t used that but I have used the Frozen Ape.

CD: What is that?

MM: Frozen Ape is the brand but it’s for tempo, you have to pay for it, but it’s a cool metronome. It’s just the one I use. But, both of them are readily available on my phone and I use those with every student, every lesson and connect to my Bluetooth speaker.

CD: With the Drum Beats+ it has over 300 drum beats that are available, they are not all free, but 100 or so of them are and there are other folders and packages. For instance, I am preparing Pearls for a recital and that 3rd movement is like a Samba and there is a Samba/Salsa drumbeat to help the movement dance. I just didn’t know if you used anything like that.

MM: No, but, I have used iReal Pro, have you used that one?

CD: No, I don’t know that at all.

MM: iReal Pro is like band in a box, but for your phone. If you have a jazz student, you can input chord changes and then put a groove behind it and they will basically have a rhythm section playing a groove behind the student.

CD: See, that is cool. That is what I was looking for. That is really cool.

MM: It’s like you get a Jamie Abersold Book, but Jamie Abersold books are obsolete now that iReal Pro is out.

CD: Yeah, similarly to the Tuning CD being obsolete. We have these advances that are taking old things and making them new and more accessible. It is awesome that you bring up iReal Pro, I’m going to check that out.

MM: It’s the same thing like the tuning CD, that was cutting edge, and that made sitting next to a person with perfect intonation obsolete. So, as time goes along, and advancements go, certain things become obsolete, that’s the way it is.

CD: That’s what I was looking for to advance pedagogy and make enhancements in the way we
teach. So, going further and away from technology, have you recently implemented some new teaching methods or goals? What are they and have you experienced some new outcomes?

MM: Now, are you talking about new teaching practices in private lessons?

CD: In the applied studio, yes. Unless there is something new that you’re doing in the band setting that could apply too, because after all, music is music.

MM: Well, something that I have been doing recently in the band setting, I took from what I do in applied lessons, just on a grander scale. In applied lessons, it is important that when someone is working on a piece that we have the score there because their part doesn’t exist on its own, it works with the piano or the band accompaniment. So, what I do with the band now is I put the score, using a camera that can point to the score on my podium, and as we are going along it is projected behind me. I can reference something and point to it and say “Look, altos and horns, you have this rhythm here, it is very important you do this to it because four bars later, as you can see the trumpets are going to mimic it.” It is important to be able to visualize the score. For two reasons. One, a lot of students have never read a score before and two, once they know how to read a score they can see the music visually and know how it all functions.

CD: And, they then know what to listen for, too.

MM: Yes, exactly

CD: It makes for rehearsals to be more efficient.

MM: Yes, so, they are going to need to be able to when their part needs to be blending, matching, mimicking, if it’s the melody, needs to come out, accompaniment in the background, [etc.].

CD: So, you do that in applied lessons as well?

MM: …I’ve always been doing that with applied lessons, but physically holding onto the score but with band I took it to the next step by projecting it on the screen.

CD: And are you noticing a difference in doing this?

MM: Well, yes, I asked some students afterwards. It does, and I as I suspected, they just have a larger grasp … [reception]… but in the moment we’re working on it in rehearsal, I can easily tell before they even tell me, I can tell how it affects their playing because they realize exactly the purpose for every note that they have, as opposed to just playing the part.

CD: So, how do you see the future of music teaching, specifically tuba/euphonium studio teaching, evolving in the future? Are there steps we should be taking now to move in that direction?
MM: Well, it seems like I have noticed how I have done this a little bit, but I notice more people doing skype/video lessons. Whether they are recorded or [live]. I have also even had times where I sent stuff to students like a picture or video of me. I have one student who was practicing and asked me about vibrato so I sent them a video of me doing vibrato, a close up of my face doing vibrato through text message. They were easily able to get that and didn’t have to wait until the next week. I have also done that with HS students. So, it seems like, I don’t know if you have noticed that, but I have seen people offering more and advertise that you can have a lesson with them from anywhere around the world. I have even heard about, I haven’t see this, but that San Diego State, what they do is in real time with their Jazz band they will have a video screen behind them where they have basically skyped in, from Cuba, a rhythm section. They will play along with the students at San Diego state by video. I have never seen that, but I have heard that it happens. I would want to check that out to see how it works, but as far as the future goes, it seems like teaching is getting a little more electronically accessed. Basically, YouTube mostly viewed videos are “How To’s,” so I guess mostly people watch videos to learn how to do something. There’s a few low brass “How To’s” now. They all aren’t the best for what a student should know, and that is why it is important for music to be an apprentice type industry. But, the fact is that is where students are. They are on YouTube and looking for resources on there, whether it is play high or play low or double tongue, it is all there.

CD: Right. You kind of said where some of it might not be as good as other stuff. So, should we be working to create stuff that is almost peer reviewed, in a sense, so that we have a more reliable resource?

MM: Yes, see, this is what I mean. The future is kind of sticky because… I have talked to the faculty about this because…[reception]…what universities [and schooling] used to be, when it was invented, it was the place where books were. It was the place where the books were, and the professors were there and knew the books, and they had the knowledge. So, the knowledge is there at a physical place on campus. Now, were in an information age. Information is everywhere. So, the important thing is to know what is credible, what is worth your time in reading and accessing. That is when it takes an expert to be able to show you why something that is a popular video won’t help you because it is not showing you the thing you actually need. They still need that apprenticeship along with it.

CD: Part of the issue…I interviewed Andrew Hitz on Tuesday, and I have read Seth Godin’s speech from Carnegie Hall and part of what they mentioned is that the problem with today is literally anybody can publish anything, at any point in time. So we are swimming in information today. So, it is really hard to decipher what is credible and what is good versus what isn’t.

MM: Yes, that is a major issue. And low brass studio teaching is not immune to this. I have had high school students come up to me and comment on something …[reception]…or say that “I can do vibrato like this,” and I have to tell them not to do it that way. But, they believe me, but they would never had known if I hadn’t told them or if they hadn’t met with me.

CD: Yes, and Andrew Hitz brought up the analogy that he could publish a book today and me in Louisiana could buy that book 24 hours later. It doesn’t matter what the book is about, but
anyone could buy it and it is difficult to figure out what is good and what is not.

MM: Yes, once something is published either electronically or hard copy it gains credibility on its own, whether it is peer reviewed or not.

CD: The last question I have for you is, your career is young so you may not have, but have you faced opposition in your teaching methods or other innovations in your career? How did you work to overcome those barriers?

MM: Let me tell you this. I am probably the perfect person to ask this question [to], believe it or not. So, in my position as far as student learning, nothing like that. But, being part of an organization or university where there are numerous faculty and all have plenty of education and plenty of knowledge…Doing any kind of change or any kind of innovation, it’s important to know how to navigate through the system. I don’t want to quote a movie, but in the movie “Lincoln,” he says what is the point of having a compass and knowing true north because it doesn’t tell you about the deserts and chasms along the way. So, if you know where true north is and you’re trying to get there straight ahead and your outcome is to only fall into a chasm, then what is the point of knowing true north. So, in academia, I tell this to students, when you first get your job, whether it is public school or university [it’s important to know] if they are hiring you to be someone to really change everything or if they are hiring you to be someone that maintain what has already been handled. I have seen it both ways where someone has come in and they respected the person before them and they tried to change everything and it’s a big mess. Then the flip side is when change needs to happen, but doesn’t change much. That’s another big problem because then we’re just doing the same thing. So, it is important to know your role, but, in innovation and change comes challenges because, you really, if you are changing something, you are telling the people involved that they have been doing it wrong in the past, inadvertently. Which can be, inadvertently, insulting. So, it is important to know how you can actually communicate and collaborate in an effective way. Because, if you just get your first job and say “This doesn’t work and this doesn’t work” and change this and that, you don’t know how long those people have been doing it that way and you are basically telling them that they have been doing it wrong and it’s been a waste of their time. Then, they won’t want to help you. Essentially, you are going to need help if you want to effect change, whether that is the curriculum or working on new technology, or changing the culture of the environment. It is important to know how to navigate through the culture and the system without gaining opposition. That is what I mean when we first started talking about collaboration, communication, and leadership. All of that is involved, especially when you are trying to move a program along, recruit, or create change or innovation.

Joseph Skillen Interview Transcript

CD: Could you describe your teaching philosophy?

JS: Well, to be brief, I think we are training students, I don’t even like the word training…educating students for a role that we don’t always recognize what it is going to be 5 years, 10 years, 20 years, or 30 years from now. Particularly when you think about this year’s freshman class is probably going to retire in 2065, and so, I’m just thinking about what I’m
doing right now is touching 2065 in some way. And, so, I’m thinking a lot about how rapidly our profession has changed just over the period of time that I have been doing this, and I can’t even begin to imagine, nor can anyone, what the future is going to look like going into 2065. So, or beyond. Because they are going to be teaching people, hopefully some things that I have taught them. So, hopefully it will impact beyond that shelf life. And it’s kind of staggering to even think about that.

CD: It is.

JS: But, it’s something to think about. And, because of that, I know what changes have happened and I can’t predict what the market place is going to look like, I can’t predict what students are going to look like, I can’t predict what learning is going to look like, but what I think is universal is the ability for people to find things that they value, find resources for those things, and find ways to convey its value and methods of learning those things to others. Whether they are advocating for their art, or whether they are using it through a teaching sort of situation, so I am straying off topic a bit, but, teaching philosophy wise, I am preparing students to be capable of adapting to any landscape that they choose to place themselves in and taking their instruments with them so they can show others what their instrument, what music, what artistry they can bring to that setting. And, because it is so unpredictable where they are going to go, I try to teach the universal things. I try to teach mastery of your instrument, mastery of expression of an artistic ideal, and adaptability. Those are kind of the universal things I try to teach. And we can drill down on any one of those. So when we look at mastery, I teach mastery through encouraging people to compete with one another so they get better at honing their own skills and get better at recognizing their own strengths and weaknesses. If we look at adaptability, I am trying to teach adaptability through the different skills that I am trying to introduce, that I, at this point, feel are important for an evolving artist. We don’t really expect mastery in those, but I want to introduce that it is okay to be thinking beyond your instrument, and not that it is only okay, but required to be thinking beyond your instrument. So, we’ve got mastery, adaptability, and what was the other one? I did a third one, I’m blanking on that…

CD: I’m blanking on it too… I was trying to listen and absorb and I…

JS: Okay, well those are the main things and we do it through the vehicle we have chosen which is our own personal instrument. So, you learn a lot about yourself while you are mastering an instrument, while you’re going down an artistic path to begin to express something, you learn a lot and to be able to have a career is going to take self-knowledge in addition to mastery, in addition to adaptability. That’s what I’m trying to do.

CD: That’s interesting, I haven’t thought about the, when your students are going to retire thing. I don’t…and it’s interesting, because I find that you think of a lot of things that I don’t find a lot of other people think about. Like, if that makes sense.

JS: Awesome.

CD: Um, and, I have never thought about that. You know, I am teaching kids now who are about to enter the work force. That’s like, I think immediacy, and you don’t think about I’m
teaching kids that are going to enter the work force and then they are going to retire 35, 40, 45, 50 years from now.

JS: And when I was younger and, in your spot, I thought about immediacy as well. And I think there is just a trajectory that comes with maturity as you do this that comes with legacy, not necessarily your own legacy, but just a sense of how long these things will last.

CD: So, it’s interesting, because we are at very different stages where you have been teaching in your 21st year…

JS: Well, teaching here for 21 years.

CD: Sorry, so that’s what, how many years total?

JS: Probably 28.

CD: So, you’ve been teaching close to 30 years, and I’ve got a tenth of that, at least full-time experience. So, how has your philosophy changed from when you were a person in my position, preparing to enter the collegiate teaching realm to where you are now 28 years later?

JS: Quite a bit! [Laughter] Man, I think a lot about this. And just thinking if we can go back to the previous thing, trajectory. I think a lot about the previous teachers that I have had, they primarily came from my, when I was in high school and even middle school I had a private teacher but he came from Winston Morris at Tennessee Tech. So then, if I think about where did Winston Morris get what he’s doing? It came from Bill Bell. Well where did Bill Bell get his stuff? And, well, he kind of made it himself in a lot of ways, right? But, when did he start doing that? It was probably in the 20’s and Winston got with him in the late 50’s or 60’s at IU. And even from 1950 until now there’s a trajectory of like 68 years? Um, just gives you a sense that it isn’t too farfetched to think about that.

CD: Yeah. You don’t think about things that way.

JS: No. And it gives you a real sense of that.

CD: I guess we just get caught up in our own bubble and where we are now and what we can impact now, rather than thinking about the long term.

