THE MORAVIAN CHURCH AND ITS TROMBONE CHOIR IN AMERICA, A LECTURE
RECITAL, TOGETHER WITH THREE RECITALS OF SELECTED WORKS
BY W. PRESSER, R. MONACO, L. BASSETT, P. BONNEAU,
E. BOZZA, R. DILLON AND OTHERS

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
North Texas State University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Doctor of Musical Arts

By

Wesley R. Branstine, B.M.E., M.M.E.
Denton, Texas
August, 1984

The three recitals consisted of performances of original twentieth century solo works for trombone with the exceptions of Trio for Brass Instruments, by Nelson Keyes, and Divertimento for Trumpet, Trombone and Piano by Boris Blacher.

The purpose of the lecture was to investigate the historical and musical heritage of the Moravian Church, with a particular interest in the works and players of the American Moravian Trombone Choir.

The historical overview of people, customs, and practices is traced from its beginnings with the Unitas Fratrum in Bohemia through the Northern Germany settlement of Herrenhut and the establishment of the American Moravian colony at Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

The musical life of the church is represented by a discussion of the early hymns of the founding fathers in Bohemia and the subsequent instrumental music of the Moravian trombone choir in America. The trombone choir played chorales that were used to call the congregation to order, announce important visitors to the town, and provide music at special occasions. Anthems were played by trombones (when players were available) in regular church services, or outside when it was necessary to double voice parts. Concerted music was played in the Bethlehem Collegium Musicum.

Biographies of the players of the 18th and 19th century trombone choirs provide information attesting to the proficiency and dedication
of these musicians. A list of players who contributed to the trombone choir movement since the 19th century is included, as well as information about the popularity and function of the Moravian Trombone Choir today.
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NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF MUSIC

presents

WESLEY BRANSTINE

in a

Graduate Trombone Recital

assisted by

James Gardner, Piano

Monday, September 25, 1972  5:00 p.m.  Recital Hall

Program

MORCEAU DE CONCERT  Marinus de Jong
SONATINA  William Presser

Intermission

MORCEAU SYMPHONIQUE  Philippe Gaubert
SONATA FOR TROMBONE AND PIANO  Richard A. Monaco

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree DOCTOR OF MUSICAL ARTS
NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF MUSIC

presents

WESLEY R. BRANSTINE

in a

Graduate Trombone Recital

assisted by

Leon Bugg, Piano

Monday, March 5, 1973 5:00 p.m. Recital Hall

Program

CAPRICCIO  Paul Bonneau

SONATA FOR TROMBONE AND PIANO
Allegro Moderato
Moderato Cantabile
Allegro Marziale  Leslie Basset

Intermission

CONCERTINO  Lars-Erik Larsson
Allegro Pomposo
Andante Sostenuto
Allegro Giocoso

DIACRIONIC FOR F-B, TROMBONE AND TAPE  Ronn Cox

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Musical Arts
NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF MUSIC
Presents

WESLEY R. BRANSTINE
in a
Graduate Trombone Recital
assisted by

Donald Kramer, Trumpet
Julia Reynolds, Horn
Thomas Chase, Piano

Monday June 10, 1974 4:00 P.M. Recital Hall

Program

Trio for Brass Instruments
   Slowly
   Moderately Slow
   Very Fast

Ballade for Trombone and Piano

Intermission

Divertimento for Trumpet, Trombone, and Piano
   Allegro
   Andantino
   Presto
   Moderato
   Allegretto
   Andante
   Presto

Concertpiece for Trombone and Piano

Nelson Keyes
Eugene Bozza
Boris Blacher
Robert Dillon
NORTH TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF MUSIC

presents a

LECTURE RECITAL

THE MORAVIAN CHURCH AND
ITS TROMBONE CHOIR IN AMERICA

WESLEY R. BRANSTINE
ALTO TROMBONE

assisted by

Don Kramer, Soprano Trombone
Stewart Wright, Tenor Trombone
Douglas Camp, Bass Trombone

and vocalists

Lydia Evanson, soprano  Dr. Teresa McRee, alto
Dr. Charles Rye, tenor  Eugene Kuyper, bass

