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INTERNATIONAL

# TROMBONE

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**Dave  
Taylor**  
BE THERE!

**Inside:**  
FREE Dave  
Taylor DVD!

# BE THERE

BY DAVID TAYLOR, BASS TROMBONIST



William Chu, Photographer

"For me, being in the **MOMENT** is one heavy way truth reveals itself."

**“Dugger,” Thad Jones said to me, “you’re all chained up!”** He said this when I left his and Mel Lewis’s band to stay at home, raise my family, and develop a career in New York. The fact that most of the cats in the band were divorced made it hard to score “road points” with Ronnie (now, my wife of 41 years). Having spent 6 years at Juilliard, and having left the building to gig while I was there, I had a thriving career developing in New York with orchestral, chamber, big band, and recording work . . . anything I wanted. I had to leave Thad and Mel’s band to follow my own path. One of those life decisions that you think you have all the time in the world to make, but really is always a split second choice.



Dave and Ronnie Taylor in Venice.

In the sixties and seventies New York had a thriving modern music, and jazz big band scene. Playing in jazz groups helped me develop a real classical chamber music mentality. Playing and getting inside the “real” music of your own country, with musicians who know how to go over the barline, personalize phrasing, time, and harmony enables you to understand more easily the nuance of another’s music. Existentialists know that people are people no matter where they live on the globe. Because of this, it relates that if you know your feelings and you respect everyone as you would yourself, you can relate your feelings to everyone else’s on a universal level. If you know your native music deeply, you might have a better understanding of how other cultures derived their music. Remember the saying, “Music is the universal language?” Well, it is, with each locale having its own dialect. It broadens your views. I didn’t know it at the time, but because of this mindset, I was able to develop my own style of phrasing, and improvisation in both classical and jazz genres. An early influence on the need for flexibility was J.S. Bach. I directly related J.S. Bach’s ability to write in the German, French, and Italian styles, as my model. My schooling exposed me to all these possibilities.

To further develop my craft on the trombone and open up musical possibilities, I started commissioning music, and through

the combination of education, luck, and lots of energy, I actually started playing in great venues all over New York. Throughout my career I have had a great time doing that.

When I look back, I realize that I had the luck to be around Masters. I see guys like Leopold Stowkowski. I was playing in his orchestra, the American Symphony, in Carnegie Hall while I was still going to Juilliard. We were premiering Ives’ Symphonies, and large Berio pieces. Stowkowski was in his nineties, and he was constantly telling us, “Do Betta.” Imagine that scenario. BE THERE.

I did all kinds of gigs; just to get the experience and grow . . . did I mention the money? To play in big bands when I was at Juilliard was a no-no. The “inside” word was if you played in jazz bands, you couldn’t be an orchestral player! I didn’t listen to that kind of talk. I also started playing in Broadway pits from 1965-71 . . . another no-no. I tried it again with a couple of weeks of subs, re-testing the water, around 1990, but it wasn’t my cup of tea. In the 60s, I met an amazing group of players, and networked. Even got to record with Duke Ellington because the fantastic trombonist Julian Priester was my section mate in a show; he heard me play, and liked it.

Imagine, recording with Duke Ellington. On one or two of the cuts on The New Orleans Suite recording, Duke had the band

(and I mean the original band!!!!) sit in a circle, and to get his point across, rather than talk, he danced around us and inspired us. Duke’s presence did that to all musicians. When I was in the Gil Evans band, I saw the same thing. Well, there was this one time: we recorded a movie track for the film, The Color of Money. During the session, I was experimenting with mutes, one of the things Gil really liked about my work. At one point I was messing around with a harmon stem in. He didn’t like it and said, “Take the mute out” to which, I said, “but Gil, I’m hearing bag pipes.” “Yeah, well don’t hear bagpipes” he snipped.

At the time it hurt my feelings . . . I mean check it out, Gil Evans! But I quickly got past it, because I knew I was making music with a guy who could be annoyed with something, and at the same time understand the importance and difficulties, of personalization. Without saying a word, he made you feel safe to keep trying. You knew you were there because of your strengths. If something didn’t work at that moment, his presence encouraged you to continue to investigate and take risks. Your experiments might work somewhere else in the music. Another time I showed up late to one of the Monday night gigs because of an airline scheduling problem. I missed the first set, so I refused the money for the gig. He wouldn’t have it. Gil insisted I get paid double. He said he knew how hard it must have been for me to get there. How often do you meet people like that? He was real in living his successes and failures!

I remember Pierre Boulez kidding around with me when I started subbing at the New York Philharmonic. I came to his attention when I played in some of his small group “Rug Concerts.” These were concerts featuring some of the more risk-taking composers of the period in a smaller venue, Cooper Union -- a theatre in New York where Abe Lincoln gave some speeches. Boulez was very supportive of the contemporary music scene in New York. When I continued subbing in the orchestra for one of my teachers, Alan Ostrander, Boulez continued to be friendly. What an encouragement. Then, when I didn’t bother going to the audition for the orchestra, when Mr. Ostrander retired, and a new player was hired; Boulez still used me on the Philharmonic’s recording of Vareses’, Amerique, where the bass bone has the solo separating the two main sections of the piece. It wasn’t a matter of who played better, he liked my style of playing. How could I not have wanted to continue taking risks after hanging out with cats like that!