JS: That’s how humans survive. Just thinking about what’s going on now. But, um, that is a real privilege of being able to be in a place for a long time, is that it gives you time to think more long term instead of so immediately.

CD: And it also seems like part of what may have changed over time is you realized how big of an impact you can have. You don’t impact just this one student. By working with this one student I am able to have a much larger reach on the things that I am able to teach this one student.
JS: Right. So then, as far as pedagogy has changed, I think that adaptability piece is something that I have added as of late, I used to, and still strongly believe in mastery, but I think I started my pedagogy thinking in terms of specifically mastery. Um…

CD: On tuba/euphonium?

JS: On your instrument yes, just being the best. Making everyone the best. Making everyone understand the pathway to achieve the best playing possible. And as I have considered that over the years, that is kind of a 19th century model. That is the industrial revolution speaking loudly, let’s just make one thing, make it really well, but it will improve until you get to the point that um, everyone is doing the same thing. And, then we reach the point where we have passed the pinnacle and everything looks so similar and you have to figure out how to create something that is different enough to be noticed while the mastery trajectory is still so…pinpoint sharp in studios across the world really. And we then have to question what has the value of that been? Um, and, what are we training people to do if it is only the mastery model? So, I have begun to adapt, literally, adaptability into the teaching model just because the job market is reacting to the over saturation of highly competent people. 30 years ago, you could be an outlier if you were an incredibly masterful performer on your instrument, now that is a little more normal and you have to find a new way to be an outlier and to be noticed. And the way you’re going to have to find that way is by adapting co-curricular skills or things that allow you to co-exist with the profession you want to be a part of while you are looking to find your place. And, so, that is just the way that is going to be. And, I think we have to adapt to that. I have added that bit to it. I haven’t scaled back my desire for mastery for students, but I think I have scaled back the expectation of the amount of repertoire, the expectation of what I am going to “force” people to do. And that is probably the other thing I have shifted. Earlier in my career, I think I forced people to do more things than now I just recommend and try to allow people to develop a little more of their own trajectory rather than following what I would want to see them do. And that is tough to know that it might be advantageous for a student to do X but they strongly desire to do Y and watch Y happen when my feeling is that X would have been so much better. But, then that is my desire and not theirs. And, so, I’ve learned to say less and observe more, I think, over my teaching. Ask more say less.

CD: What do you mean when you say recommend instead of…

JS: well I mean, previously I would have required everyone who could play at a certain level you must submit a recording for this competition.

CD: Oh, okay.

JS: You must do this, that’s going to be a lesson requirement.

CD: But, if the competition isn’t, if competition isn’t a student’s desire…

JS: Right.
CD: You would say “If you would participate in this it could be a good experience, it could launch you, but if you don’t want to, I understand and we will go down a different path.”

JS: Yes. And so, I had to question what was the motive of encouraging, or forcing them to do those things. I had to be honest and say that it was an egotistical motive on my part that I wanted to have a “successful studio” and the way you have a recognized successful studio, I thought at that time, was to have more and more people at the tops of these competitions. I have learned that at what cost? You frustrate more students than you help. You can also have a successful studio by doing something different. It may take a while to have that be noticed, but you can do something different and you are more successful in multiple ways.

CD: That’s what I was going to ask. So, then, if success isn’t necessarily driven by results at competitions or orchestral auditions or military band auditions, because those are merely just performance minded things, so what is success if it is not only that?

JS: Well, isn’t that a great question – “What is success?” And, um…

CD: I guess it’s part of the reason for this document.

JS: It is. And one thing I am learning is that more and more while this sounds like a new age kind of answer success is the way we choose to define it. And, uh, being apparent and of a certain age and living through certain things I have begun to realize the paradigm that we think we are aspiring to master is just made up. It’s all made up, everything is a construct. So, without getting to post-modern on you here, everything is all a construct. So, since it is we are actually in control of the way that we construct our own view of expectations. So, I think success is helping, well, the way I still define it, honestly is your successful if you can build a house with your instrument. Build a house with your instrument, and that can be a small house or a big house, it could be anywhere you want it to be. How you use your instrument to do that, even if it selling your instrument to make a down payment on a house as I have done. That is okay. That is okay. So, defining that so that at some point you can look backwards and see a trajectory that makes sense to where you are now and have things you’ve done in the past inform what you are going to be doing in the future. It is all about skills, it’s not about mastery of your instrument. It’s about the skills you learn as you’re mastering. And if you continue playing your instrument, absolutely that is outstanding. But, there are people that I have graduate that I consider to be extremely successful that are no longer playing their instrument, but I consider them to be musicians. I consider them to be masters of their realm and I think they would say they learned how to do their new thing with some of the tools they learned by working with me through this process.

CD: Actually, I think that ties in very well to the next question…

JS: Is that answer okay?

CD: Yeah, yeah. So, I think we agree that the relationship between the applied professor and a student is probably one of the more important ones that students will have throughout their collegiate tenure, right?
JS: I think so.

CD: So, how has maybe your relationships with your previous teachers impacted your pedagogy?

JS: I have had good ones, and I have had bad ones.

[Laughter]

JS: So, um...how has it impacted my pedagogy. Well, I think young teachers, it’s a pretty standard thing that they will do mimicry at first to emulate what they thought were the successful aspects of their previous teachers. And so, we tend to think if we bring the best of what we have experienced to our students then they’ll become good students like we were ourselves. Um, this will get you so far. I think that’s maybe about 60% of being a good teacher. The remainder comes from you being authentic about what you want to teach and what’s important that they need to learn from you that goes beyond the actual subject matter. Um, and so then that’s when we get into the realm of how comfortable are you, I’m speaking of the studio teacher at this point, how comfortable is the studio teacher with themselves as an artist, as a teacher, as a mentor, as an example. Such that they can allow themselves to be seen by their applied students in all those roles. How comfortable are you limiting yourself so that your students have a chance to fail comfortably instead of feeling like it’s your responsibility to make sure they are always successful? Because part of the learning process of course is learning to fail well, fail better, and each time they get back up and try again that they are stronger. So, how comfortable are you that you’re doing the same thing, you’re trying new things, and you’re not always good at things when you try them, and that they see you, sort of, in the fight that they’re in. How comfortable are you doing that? And so, I think those relationships grow the more each side is honest and that’s … and you can allow yourself to do that. I tend to think of the relationship of the applied teacher to the student sort of as like, when I see my students teach, you know people who have gone out graduated and are doing their own thing and I go visit them where they are and I hear them teach and I hear myself teaching that’s a real compliment. And that’s really, really neat. Not on an egotistical level, but, what it basically means is you’re getting into their musical DNA and allowing yourself, them allowing you to enter their mind in such an intimate way, really, is profoundly humbling and, um, it’s a privilege that we teachers always need to remember is happening. That we are being observed in just about every sphere and the impact that our legacy is going to have into hundred years from now, that we have already discovered is possible, that is going to be in that DNA and it’s something we need to be mindful of and it can only be forged in the one on one relationship, I think, where each party is allowed to be observed in a, sort of, a free way. Does that answer that?

CD: Yes. I kind of took out a later question because you addressed them both at the same time, which is good. So the core of this document is basically how the applied professors can help shape their students to be successful in this 21st century. Right?
JS: Yep.

CD: So, what’s the role of the applied studio professor in the 21st century?
JS: Um, largely like kind of what I was just talking about. Being an example so that you are showing, that you recognize that the world is different than you thought it was and so we’re not building buggy whips anymore, as great as they were. I just don’t have things to whip anymore. But, I mean, we’re not building buggy whips, so they need to see that we are dealing with the changing landscape and what that means. And that means that we need to be knowledgeable of what is out there, and how we bring that knowledge to our students, um, and basically, you know, we’re not afraid, we’re just showing what’s out there. And I think that’s the role largely is to lead by example. And also, show and share examples, so if you’re not, I mean, all the new technologies that are coming out all the new ways to perform, all the new literature that is coming out, you’ll never be able to do it all. So, find the people who are good at doing things you’re not good at and introduce those people to your students so you’re not limiting their exposure to stuff because of your own fear of looking inadequate, you’re actually showing them all the things that are possible. And again, that just comes with the self-knowledge and humility that a teacher should have realizing that you are limited, we are all limited. And so, there should not be a desire to make it look like you’re the great powerful Oz that knows all things and how dare you question me. It’s more of a you’re a learner also and you’re showing that with them. So, it’s like it’s a perpetual newbie feeling that you should be having. And it’s okay to sit and be perplexed and wonder what to do next.

CD: I want to talk about that fear of inadequacy thing later.

JS: Okay. [laughter]


JS: Did I stay on topic?

CD: Yeah, it’s good. Um, you actually kind of weaved around some of the previous answers I have gotten, that’s why I want to talk about something later, because it’s interesting hearing that from you versus some of the things other people have said. So, we’ve been, you and I have known each other since when, I auditioned for you for my undergrad in 2005, so it’s been 14 years. Um, and in through our interactions throughout the course of those years and my time with you as one of your students, you know, I have noticed a bunch of things you have, these skill sets you are trying to expose us to in all the variety of things. So, where did you learn and develop these things you have at your disposal? Whether that’s your research, writing, entrepreneurship ideas, or where do you get the information to help us gain those, the knowledge or skills to be successful in our avenues?

JS: Well, it might frustrate those around me, but, uh, I’m perpetually curious. And, um, so, I am usually asking a lot of why questions. Not usually to people, because that annoys people. I’m, you know, you’re not a two year old. I’m always asking: “How is that person doing what they’re doing?” “Why are they doing what they are doing?” “Why are we doing this in this curriculum?” “Why are we doing this in this way?” Um, so, I am always just asking questions, um… I’m filing away those questions. And this may sound like a lazy answer, but I live for breaks. I live for Christmas break, Spring break, sabbatical, I live for summer break. Not because I need the rest, even though rest is useful, but I actually rest by doing the reading, doing the research, doing the
looking during those breaks. And, so, that for me is like I keep a mental list of “Okay, this break I want to accomplish bang, bang, bang, bang, bang. I want to learn about these things, I want to read more about these things, and so, I have, if you were to look at the night stand next to my bed I have 15 books that are you know in various stages of being read. So bookmarks everywhere. You know, various topics that I find to be interesting. There’s a novel in there too, just you know, I’ll get through *Infinite Jest* by David Foster Wallace, I will get through it.

CD: I’ll file that away in the books to read later.

JS: Oh, it’ll take you forever. Basically, modern day Faulkner. It’ just fantastic. But, uh, um, anyway, breaks are when I get a chance to do that. And I really enjoy that. The times that I can do something different are the times that I grow the most. So, when I’m doing a study abroad trip, I’m really growing the most then because I’m being exposed to other fields, other professors, and other students who are in other fields and they ask different questions. And, since I enjoy questions, I enjoy better questions, so I am just surrounded by people like that. The other thing I would say I enjoy is film, documentaries, this kind of thing where, biographies of people and then also just attending conferences, conferences that are not necessarily music conferences, but conferences of thinkers, you know. Where can you be around people like that? Where can you watch this? And it goes beyond Ted Talks. You know Ted Talks are useful for dipping your toe in the water. But, to dig into something and find spheres of interest and begin building, really, trees of mastery like you would on your instrument in those fields as well. What are the core knowledge aspects and then how do you start hanging things on that tree of the core knowledge aspects of those fields that are interesting? And, I find the pathway to mastery is the same in every field that you look at and it’s just a matter of different jargon, different terminology, but the pathway is the same.

CD: It’s interesting because I, along with several of the current and former students appreciate that about you and we all kind of talked about that no matter what we have questions about, or what we want to know we feel comfortable going to you, and you will have the answer. And you will either have the answer or know how to get the answer. So, it doesn’t matter what it is. And I remember my first semester here when I was taking conducting lessons with Dennis, he was like “Alright, come back with 4 conductors.” I was like “Okay.” And I mean, he didn’t want the normal ones, he didn’t want Bernstein, he didn’t want Klieber. He wanted other people. So, I was like “Hey I don’t know where to go. Oh here’s 5 names.” I left that lesson going that’s weird. And it is music, and music is music. But [snaps fingers] you just threw out these names that fast. It’s just your breadth of knowledge, no matter what your students are curious about, you either have the answer or know how to get the answer really quickly. So, to just throw it out that that it is something that many people appreciative of that you have worked with.

JS: Thanks. Well, I enjoy learning. But, I also learned early on that to reach as many students as possible you’re going to have to reach them through various learning styles, and through various backgrounds, and various, you know, world views that they bring and so learning about other fields, other aspects of even music, but other fields too, allow more points of entry. So, when students are coming from a different type of background, it’s a way to reach them and that’s another reason that I dig in to that also, it’s just so that you know that there’s going to be just a pathway that you’re going to reach somebody differently than you thought of before.
CD: You touched on it a little bit earlier with how your pedagogy has changed, where you have incorporated the adaptability aspect. Um, but where did develop the idea to incorporate adaptability or these co-curricular skills as we have called them, into your pedagogy?