Program

CHORALES OF THE MORAVIAN TROMBONE CHOIR

"Passion Chorale"
"Jesus ne'er my soul can leave"
"Passion Chorale"

H. L. Hassler  J. C. P. Pietatis  H. L. Hassler

ANTHEM

"Seek Ye His Countenance"

J. Herbst

TWO SONATAS

Largo Allegro Allegro
Adagio Allegro Scherzo

Cruse

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Musical Arts
Tape recordings of all performances submitted as dissertation requirements are on deposit in the North Texas State University Library.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Moravian Church has a history and musical legacy that extends from its origin in Europe through the migration to America. The Church survived countless persecutions, organizational changes, and relocations throughout its existence, and managed to maintain a system of customs and practices not found in other Protestant Churches.

Music is an inseparable part of Moravian daily life and religious belief, and some unique musical treatments concerning chorales and other liturgical pieces evolved from the early Church. The use of brass instruments is a part of that musical heritage. Trombones were favored over the other brass in their use for functional music in church activities such as funerals and special holidays. The early Church began the tradition of a full trombone choir—soprano, alto, tenor, bass, and that tradition was brought to America in 1754. In America, the Church established its most successful settlement in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, in 1741. This colony was a transplanted version of the European Church in both historical and musical practices. The trombone choir became one of the more popular aspects of the American Moravian colonization.

The players of the 18th and 19th century Bethlehem trombone choirs are among the most famous in Moravian Church history, and their tradition of loyalty and dedication has survived to the present day.
CHAPTER II

EARLY HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

Origins in Moravia and Bohemia

The Moravian Church was established in 1457 and was known as the Unitas Fratrum, or Brotherhood of the Unitas Fratrum. It originated in the countries of Moravia and Bohemia, that are now known as Czechoslovakia, and began as a result of dissatisfaction with the Papal leadership. The first man to publicly express the difference of opinion was John Huss.

John Huss was born in 1373 in Hussinez, Bohemia. His last name is derived from the abbreviation of that town.¹ He studied at the University of Prague, attaining a Bachelor of Theology degree in 1394 and a Master of Arts degree two years later. In 1401 he became an ordained priest. Huss's ideas and thoughts closely followed the teachings of John Wycliff, based on the philosophy that Christ, not the Pope, is the head of the church. He preached in his native Bohemian tongue, a practice that was strictly forbidden at the time, and became a popular figure whose ideas were widely disseminated. His powerful sermons attacked moral corruption at all levels of society, but particularly among the clergy. Huss openly stated that the individual should be trusted to read the Bible and that interpretation by a priest was unnecessary. This idea is embodied in the

very foundation of the Protestant Reformation and was not accepted by Vatican leadership.

In 1414 John Huss was summoned to appear before the Pope in Constance. Although he had been promised safe conduct, Huss was immediately thrown into prison and given the choice either to recant his heresy and be imprisoned for life, or be burned at the stake. He chose to be burned, and on July 6, 1415, the sentence was carried out. This act made Huss a martyr, and as a result, a Hussite League was formed.  

The League sent an angry letter to the Council of Constance protesting Huss's death. The Council's reply consisted of a threat of war to the Bohemian nation and an order to dig up and burn the remains of John Wycliff. In addition, Hussites were denied the use of church buildings and not allowed to drink from the communion cup.

The inevitable war began, and for ten years, under the leadership of a great general named Liska, the Moravian brethren managed to survive. By this time, however, two factions divided the Hussite people. One group, the aristocrats called Utraquists, believed that the Catholics no longer wanted war, and were willing to negotiate peace. The other group, the Taborites, was a radical faction which considered differences between the two beliefs irreconcilable. These opposing points of view became so intense that they led to the Battle of Lipan in 1434. The Utraquists won the battle and eventually received full equality with Catholics. During

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the next thirty years, an underground church movement, called the Unitas Fratrum, rose from the ranks of the defeated Taborites. Unitas Fratrum later became the spiritual predecessor to the Moravian Reformation. The group gained in membership, and around 1467 decided to appoint its own bishops. The Roman Church again intervened and declared war with the Unitas Fratrum, describing them as shameless outlaws. Thus began the worst persecution in Moravian history. Meetings were forbidden, books were burned, and churches destroyed. The destruction persisted until 1517, when Martin Luther posted his 95 Theses. The diversion of Roman attention to Martin Luther gave Moravians a short-lived rest—very short, because they immediately joined the Lutheran movement. The alliance did not last, however, and the Moravians eventually went their separate way.