### My basic philosophy: **BE THERE.**

**Always try to play with people you can learn from. Take chances. Hang out with people who take risks. Even if you feel you are not up to the standard, you’d be surprised the help you get with a little humility. Often times the risk-takers are the innovators.**

I have had the good fortune of playing with enough innovators to realize they see technique as a color, not an artifact, pitch as another color, rhythm as a color, and form as a personal idea. The risk-taker might be more involved with developing something new, or “living on the edge” and, realize as the great French sculptor August Rodin stated, “there is no such thing as beautiful color, there is no such thing as beautiful line, there is no such thing as beautiful form. There is only one beauty, and that’s the beauty of truth revealing itself.”

For me, being in the MOMENT is one heavy way truth reveals itself. I also found it’s a way to get around worrying about clams and mistakes. It enables style to develop. Being in the moment,



Mel Lewis, Dave Taylor, and Ron Bridgewater (sax)

is BEING THERE. It’s “The Street.” Practice all the components of fundamentals, but once you are in front of people, let these components slip into the background. Try to enjoy the moment.

OK, so here I was in the 1960s, good chops, and enthusiastic, but compared to the heavies I was associating with, I felt I didn’t have a personal enough approach, and had no concept of how to develop one. I did know I needed to develop my articulation. Although I played successfully in many genres, I knew my articulation had to develop more immediacy with a clear sound immediately upon impact. I wanted total understanding of my “process” of making a sound, and knew that this understanding would give me the confidence to come in at any entrance without hesitation. Another big advantage for me was that I had a premonition that this style would not allow double tonguing. Try expressing your self on a series of 16<sup>th</sup> notes; first try double tonguing then single. Hear how pronouncing each note as an individual enhances the flow, and musicality of the line more through emphasis and dynamics changes. With experience, and learning the process, you learn to vary intensities, and actually have more places in your chest for varying diaphragm control. With this control, you can change the shape of your mouth cavity for tone color, and maintain your full tone. Because I had no clue where all this would lead me, I decided to leave the horn on my face all day every day, with the hope that something would develop.



Ray Anderson, Art Baron, and Dave Taylor

For years I didn't take more than a handful of days off from the horn each year. I continued to take every gig that came along. My tonguing exercises also became a "band aid" in case of chop problems due to "climbing into the sound around me" in so many different genres of music. This work ethic over the years grew my technique, confidence in tackling any music, and left no doubt to other musicians that I was serious. I must have had some faith in myself due to early successes. But, an important thing to remember is this: small successes are vital in life to reach the big ones. Don't put unnecessary expectations on yourself. Unnecessarily heavy expectations might not allow you the ability to fail. Failing must be allowed to happen for growth and success. It's important to get into the habit of picking yourself up to continue on the path. To me, staying on the path is the goal itself.

How was I supposed to know, that 30 years down the road, my dear friend, colleague, and great composer, Daniel Schnyder would share this understanding that articulation is one of the most important keys in interpretation.

Because this is not an article about articulation, I'll describe quickly why Daniel and I have recorded so much together.

Due to the ITA's interest, much of this article will be about my collaboration with composer Daniel Schnyder. We have a trio, and the journal is doing a review of the CDs we've done over the last ten years, due to the fact that much of the materials on those CDs is becoming part of our bass trombone repertoire. The DVD included in this issue is the first whole project as a duo. We will be appearing in Zurich on September 13 and in Washington, D.C. on October 3, 2009.

If you have solid understanding of the process of air support, tonguing, and the difference between embouchure and aperture,

you can maintain tone and pitch focus while coloring your sound. You'll have an articulate technique that will sound as if you were talking. You'll tell a story. Let me describe it another way. With "strong" suspension bridges, swaying roadways are built into the structural plans. Combine swaying roadways with moving cars, and you have a million variations of a straight line. This can happen because the bridge is solid enough to maintain consistency. As I mentioned earlier, with "strong" understanding of your process, the three areas: support, articulation, and embouchure -- you can vary attacks, support your air in different places, and change the shape of your mouth cavity. This also allows you to maneuver time. Your rhythmic sense will have an elasticity which is another key color in chamber music interpretation. This is the basic reason Daniel Schnyder and I love performing together. We turn the music into a "child's playground" through articulation, and librarian-like ability to reference different styles. Realizing that we are playing through composed chamber music, where the past styles are the "folk sources" of the music, gives us the freedom to take these references and turn them into further personalization. Incidentally, I'm very proud to have been an influence on his writing, because Daniel marks the Bass Trombone Concerto as the beginning of a change in his overall compositional style.

Every generation of musicians has a different set of problems than the ones that came before them. I identified with composers, artists, and writers because they understood right from the get go that they had to be problem solvers. I felt so strongly about this, that I would carry their books to master classes, and ITA festivals to quote, and present the stacks of books as a visual reinforcement. If you read their essays, autobiographies and biographies, you will discover how creative people overcame their problems and insecurities. You might be inspired as to how to solve yours, and find ways to develop your career. Some of the problems I confronted were: a) How can I develop a musical personality based on historic precedence? b) How could I avoid being so influenced by history, so history wouldn't hinder my risk taking? c) How can I

get my music to the public while maintaining my personality and credo? d) How can I get my music out there while making a living and having a family life?

Because I chose to stay in New York and let the chips fall where they will, I had to explore every option. Basically, wherever a group of people genuinely wanted me the most, that's where I went. The emphasis changed year to year, but I was always able to maintain great gigs in orchestral, chamber, solo, jazz, and pop fields. I chose playing in the studios for my main monetary activity. It offered freedom from a steady gig, good money, and a hang with great musicians who encouraged each other to do their own thing. My great luck in being in the studios from the 70s through the 90s was that much of the work had only bass trombone in smallish mixed ensembles. Come to think of it, maybe this luck was helped along by the quest for developing personal style and technique.