JS: Being pissed off.


JS: That my own colleagues aren’t doing it. I just get frustrated when I really don’t feel like we should have to in the applied studio, but, because of that one on one relationship, I care so much about my students that I’m not going to wait for my colleagues to get off their ass to do it. And, so, should there be a technology class where they are incorporating these things? Absolutely. Is it going to be taught? No. And if it was taught, would they be teaching my students the things I want them to know? No. And, so, I just kind of, I care too much about my students to, uh, franchise that out and to wait on that to happen. Because, I tried that. I did an entrepreneurship, sort of, work group and I did that for about five years in the College of the Music and Dramatic Arts here. We had a patron who gave us some money to explore some entrepreneurial things, and I thought “Oh man, this is going to be the things that’s really going to get the ball rolling and is going to get the entire faculty and excited and make this happen. What I learned was they were so grateful that I did it for them. That they could just allow, it would allow them to basically do their own stuff and not get bogged down with all the extra stuff that they don’t want to have to learn how to do. And I think they are actually intimidated by it, my colleagues I’m saying. And, uh,

CD: Here or just in the tuba field?

JS: Here at LSU specifically, but I think also common to everybody else. It’s too intimidating to talk about something you’re not good at, or talk about something that you’re not going to be the master of. And, um, people don’t want to do that and it takes work to plan these things, and so, I think the human nature is to be lazy, honestly, unless we really push ourselves beyond that. And I find that college faculty are largely intellectually lazy when it comes to creating courses that are going to be so critical to student’s success. It is just way easier to just keep teaching things the way we learned them, keep the curriculum the same instead of developing something that is going to be ultimately very useful. So, frankly, going back to what I said before, I just got pissed off trying to make that thing happen and I kept getting “It’s so nice of you to make this happen for our students, thank you, thank you.” When I kept thinking, “Well, why don’t you get off your ass and do it yourself.” And uh, that didn’t happen. So, um, I decided to kind of, just build actually what I was, what I thought would be a case study, frankly, for could this work in the applied studio. And having done this for, I think we’re in the 4th year almost, doing this for 3 or 4 years in a really structured way. There have been aspects of this has been peppered into lessons already, but I think we’re starting to develop some data, that…. 

CD: Yeah, just in the, and not to interrupt but just in the 3 year window of time between graduating with my Master’s and starting my Doctorate, while some of the things did transfer, um, some of the things you were incorporating into the model did transfer, the arranging, some
entrepreneurial things, the presentations, whatever, those did transfer but in that three year window it went from were going to incorporate this to this is how were going to incorporate this on a structured level where everybody is going to do it and the requirements were a lot more strict.

JS: Right. Well, because I found that students who engaged in these things were almost being punished by having more time taken from them. And, the students who weren’t doing this were just like, you know, skating a little bit. So, why would a person who is working harder be punished. Where if it is the same expectation for everyone then everyone is equally exposed, so it seems to make more sense.

CD: Where did get the, all of these topics for the performances, obviously those are a little easier to answer, just because the performances are lyrical and technical etudes, you know, you’ve got improvising in there, which was something new when I came back for my doctorate, the excerpts or competitions, chamber skills, all that stuff is normal. But the presentations and projects, specifically, where did those ideas come from?

JS: I started to look at what skills are important for everyone that is entering a job market and what skills are not particularly strong in my students. I found oral expression to be very weak, I found writing skills are very weak, and I wanted to make them realize that those skills, um, cross every curriculum. It’s not just when you’re in a writing class that you have to write, because I, on a daily basis am writing more than I am playing my instrument. I on a daily basis am communicating more than I am playing my instrument. And so those things can’t be short changed. So, I started looking at what are things that are necessary and how could I then use those necessary skills; writing skills, oral communication skills, and while requiring those skills teach these co-curricular things. So, I started adding, um, topics that I thought were musically relevant that I was beginning to see emerge in the field. So, video production, audio recording, and some of these things that were coming up, but then I could have people do oral presentations and write about them in addition to begin exposed to those fields in the same process. So, I try to kill as many birds with the one stone as I could.

CD: And, as we are talking about this, I’m thinking about it, you now, so you mentioned it at the beginning, that the students you teach now are going to have an impact up until probably 2065, or so, give or take, right? So, in some of those presentations where we are talking about important teachers or performers and such that we have done, I didn’t think about it then, but I think about it now that’s the long trajectory, where you’re trying to get us to realize that Bill Bell lived way back then and he is still impacting people now. Like, Winston Morris is still teaching. So, as we are talking about it, I guess subconsciously I realized it but it was never something that was super present.

JS: Well, and so, in order to really know your field, you have to know the foundations in addition to what is currently happening and you build on those things and take it to the next level…

CD: So, um, we touched on it a little bit, but I just want to see if there’s anything I missed. So, how have you been able to successfully help your students develop co-curricular skills,
besides…or beyond, I’m sorry, beyond exposure or surface level knowledge? I know that’s your goal, but…

JS: Well that assumes that I have successfully done it. I’m not sure that I have…

CD: I think you have. I mean, to some degree. I mean, you consider playing a secondary something that is co-curricular right, because it’s not a main requirement, right? But, I’d like to think that if I played tuba for someone they wouldn’t know that I was a euphonium player as a primary skill.

JS: But, I guess I would question, um, are you doing that because of your own desire to do that or because I have suggested that it is something that’s necessary?

CD: Whether it’s a desire of mine or not I have worked closely with you on developing that skill for 6 years, so…

JS: So, you’re saying…

CD: My work with you…

JS: How would I gauge the success?

CD: How have you been able to help your students to develop those skills?

JS: Okay, well I guess the first thing is exposure, first. Just exposing people to like, I’ll give you an example, student X I won’t mention his name, but student X told me just yesterday that he is really interested in running a music store and becoming an instrument repair technician, and I wouldn’t have guessed that student would have been interested in that, but we specifically talked about instrument repair techniques last semester and that seemed to plant a seed in him that made him start thinking “Wow, that’s a possible career trajectory.” And part of what I wanted them to do for that was to interview repair technicians and understand what they have to do and it opened up a world to him that was pretty interesting. So, the exposure aspect and then having someone take hold of that I guess tells me that it is meaningful.

CD: Right, so it’s a gateway. So, how do you, so then, since you just found out yesterday, maybe this will help me get to my answer, how do you plan to help him continue to pursue that?

JS: Um, continuing to connect him to other people that are doing that and remember that is something he is interested in and in passing in lessons or whenever ask him if he has followed up on some of that. Or, I may frame questions in his lesson like “If you were working as a technician, what would you do?” And just kind of continue encouraging those thoughts in sort of a tangential way. And letting him know that is something I desire for him but something that I value is him wanting to go in that direction. Because I think sometimes, we feel, or students might feel it is taboo to talk about something other than “I’m going to be a great performer.” And I want them to feel that the space is open so that they can explore, in fact I want them to explore those things. So, its value they are exploring instead of something that we do outside of lessons
or do it at another time. I want them to know that we are teaching the whole person not just the skills themselves.

CD: So, I want to do another example, so Thomas, I’m going to put his name out there because a.) I have interviewed him, and b.) I don’t think he’d mind. So, he is big into the audio engineering stuff.

JS: Yes, he is.

CD: I know that he talks to you a lot about that stuff.

JS: He does.

CD: So, that’s not something that, audio engineering isn’t something that you’re necessarily…

JS: Of all my interests, that is not one of them. [Laughter]

CD: Right. So, but, he trusts you enough and, um, he trusts you enough to come to you with those types of questions and skills. How do you field those questions? How have you gained the knowledge or whatever to be able to help him?

JS: I try to tell him what I can help him with and can’t help him with. I try to answer his questions with the expertise that I have. So, I’ll say “Well, as a performer here is what I listen for,” or “As a performer this how I like an audio person to interact with me,” or “As I have done this in the past this is what I have seen audio people do.” Um, and I have run small businesses so I talk to him a lot about small businesses and getting his business registered and the taxes and all that stuff. So, we talk about like running a business, we talk about not the nuts and bolts of being a great audio technician, but I give him names of people who have done it in town. He has contacted them. So, I answer things the way I can and then I connect him.

CD: So, a lot of it is here’s people who can help you with the “nuts and bolts” and here’s how I can also help through my experiences.

JS: And, uh, the continual encouragement. So, I have hired him a 2 or 3 times and a couple times we have had projects that didn’t turn out as well as they could have and we stuck with it until he failed better. Um, some of those things I think he learned from those processes. But, I also throw work his way, too. From other people, so I begin to recommend him to others when I think he’s ready so some leads he’s gotten, or leads he thinks he might have generated, I might have generated those for him. So, I try to do that for my students when possible. Kind of, sort of, grease the skids a little bit.

CD: So, even though it’s not one of, as you say, it’s not one of your interests, it’s still something that you’re not afraid to tackle or afraid work to develop in your students?

JS: Oh, not at all. And my only limitation is time, honestly. I guess I could learn to do those things but the time to do it, other things just jump in front.
CD: It’s fair, it’s not like you’re busy with this Graduate Advisor stuff, right?

JS: No…

CD: I think you kind of talked about [that question]. I think this will be interesting, how do you see the future of music teaching, specifically tuba/euphonium studio world, evolving in the future?

JS: Well, uh, here’s a couple things I believe. One is music is not going away, ever. Everyone is going to find music in their world in some way. Um, the way we deliver that music is going to be radically different, um, from today even two years from now and even ten years from now the way that stuff is delivered, we can’t foresee how that will happen. Spotify will probably blow up, something will replace it, YouTube will probably be you know, hacked by the Russians, and no one can trust YouTube anymore. So, something is going to happen, so we can’t predict the way that stuff is going to be delivered, but people are going to want to have music. I think there is going to go, we are going to enter a phase, I’m going to get to your question, I promise. But, we’re going to get to a phase, um, scarcity is going to become important. When some of these media go away, people are not going to have the music that they desire and people are going to seeking music more than they have been. Right now, we’re sort of glutted with all these easy ways to get music. When those platforms blow up because those business models can’t support them, there is going to be a scarcity of music and then there’s going to start to be, I think, people seeking out more than just being bombarded. So, I think we’re at a bubble right now that is going to burst and I think it is going to get interesting yet again when the desire for people to hear music, because I can’t imagine a world without music, most people can’t either. And, um, so then there’s going to be a desire to look for that. So, how do we teach that music, because the question was how is teaching going to change going forward. I think it’s going to be, um, a mix of what happens when this bubble that I am describing of musical delivery bursts and whatever the next platform is going to be that delivers music that people are going through the scarcity looking for what is missing is going to be paired up with how we teach it. So, I think the master/apprentice model is going to continue because you still want to apprentice with somebody that is good at what it is that they are doing. But, what is going to change is probably the delivery method of that. Um, is it going to be necessary for people to come to a four year school, grad school, to be able to gain that knowledge? I’m not sure. Maybe not. And so, that is terrifying in some ways because I am saying some things will crash and this thing may be part of the thing that crashes. That is going to happen in a four year school in a university setting. I just don’t know what’s going to happen, but I think part of the higher education model in music is part of that bubble that I am talking about is going to burst. Then what gets rebuilt is what music teaching in the future is going to look like and how it’s going to be built. Um, what we can do in the meantime, it sounds like I am painting a very bleak picture, but…

CD: Yeah, I’m kind of worried now.

JS: But, what we can do in the meantime is be as adaptable as possible and know that we don’t know when the bubble is going to burst, but it is going to, and be ready with multiple ways of generating income while we are still being artist. And being artists in unique ways that people will want to seek out, regardless of whether or not that mainstream thing is completely gone. So,
I think actually what is going to happen, I said no one knows what’s going to happen with that bursting, but here is what I think is going to happen, we’re going to return to a sense of locality. Instead of everyone being so interconnected, I think when that bubble bursts there is going to be premiere value on the local artists, like you see in local restaurants, like you see in valuing those that are embedded in the community, and reaching out to find those people. So, those people are going to be the ones that are sought out and sought after and they are going to develop their own little following in their own little sphere and those spheres are going to be noticed again and then will rebuild from the local again. And so, that’s why it’s got to be so much more important for people to be artists where they are because they are going to be part of that voice in the local area that can be rebuilding the new thing that is going to be recognized as music teaching going forward. Did that meander far too much or…

CD: I’ll listen back and figure it out.

JS: But do you understand what I’m saying? The gist of this is basically like, I’m not convinced that our current model of music teaching is going to last, is basically what I’m saying.