The Moravian brethren increased in number and flourished for a few years. However, prosperity ended when Ferdinand II became King of Bohemia. In 1619, the King was responsible for imposing more stringent laws on protestantism. Only a Roman Catholic could be a citizen, enter a hospital, marry, or hold property. The Moravian membership was driven underground and all but perished. The few who did survive are affectionately referred to in the contemporary church as the "Hidden Seed." They managed to survive by meeting in complete secrecy, and were able to pass along ideas and principles only by word of mouth, and then only from father to son. Many thousands of the scattered "Hidden Seed" left Bohemia and Moravia, and relocated themselves in other countries. Their solidified reorganization was not fully accomplished until Christian David

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assumed leadership of the group. David's training had come from a man named Comenius who had tried to re-establish the church years before in Poland, but had failed. David was able to succeed where his teacher had failed by moving a small group of Brethren to the land of Count Nicholas Zinzendorf. The land was located at Berthelsdorf in upper Lusatia and today is part of East Germany. The relocation took place in 1722 and was called Herrenhut, meaning "under the care of the Lord."

Zinzendorf quickly became emotionally attached to the people living on his land and began to take a leadership role in their affairs. He was of the nobility, and therefore politically accomplished. He was also very well educated, holding a degree in law from the University of Hutenburg. Zinzendorf was a devoutly religious man committed to three rules: to be kind to all men, to be true to Christ, and to send the Gospel to the heathens.\(^5\)

The development of Herrenhut followed a distinct pattern that would set the trend for Moravian Churches of the future. The village was built on a communal basis; that is, everyone contributed according to his ability and shared according to his need. The Moravian settlement is one of the few successful communistic experiments in history. The achievement is due perhaps to the extreme persecution of the people and their acute need to live together in peace with others sharing the same principles and ideas. The settlement developed what is called a "choir" system, consisting of people living together in groups according to age, sex, and marital status.

The choir system generated special events that contributed to the individuality of the Moravian Church. These events have been handed down from generation to generation.

The Love Feast's exact origin is not known. It may have begun with the Hussites, who had to gather in secrecy; or it may reach further back in Christian history to represent the fellowship of the Apostles. Whatever the case, the development of the Love Feast took place at Herrenhut. The villagers would come to the great house of Zinzendorf to celebrate a special occasion, such as a wedding. Each member brought food, and a prayer would be offered before everyone shared in the Feast. At first, the tradition consisted of simple bread and a drink, and of course, the conversation and fellowship that followed. Some of the contemporary churches still revert to the simple "bread and coffee" principle.\(^6\)

The Easter Sunrise Service dates back to Herrenhut around 1732. A group of Brethren would gather at dawn on Easter morning at the cemetery. There they would offer prayer, thanksgiving, and song. The meeting place was significant, because it denoted Christ's ascension from the tomb. Also, the cemetery was a constant reminder to Moravians that all men are, in the final sense, equal. To further emphasize this belief, all Moravian gravestones were flat and of the same size. In the early church, markers were grouped by "choir" rather than by family. The cemetery was generally referred to as "God's Acre."\(^7\)

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\(^7\) Ibid., p. 49.
The daily text reading began with Zinzendorf, who would select a Bible verse each morning to serve as the day's thought. He later prepared the text for an entire year in advance.

The Covenant Cup was a service in which the common communion cup was passed from one brother to another in the manner of Christ to the Apostles.

One of the most interesting customs of the early Moravians was the system of casting lots. The lot system to them was a sign of equality, humbleness, or humility. There were three possible results of the casting of lots—yes, no, and blank. Governmental decisions were carefully considered, and the casting took place for only the most serious matters. The authority of the lot was never questioned. It was, in effect, the law.