Funny how I came to studio work, it basically blossomed in one week. It was that BE THERE thing. In this one particular week, I was playing with the NY Philharmonic, doing a Blood, Sweat, and Tears studio recording, and on one day in the middle of all that, Jon Faddis, my roommate in Thad and Mel's band, and I were doing a jingle date. We'd lined up some subs, but decided to fly up to Rochester NY to meet the band for a one nighter. Back in the day, some of us flew around a lot covering our musical bases. We knew that the studio scene was extremely lucrative and empowering, but we also knew that it was both contingent upon and supportive of doing your own music. In other words, you needed to have a name to be a top-call studio player, and you needed the money to support your music habit so you could become noticed.

I took money earned in the studios, and started commissioning composers. This is Problem solving: a) having the money to commission composers; b) commissioning to advance your artistry and getting your music out to the public; and c) getting recognition in your "business."

Since the 70s I've been mentioned and reviewed in the New York newspapers many times. I knew potential employers read the papers and would see I was serious. Incidentally, Youtube might be the newspaper of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Also, when I say serious, I don't mean solemn. I mean, when it comes to technique you're "there," but while that's going on, you share the joy. Louis Armstrong, Pablo Casals, Dizzy Gillespie, Luciano Berio.

So . . . John Faddis and I flew up to Rochester. We were surprised to find out that Public Broadcasting System was going to televise our set. Great, but even wilder, the great trombonist Jimmy Knepper (also Charles Mingus's trombonist and copyist) for some reason was dissatisfied with the placement of his microphone. In a huff, he pushed it away from himself, and it landed directly in front of me. When the TV show was aired, you heard rhythm section, soloists, John Faddis's trumpet on top and Dave Taylor's bass trombone on bottom. When it was shown in the New York metropolitan area several times, I guess folks realized I was doing all this "genre jumping" and within a week I was doing first call work.

One of the first composers I commissioned was Eric Ewazen. This was back when he was still a student at Juilliard. I asked to listen to a tape of different styles of his composition. One of the pieces was written for 8 cellists. When I heard it, it blew me away. I said, "Man, I have to have something like that!" I demonstrated what I liked doing on the bass trombone and the various mute sounds I had come up with, and he wrote Dagon I and Dagon II (David Taylor Bass Trombone, New World Records). Check this stuff out; it's Eric Ewazen, as you've never heard him. Eric likes to say he wrote me several pieces in the beginning of his career, in the middle, and "I'll write some at the end." We are friends and socialize with our ladies. Coincidentally, Eric just emailed me, and



David Taylor preparing for Carnegie Hall debut recital.

we are planning a new project. Here's a line from his email, "In addition, since you and I have worked together for 3 (count 'em!) 3 decades, we could give a talk on our experience of collaborating on new pieces -- what it is that we enjoy so much about working together and creating this new music!"

Of the pieces Eric's written for me, four are with trombone choirs. Dagon II is me overdubbed nine times. Dagon I was written for trombone duo and percussion. I recorded it with Charlie Small, tenor trombone, and Jonathan Haas on percussion. It was during this period Charlie wrote the Conversation duo for us. The Dagon pieces have never been performed live with full choir. I would really like doing that somewhere. He also wrote two solo bass trombone and trombone choir pieces that I recorded with the Vienna Trombone Quartet and Four of a Kind (Four, Bass Hits, Albany records). You'll notice in the picture on page 21 Eric and I are having a serious compositional meeting. New Year's Eve, at Sammy's Steak House on the Lower East Side of Manhattan...we plan on making this a tradition. Here's another good reason to read and go to art museums. If you want to be a friend of composers, it might be cool to have some things to talk about after the rehearsals besides the gap between low E and pedal Bb on the horn.

I have premiered hundreds of pieces of music. Some of the composers are well known some not. Some are more accessible, some not. Some might become well-known after YOU play their music! Although I've had at least six concerti written for me, most of the music written for me is for smaller ensembles. I prefer this because it's easier to put them on programs.

### Several more thoughts about commissioning:

1. let the composer know how you play and what can be done
2. let the composer take it too far, and then compromise. It's wonderful when your technique can be taken further than it is at a given moment. I've found that many of the composers with whom I work, stretch their own concepts when they have a willing subject. With experience, you will know exactly how to tell a composer those few things you can or can't do. And, how you can give free reign to his creativity and know what effort you will be required to exert in advance
3. It's wonderful when a composer bases a piece on your personality. YOU BECOME PART OF THE CONTINUUM. Who was J.S. Bach's trumpet player? Who was W.A. Mozart's French horn player? Who was Prokofiev's Tuba player? Sometimes when I daydream, I like to think I've influenced a composer's thinking so much, that I've influenced the way he treats the trombone in all his writing, and that I'll be part of that continuum, too.
4. Composers are professional and have the same needs as any professional. If you can't offer money, guarantee a concert. Composers need to get their music in front of people (problem solving). In fact composers often write for me because they know they will not only be played; they will get publicity.
5. As it is for us, it is for them. PR is like money in the bank!
6. Talking about PR as money in the bank, as part of your agreement with a composer, ask for credits in publishing, i.e., this piece is dedicated to "John Doe", etc... Also, there are times when you can ask for a certain amount of time for exclusive rights to performance. This means no one else has the right to perform the piece for a designated time.
7. Develop a track record so composers know you're serious. BE THERE. Living composers know that if a musician plays his music incredibly well, it reflects upon him. Make a note: the opposite is also true, you bomb; he bombs! In other words, if a composer knows you will ace it, publicize it, and play it in a good venue, he'll make sure he writes for you.