CD: Right, at some point something is going to blow.

JS: Something is going to blow and I think there’s going to need to be a restructuring of what that is. It’s going to be partly mixed with the market forces, partly mixed with educational forces, partly mixed with the demand for people’s demand for wanting to have music. All those things are going to converge to show the new model of what music teaching is going to be. This is probably a 20 year process. But, I think that’s what’s going to happen, and the way we, so if the future is short term we remain adaptable and we remain locally embedded wherever we are as being the best artist possible, that people will want to learn from. Going forward that adaptability will only continue to help, but I think it will be a point of strength to be local, to have a credibility, because the credibility is going to want to be the thing people want to learn from. It’s not going to be just “I’ve got X degree, come learn from me.” Because that when, once there is a burst, that isn’t going to matter, it’s only going to matter what people consider to be credible.

CD: And you’re trying to make sure that you’re teaching that and that’s why this model is in place?

JS: Yes. And so, part of bursting, let me just talk about the bubble bursting. When I talk about credibility, right now it’s all just all about how visible are you on social media and all this stuff. Probably 5 years ago that amount of credibility mattered, but now everybody has the same amount. So, there’s a large amount of “don’t give a shit” anymore about that kind of thing. People are pulling off of those platforms because everybody looks exactly the same, don’t they? So, then, what’s the next thing going to be? And that’s where I’m saying, I’m putting it out there that I think local credibility and it’s not going to be trying to interconnect, because what we have learned from interconnecting is everybody looks the same. And we’re talking to each other, we’re not reaching new listeners.

CD: Yeah.
JS: So, that may have, I hope it doesn’t sound bleak.

CD: it does. It’s terrifying.

JS: [Laughter] But, it’s just as I see it.

CD: It’s terrifying in a sense, you know?

JS: Well, it’s terrifying because there’s no clear path.

CD: Yeah, and the uncertainty in a sense.

JS: Right. So, I wish I could kind of say that everything was going to continue the way it has been. But to manger even farther on this question for a second, I have been thinking a lot about my teachers, they were largely focused on the mastery side of things and establishing our instruments in the mainstream. We started outside of the mainstream. “Just get us recognized. Come on we’re a legitimate instrument. We need concertos.” What does it take to be legitimate? You need concertos. Okay, we’ve got a lot of okay concertos, don’t have a lot of great ones, but we’ve got a lot of them. So, that’s something. We’ve got a body of repertoire, I’ve got books on my shelf that I was part of help in writing that proves we have repertoire now. That did not happen 50 years ago, so you cannot minimize the amount of work that it took to get us to that point. We can’t keep riding this horse, though, because we’ve reached a point of diminishing returns if we are only speaking to ourselves. That is what I think we are doing at this point. So, we can rest knowing that the work of our predecessors has gotten us to where we are, now we need to start having a broader conversation about now what? It’s not the same fight they had, we have a different thing to do. And so, teaching will be that. Advocacy in a new way...

CD: That’s a good way to put it, that kind of sums it up.

JS: Yeah, it’s kind of its really, it’s not...

CD: The battle we’re fighting today isn’t one of just being recognized that battle has already been fought. We’re recognized.

JS: Right. I mean, we still do because when you say I play tuba to someone they ask “What polka gig are you going to?” You still run into that, but at least they know what a tuba is. Previously, they didn’t.

CD: Right.

JS: We still have to fight that a little bit, but not as much as we used to. And, I am extremely grateful that I don’t have a single colleague on the music faculty that are saying “Well, why are you here?” They see me as an equal artist to them. And, that was not the case 50 years ago.

CD: I think that’s what I was getting at with the legitimacy thing. Where we have been established that we can be artists.
JS: So, kudos to those who were teaching before and some of them are still teaching. And, they are still carrying that torch. It’s time to carry a different torch.

CD: I agree. I think that also kind of helps, you know, state the case for what we are researching, writing, and make more people aware of.

JS: I think so. Is that it?

CD: Yes. That’s a wrap.

JS: Awesome.

CD: Thank you!

Danny Chapa Interview Transcript

CD: To start, a really broad question how did your time at LSU, specifically in Dr. Skillen’s studio, influence your career?

DC: Well, LSU a big stepping stone for me, not only in developing physical skills and overall musicianship, but it also launched me into graduate studies. Basically, I have three main things that I was thinking about. There are 3 main things I took away, and of course many details in between. The main thing is just preparing for the next step, which you know could be the next phase of your life, preparing to go into the professional world. Because, I feel like graduate school if your first taste of the professional work environment. Even though you’re still a student, I feel that graduate students should be professionals, and undergrads too. But, you do come into undergrad from high school where you are just learning how to be a college student and how can I prepare myself for the real world and getting a job. I feel like grad school is like practice of having the job and life in general. I feel like the most important thing I gained from my life at LSU is the preparation for that next step two enter the work force and setting up a career. What I chose for [grad school] was North Texas, which is not an easy [euphonium] studio to get into, so I have to give Dr. Skillen credit for preparing me to get into the most prestigious euphonium studio in the country, or maybe the world. That is huge for me, personally. All of the things we did set me up to achieve that goal and that is the next thing…functioning, how do you achieve what you want to achieve? That’s though attaining various goals. Dr. Skillen definitely laid out a series of goals for me to tackle. Going through that process then, I developed critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which are two other big things. Let’s start with problem-solving skills. I think a specific example of nitty gritty, in the music scenario was when I was working on the 4 Lyric Pieces by Aagaard-Nilsen. This particular lesson sticks out to me because it was one of the first times where I really took the music apart element by element. He had me work on the articulations only, and just focused on one thing because there is a lot of information on the page. First was articulation, then dynamics, rhythm, and so forth and all of those things are really exaggerated [in this piece] so I was able to put all my attention on just that one thing. When I finally put it together it completed the whole picture. Going through that process was crucial and that is one example that sticks out to me, of many, that really helped me figure out
how to learn, teach myself, how to analyze and break things down. I will say, too, that all of my
is physical skills that I developed were with Dr. Skillen. Taking lessons with Dr. Bowman, by
contrast, was the most advanced ear training class that you could imagine, but euphonium
specific. We didn’t go over anything physical. By that, I mean, firm corners, fast air, air
direction, or those kinds of things. All of the fundamentals and foundation were already built in
my undergrad. Again, credit Dr. Skillen to helping me develop fundamentals that set me up for
Grad School and also have a foundation for my own pedagogy examples such as teaching high
range, low range, pivot system, technique, etc. Before I forget, I want to go back to
goals…something as simple as having a warm-up, your own warm-up, now I am going to create
my own warm-up. When I was at LSU, Dr. Skillen had the “Dr. Skillen Warm-up,” and when I
look at all these other studios, they have their own warm-ups. John Whitacre at Alabama for
example, J. D. [Salas at SFA], and just going through that process gave me a model to go after.
Having your own warm-up packet, because in my mind a packet represents a culmination of
what you have in your mind and what you have found and what you think is important and what
you think works for people. So, my plan is to do a warm-up packet for euphonium music majors
and euphonium performance majors…and eventually tuba as well. So, developing pedagogical
materials, the seeds were planted really early on. I guess, one of the other main things too, is the
“you ought to know’s,” such as solos, rep, excerpts, etc. and I felt like Dr. Skillen did, again, a
pretty good job of introducing me to big broad categories. As I progressed in my career, I went
further in depth, but I would not have known where to look if it was not for him. Repertoire,
general direction, and problem solving. Critical thinking, of course, many lessons learned, some
harder than others. We all go through that phase when we are younger, and that is part of the
undergrad experience, and if you don’t know, the time is now. At the age 18-22, that range, there
is a lot of bone heads out there that are stubborn and go through HS and usually they are pretty
good and they don’t know any adversity or haven’t been challenged as much. Basically, going
from 12th grade to college, and [realizing] it’s not an extension of HS. Now, of all times, it is so
important, he did a good job of keeping me in check. [He was a good mentor]. There is a mentor
element to teaching as well, as I am learning too, and I have to remember of myself when I was
that age. We have to remember in college we aren’t just teaching music, we are teaching people.
Like Dr. Reveli said, we teach people through music. It is life lessons that we are learning and I
think that is what [Dr. Skillen] is all about; holding people accountable, having high standards,
here is the curriculum, here are some things to follow…

CD: It sounds like what you’re saying is the big things you have taken away, so far, is just how
to prepare, the ability to synthesize information, critical thinking, problem solving skills, and
figuring out how to achieve your goals. And then, just a fundamental foundation for performance
and pedagogy.

DC: Absolutely, yes. Was there another question?

CD: Nope. That was it. Let’s be more specific - what aspects of his teaching do you utilize in
your own teaching? You talked about a routine, but are there any specific or broad spectrum
things?

DC: Of course, well, I have a nice background because I started…Dr. Skillen, as I would say if
it’s in the box or out of the box, Dr. Skillen’s thinking is out of the box. He encourages you to
think and analyze, break it down, and look at it from a bunch of different angles. Versus, Dr. Bowman is simplified, this is the...take the blue pill, do what I say. Which is fine, it’s great, and it works, and this is the one way to do it. There is nothing wrong with that because it yields results, so of course you’re going to do it. But, going between simplifying things and analyzing stuff. I feel like...and there’s the third thing, when I took trombone lessons, there is this whole song and wind approach, so I have three main influences with my teaching. Of course, HS band directors as well, but it is nice to have a bunch of different things to jump in between. I generally try to keep things simple, but if I am doing something contemporary, but that specifically with Dr. Joe, I have a broad spectrum. I feel lucky because I have had many sides of teaching and approaching pedagogy. Can you repeat the question? I feel like I am getting off track.

CD: Sure, I was asking if there...are there any specific aspects of his teaching do you utilize in your own teaching?

DC: Okay, so, definitely...

CD: You don’t have to be specific, just whatever you can recall during your time here and things you may use.

DC: Sure, he used the pivot system and that is something I have been using a lot when I teach. I walked in teaching HS and MS lessons and masterclasses for a little over, now, 10 years. So, about a decade, and I use the pivot system and that is the main one. Teaching students to play low and teaching students to play high. I actually used the pivot system in my brass methods class, you know, teaching it to non-low brass majors, too. Of course, secondary lessons a little bit. But, that is huge and is something that has worked really well for me. That is a specific example, um, of course we talked about creating a warm-up packet.

CD: Are there any things within your warm-up packet that you could maybe tie into stuff that you learned here?

DC: Maybe the structure of it. Starting with long tones, things that are tone related, then blending with articulation, the main categories. Tone, articulation, flexibility, and finger coordination. And that is the foundation of how I teach when I do masterclasses. I tell all of my students you have to do 4 things every day. You have got to, I use the acronym LAFF – Long tones, articulation, fingers, and flexibility. That is based on that, it takes roots from, even though there’s some different things, but it takes from that warm-up packet Dr. Skillen has. I remember tone stuff at the beginning, articulation, then finger patterns...scales in third, and then flexibility stuff, you know about it. I came up with my own version of that with something that is very accessible to kids, LAFF. Then, I have just been spreading that around to wherever I teach. I bet I could think of more if I had more time, but I think that is pretty much it. Was there something, or other specific things?

CD: The last question I have, because I only have three short questions. Like we talked about earlier, Dr. Skillen encourages the development of skillsets besides performing in his teaching.

DC: Oh, yeah.
CD: You know like we talked about – arranging, audio engineering, this probably wasn’t around when you were in his studio, but, creating an app. So, are there any skill sets you possess that you can directly attribute to your time in his studio?

DC: You know, I think, when I was in school that I was just so focused on performing. I know he had these ideas, but he didn’t have these things as present as they are now, but at the time when I was in school I wasn’t thinking about diversifying. I didn’t know what the hell I was doing, honestly. I didn’t realize that if you want to go to North Texas and get a Doctorate, or a Master’s and DMA in euphonium, you’re probably going to need to play tuba, play trombone, and do all this other stuff…that was a delayed reaction for me. So, it is one of those situations where if I had this knowledge, or future knowledge when I was young and dumb…

CD: Well, young and naïve maybe…

DC: Sure…If I had that future knowledge, I would have tapped into a well that I feel that I didn’t really take advantage of because I didn’t feel, I knew he talked about that stuff and made it pretty clear that if I were interested, and he encouraged things, but I wasn’t as present for me, because I didn’t even know what I wanted to do. All I thought was perform, perform, perform and it wasn’t until later in my career when I had to diversify and had to do all these things. I know for a fact he had all these side projects going on, I just never got him to…I wasn’t really, or didn’t ask basically. I know that if I did, he would have given me all these things to consider. But, I know Justin Clarkson, for example, he had a brass quintet going for a while, and they were trying to do stuff to be marketable, and I know he played a role in helping Justin come up with ideas. I guess he helped us with our quartet, going out and getting gigs, and competitions.