These were only a few of the customs that made the settlement at Herrenhut prosper. The new church, with its communal system and under the able leadership of Count Von Zinzendorf, became strong.

In its new prosperity, the Moravian Church became a mission-minded one. Count Zinzendorf vowed to "carry the Word to the heathens." The unusual aspect of Moravian mission work was not to try to convert whole groups of people. The missionary would simply move to an area to live and work among the people and preach the Gospel, spending as much time as possible with the individual. This method resulted in fewer converts, but those who volunteered were greeted with love and brotherhood. During the missionary period, the potential for the conversion of untamed Indians made America ideal for the migration to the new country.

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8 Schattschneider, op cit., p. 63.
The State of Music Prior to Migration to America

Prior to migration to America, music in the church consisted of the early hymns of the Unitas Fratrum and probably began with John Huss and the Hussite movement. Since the Moravian brethren were not officially recognized by Rome, their hymns were most likely sung in the vernacular, learned by memorization, and passed from one generation to another by word of mouth. In 1501, the first Czech Songbook was published containing eighty-seven songs. These songs were primarily the work of three Bohemian brethren: Luke of Prague, Matthew of Kunwald, and John of Tabor.9

As the Moravian Church grew, more songs were added to the repertory, making necessary the editing and producing of the first official Unitas Fratrum Songbook, completed in 1561. A composer/poet name Jan Blahoslav is credited with most of the work involved with the editing and publication of the book.10

There were other editions of Bohemian songbooks in the years that followed, the differences being primarily textual, i.e., many new texts being set to the same music. Most of the new words came from the works of Martin Luther, Michael Weisse, and John Huss. The music, particularly the hymns of Weisse, was mostly derived from existing religious melodies, with a few coming from folk material. The outgrowth of music continued until 1620, when the congregational activities of the Moravian brethren were forced to take place almost entirely in secrecy.


10Originally, a commission of three men, Jan Cerny, Jan Blahoslav, and Jeri Strun, were asked to prepare the songbook. Blahoslav, who was best qualified, did the index for the book, so it is probable that he did most of the other work as well.
When the "Hidden Seed" finally found their way to Herrenhut and Count Zinzendorf, they were allowed to worship as they pleased. Vocal music assumed an extremely important role, and the singing of songs became so much a part of daily life that up to thirty songs per day were sung. Zinzendorf introduced new ways of using hymns. He believed that songs were the best way to bring the scriptural word into the hearts of his people. H. G. Sprangenberg (Zinzendorf's first biographer) commented on the Count's interest in music:

On Cantata Sunday (May 11, 1717), the so-called hours of song were introduced; first, one took up complete songs and then continued to sing separate verses about various subjects in a touching manner. Our Count was very practiced in song and verse and so familiar with them that, without having a hymnal in hand, he not only quoted verses from many different songs on a particular subject, but sang them with such continuity that one could call them a sermon in a song.

The new freedoms of the Herrenhut community created a need for all types of music. The church needed music that was functional, since it was to be used all day, every day, as an important part of communal life. This is probably what stimulated the introduction of wind instruments into the Moravian congregational life.

The first mention of the use of wind instruments is in a birthday record dated from 1731. After this date, the use of trumpets, trombones, ...
and horns is mentioned in almost every historical reference to music in Herrenhut. Their presence is most often in connection with special functions, such as ceremonial feasts and funerals. The first use of a four-piece trombone choir, soprano, alto, tenor, and bass, is prominently mentioned in funeral records of the time.\textsuperscript{14} The trombones were favored for these services for several probable reasons. Trombones balance and blend very well with voices, and match the four part (S/A/T/B) harmony. At that time, the great brass-making center of Nuremberg was in full production only a few hundred miles away, so the accessibility of instruments was at least feasible. Most of the services in which the instruments were used were held outside where trombones were ideally suited for acoustical projection.