Usually when a composer writes a concerto for me, I suggest he write a piano transcription. Some of them find it hard to do, others find it hard but understand the practicality of it. A big benefit of commissioning smaller orchestrated works is other people might be able to get it programmed on their concerts.

Speaking of which, be careful how you program new works on your recitals. They often require so much effort; they can bring down the quality of the whole show by favoring, or concentrating too much on the one, new ten-minute piece. I often bring this problem up to composers, and try to make them understand that if the piece is technically over the top, I probably won't want to

program it on a full recital. Sure, I'll play it as an individual piece on a diverse program, one in which I can give it the extra oomph, as I would a concerto. In the last 20-30 years because I have a pretty good track record, composers want to write for me.

When my children were in their teens, I felt I could start going on limited road trips again. I joined George Gruntz's Concert Jazz Band. It was great. Some of the tours had the trombone section of Ray Anderson, Art Baron, and me. George named the section, The Lucifers. On one trip we were playing in a hangar-like space in Zurich. I don't quite remember, but I think it could have been an aircraft hangar. Don't let that surprise you. Often when I play solo concerts in Europe, they're staged in weird places. Once in Austria I played a concert backed up by the Vienna Trombone Quartet in the deep section of an empty swimming pool. Once I played a recital with keyboard in a road salt storage hangar in between "mile high" piles of salt. Anyway, the day after the concert in Zurich most of the guys in the band were lunching at an outdoor café, and this tall, skinny, young guy comes up to me, introduces himself, and tells me he was at the concert. He liked the solo I played (in a Harmon stem-out mute), and then Daniel Schnyder showed me his scores. They looked very interesting, and we had a great conversation. He told me he was moving to New York, and we should hook up. I said, "cool." BE THERE.

I was there because my philosophy as a freelance musician necessitates that I try to stay on the edge. Earlier in the article I mentioned I used to fly around to cover my musical bases. This is what I would do: I played in several groups that toured the states infrequently; one was a small band led by jazz great Bob James. You might know him for the music of the TV show, Taxi. Other tours were in orchestras backing up singers Frank Sinatra or Barbra Streisand. If I could find a flight that would enable me to coordinate a recording session and the road gig, I would take it to keep all the "plates spinning" even if it meant taking a financial loss on the day. I actually sent a sub to one of Streisand's recording sessions at Madison Square Garden so I could make a rehearsal of the Mozart *Requiem*.

Of course, if I toured Europe, that process was not too practical. When I joined GG's band I knew it involved a two-week tour every year. I knew it meant I would walk away from lucrative gigs, but I needed to stay spread out. My feeling is in a long-running freelance career don't try to "own the Empire." Try not to worry too, too much about the accumulation of money. It's always important to stretch, and take chances by investing in yourself. You also keep freshening your income base. Certainly I wouldn't have met Daniel Schnyder exclusively sitting around a studio in New York.

Although, I met Bob Mintzer directly through the studio scene in New York. We were doing a recording session, the great Michael Brecker was in the saxophone section, and he brought a young friend around, and introduced him to us; it was Mintzer. Talk about lucking out! Then being asked to join the band and having a book written with your playing in mind...BE THERE. There was an incident early on in the band's history that was very encouraging to me. Again, remember the small successes, they help build to the big ones. The late fantastic song writer and pianist, Don Grolnick, and drummer Peter Erskine were standing in the doorway of the studio during a sectional rehearsal with the band. They were laughing and whispering in Bob's ear. It turns out they were enjoying how I was personalizing Bob's written parts. It was something I couldn't have imagined would be noticed. That it was, freed me up to do it more.

When you adopt that BE THERE mentality, you never know when, where, or what circumstance will offer itself to you. I play with the Lincoln Center Chamber Music Society. I decided to also play in their educational series. Bruce Adolphe, composer

and author, wrote and recorded a children's piece with narrator called, "Maria and Her Hearts Desire." One might think the kiddie's concert/recording would be a light gig, but I took it. Turns out it was an octet, and Itzhak Perlman was the fiddle player. I got to duo with Itzhak Perlman. Wynton Marsalis wrote a companion piece to *L'histoire*, called *The Fiddler's Tale*. Lincoln Center asked me to tour the States and record both pieces with Marsalis. Both are out on CD. You never know! (be there).

years to rehearse. It was real. The music was very difficult at first, even though it was written with my style of playing. I knew then this music would become a wealth of Bass Trombone repertoire. Actually, string, and woodwind players are also playing a large amount of it, and the bass trombone sonata has been transcribed for French horn, and bassoon.

I didn't realize it was going to grow into the large oeuvre it has become, and I'm very proud of the fact that I might be enhancing



(left to right) Per Brevig and Gilberto Gagliardi, Radegundis Feitosa, Charles Villarrubia, Ron Barron, David Taylor.

Daniel was offered University Professorships in Europe, but he and his wife Barbara realized they had to move to a creative center. Daniel went to Berklee, in Boston. Studied with guys like George Russell whose band I recorded with. He knew of the environment in New York and wanted to be around the creative virtuosi and scene in general. He had to be around people who could play what he was thinking and writing. Looking at it historically, composers and musicians have done that throughout the history of western civilization: Salzburg, Vienna, Berlin, London, New York, New Orleans, Chicago, etc.