CD: I would definitely say chamber skills are outside of just solo performance and definitely include that into something that is additional to just playing the euphonium. Sure, you’re playing the euphonium, but it is a different type of setting. So, flexibility in ensembles.

DC: Absolutely, you know my situation was actually a little different. I think he wished he had me for one more year. I came in as a transfer student, so I came in late. I think, even Mr. Wickes thought I was one year younger than I was while I was there, the entire time. During my senior year he even said he wished he had me for one more year. It was an interesting situation. But, I know that he definitely had all those things, available, I just didn’t…I wasn’t in a place where I thought it was important because I didn’t know better.

CD: Were there any things like presentations, or teaching things, maybe things he helped that piqued curiosity in music. I know you talked about him helping with your foundation in music, but were there any things he offered to make you dive deeper? Did he help you with research? Thinking about entrepreneurial ideas?

DC: A little bit. Actually, here, it’s coming back to me. You know, we talked about, when I was a senior, we did MTNA, for example, the solo competition. All that stuff set up my UNT audition. The same repertoire. He challenged me with the Ellerby and thought it would be good for me. Going back to some earlier stuff, because I think it is important, this is one of the biggest
things I got from him, in that he really did set me up. He asked “What do you want to do?” and Seth Orgel freaked me out to, he asked me “Do you want to teach or do you want to play?” Deer in the headlights. He said, he basically said, if you want to go to Grad School or keep playing the euphonium, you have got to go study with Dr. Bowman, you have to pay your dues at the altar. That was it, that was the secret to my success. That conversation we had. I am trying to remember, because I know we talked about these things. It just seems like such a Dr. Skillen thing to, what you’re saying. What you’re getting at is very much true, I just have a hard time finding examples, maybe because it was such a long time ago, but he, I suspect in general he always, showed me all of the paths. He showed the things you could potentially do, and me being young, I didn’t know what I wanted. I knew I wanted to play, so that’s what we came up with... You want to do these extra things, but you have got to do them right. That is something that really stuck with me. If you are going to do extra things you have to be professional with it and make your product good.

CD: That is awesome that you say that, because we are talking about adding skills to your arsenal outside of being, for example a fantastic euphonium player. But, can you really say you are a tuba player if the level isn’t equivalent to your euphonium playing? If you’re an audio engineer, do you really know all of the ins and outs? His model of exposure to these things is great, but, it is awesome that you also pointed out that his expectation of you having additional skillsets doesn’t change just because it is additional.

DC: 100%. That is the nail on the head right there.

Justin Clarkson Interview Transcript

CD: How did your time at LSU, specifically in Dr. Skillen’s applied studio, influence your career?

JC: I would start probably with the musicianship side, and just the challenges he presented in trying to develop that side of the skillset. It wasn’t, it was one of those where he encouraged us to be a musician, on any instrument, at any level. Whatever it was I was interested in, he totally backed me up on, and was like, okay if you’re going to do this, you need to be the best at it and we need to make it a musical experience for whatever audience you are playing for. So, like, I felt that I came into the studio, with some fundamentals in place, but the musicianship side, that was a challenge. All the way until I graduated, maybe in my last year did I feel like I got the full grasp of what he was saying and trying to do. He wasn’t as structured, yet, with the entrepreneurial, kind of stuff, when I was there. There was encouragement but it wasn’t structured. It was like, “Hey, I’m thinking of doing this,” and he would brainstorm with you. You should think about this avenue or what if you did a PR package that you shopped out to 10 schools rather than 1? That sort of thing. And, then, the research side, I hated. Later on, I appreciated what he did. At the time, I hated doing it, but once I got to my Master’s and Doctorate that research side of things was fantastic. I walked in already having papers, and some of the papers I wrote for him, I submitted for Master’s and Doctoral submissions for applications. That side was really cool. In fact, he had me do an excerpt book. I had to research the excerpt, listen to recordings, talk about the recordings, challenges of playing it, and actually
play it. All of this came together with the research and the musicianship aspects together, played a big component for Master’s auditions.

CD: Okay, so he actually had you do research projects on excerpts and things you were interested in.

JC: Yes, and even stuff I wasn’t interested in. He was really good at presenting something. I would say I want to do an independent study, he would say let’s try this and based on the feedback I gave him, we went further and further into detail. I like The Ride of the Valkyrie, well let’s do some research and listen to recordings. “Have you ever heard of Sensemaya? Let’s do that one.” We did other papers for him along the way, too. There were two other big areas where he pushed me, or gave me the opportunity to excel. One of the was actually when he was on sabbatical. He allowed me to study with other professors, and encouraged it. He wanted us to bring that knowledge back into the studio and into the fold. I know other teachers are not like that. Not everyone is as accepting of other teaching. I studying with Brian McWhorter, Jeff McKay, both trumpet players. I studied for an entire semester with Seth Orgel, and that was a huge part of launching me forward. Who else was there? Jens Bjorn Larsen. And so like, having that encouragement, because I would have never done those things, he encouraged it. He could have said no, you’re not allowed to study with those people. It could mess up what we’re doing here. So, that was huge.

CD: So, his open mindedness to other teaching models and other people’s way of thinking?

JC: Yes. And he was genuinely interested in what you learned. “What did you learn? How did you do that? That sounds better, how did you guys go over that?” Stuff like that. And then, lastly, the area of independent study. I have never, really never, enjoyed reading. I got into some of the self help stuff, like The Inner Game of Tennis. I got into an independent study with him and we did like a reading club sort of thing. Each week we had a different assignment on a book he liked. One week was The Courage to Teach, Letters to a Young Poet, and a couple others. I even read Winston Morris’s dissertation or something along those lines. We would discuss those.

CD: Did he have you read Malcolm Gladwell’s What the Dog Saw?

JC: No.

CD: I did a similar course with him and that was one he had us read, so I was curious about that.

JC: Some of them, yeah, they were like Malcolm Gladwell. I just read Blink. It was stuff that would pertain to music, I mean Letters to a Young Poet is just a guy writing letters to a poet. Just literally submitting this exchange of letters and the appreciation they have for each other’s art. It didn’t apply to music but it gave me a glimpse into his influences or likes and dislikes. I just felt like a very free-thinking environment. And that is not the case I had at other schools, with other teachers.

CD: Yes, I would definitely agree with that.
JC: Yes, I guess that goes along with the business and entrepreneurial side. He started getting into that a lot more into that after I left. I could see that’s when he started thinking about it, had the seeds, just not in detailed terms or in a system yet.

CD: That’s good stuff. A little bit more pointed question – What aspects of his teaching do you utilize in your own teaching? Not necessarily big picture stuff, like the influences you just discussed or the way you think, but what you do teach that relates to how he taught you?

JC: See… That’s a tough one man. That is kind of like, going to the extreme would be like trying to figure out the specific influence of your father. It’s hard. He came down to do a masterclass and I had thoughts “Oh my god, that’s right. He’s the one that taught me that!” The stuff that I have learned from various teachers, because I would do summer camps, so I would have 2-3 months here with this teacher, and 5 years with him, and it all has come together into where I can’t pinpoint exactly where things are coming from. I think, the, I would definitely say the focus on musicianship would be one. On that demand for performance. Others were not that way. They were more about perfection. Is this note in tune? Are your note styles consistent across the board? Can you play it ten times in a row, right? Those kinds of things. Joe really taught more on the performance side of things and really trying to say something through the instrument. The sing, buzz, play aspect. He handed out a paper, and I strongly remember, and still use the system of sing, buzz, play, and sort of trying to come up with your own pedagogical system. You know? I almost feel like that was more memorable than the very specific practice aspects or things he was teaching through that. I strongly remember technical skills.

CD: Did you get to sign the trophy?

JC: I did not. And that still to this day is like “Oh, man…” But, I would say it was in the last few years that I really took off. It took me a while to sort of buy in and really commit. You know, I am glad I had that fifth year because it was maybe year three when I really thought “I get this, I can do this.” So I really use that with my kids at the college level. But, I do allow his technical skills packet to influence my high school kids. So, it is very structured, we have to develop these fundamentals, and we have to work on these etudes that apply to this solo, and then by the time we get to the solo we are really working on those, like I said, performance aspects and trying to tell some story. So, yeah, it is kind of tough. When he came down, it was like “That is exactly what I tell my kids.” I wouldn’t put his name, I wouldn’t quote him in saying it to the student, it just feels like part of who I am as a teacher and a player.

CD: So, you’re saying that, when you reflect on his teaching and your time here that when you saw him come out and teach, you realized that his teaching has become part of who you are and saw it all come full circle?

JC: Exactly. That was the first time I thought about it in that way, to be honest. He would say a phrase or let’s do this. And I realized that’s where I got that from. I had forgotten that he, you know, I had been using it so much and for so long. You have to remember that I graduated in 2008. And I just saw him just a couple years ago. That’s a long time to go without that one on one contact and going over that information again.
CD: Yes, that is a long time. So, the last question that I have – it might be pretty simple. Like I talked about earlier, Dr. Skillen encourages the development of skill sets, besides performing, in his teaching. Is that something that you work to develop in your own students?

JC: Yeah, um, outside of performing and teaching? Yeah.

CD: So, then, what do you do and how do you incorporate these things. How do you incorporate arranging, pedagogical skills, or research?

JC: From the fundamental aspect, it’s sort of a diagnostic point of view. Trying to diagnose things through a certain set of tools. He has a practice sheet that would give you practice tips, like sing, buzz, play, and other ways you could diagnose…

CD: Are you talking about his taxonomy thing?

JC: Yep. Um, so, making sure they understand that and can walk away from my studio, on any level, even middle school, they understand the components of playing and are able to self-diagnose. So, even an 8th grader understands you need to be able to buzz it, air speed/direction, aspects of tone quality. They will be able to say what is wrong.

CD: So you’re getting at synthesizing different aspects of performing and the way he would approach those things.

JC: Yes. Then, sticking along those lines, with my High School and College aged kids, it’s the public speaking aspect. They are not allowed to perform in a chamber ensemble or a solo without introducing themselves and speaking about the piece. They thought I was crazy at the university for having them talk at a recital. This may be the only recital they play, but this will not be the last time they have to speak publicly. So, making sure that they are able to speak on an intellectual level is difficult. Public speaking is not an easy thing to do. So I make sure that they are prepared to do that about their pieces, about their selections. With my low brass seminar, they had to introduce each person in the ensemble and what school they were from, something about the piece, and something to listen for. This is all the way down to Middle school. Those are probably the two biggest components from that. But, I also think that times have changed dramatically, in regards to the studio aspect, in terms of employment and the skillsets that you need to walk away with. I have stayed in touch with Joe through the years and I wouldn’t say that I was a part of his thinking or a part of the conversation, but he was telling me about his ideas and some of the things he was thinking about doing or the way he was going to take things at the school and programs he wanted to implement. That has still influenced me. If I have a student interested in other avenues, I make sure they explore those options. Whether they will be a music major or not. Fining that balance, not only with how you are going to make money, but how are you going to feed yourself musically.

CD: Probably a lot of what you are talking about is that he had ideas for what he wanted to incorporate. Now, it is a lot more structured where everyone in the studio does a project over the course of the semester that range from a recording assignment, video assignment, arranging project, electronic exploration, creating an app, or teaching and listening assignments. So, there
are now a lot of different things that he has started to incorporate across the scope of the semester in addition to “I’m going to teach you how to make you play your instrument better.” And then, there are also presentations in studio class, where you are in front of the group, presenting something that you researched and present your research to the studio.

JC: I would say if there are 15 of those, I would say 7 of those were implemented when I was there. Some of the things you’re saying I remember doing that, and that, even if it was just one time. You know one semester I remember doing some of those. He is doing a great job keeping up with the times and modifying the studio parameters so that people walk out the studio in a competitive way. Instead of staying with the old model and saying “Well, this was successful at this time, so, it must still work.” No, no. He is constantly modifying and it’s awesome. In fact, Hunter (current student) was texting me about some of the assignments this semester and how he has to submit things on YouTube. A recording at the beginning of the week, a recording at the ending of the week after studying the excerpt. That is killer.

CD: One of the things that I have appreciated about studying with him is that, as I gather, not a lot of people are doing.

JC: No, it’s not.

CD: He is pushing the envelope about what tuba pedagogy is. He’s not preparing me to show up at an audition and place second and that’s it. He is preparing me for if I do show up and place second, I have other things that I can do to still be successful in the music field. I don’t have the military job or the orchestral job, but I am doing this stuff anyway.