\textsuperscript{14}Blume/Blankenburg, \textit{op cit.}, p. 604.
CHAPTER III

THE MORAVIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

History of the First Settlements

As the Moravian Church prospered at Herrenhut, it came under suspicion of being a gathering place for Separatists. Zinzendorf, as an aristocrat and politician, had long been aware that the religious success of his people would sooner or later cause problems. One of the solutions he saw for decentralization of the Brotherhood was missionary work. The administrative organization and the choir system made it possible for young married couples to leave Herrenhut on missions, secure in the confidence that the communal system would care for their families.

In 1732, a foreign mission program was begun, and in 1734 the first American colonization by Moravians took place. This was a missionary group that found their way to a parcel of land on the Savannah River in the Georgia colony. The Moravians were successful in the new country until war broke out between the English, located in the Carolinas, and the Spanish, located in Florida. The Brethren, having years of persecution and war behind them, chose to remain neutral, and in so doing, caught the brunt of the conflict from both sides. Rather than stand and fight, the Moravians decided to move north to a tract of land called Penn's Colony.
In December of 1741, the first town to be established after the Georgia excursion was located on the Lehigh River and was named Bethlehem.\(^1\) It was patterned after Herrenhut, with the same customs and practices and the same isolation from outside influences. The preference for isolation is not hard to understand because, with the exception of some of the early missionary work, every contact with the outside world had led to conflict. This is the most logical reason that the Moravian Church did not increase in numbers as rapidly as other Protestant churches in the new world at that time.

The Use of Music

Music in the American colony was also a transplant from the European model of Herrenhut, so its importance need not be reiterated. However, the fact that music was an integral part of daily life can be verified by a quote from a twelve-year-old girl attending the Bethlehem Seminary in 1787:

> In the apartment where I reside, at the boarding school for Misses, there are about thirty little girls of my age. Here I am taught music, both vocal and instrumental, I play the guitar twice a day--am taught the spinnet and forte-piano; and sometimes I play the organ....

> We rise at six, and after combing our heads and washing, we retire for prayers, to a little chapel which is part of this building (Colonial Hall), and which is consecrated to the use of our school. Our morning and evening prayers are playing on our guitars (which we join with our voices) a few religious verses /sic/. This chapel no man or boy ever enters. At seven we go to breakfast, at eight school begins, in which we are taught reading and grammar, both English and German, for those who choose; writing, arithmetic / sic/, history, geography.

\(^1\)The naming actually occurred several months after the establishment of the colony, so that the honor could be reserved for Count Zinzendorf on his first visit to the new country. He called the town Bethlehem because its completion coincided with the celebration of Christmas.
composition, etc., until eleven; when we go into a large chapel, which also joins this house, where there is an organ. Here we see three gentlemen—the person who delivers a short lecture on divinity and morality—the organist, who plays a hymn, in which we join with our voices—and the boys' schoolmaster. In this meeting the boys attend with us. At three quarters after eleven we dine; and at one school begins. In the afternoon we are taught needlework, tambour (embroidery), drawing, music, etc. till three when school is out, after which we walk, or divert ourselves as we please. At six we sup, then play on some musical instrument, or do as we please, till half after seven, when we retire for evening prayers, at eight we go to bed. We all sleep in a large chamber, with windows on both sides, in which a lamp burns during the whole night. After we are in bed, one of the ladies, with her guitar and voice, serenades us to sleep.

On Sundays divine service is performed in the great Chapel, where the whole society, men, women, and children meet. Their preaching is sometimes in English and sometimes in German. They sing enchantingly, in which they are joined with the bass-viol (celli), violins and an organ. To call the people into the chapel four trombones are blown, with which you would be delighted....

Composers of the early hymns that were used at Herrenhut are previously cited. American composers of Moravian church music did exist, and a few of these are gaining much deserved recognition today. Briefly, they are as follows:

Jeremiah Dencke (1725-1795) was the organist and Warden of the Bethlehem congregation.

John Antes (1740-1811) was born in Pennsylvania but was active as a composer in England.