When Daniel moved to New York with Barbara, our families became very close friends. We have fun, and our relationship goes beyond the music. We formed a trio with the pianist Kenny Drew, Jr. We are three very different musicians, but each of us knows a lot of the history of classical, jazz, and pop music. We read our buns off and improvise individually. We get along very well. Daniel organized the whole thing and wrote for each of us. This is the same strength many great bandleaders exhibit. We started touring Europe and recorded our first CD on the tour. Enja was interested, and we were able to get some real cheap studio time at the Zurich Radio Station. We took advantage of it, even though we didn't have a 100

the repertoire. As a wonderful "side effect" this music is being very well received by the general music going public. We played concerts featuring the Bass Trombone Sonata, and Saxophone Sonata surrounded by the popular sounds of George Gershwin and Kurt Weill (Jazz meets Weill and Gershwin, Koch Jazz). The Weill transcription suite has improvisations in between each section. This Suite from the Three Penny Opera also allowed me to continue experimenting with phrasing and mutes in most sections: Bucket, Harmon stem in and out, plunger and Kazoozin (my variation on a buzzer mute). Many of the composers who have written for me flipped over the Harmon, bucket, and Kazoozin. I've always tried to personalize mute colors. In the orchestral genre, mutes are used in a fairly conservative way, but in the improvisatory genres, personalization is the key, and you play the color as if the instrument were a whole new ax.

I have a lot of great memories of musicians who came to Sweet Basil's to hear Gil's band and who really noticed the mute work. One of these memories includes Jaco Pastorius. I played in Jaco's Word of Mouth Band, and recorded the Liberty City CD. Both Jaco and I were fairly excitable guys back in the day, and even though he

was the leader, if he did something I found disagreeable, I let him know about it (true confession: I was that way with just about all of the leaders and composers I worked with, something I'm truly working on changing [maybe]).

Anyway, back stage after our big Lincoln Center, Avery Fisher Hall concert, Jaco and I had an argument. One night, maybe months later, he came down to hang at Sweet Basil's, a club which had the band playing right on top of the front row of small tables. I took a solo using the Kazoozin, and seconds before I finished, through all these tables, literally plowing right up the middle, Jaco came bounding up to me on the bandstand. All the while apologizing with the same wild energy he used charging through the "civilians." It's one of those moments I described earlier, HOW COULD ONE NOT WANT TO BE A RISK TAKER HANGING OUT WITH CATS LIKE THAT!! BE THERE. A similar thing happened with the singer, Sting. I had just returned from a European tour. I arrived home on a Monday afternoon, and I really didn't feel like going to the band that night. I dragged my butt out of the house, thinking in my heart that this would be a horrible evening. I didn't feel like playing, but this was Gil Evans we're talking about! I took Ronnie with me for moral support (and designated driver). Last tune in the set, I took a solo. Again: Kazoozin. On the way out of the small crowded club, I collect the wife and walk out. Sting comes running after us shouting Daive, Daive (with that British accent), asking me to come up to his pad and record a solo. Love that Kazoozin! Now, I ask you, do you think that scored "road points" with Ronnie (now my wife of 41 years)??

Daniel Schnyder calls the kazoozin, my secret weapon. He used it in the bass trombone concerto and wrote a specific part for it in the Faust movie, the film score he wrote for the trio (discussed later in this article). When Faust meets the Devil for the first time, The Devil says nothing to Faust; he just tips his hat to the slow glissando of the Kazoozin. BE THERE. And while you're there, experiment with mutes. The plunger is an amazing vocal addition. The Harmon with the stem in or out is a myriad of sounds. Even if you just concentrate on these two mutes, you will begin thinking differently about phrasing in general. Practice them as you would practice anything else in your session. Take chances on making sounds "out of the blue"; play so out-of-the-box that you are chance-taking. Make sounds you don't hear. That's often the basis for soulful improvisation.

In the Schnyder/Taylor/ Drew trio, we bounce off each other concentrating on logical expression rather than being "proper." We didn't want to feel bound to phrasing that over the course of time has solidified through a "too much studied process." Although we're concerned with trying to be technically clean, we aren't obsessed with archiving the music for posterity. While we didn't obsess, I can't say we don't think of technical issues. When you premiere music, you know that within ten years or so, a new generation of performers will wonderfully adapt to the problems of its performance. So, you not only want to rise to the task of commissioning, but you also want to make the interpretation and technique hold up to the test of time. I assure you this is no easy task. *Archaeopteryx* for bass trombone and ten instruments written by Charles Wuorinen, is still so technically difficult, I think players might be avoiding it. Charles has written two other pieces for me, both extremely difficult. They are *Archangel* for bass trombone and string quartet, and the *Trio for Bass Instruments*. He was the first, well-known composer I approached. He was conducting a solo piece Maurice Wright wrote for me. After the concert, I asked Charles if he would compose a piece for me. He asked me what I was looking for. I told him that I didn't have too many opportunities to play slow music with strings, so he wrote

*Archangel*. I had some success with it, so I asked him for another. This time he said he would like to write something more florid. That became *Archaeopteryx*, which was just re-released as the title piece of his new CD. I wanted an odd trio piece, so I asked him for a trio with Bass Trombone, Double Bass, and Tuba. We went to someone else for the money!! BE THERE

Another thought. I also approach composers who are well-known in the community. To be honest there are times I know certain composers will guarantee me a spot on a high profile series. There are several reasons for this: 1) every group wants to be involved with the "edge;" 2) every group wants the publicity of the performance, and newspaper coverage; 3) every group wants to be involved in a possible recording session; and 4) maybe most important, every group who's being funded, or has grant applications pending needs to show they are involved with advancing the art, and are proactive in the community.