JC: Yep. Well, I have a friend who put it in terms, it’s the same stuff that Joe taught me, but he put it in these terms that finally clicked. Identify the skillsets that you have and enjoy about being a musician and teacher and finding ways that you can employ it, like you’re saying. I don’t feel helpless, like many other people do. I think. After talking with other musicians who finish their degree and are like “I have no idea because I didn’t win that job. So, I am going to go home and live with my parents and keep taking auditions.” It is so much more empowering to walk out and go, I am a business owner, a private studio teacher, and I have other areas of employment where I am flexing those muscles. I am working part time at a run specialty store. It’s a way to fill some hours and get away from tuba and teaching. I essentially had to do a study of anatomy and be able to diagnose issues that people are coming in with. I feel like that isn’t much different than the students I deal with. The only difference is I am dealing with feet, knees, and IT band issues. That kind of thing.

CD: So, you even feel that the skills you developed in the studio here are being employed outside of tuba?

JC: Oh yeah. It’s wildly successful right now. I am only working part time, but I am very happy with it. And, they are happy with me because I am able to talk to people. I am able to talk to them on an intellectual level, I know my stuff. I am still using the self-diagnostic thing, like where is stuff going wrong and how we can improve on that. I know other musicians who would never take on a job like this because it isn’t music. I am just as happy doing this on a part time
level, in fact I am happier doing this than teaching terrible high school students. I gave those students up because it was killing me they didn’t want to practice, they weren’t involved, they weren’t committed.

CD: It takes a lot out of you.

JC: Yeah. And at least with this, I go back into my studio stuff feeling energized and ready to go.

CD: That’s all I got for you. I just wanted to get your take on how your time here has influenced your career so far.

Thomas Gusewelle Interview Transcript

CD: How did your time at LSU, specifically in Dr. Skillen’s applied studio, influence you career?

TG: I think in particular it is the openness to experimentation in the fact that he doesn’t try to push you into one certain idea of what your career or being a musician should look like. It’s his openness and ability to push you into any creative or professional form that you want to take. Exposure into many different aspects into things is another big influence so far through my time here at LSU. In the projects that we do for studio, it isn’t necessarily about music, it’s about development of skills. Some of the presentations or teaching projects for example, I taught someone high range, and that student taught me about physics. It’s about the exposure to the ideas and the art of teaching, for example, rather than just about music. That is the way that Dr. Skillen approaches all of his pedagogy. For me, any time I have had an idea, even non-euphonium related, Dr. Skillen helps me develop those ideas that may or may not connect to ancillary skills, such as marketing or other channels or avenues of ways to approach things that aren’t through the instrument. Dr. Skillen definitely encourages thinking outside of the box, and seeks to make his students well rounded and develop their skills outside of just playing the instrument. The biggest impact is his ability to point you in the right direction, the knowledge, and the introduction into the skills that I will need to possess in order to be successful in any avenue.

CD: So, then, even though you may not have a ton of experience teaching, what specific aspects of his teaching do you utilize in your own teaching?

TG: One of the things that has always surprised me about Dr. Joe is his ability to recognize how someone learns. I try to figure out how students learn when I first meet with them. He also knows how to say things in different ways in order to disseminate information. So, I try to tailor what I am saying in a model after how he approaches teaching. Another thing is his context of discovery, he teaches you in a way to discover how to get better or solve the problem instead of just giving you the answer. I try to help lead those students I teach down a path of discovery much like what he does with me.

CD: Dr. Skillen encourages the development of skill sets besides performing in his teaching. Are there any skill sets you possess that you can attribute to your time in his studio?
TG: Some of the things through my studio experiences that I have developed are arranging and transcription skills, entrepreneurship ideas, audio/video skills, performing opportunities (he has pushed me in a way to make my own path even if I don’t feel I am as good as Steven Mead), and research/grant writing. Even though I have already had prior experience in the audio engineering realm, working with Dr. Skillen really helped me to refine my skills and learn some of the business side of things that will allow me to continue to pursue this further.

Allen Carpenter Interview Transcript

CD: How has your time at LSU, specifically in Dr. Skillen’s applied studio, influenced your career?

AC: I would say that Dr. Skillen’s studio has influenced me tremendously in my current career. His guidance and teaching have helped me reach playing goals I never thought I would have been able to achieve. He has been a direct influence on my understanding of the world of academia and has helped me edit and write documents for submission to universities and summer programs. He has also had a huge influence on me as a role model. Until studying in his studio, I was not as serious about music and teaching in the field. As I got more serious about tuba, I decided I wanted to perform for my career. Through my undergrad, I decided I wanted to be a band director. When I started to study with Dr. Joe, his holistic approach to music really influenced me to push myself become a better musician, student, and teacher.

CD: What things has he done specifically in his teaching that influenced you?

AC: He is a master craftsman that can tailor his lessons to meet the needs of any individual. It is a very generic thing to say, but it is really difficult to differentiate from one student to the next after you have been doing that all day. He was really able to help me refine my playing through his approach in applied lessons. What I admire the most about him, especially after being one of his graduate assistants and seeing how busy he is, he truly invests wholly in each student. I felt that I owed it to him to put in the work to develop in my playing because of how much work I saw him devote to other members of the studio. He is always available for his students, regardless of if he is working on not. I really respect that about him because he has a genuine care for his students.

CD: How has your writing, editing, arranging, research skills improved due to time spent in his studio?

AC: He has been really helpful in understanding the process of how to research and how the process works prior to writing. I used to just tackle it all at once, and he helped me realize the steps that are necessary before writing. “You can chase a research rabbit for two or three months before you realize that’s not where you’re going to go.” Through watching him edit, that really helped me to develop those skills. His philosophy of “how can you say this more succinctly” has really benefitted me. There’s no reason to make things wordy just to sound smart.

CD: Are there specific aspects of his teaching do you utilize in your own teaching?
AC: Just about everything I use in my teaching can be attributed to Dr. Skillen. His philosophy of breathing, relating breathing to different partials, articulation, how articulation works depending on range, and mental practice strategies. After seeing how he approaches practice, it really helped me to grasp how you can be efficient with minimal time.

CD: You’re about to start teaching at ULL. Do you plan on incorporating co-curricular skills into your model with the students there?

AC: Yes. I think that is incredibly important for studio time to be used to build those kinds of skills. This is the biggest opportunity for us to develop those skills within our students. I have a list of important pedagogues for my students to be able to research, write, and present on to the class. It helps to really inform the students about the world beyond their own bubble. It could help you to realize that you’re not too far away from those people who are winning jobs.

CD: So, you plan on using studio time to incorporate projects similar to what Dr. Skillen does?

AC: Yes. I plan on only using presentations during studio but have plans to incorporate more things into the curriculum down the road. I don’t want to start out with over loading students with too much right away. IF he does not have the exact knowledge for a subject or question, he know exactly how to find the right information and give you proper advice on how to gain the knowledge that you need.

Andy Larson Interview Transcript

Consent Script

CD: How did your time at LSU, specifically in Dr. Skillen’s applied studio, influence your career?

AL: That is hard because I’ve made some shift since then. I would say that I always found my time there working with him and being around him, I always felt motivated and inspired. And maybe that is part of the problem, that I moved away and now I am not motivated and inspired anymore, although I don’t think that is true. But, I found his approach one of the things he always talked about, his teaching philosophy, was that he strived to really model what he thought was the complete person, not just the awesome player and awesome teacher. But, he tried to live all aspects of his life the way he thought would set a good example for his students. I know that he, during my undergrad he told us, I don’t know who this person was, but he went to a police station and picked up a student, like someone who had gotten into trouble and they were from out of state, so he went pick them up. So, he was just there and being there and a positive role model and a positive influence on all things, not just music and teaching but as a citizen. I feel like that, in particular, has stayed with me. Especially within the last, since moving back after I did my Master’s degree, when I moved back to Louisiana in 2007, maybe 2007; politics changed a little bit, things got more divisive, he really tried to set what he thought was a good example outside the classroom. I think that is one of the things that has really stayed with me beyond my LSU days, was really a desire to try to, regardless of profession, really try to live that kind of complete example, you know. Now that I have a son, it is like I want to do that even more.
CD: Yeah that is something that I kind of want to do too. I don’t only look at him as someone that only teaches me tuba, you know, anything in music that I have a question about or politics, or if I have questions about that, he really just has this holistic mind set about him. He is educating the whole student and that is a big part of his approach. He seeks to have a bigger impact than “I am going to make you a good tuba player.”

AL: Yeah, I think during my undergrad days I wasn’t really aware enough to gather all of that yet. I really kind of got that after I graduated and moved away and moved around and came back and once I had graduated with my Master’s from up in Wisconsin, when I moved back, it was kind of like he treated me as a college at that point, even though I had been his student. You know, I was freelancing in the area and playing in groups that he was conducting, or he organized or that he was playing next to me in and he really just treated me as an equal which was really cool.

CD: Could you elaborate on how the experience was different from undergrad to doctorate?

AL: I think there were, there were two sides to that, my side and his side. During my undergrad I came into it from a place where I had originally wanted to go to college and do music production and be like a cool dude with the sunglasses behind the mixing board while the rock back or rap artist was in the recording studio. I wanted to be a recording engineer, so right out of high school I didn’t really have my act together well enough to figure out where to go for that. And my...so long story short I ended up at LSU with a full academic scholarship coming from Florida and kind of thought well let’s do this for a year or two and then transfer somewhere that has a production degree and then finish out with the production degree. I didn’t really get serious about performing until after my sophomore year until I went around and looked at some schools to possibly transfer to, and my dad and I flew all over the US and went to 3-4 schools. I kind of realized I liked where I was. And so, I decided to stay. And I kind of took tuba playing more seriously and I thought I want to be a performer, I want to play, I want to be a soloist. And so I went to my Master’s degree and did my Master’s degree and learned some stuff up there and came away from that with a strong desire to teach, that was where the college teacher bug really got lit, cause Marty went out of town and let me sub for him both at the school I was teaching at and at Lawrence where he taught and that was kind of where that, whoa this is actually awesome. I like doing this and I’m really bad at it. Like, some of Marty’s students in Appleton were better than I was as a Master’s student, they were undergrads, wow not only am I bad at teaching but I need to shape up my playing. So that experience taught me a lot and it was also difficult in Wisconsin because Marty was a part time teacher, so he wasn’t even in town except for one and a half days per week, so I learned a lot about self-motivation and creating my own opportunities and all that sort of stuff while I was up there. I was occasionally communicating with Joe asking him questions and advise and sharing new music that I had found and stuff like that with him. Um, so that is kind of where I came from going through my undergrad and where I went after I left and when I got to LSU, Dr. Joe was in his 2nd year of being the full time teacher, I know he was there for 1 year as a visiting professor, temporary, at first it was just Larry Campbell who did all low brass, and I don’t remember if Joe was there for 1-2 years for a temp thing, I was there within his first, I think 2nd year as a tenure track teacher person. So, I was there during his first, I would have left shortly after his first, if they do the traditional 3+3 with mid tenure review. His mid tenure review would have been after my sophomore year and so he wouldn’t
have even been tenured until after I was gone. So I left in 2005 and then I didn’t start school again for another 5 years after that and I think he learned a lot going through the process of...he had had a couple of adjunct jobs before, then he came to LSU, got the tenure track gig, had to get tenure... so I think going through the 10 yr. process and really having some security for the first time in his life as far as his job plans I think he learned a lot and he also had 2 kids during my undergrad, so they were growing up, and you know if he and Anna Karin are anything like we are when you have kid it is like tests everything.

CD: Yeah it definitely changes things.

AL: Yeah it changes your whole relationship, it changes it does it changes everything, and you know so I’m sure he and Anna Karin were learning things about themselves as individuals and themselves as a team and figuring out who they were as a family and so by the time I came back and started school again and the kids were older and they were school aged, they had kind of figured all that out, but they it seems liked by them they would have figured that out, and he was, he had kind of his.. his stride as a teacher and all that sort of stuff. I think those are the differences. He learned a ton and I learned a ton and then we kind of rejoined forces as it was different people, he and I were different people and also just LSU went under a huge change in that time, there were lots of retirements and new faculty members coming in, there were some tumult in the band area and band directors were all different.

CD: Yes, I know that situation pretty well.

AL: Mr. Wicks retired and the orchestra director left and they got another orchestra director and there were consistently new facility and the Music and Dramatic arts building go renovated... they closed my last year in the spring... was the first time the MDA was closed. So, like you know everything was different when I got back, the facilities, the people were different, the attitude of the school of music and the position of the school of music within the music and dramatic arts college was different and it was kind of like going to a different school almost. That was partly the major reason I stayed.

CD: You mentioned it was a new school, you mention you and both Dr. Joe had a few years of experiences to kind of build on as people and so that sort of shaped your trajectory of work together during your doctorate degree.