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3More information is available on John Antes in the Moravian Music Foundation Publications booklet, No. 2, "John Antes, 'American Dilettante.'"
Johann Christian Geisler (1729-1815) was a composer whose music is represented in the early manuscript collections.

Christian Gregor (1723-1801) was regarded as the "Father" of music in the renewed church. Gregor is generally acknowledged as the church's first outstanding musician and was the guiding spirit in the preparation of the German-Moravian hymnal published in 1778. In 1784, Gregor issued a chorale book for organists in congregations using the hymnal. His manuscripts can be found in many of the early Moravian settlements in Pennsylvania and North Carolina.

Johann Friedrich Peter (1746-1813), who was born in Heerendyk, Holland, was educated in European-Moravian schools and came to America in 1770. He served in Moravian communities primarily around Salem, North Carolina.

Johannes Herbst (1735-1812) came to America from Germany in 1786, at age 51. He was an ordained minister in the Moravian Church and is considered one of its most important composers. Herbst was also a copyist, and was able to acquire an immense library of choral and vocal music. His collection is now in the Moravian Music Foundation at Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and is one of the best sources for Moravian music study.

N. C. Christian Ignatius LaTrobe (1758-1836) was the nephew of John Antes. He was best known for the LaTrobe collection of Hymn Tunes Sung in the Church of the United Brethren. He obtained his material from the Gregor collection in Germany. The collection contained only hymn tunes with figured bass. LaTrobe added the inner voices below the melody to serve as a guide for organists who may not have studied thorough-bass.⁴

These men all composed for the church, and their music is in use in Moravian congregations today.

Instrumental Music

There was a place for instrumental players early in the Bethlehem Church. The violin, viola-da-braccio, viola-da-gamba, flute, and French horn were played for the first time at the celebration of Christmas, December 25, 1743. In 1744 a spinet was added, and in December of that year, the Collegium Musicum was organized.

The Collegium Musicum originally consisted of informal gatherings of students or amateurs who performed music for their own enjoyment and enlightenment. The Moravians began this tradition at Herrenhut under the leadership of Bishop August Sprangenberg. At Bethlehem, the organization was founded by Johann Christopher Pyrlaeus. There were fourteen members in the Collegium Musicum at first, a modest beginning which probably initiated the great interest in instrumental music held by the American Moravian Church.

Some of the earlier-mentioned composers wrote for the instrumentalists in the Collegium Musicum in Bethlehem. Johann Friedrich Peter composed six string quintets that are acknowledged by Hans T. David as the first

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6 Ibid., p. 4.

7 Sprangenberg became one of the first Moravians to come to America. He pioneered settlements in Georgia and Pennsylvania and later was a dominant figure at Bethlehem.
American chamber music.\(^8\) John Antes was the first American-born chamber
music composer.\(^9\)

The other composers mentioned arranged instrumental accompaniments
for hymns and anthems, as well as music for church functions in which the
Collegium Musicum performed either individually or collectively. Practi-
cally all the music could be doubled or improvised upon by whatever
instruments were available at the time.

The Trombone Choir

The use of the trombone choir at Herrenhut has already been mentioned.
It should be noted, however, that the tradition of brass ensemble music had
existed since the development of the German Stadtpfeifer in the late 15th
century.\(^10\) While these players were gradually replaced by the classical
orchestra, a few German towns kept the Stadtpfeifer tradition alive by
continuing to employ musicians to play chorales from church steeples.\(^11\)

The trombone choir was used early in the Bethlehem congregation and
the Collegium Musicum. Church financial records show that the first set,

\(^8\)According to Hans T. David in Musical Life in the Pennsylvania Settlements of the Unitas Fratrum:

"The quintets abound in violinistic figures, whereas they make little use of the thematic development, the elaboration of short motives, which passing from Phillip Emanuel Bach to Haydn and Mozart, was characteristic of the fully unfolded Classical style." p. 10.