Around the same time as the first Schnyder/Taylor/Drew trio CD, we made a TV show. Each of us performed our own unaccompanied solo composition, and then we played a couple of trios Daniel wrote. I guess it was successful, because several years later they made a show about New York being a "melting pot," and videoed the *Bass Trombone Concerto* the day after it was premiered. The concerto was just one part of an hour show. The TV show became the recording. It was another one of those "piggy back" sessions. Since we recorded the show in a great studio, why not have it released as a CD. The problem was we only had around two hours to record it. We did a couple of takes and that was it. I even had to argue to get a second take of the cadenza section. But, because I feel more comfortable playing in a recording studio than anywhere else, I'm very pleased with the outcome, and really happy with the phrasing. The concerto came out on a CD called *Absolution* (enja) and was part of the Absolute Ensemble's CD. We were nominated for a Grammy award for performance. We didn't win. The fiddle player, Gidon Kremer won. I didn't care. I got off on the possibility that this great violinist might have been a little concerned he would lose to a bass trombone!!

Speaking of nervous, I once wrecked my horn in Brazil. I forgot to unknuckle down the slide, and when I played my first note on an unaccompanied recital with the flourish of a plunger, the bell section flew over my head and fell onto the stage with a thud. What a feeling that was! Slowly I turned. It was wrecked, but by some miracle playable (after bending some things back to shape). I bring this up because I had no time to get it repaired properly, and our trio had a two-week gig in Australia soon after the trip to Brazil. Kenny, Daniel, and I shared a house in a remote area of the Barossa wine valley (great Shiraz) outside of Adelaide. Every morning around the breakfast table, I would bemoan my fate of "what am I going to do (blah, blah, blah) with this battered horn." I began to understand how truly deep Daniel was. He would be sitting at that table every morning listening to me and answering my complaints, with "Yeah, Taylor, I hear you." All the while he was composing, with exact detail, a 12-tone song cycle. He was sitting there as if he was jotting down the notes at a family circle meeting. His natural ability to do this struck me as "old school." This must have been the way those old heavy cats in Austria had done it!!

Speaking of Austria, there was one time we did a recital in Austria, on the Boden Sea, a body of water engulfing the borders of Austria, Germany, and Switzerland. We went back to Switzerland after the concert. It was a two-hour drive. Daniel realized the next morning that he'd left a whole box of CD's at the venue. He was going to go back to get them. I said, "Cool, I'll go with you." We were using his mother's car for the tour, and we had a great time. After picking up the box in Austria, we barely made it on to the



(left to right) Composer David Snow and his wife Karen, Maria Rojas, Eric Ewazen, Ronnie and David Taylor (standing), Linda and Joe Pehrson — Sammy's Steak House, New Year's Eve, 2007

ferry back to SUISSE. In fact the gate was closing, and Daniel gunned it plop onto the boat. Out of the corner of both our eyes we looked up at a guard on the top deck looking at us funny like. Sure enough when we reached the Swiss border, we were pulled over. The police said very little. They motioned us out of the car, two of them stood guard over us at the side of the road (hands firmly placed on holstered revolvers), and two others proceeded to take Daniel's mother's car apart: hood, door panels, seats, trunk, the works. It was wild. When they found no contraband (during that period, there was a lot of gun running headed for Eastern Europe), they busted us for the box of CD's. We got in the car, PO'd for a few minutes, then laughed and carried on all the way home. Come to think of it, we were busted in New York also. Cops pulled us over, and checked us out. They wound up giving us tickets for not wearing seat belts. Me, Mr. Bright, starts messing with the cops, and after a while, said, "he's not even a citizen, how could you do this to him?" Sure enough, they went after his green card. I felt terribly green myself, bringing that up, but we eventually got away without too much pain: 75 bucks each. Daniel and Barbara became American citizens in 2006.

We were even yelled at by lifeguards at the beach. We took our wives to Rockaway beach in NY, probably went too far out (no musical pun intended), then, several of them started whistling, shouting and waving...and chastising.

Here's a picture of us with mom and the car; we might have forgotten to tell her the car was dismantled. Left to right we are Taylor, Drew, Antonette Schnyder von Waldkirch, and Daniel. The place is called BASCHLIG PLATZ. Daniel was raised there. It is in Zurich and the name comes from a 17th century Russian military hat. A Russian soldier lost it there during some fighting, and it has nothing to do with our hats (this whole description is Daniel's). The building in the back is from the 16th century. Daniel says that's why it's so sunk into the ground.

The second trio CD, *Words Within Music* (enja) was mainly the music of J.S. Bach's St. Matthew Passion, and shorter works

"David Taylor turned Bach's *Goldberg Variations* and the *St. Matthew Passion Suite* (transferred onto the harmonic jazz pattern by Schnyder) into a thunderstorm. His bass trombone, in sound and appearance terrific, let it rain: a mixture of enthusiasm, sweat, and saliva. His performance was characterized by the perfect symbiosis of body movements . . . a strong breath which allowed him to master his instrument perfectly. Close to playing the theater yet never ridiculous."

From Dinah Cencig's review in the *Leipziger Volkszeitung*

from suites we performed. Of the shorter material, the Trio for Soprano Saxophone, Bass Trombone and Piano was another of the seminal pieces Daniel has done for us. In fact, it has been done in four versions. The original trio version, a wind band version (*Ad Parnassum*), Daniel and I recently recorded it as a duo, and I recorded it as a duo with the horn player, Adam Unsworth. This CD was recorded in two different locations, Brooklyn New York and a suburb of Zurich, Switzerland. Going back to the thoughts on newspaper and magazine reviews: if you believe the good ones, you have to believe the bad ones, too! Our trio's version of the Passion has been criticized by some educators and journals, yet, when we performed it in Leipzig for the Bach Archive, commemorating the 250 year anniversary of Bach's death, it was well reviewed. (If I choose an exception to my review rule, this is it.)