AL: Yeas, of course.

CD: And by that point the model that he has in place now was starting to take a lot more of a structured shape, you know there were assignments for studio class such as presentations or research topics different types of performances and things...

AL: Yeah, he was starting to kind of implement those slowly while I was in my doctorate year I think. He started to do some of those... he had tried to do some of those while I was in undergrad and some succeeded and some didn’t. While I was gone, I’m sure he kept trying other things, I think you are right, I think the model he currently follows was really kind of implemented around the time I was in my doctorate.
CD: Yeah that is kind of when it really began to take shape and I noticed after I got back from teaching in Houston, that from when I graduated from my masters and started my doctorate, that three year window, it went from “Hey we are going to do this this semester” to “next semester we might do something different” to having a full four year plan laid out. And he had really begun to incorporate that adaptability component around the time you started your doctorate.

CD: What specific aspects of his teaching do you utilize in your own teaching? Or how has his teaching influenced your teaching?

AL: I think fittingly one of the things I remember right off the bat about his teaching, he always said that the more outlandish and more out there and crazy analogy the much more likely you are to remember it. And I don’t think that’s the best example, but I can’t even site a concrete example of one of the out there analogies he used but I remember numerous instances in both undergrad and grad school where he was trying to get me to think of a phrase in a particular way or an attitude in a particular way and he would say just think of it like this and it was the craziest out there farfetched or mythical wild whatever analogy and I remember sitting there wide eyed and with my jaw on the floor like where did you get that?

CD: Yeah, I know exactly what you’re talking about

AL: Oh, you’re not going to forget that next time, are you?

CD: I know exactly what you’re talking about, I can’t recall any of the specific ones either, but, um, I know I’ve never heard the same one twice.

AL: And I know that I do that in my teaching, you know, I’ll cite South Park or, you know, all kinds of outlandish things on this...if I think it will resonate with a student...um so I think that’s one. I always really enjoyed, I think more so as a graduate student, we did this more so as a graduate student, but he would challenge me to come prepared to play a particular thing, like the first half of the first movement of something, but he would want me to have five totally different ways to play it. I would just kind of, be like, almost like, I would literally play all five back to back to back, and he would take notes and then we would talk through each one and try to get me to explain verbally what I was trying to do with each of the different versions and he would tell me what he liked and what he didn’t like about each of the versions. And, sometimes he would come around to my thought process after I explained it. And using that we kind of cobbled together this patchwork version of this little bit of the first one, this part of the third one, none of the fourth one, and this part of the fifth one. I especially remember doing that with the Ursa Concerto, the Libby Larson Ursa Concerto, preparing it for Falcone in 2010 or 2011, whatever year that was. I was really struggling with the “bear growl” and I had kind of a short time to prep it because I had just gotten back from Ireland and had to leave town in like two weeks or something. [Dr. Joe] agreed to meet with me 3 or 4 times over the course of that two weeks, and he said alright next time we’re doing nothing but bear growls and were going to do it for an hour or an hour and a half, or however long it takes to find a bear growl that we like. So, I had to come prepared with like, I had like 50, I’m exaggerating, but I had a bunch of different versions that sometimes I used a buzz, some half valve, sometimes I took slides out, mouthpiece on backwards, sometimes yelling through the horn, I tried like one of them I remember I picked
the tuba up and but the bell on my head so the tuba was sticking up on my head and [audible
growl], and you know some of them resulted in falling over laughing like “NO! please don’t do
that, that way.” And others were kind of like “Okay, that one makes some sense, what if you
tried adding this to it?” That was a particular example where all it said in the music was a curvy
line and it had growl written above it. So, it’s a concrete example of that. Um....The technical
skills exam is something that I’m still doing to this day, and I think I am, I know that I’m worse
at it now that when I was in school. But, you know, it’s one of those things that you just got to
keep up, but I think that it is, I know that he adopted that from one of his teachers, so, kind of
embracing the lineage.

CD: Yes, I use it to. It definitely helps to create a really solid foundation of just a general ability
on the horn.

AL: Yeah, I feel like physically if you can get to 700 points on that thing then pretty much
anything that someone lays down in front of you, just about anything like 97% of anything
someone puts in front of you that you are physically capable to play. And I think if you
supplement that with the Bai Lin Lip Flexibilities book, really play the snot out of it, and you can
really play the snot out of the technical skills, and play the snot out of the Snedecor Low Register
Etudes, you are set for anything people place in front of you. You might need an hour ow two to
hash out some rhythms, but you are capable of playing it.

CD: Yeah, I agree. Cool. So then, Like I touched on earlier Dr. Skillen has incorporated this
adaptability component. Are there any experiences you had in the studio that have allowed for
your development of skillsets besides performing in his teaching? Are there any skill sets you
possess that you can attribute to your time in his studio?

AL: Umm, during my Doctorate he started really kind of getting into that sort of thing. He
started talking more about, specifically while I was there, it was a short lived endeavor with
entrepreneurship that he oversaw, and like we went to a conference in Los Angeles for that, and
did some presentations with the, um, LSU, they had a business pitch contest that was campus
wide, and part of our work with the entrepreneurship group was to have, participate in this
business pitch project and we did some work in the community and stuff like that. So, I think that
was probably the beginning of getting into that, and I think there was some political things in the
SoM that kind of brought that to an abrupt end, but I know that he maintained his desire to do
things like that with the students. Honestly, I didn’t really witness a whole bunch of that outside
of the entrepreneurship stuff. When he started getting into that was kind of when I was done with
classes. I was off campus more...

CD: Well, maybe some of that stuff, um, but I know that with the presentations or, for studio
class, did you guys do presentations on performers, or pedagogues?

AL: Yeah, absolutely we did. We did presentations on, he would have us do 10-15 minute
presentations.

CD: Yeah, even if it was something as simple as I’m able to communicate better because of
things I did in his studio, or write better, research better, or anything.
AL: Oh, I definitely write and research better.

CD: Yeah, I’m going through that right now. He’s yeah...um...so...

AL: I definitely write and research better, and I actually, it’s fun because I feel like my experience going through the writing process with him has sparked a lot of spirited discussion between me and my referenced Librarian wife. Um, and scholarly inclined wife, because she comes from a little different philosophical circle when it comes to writing style and citation style and stuff like that, so sometimes we, uh, we get to argue over which way to cite a particular source or whatever.

CD: I mean, really, I’m just looking to see if there’s anything outside of tuba performing that you could attribute specifically to working with Dr. Joe in the studio.

AL: Yeah, I think, I mean, I did the technical skills with students, I basically carbon copied tuba ensemble literature, you know, all the stuff I played with him, I have taken to other schools I taught at and used, Brass choir stuff from my days in brass choir with him, I carbon copied that and took it elsewhere, I did other stuff too. Like, when I was teaching at Akron, I started teaching and only a month in we already had a brass, and I got there and the calendar was already set and I had a brass choir concert 5 weeks into the semester and was like “Uh-oh.” So, I basically took pieces from the two years I was in brass choir at LSU and used that at Akron for our first program. It was stuff that I already knew it because I played it and, in some cases, conducted the LSU Brass Choir. So, some things that I did and had opportunities to do as a graduate student and assistant to him I implemented in my teaching and stuff. But, I think, you know like aside from the whole citizen, living the whole complete citizen person thing, I think one of the things that always surprised me about him was that he was always, somehow always had time to read. And, I remember once I asked him, like when I was writing my document I would get home from work, because I was working full time, I would get home at 6:30-7 and then I would eat dinner and sit still for an hour and starting around like 8:30-9 I would start writing and write for 3-4 hours and then, I would go to bed at 1-2 in the morning after writing and getting my brain to calm down. Then, I would wake up at 7:00 to eat breakfast and have coffee and go to work at 9:00 and I would already have responses from him that had timestamps at 4:30 or 5:30 in the morning and, you know, it wasn’t every time, but it was many of the times. And, also talking to him in his office he would say “Oh, I read this great book, you got to check it out.” And it’s like, “How do you have time to read all these books, practice, be a husband and a father to two very rambunctious and super curious teenage boys, and read books, and answer my dissertation chapter at 5:00 in the morning? How do you do this?” And he said a couple things, he said “One, I take cat naps during the day so I don’t need to sleep as much at night, I have trained my body over years and years to do that. Also, I’m just always curious. I always want to know more, and things keep me up at night because I want to know more and I want to learn more.” I think that constant curiosity and the true curiosity and the desire to be, and I think these are his words “a lifelong learner.” That has definitely stuck with me, and I feel like that is one of the things that Kelly and I have bonded over, is that we are both that way. We are both kind of just intrinsically curious, and it’s really awesome to be around someone else that is that way. And, coupled with that I didn’t even talk about his LSU in Ireland thing that he did for, I don’t know if he is still doing that or if he is still doing stuff with Study Abroad.
CD: I think he is this summer.

AL: Well, he was doing LSU in Ireland, I think he did it for 6 years or 8 years or something like that, then he stepped away from that and did one summer in Germany, and another summer where he took alumni to Sweden and Denmark and Norway and Finland, and just like helping, part of that was I helped him organize a couple of those summers and sent some emails to beds and breakfasts in Ireland to help him out with planning those trips. Then, one summer I went. Just kind of like, being around him when we were both outside of our element, but still seeing him be in one of his elements, the curiosity that one finds when you’re in a totally new, foreign place. You know, all of that, the lifelong learner, forever curious. No matter what I’m doing to pay my bills, those are things that will always matter to me.

CD: Yeah, same. I get it.

AL: I make it sound like I’m not playing tuba anymore, but I’m definitely playing tuba, and holding out for an adjunct job around here, because at this point that’s really what I need to fulfill myself.

CD: Cool, thanks Andy. I appreciate the time!!

AL: Absolutely!!

Brian Gallion Interview Transcript

Consent Script

CD: How did your time at LSU, specifically in Dr. Skillen’s applied studio, influence your career?

BG: Well, when I did my Master’s and DMA at LSU with Dr. Skillen, and when I came in for my Master’s degree Dr. Skillen asked me what my goals were and I told him that I really just wanted to play with the Chicago Symphony by the time I was done with my master’s degree. And he said “Okay, great. But, just in case that doesn’t happen because Gene Pokorny is in that spot and he isn’t planning on going anywhere, I want to teach you to be able to take anything that comes your way. And so, you can have that ability to say yes to everything and get your career where you want to go.” So, I would say that has been my career path. You know, I said yes to a lot of things that I was maybe not an expert in, you know, and not ready for yet, but Dr. Skillen encouraged us and taught us to be open minded about what it was that was coming out way. Whether that is a Mardi Gras parade, having never played music like that, or encouraging me to apply for an advertising position with the ITEA, a job for which I did not have any experience, or jumping in with both feet into the non-profit world, which again I did not have any experience. All of those things are because Dr. Joe encouraged me to say “Yes,” and then tackle the how later.
CD: So, did he kind of help you establish a way to be more comfortable with just accepting things as they come to you? Whether that was advertising or the non-profit thing, did he teach you how to lay the groundwork to get going in those avenues?

BG: Well, I would say that he initially taught me the mindset, the growth mindset almost. Just because I don’t have experience in something doesn’t mean I can’t learn it. Just because I don’t have experience doing advertising stuff, doesn’t mean I can’t develop the skill set to be effective at that, and I have been doing that now for 8 years. So, first of all, kind of a growth mindset, but also being objective about the situation that I find myself in and think on my feet. And, being able to think on my feet and have confidence in my ability to succeed in situations where I may not be entirely comfortable to start.

CD: Cool. It’s really interesting because everyone that I have talked to Danny Chapa and Justin Clarkson, you now, Andy, and even the current students, they all say that the way he approaches teaching is definitely holistic, and it’s not solely focused on making you the best tuba player he can. He understands that life in music is bigger than just that one thing.

BG: Right.

CD: It is really interesting that everyone is kind of emphasizing that. Are there any specific aspects of his teaching do you utilize in your own teaching? Well, when you were teaching at Southeastern.

