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Saturday, March 14, 2009

Summer Trombone Workshop Founded by Haim Avitsur

The Summer Trombone Workshop was founded by Haim Avitsur to create an environment that nurtures collaboration among trombonists and fosters the uninhibited expression of musical ideas. The nine-day workshop raises the bar on modern teaching philosophies demanding a high level of performance, and teaches participants how to convincingly express their musical ideas. During the workshop, each faculty member gives a recital, and teaches and coaches participants in both private lessons and public master classes. One of the workshop highlights is the faculty trio concert.

After the success of the first workshop faculty members Haim Avitsur, David Taylor, and Nitzan Haroz formally established Trio Hidas. Each member brings his own personal experience, knowledge of trombone playing and life as a musician to the workshop. Participants are exposed to three unique perspectives on career paths, performance and teaching. Although their backgrounds and approach to style are different (at times contrasting), the participants benefit from seeing three paths toward the same goal.

STW is based on the principal that each performer has an equal responsibility in a chamber music setting. Trio Hidas gives an open rehearsal to help demonstrate this. This rehearsal allows participants to witness the personality and dynamic of a professional chamber group. STW musicians have two opportunities to apply these lessons; each participant plays in a quartet and a large ensemble. The large ensemble rehearses without a conductor every morning, and gives a formal performance at the workshop's conclusion. In the quartets participants learn how to function in a smaller chamber setting. Each musician quickly begins to listen, blend and "flex" his/her musical muscles. The faculty guides, rather than directs, the chamber groups throughout the workshop.

STW began at the University of Virginia in 2005 with 13 full participants and 4 part-time participants. That year there was one trombone ensemble and the final student performance shared the stage with the Trio Hidas concert. The following year at Syracuse University a second trombone ensemble was added for the part-time participants and the first participant quartets were established. Since 2007 the STW has been at Temple University in Philadelphia. The large ensembles now perform in a separate event from the quartets as enrollment continues to increase. Since inception, each full-time participant plays for all faculty members during a master class and a private lesson.

In 2006 William Chu, a Taiwanese native, attended the STW in Syracuse. He was so moved by the workshop's ideas that he helped bring a version of the workshop home to Taiwan. STW Taiwan had a second summer in 2008. Over 50 participants in Taiwan come together for 9 days in Taipei.

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Upcoming Events

[The Eastern Trombone Workshop Thu, March 19](#)

[The University of Texas Trombone Choir in Virginia Fri, March 20](#)

[Abbie Conant at the University of Redlands Sun, March 22](#)

[Malloy Recital Mon, March 23](#)

[Martin McCain at Texas State University Tue, March 24](#)

In January 2009 a new winter location was added (Winter-STW). This five-day workshop was held at Rowan University in Glassboro, NJ from January 4-8, 2009.

For information on Summer Trombone Workshop 2009 please visit www.haimavitsur.com/stw09.

Article Written by Justin Isenhour

Below is a reflection on the Workshop from a 2008 Participant.

STW08 by Justin Isenhour:

As I arrived in the Philadelphia Airport and hailed a cab to take me to Temple University I was very excited and a bit nervous. I was here to attend the Summer Trombone Workshop where I would get to work

with Nitzan Haroz, David Taylor, and Haim Avitsur. As a freelance teacher and performer it had been a long time since I'd played for other trombone players outside of a lesson, much less an audience of them in a masterclass. I had no idea what to expect from this workshop.

At our first large ensemble rehearsal I was a bit frustrated that there was no conductor and the group did not instantly gel. As Haim led the group he encouraged us to be active participants in the entire experience, instead of just being led through the motions. By the large ensemble dress rehearsal not only was I impressed by our progress I couldn't imagine doing it any other way (having no conductor is very liberating). This wasn't just a large trombone ensemble it was our trombone ensemble. We did things together, as a group, with Haim guiding us not directing, and everyone had input.

The masterclasses were very affirming for me. In my daily life I'm not surrounded by many trombone players, much less those striving for a high level of artistry and every participant sounded great. I began to realize that this was an environment for excellence, growth and creativity. One of participants playing for Mr. Taylor was told "this isn't school; this is a workshop for the real deal thing." I think that is a perfect statement. This workshop is not school; these are not school situations, and there are no right or wrong approaches. It is all about experiencing music in a real performance situation both on stage and in rehearsal. The only "wrong" answer is one that isn't fully thought out.

I was surprised by how much the emphasis was on music, not trombone playing. We were all trombone players, but we were working on making music, expressing ourselves and finding something much more meaningful than a few tips on how the trombone worked. Before workshop I had gotten so caught up in trying to make everything note-perfect that I was training myself to be a technician, not a musician. It was so refreshing to play with other great players who were interested in striving for a musical statement, not an impressive "trombone" act. Again I think Mr. Taylor said it best "I give people recitals, not trombone recitals."

Rarely is there an environment with such a wide variety players who all perform at such a high level: grad students, undergrads, "pre-grads" (some who missed their high school graduation for the workshop), and young professionals. It really recharged my batteries; not only to learn from a great faculty but just to be around all the participants. The attitude was very positive; participants learned from and fed off each other. The energy

brought by some of the younger participants was inspiring. One of my favorite quotes from a fellow participant came after Mr. Haroz's recital. He said, "That was amazing. . . . I'm going to go practice." How many times have you been to a concert that inspired you to practice late into the night? Now how many of those concerts do you want to attend? Or maybe even give?