Playing music with this degree of difficulty makes you rethink your equipment. I had gone through a big equipment change in the early 1990s when I started playing an Edwards with Thayer valves. Playing non-stop virtuosic chamber music for a whole concert (including playing Daniel's *Bass Trombone Sonata* as a solo spot) made me think "sports car" rather than "pickup truck"

when choosing an instrument. I had always thought of highs in the sound as "Sunshine" and always felt staying away from heavy bells and very large mouthpieces was the way to go. Trio playing is really like solo playing. There's no place to hide. For me, being on the road, and maintaining excellence requires minimal equipment changes. I usually use 2 similar mouthpieces on one setup. It took a long time for me to come to this conclusion. Although the equipment I'm now using works for my big band, chamber music, and my Mostly Mozart orchestra commitments, I might go to a larger mouthpiece for a little more room in Strauss or Mahler. Schnyder and I are always talking about sound and equipment. We're so into it that I can tell what reed he's experimenting with, and he knows my mouthpieces. Although we're both interested in colors and projection, because of our conservatory training and background in orchestral music, we don't veer too much from what we consider a "classical, artifactual" sound.

We recorded the *Words Within Music* CD (enja) before the ink was dry. It's only recently that I've performed Daniel's music on published printed parts. Usually I played from manuscripts. Much of the trio music, and concerto was learned from hand-written parts. I think there were some notes changed in the published parts, not because of mistakes, but because Daniel edited and made a few changes. He's OK with my preferences for a couple of idiosyncrasies or note preferences in a lot of his music. For example, in the concerto, I enjoy playing Eb instead of E natural in the first movement's cadenza, and I play a more florid opening of the last movement, which was simplified. Instead of a gliss on a descending scale, I chose to play defined notes, small things like that. He is very liberal in letting me change octaves in just about everything. We premiered the *Trio for Bass Trombone, Soprano Sax, and Piano* and went right into the studio. The studio outside of Zurich was great, but we had to change the pitch as the piano was tuned at A 442 or 444. We confronted this problem a lot.

Some of this material from the earlier CD's was used in the amazing film score Daniel wrote for us accompanying the silent movie *Faust*, based on Goethe's version of the Dr. Faust legend. This music was commissioned by the Goethe Fest to be performed at the Alte Opera Frankfurt to celebrate Goethe's 250th birth. Murnau, the great German film director made this film, and it was based on part 1 of Goethe's two-part history. Actually the legend of Dr Faust has been traced back to the Englishman Christopher Marlowe but it traveled to Germany, and morphed. You should check the story out. The second part is beautifully sleek, abstract, and modern. Through reading a lot, I'm finding literary style directly correlates to the interpretation of music. The rhythm and flow of sentences, paragraphs, and chapters gives me more opportunity for variety in my thought process (did I really say "existentialists" earlier?)

When we started our rehearsal at the Alte Frankfurt Opera, something was wrong. Things didn't line up. When I realized there was no way I could push my tuning crook any further into the horn, I kind of freaked. I started aggressively asking how many pianos were in the building; answer: 8. Well, are there any tuned to A 440? Yes, one on the top floor. Well, get it! It took a while, moving the pianos floor-to-floor, but they did it. We play in concert halls, recital halls, and clubs. Kenny Drew is way into sound also. Not only that, but our music is so demanding, if the touch, feel, and pedaling of a piano isn't great, it affects our interpretations negatively. Kenny is also very aggressive about the quality of the instrument in the hall. You really don't want to give him a sub-par piano. And with his power, he's been known to demolish an Upright or two. We mix so many genres, I think presenters in all kinds of venues are having problems understanding the detail we demand of ourselves, and the quality of keyboard needed (you should hear Kenny playing bass lines on a Bosendorfer).

The Faust score is 2 hours of written and improvised material. Daniel is Faust, Kenny is Gretchen, and I'm Mephisto. We sit in front of the screen, and work our timing with the action. Improvisations are with the character's mood and action. Every night is different depending on your mood's interpretation of the character's mood. The music is great and leads to many versions. On the *Faust/Worlds Beyond* CD (Col Legno, Spring 2009) the movie score is recorded as a suite. The rest of the CD is *Worlds Beyond*. We did a few takes of each movement, and went on. *Worlds Beyond* is the suite that totally made me rethink performance. For the last few years Daniel has been giving this CD to musicians all over the world to learn his style. This CD was given to string and woodwind players as well as brass players, and the piece is becoming well-known in all instrumental categories. I'm very pleased that my multi-genre experience is helping solidify a new kind of chamber music. The length of each section, the difficulty and duration of the music makes the intensity nonstop. Because the bass bone part is so important in the structure means that endurance and interpretation are inseparable. I don't like to pace myself, so it means I have to come up with a longer line vision, so when I do lay back, it's organically part of the music and not just playing safe. We stand when we perform. You don't count beats or bars or tap your foot. You start, and because you have an intrinsic understanding of the overall beat and your place in the texture, you just play lines. You walk out, having taken a great deal of time in getting everything properly set up (table, glasses, slide cream, water bottle, mutes, screw driver, Allen wrench, etc.) Daniel and I bring our own folding music stands. The look is better, less in the audience's face than the clunky ones, and you can customize the width of the stand to have more pages up without two long stands blocking the action. When you walk on stage, it's best to be beyond composed and prepared. You are looking at 25 minutes of focus for *Worlds Beyond*, and 2 hours of nonstop "battle" for Faust. You simplify every thing so you can walk out, and JUST LISTEN and PLAY LINES!