BG: I would always try to...Joe was always very good at diagnosing problems in my playing and so I ... this isn’t specific to what we were just talking about, but Joe was always very good at diagnosing problems and I spent a lot of time trying to learn to do that and it always seemed to me that he had the answers. Joe also was really great at modeling and really great at doing deep dives into issues, so I would try to do that as well. He was also encouraging me, and this is where it plays in, when I got to my Master’s degree I was not really adept at multiple tonguing, so he gave me the tools to learn how to do it and told me to go figure it out. “This is what you do, but we’re not going to spend your next four lessons working on this, here’s what you do, you need to figure it out and have your own “aha” moment.” And, I would try to do that with my students as well, and a lot of times it was on the same issues I had, like multiple tonguing, “here’s how you do it, and now go and practice this.” Joe was really great at creating little micro-steps to encourage you along the path, right? So, he’s go this thing that I know you know about called say-blow-buzz-play, and so, with multiple tonguing specifically, you can’t play multiple tongue, then break down the individual parts and put them together. You have to figure out how to move your tongue the right way, then how to blow air while moving your tongue, then buzz while moving your tongue and blowing air, and finally put that into playing. And, so, it’s really great, you know, you get encouragement along the way instead of just saying “No, that’s wrong, you have to double tongue.” He’s really great at deconstructing I guess, would be a good word to use. What the actual process is, and, then you can build it back together. I would say that you could even say that I used that today even in the non-profit world. I’m not teaching, I’m an administrator right now. But, if I see a problem, I have the ability to break it down into small steps and solve the problems. That’s a, while I’m not applying that ability to um, to my teaching, since I am not teaching, I am still applying that to my career, which is cool. I still do that stuff in
my own practice when I’m getting ready for a gig or a show or something. Does that make sense?

CD: Yeah absolutely, what did you call that process again?

BG: Are you talking about the say-blow-buzz-play?

CD: Yes, that’s it. Got it. I was thinking it was only one word, and I couldn’t figure out what it was.

BG: It’s deconstructing a problem so that it’s really detailed, and then putting it back together.

CD: Cool. It’s really neat that a way he taught you to break things down on the horn and how to solve a problem has manifested into your current position, too.

BG: Yeah, well I would say that is one of the things that Joe is really great at. You know, he applies it in his work to teaching applied studio, but it has so many more applications outside of just playing the horn. You know? Teaching, and then, I’m an administrator and work a lot with spreadsheets and processes and trying to break those down. I haven’t really thought about it until now, but it makes sense to me.

CD: Yeah, he kind of, what’s really neat is, who was it...I think it was Thomas, who is currently in the studio now, he talked about one of the unique aspects that he tries to utilize is that he tries to lead his high school students down a pathway of discovery. He doesn’t want to give you the answer, but he gives them the tools and information, because ultimately it will manifest itself in many different ways and be more effective if you can go through it yourself.

BG: Yeah, you are your own best teacher. You know, Joe is really great at that and having him guide you along. That’s a great way to put it, going down a path of discovery. You discover along the way that you’re probably capable of a lot more than maybe you originally thought you were. So...and I could say that about a lot of things that I am currently doing. You know? From the advertising to the non-profit world to playing trombone in the theatre gigs, being first call trombone for Little Theatre Baton Rouge and I’m not a trombone player, I’m not trained as a trombone player. But, take that down step by step, and maybe it takes a month to get ready for your first show, but you say yes. And that’s a perfect example. My first show with Theatre of Baton Rouge was on tuba, and I told the director “If you ever need a trombone player, I also play trombone.” A little naively, but with that growth mindset that Joe talks about and um, 2 years later the Theatre director called me to play Hairspray. I hadn’t played trombone in like a year, but I said yes, because I knew it would be great for my career and for me to learn how to play music like that. So, I sweated it out for a month before that show started. I wasn’t great, but I was good enough that they kept calling me and now 10 years later, I’m still doing that. So it is a really cool thing, and credit to Joe for teaching me to have an open mind and saying yes.

CD: You know, while you’re talking about this and talking about the non-profit world, advertising, trombone playing, I know you have orchestra stuff, I mean anything that comes up you’re saying yes. It reminds me of interviewing Andrew Hitz for a different portion of this
project and he talks about how he has a portfolio career where he has 15-20 different things that he does, whether it’s teaching at Shenandoah, podcasts, chamber gigs, orchestra gigs, etc. it’s very similar to what you’re doing, in a sense.

BG: Well, I mean, there just aren’t that many jobs like Joe has you know? There’s not that many jobs where you can support yourself doing one thing like teaching or playing? There’s like 6-7 orchestral tuba jobs in the country that pay enough that you can support yourself on it, and none of the people that have those jobs just do that. They also teach. They also all go teach masterclasses and consultants for horn companies. So, if you get into a position and you sit there and you are comfortable then you aren’t really growing. SO, I’m always trying to challenge myself and do new things, so that is kind of a direct credit to Joe. That is who he is, look at what he does. He runs the Study Abroad program for the music school, or at least he did...

CD: Well, I think he’s going to Germany this summer, I’m not sure if he’s running a Study Abroad program though

BG: Does Joe know German? I don’t think he does.

CD: I’m sure he’ll learn it by the time he goes.

BG: I’m sure he will, you know, that’s kind of the great thing about him. Always say yes, then figure it out later. It’s, uh, been great so far.

CD: And to just validate what you were just saying that there’s not many jobs, just in the last 3 and a half years since I’ve been in the DMA program at LSU, I think there has been, maybe, 5 tuba performing jobs that have come available. I want to say one was Seattle, Louisville, Naval Academy Band had an opening, ummm...there might have been one other major orchestra job, but that’s about it. There’s not been any other major orchestra or military jobs in the US. Um, and then as far as teaching goes...

BG: Everybody recognizes that and they don’t want to let go of those jobs...

CD: And, I think teaching wise, like university jobs, in the last 3 and a half years sime I have been looking at job postings, maybe there’s been 5 specifically tuba/euphonium teaching jobs, and I’ve applied to a few of them. One was at A&M Kingsville, Valdosta was one too, those were Visiting Assistant and Eastern Tennessee State, but those are were [advertised as] solely tuba/euphonium studio [teaching] jobs. Not coupled with band, music education, music history, or appreciation, just tuba. So, those jobs don’t exist, and that, I think that is where Dr. Joe is going with this model is making sure that you’re adaptable and versatile and able to do those things.

BG: And yeah, to your point there’s only three just tuba jobs, but how many jobs are out there that are like theory prof. and applied studio, or ...

CD: I’ve applied to way more of those types of jobs.
BG: Absolutely, so being able to say yes and figure it out later is a great mindset to have in our field.

CD: Yep. So, then...

BG: At least taking the risk you know?

CD: But, what’s cool and I think this is where the next question is going to go. So, we talked about Dr. Skillen encourages the development of skillsets besides performing in his teaching. Are there any specific skill sets you possess that you can attribute to your time in his studio? Just be specific in things that you do, or have developed because of his teaching or influence. I know you talked teaching and big influences, but are there things you did in the studio that helped foster these skills?

BG: Okay, sure. So... Yeah, I’ve got a good one. My DMA Chamber recital. Joe told me the hardest thing about doing a DMA chamber recital is managing the people and the logistics of it, not the playing. So, when he gave me that, you know, when I started working on that, it wasn’t so much that we were working on the music, it was “Hey, Joe, my oboe player is bailing. What do I do?” You know? How do I manage this? How do I manage trying to find 8 horn players to play this Alec Wilder piece, when some of the horn players don’t have the range? It was being creative in how to manage that. So, rather than having 8 horn players we had 2 trumpet players. That you know, that played with mutes so that it sounded more like a horn. So, it’s being creative and finding a creative way to manage a large logistical thing, a large logistical problem. That is all I do now at work with Kid’s Orchestra. It’s just managing logistical problems. So, you know, I would say that was a really great experience. I could have just done brass quintet stuff, but that would have been easy because I had a brass quintet. Or I could have done brass quintet or tuba/euphonium quartet. But, Joe encouraged me to do some out of bounds stuff, so I did a woodwind quintet, a horn octet with tuba solo, and I had a quintet and quartet piece and that was great. But, it’s you know, very, he was looking for ways to challenge me that, he was looking for me to do things that would challenge me. He knew that I had played in quartets and quintets and wasn’t worried about that. He wanted me to figure out how to have a growth mindset and do new things.

CD: And he probably knew that there were going to be, you know, organizational challenges and logistical challenges and organizing stuff with a quartet you regularly play with is easy. But, he wanted you to gain some experience doing stuff that you hadn’t done before because he knew it would help in the future.

BG: Um, and I would say another cool project that I ended up doing was you know because I, I would again attribute this to him that always be thinking about new ways to communicate and new ways that you can experience art, music. So, I came to him with this idea about writing, about composing based on art and rather than saying “You’re not really a composer, why do you want to do that?” he was like “Yes. Absolutely, let’s do this. Figure it out.” And, so he encouraged me along the way and you know, I ended up composing this piece kind of based on some artwork that my grandmother had done. Like 20-30 years ago, I really liked the art and I decided that I wanted to combine my grandmother’s world and my world. And um, I will keep
names out of this, but there was a faculty member, so I did this as sort of a lecture recital and um, there was a faculty member that evidently asked Dr. Skillen “I don’t even know how to grade this.” And Joe said “Don’t worry about that. It doesn’t matter if it was great, or if he is a great composer, or if you enjoy the music, or if you think this is a worthwhile project. It is because he is doing something that he has never done before and I encouraged him to be creative and do something that was out of his comfort zone.” I am really proud of that project. And, you know, while I didn’t become a composer, per se, it was still another way kind of encouraging me to be open-minded and just say yes. So, yeah, it didn’t go anywhere, per se, but it is still something that I am super proud of and you know...well I don’t even know that I can say that it didn’t go anywhere. Because, a few years later the kind of combination of art and music kind of came back and kind of circled back around. There are these pieces, oh, Chasse you’re going to have to help me out with the name, I can’t think of it right now. Um...the it’s for tuba solo it sounds like a movie score, Scott Watson recorded it...um...you know what I’m talkin about?

CD: To be honest, I don’t know much of what Scott Watson has done.

BG: Okay, hang on a second, I’ll look it up.

CD: Okay, me too, I’m sitting at my computer. So, I’ll google.

BG: I am too. It’s a Ben McMillen piece, it’s called...where is it...Tomes of Hardened Steel.

CD: I was going to say one of his Tomes things, because I know someone who commissioned a third Tomes. Okay.

BG: Oh yeah? Nice. Tomes of Hardened Steel and Tomes of the Wanderer. I thought how cool would it be, since those pieces are designed to sound like movie scores, I thought how cool would it be to commission a movie to go with this? And I did, and it, you know it was great. I ended up kind of being, I did the world premiere of that at a tuba conference in Alabama, a regional conference in Alabama, and I am incredibly proud of that one. So, the Animation and Media Department at Southeastern created animation for me for both of them. They were back to back Hardened Steel and Wanderer. It was a really cool project.

CD: So are these pieces meant to be with some sort of visual thing?

BG: No, they weren’t meant to be, but when Ben wrote it he was imagining like, imagining this would be a movie score with the tuba having the solo. So, what I did was commission a movie to go with it. IT was an animated movie that new Media and Animation Department at Southeastern created for me. It was like 25 minutes long, and I did that. It was a really incredible experience for them and for me and for the art department and I loved it. I thought it turned out really, really well. So that, there again, Joe says yes do this, so the art thing. Write music to your grandmother’s piece. So, I didn’t turn into a composer, but that combining visual art and musical art, while it isn’t a new idea, it was a new task for me and a new creative outlet for me that was fun and cool. So...
CD: Absolutely, it’s the creative experience and the process you go through. That is more important than anything else when you are doing something like that. It isn’t just sitting on the stage with a piano player and playing the Vaughan-Williams concerto. That’s been done.

BG: Right.

CD: He definitely seeks to try to go to a new avenue. I experienced something similar in a sense with my Chamber Recital in a sense of the organizing and managing stuff too. Most of my piece were with percussion, you know. So just trying to figure that out. I did something with a vocalist. It was definitely a fun and creative process.

BG: Yeah, absolutely.

CD: That’s some good stuff, man. That’s all I have today.

BG: Alright.

CD: Thanks, Brian!
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Vita

Chasse Duplantis is a from Houma, Louisiana. Currently, he is in his first year as Adjunct Instructor of Low Brass at Southern University and A & M College in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. During his degree he served as a graduate teaching assistant for the LSU Department of Bands and Dr. Joseph Skillen working with his tuba and euphonium studio. He also holds a Master of Music degree from LSU in Euphonium Performance and a Bachelor’s degree in Music Education from Southeastern Louisiana University. Prior to beginning his DMA at LSU, Duplantis was the Assistant Band Director at Porter High School in Porter, Texas for 3 years. During his tenure at PHS, he helped lead the program to many first-time accomplishments. The PHS Spartan band experienced its first superior ratings at both UIL Marching and Concert and Sight Reading Assessments. As a performer, he has experienced success winning or placing in several regional, national, and international competitions on both tuba and euphonium. Most notably, he won the Music Teacher’s National Association (MTNA) Young Artist Brass National Competition and placed second in the Artist Euphonium competition for the International Women’s Brass Conference (IWBC). Additionally, he has placed on both tuba and euphonium at several International Tuba and Euphonium Association Regional Artist competitions.