



SCHOOL & FAMILY

# ALL THE RIGHT NOTES

FSU HAS BEEN CONDUCTING  
MUSIC CAMP FOR 75 YEARS



AMANDA THOMPSON

Campers perform on low brass instruments.

**AMANDA KARIOTH THOMPSON** COUNCIL ON CULTURE & ARTS

**E**very summer for the last 75 years, young musicians from all over the region have descended upon the FSU College of Music, instruments in tow. They are seeking expert instruction in piano, wind and string instruments, voice, drums, guitar and marching band, as well as composition, improvisation, theory and music history. With 14 different music camps offered, the opportunities to learn and grow are

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AMANDA THOMPSON

Emerging musicians in the low brass music camp at FSU.

## Music

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One of Florida State University's more unusual music camps focuses on tuba and euphonium, or "low brass," a designation that refers to the pitch of the instruments. Hailing from all over Florida and three other states, 25 campers ages 11-17 signed up for a week's worth of guidance in polishing their low brass skills.

At age 15, Amelia Rigano has been to many band camps, but this was her first time at FSU. Comparing her experiences, she noticed that "they get more into the depth of things here. I get more of an explanation here." Hunter Taliaferro, 16, also prefers FSU's camp. "This is the best camp if you want to hone your skills because other places don't have the fundamentals," Hunter said. Ulyana Shumnyk, 16, agreed. "When we're in our band settings at home, it's really hard to focus on individual groups and since low brass never has the melody, they're never the main event of the show. Here we learn how to get a fuller sound and improvement of our range."

These large instruments might seem unwieldy for youngsters. Brenna Dowd, 16, said that "starting with tuba was really interesting, especially other people's reactions when you tell them that you're a tuba player and you're 100 pounds." She feels strongly, however, that "it's something that you can definitely manage."



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FSU has been holding music camps for 75 years.



For 16-year-old Tyreke Taylor, music holds a deep family connection. "It runs in my blood," he said. "My grandfather, my great-grandfather, my great-grandmother, they all played brass, so I wanted to grab the biggest brass instrument on the shelf."

Regardless of what motivated these campers to choose low brass, they realize that studying music provides them with a lot more than just technical proficiency. Dathan Colletti, 16, revealed that "as a kid I had serious anger management problems but as soon as I took band, that all went away." Meghan Gilmore, 15, shared personal feelings about her relationship with music. "I've had a lot of inconsistencies in my life. I've moved around a lot and a lot of my life has changed but music has

been a constant. No matter where you are or what's going on, you can still play and create something beautiful and it doesn't matter what circumstance you're in."

Many of the campers said that music was relaxing for them and served as a stress reliever, but Alex Puckett, 17, had a dissenting opinion. "I feel like it's more stressful than anything," she said. "You're messing up and you're trying to figure out what you have to do and it's a study in being uncomfortable. It's about confronting what's uncomfortable and dealing with it. You need to be uncomfortable before you can work on it."

Camp leader, Paul Ebbers echoes Alex's sentiment. "This is the place where you learn how to solve problems, interpersonal problems and also playing prob-

lems. When you have a problem with your music, how do you solve it? Whether it's rhythmically, whether it's getting together with your teacher. Some students have problems with their teachers and they have to figure out how to get along. You take those skills with you forever."

Ebbers is the associate professor of lower brass at FSU and has led this camp for more than 20 years. He has seen familiar faces from year to year and as many as 40 percent of his campers return to FSU to study music as college students. "They're here for their freshman orientation because camp was an early experience that made them 'go I want to come to school here'."

Impressed by the pace of development these campers display, Ebbers said "they catch me quickly. If I give them a hint, they're right there and they get it. I see growth from hour to hour." This growth is due to the campers' commitment and desire to learn but perhaps even more to Ebbers's expertise in low brass instruction.

"It's an awesome responsibility that I have. I have to be so careful. I think I'm really good at it and I'm supportive and they don't mind opening their minds and expressing themselves musically or personally. I have a blast doing it. It's a lot of fun."

Amanda Karioth Thompson is the Education and Exhibitions Director for the Council on Culture & Arts. COCA is the capital area's umbrella agency for arts and culture ([www.tallahasseearts.org](http://www.tallahasseearts.org)).