### It's really great having a composer's ear. You build up friendship and trust when you commission or perform more than one composition from a composer.

The occasion of the International Trombone Association's retrospective reviewing of the three Schnyder/Taylor/Drew Trio CD's has put the focus of this article on my relationship with Daniel Schnyder. I have tried to weave a story of how I've gone about maintaining a fairly successful money-making career while playing the music of our time (or vice versa). Because our friendship is really based on our enjoying the work, Daniel trusts me with transcriptions and suggestions to him of the re-working of some of his compositions. The Duo Concertante was commissioned by one of my students at Mannes College. Tenor trombonist Sebastian Jerosh "bought" it for his wife, Anita, a bass trombonist. I remember Anita taking a lesson on Alec Wilder's bass trombone sonata, so I can understand how she would enjoy Schnyder's aesthetic. Sebastian was a chance-taker – even taking a chance on his graduation jury with a personalized transcription. I've recorded the trombone duo several times, with Daniel on tenor saxophone, Adam Unsworth on French horn, and Jim Pugh on tenor trombone.

Because his writing is on his computer, when I try to "coerce" Daniel into adapting something I want to play; I say, "Come on Schnyder, just press a button!" His response is typically, "Hah, sure Taylor, just press a button." Sometimes it works. I asked Daniel to make a Trombone Trio out the Trombone Quartet (Rossini's visit to Beethoven) for my group Trio Hidas, with Nitzan Haroz, and Haim Avitsur on tenors. He kind of resisted, but liked it when he heard



David Taylor, Kenny Drew, Daniel Schnyder's mother, Daniel Schnyder

the performance. I pressed the issue and asked him to make a Brass Trio out of the Quartet, and he did. I've just recorded both trios and some duos with Wayne DuMaine, and Adam on horn — *Just Follow Instructions* CD (Spring 2009, BlockM Records). Several years ago, I recorded two CDs with my bass, drums, and bone trio, *Der Doppelganger* and *Morning Moon* (CIMP records). CIMP is a label dedicated to its name: Creative Improvisers Music Project. I used this opportunity to really take it out. Two of the pieces we blew on were *Kislev* and *Tammuz*. These are originally for unaccompanied bass trombone and about a minute long, but we turned them into 5-10 minute sagas, and Daniel was cool.

Another good example of creative commissioning is the way the first Brass Trio came into existence. Daniel wrote the Brass Trio for my trio with Chis Gekker and David Jolly. Yes, the trio is originally written for bass bone, and I'm sorry to be the bearer of the news that it sounds better that way rather than on tenor (don't tell the Maestro I said that). We were known as Areopagitica, the name of John Milton's speech to parliament on freedom of the press. We submitted the piece to the International Trumpet Guild's commission competition after the piece was written, and Daniel won. It's a classic example of trust and confidence in the relationship of composer and instrumentalist. My brass quintet, The Manhattan Brass — which includes Lew Soloff and Wayne DuMaine on trumpets, R.J. Kelley on French horn, and Michael Seltzer on trombone — has just recorded a sextet he wrote for us.

Daniel and I have other plans in the hopper, and the beat goes on. We have our own directions and agendas. Over the years, I've intensified my own compositional drive and thankfully, the pieces are being performed. Some have been recorded. The most recently recorded is a CD for composer John Zorn's label, Tzadik. It's all my compositions and arrangements for my quartet. The CD is called *Red Sea* and will be out in August of 2009. I'm also playing tenor trombone (my first major at Juilliard) and singing on it. Next year, my singing of Franz Schubert and arrangements of Shubert will be performed in several concerts in Europe and the United States. This June there was a premier of a piece I've written in five movements: "Too Suite" for bass trombone and wind ensemble, with the Washington Square Chamber Players in NYC. I've written several short operas, always with humorous scripts I put together; I'm into

it. B3+, my brass trio with John Clark on French horn and Franz Hackl on trumpet as a new CD on Colegno called *Uncommon Sense*. We all write for it. You can see our live performances on YouTube.

Speaking of trust and confidence, *Moon Rise With Memories* was written for me by Frederic Rzewski for six unspecified treble clef instruments and bass trombone. We hung out, and Frederic picked up on my love for varying colors, so he let me decide the instruments for each performance. I've come up with many variations including one with big band. It was used for several performances with the Bohuslan Big Band in Gutenberg, Sweden.

Freedom.  
The Thad Jones/Mel Lewis band helped set me free. Being in that band gave me my first push into the realm of understanding that musical performance is not a finite practice. Sound, intonation, and time are colors. I remember one of my first concerts after joining the band. This concert was my first real world awakening to the "correctness" of non-metronomic time, because this band was as loose as a great chamber music group. We were in Barcelona Spain in 1970. We were playing in a concert hall and I remember leaving the gig that night crying over my general ineptitude, specifically, because I was not able to play a ballad in 4/4 time, with their looseness. We were playing Bob Brookmeyer's arrangement of *Willow Weep For Me*. I sat in front of Mel. His drumming was a magnificent combination of exactitude and wide-open space. He kept the band together without imposing. Jimmy Knepper was playing the tune. I was lost, didn't have a clue. Up to that point, I'd been so self-assured of being in the right place at the exact right time.

### I had to change up my whole thought process. I had to really learn to LISTEN.

These cats knew it but loved my deep concern. They taught me through example. They saw I was serious. They saw I truly wanted to BE THERE.

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