\(^9\)Ibid., p. 10.


soprano, alto, tenor, and bass, arrived in America and was paid for in Bethlehem in 1754. There are no details regarding from whom or where the trombones were purchased. The records show only that the instruments arrived and were put to immediate use to announce the death of church members and to "impart the majesty of sound on high-feasts and holidays."12

Apparently the first trombone choir fulfilled its obligations well and often. According to William C. Reichel:

It requires not a little self-denial to serve as a performer of the trombone choir. He is required to attend all services where they are used. He is obliged to assist in announcing every death which occurs in the congregation, to play at the funeral, to play on every festive day, morning and afternoon. To play the celebration of the Lord's Supper. He is required to go to the graveyard, or climb the church belfry at all seasons, and in every kind of weather; cold or rain must not be heeded, he goes through all; oftimes the intense cold congeals the moisture of the instruments, and renders playing almost impossible. Yet he is ever-ready, this done for the love he bears for the church. Although much is required of such members, the congregation has never been without such a choir.13

Not all reports of the "posaunen chor" were favorable. Joseph A. Maurer tells about a choir of theological students in 1835, who, upon hearing about a single sister who was deathly ill and had little chance of recovery, decided to rehearse in their rooms at Nazareth Hall (the dormitory). They intended to rehearse in the prescribed manner for the demise of a single sister. The author states:

Now it happens that Nazareth Hall and the single sisters' house were in propinquity and since it was summer all the windows were open. As the students began to rehearse, the good sister not only heard the trombones, but she also recognized the chorale tunes being played. Rising from her bed, she exclaimed, "Die denken das ich am sterbenbin!" and then,
rising even higher, with great resolution she concluded, "aber aus spert ich nicht sterben." (The rascals, the rascals! They think I'm dying, but out of spite I will not die!). It is reported that she immediately became well. But this practice of musical therapy, though eminently successful in this case, incurred the displeasure of the local congregation, and this choir of players fell into disfavor and was soon relieved of it services.14

The newness of the Bethlehem trombone choir (and their willingness to play) put them in demand in other churches outside Bethlehem. This situation prevailed until 1767, when a set of instruments was purchased for Christianspring, a settlement west of Nazareth, Pennsylvania. Another set was imported for Hope, New Jersey, in 1789. Bethlehem, by December of 1792, had purchased a second set of trombones in time to play for the death announcement of Bishop August Sprangenberg on December 2 of that year.15

The third and final set was acquired at Bethlehem when the Hope, New Jersey, church closed in 1808, forwarding its instruments to the well-established Bethlehem congregation.

The Players

Even though the first records of the Bethlehem Church verify the existence of the instruments, they do not provide complete records of the identities of the players themselves. By 1783, however, records show that the following four players were firmly established as trombone performers:

14 Joseph A. Maurer, op cit., p. 20.
15 Sprangenberg had died at Berthelsdorf, Germany, in September of 1792.
Matthew Eggert, soprano,\textsuperscript{16} William Boeler, alto,\textsuperscript{17} Daniel Oesterlein, tenor, and Joseph Till, bass. According to one source, "All these men were God-fearing upright citizens and retained the greatest respect of all who knew them.\textsuperscript{18} This group of players, however, did not have the musical prowess to remain in favor indefinitely. A younger group, which was to become the famous trombone choir of the early American church, was gradually gaining reputation as the better of the two. The takeover was not easy, as related from the Bethlehem Diary.

The old choir, envious of the newly founded younger choir, and afraid that the latter might encroach upon their rights, had united more closely and reinforced their choir with an old bass drum and a blue flag; and had decided to hold a public procession in order to draw local attention to their activity and regain their old popularity.\textsuperscript{19}

The attempt was to no avail, however, and the younger choir took control of most church and community musical functions by 1818. By 1819, their reputation was good enough for them to be asked to play for the presentation of Haydn's \textit{Creation} at the Philadelphia Academy of Music. Three of the men in the younger group played for fifty years or more, and include the following.

Jedidiah Weiss (1796-1873) was born in Bethlehem and attended the school for boys until he was fourteen years old. By that time he had acquired a great love for music and was also noted for mechanical abilities. He was then indentured to John Samuel Krause, clock, watchmaker, and player.

\textsuperscript{16}Jean Moore, "The Glory of the Trombones " Term paper, Moravian College for Women.

\textsuperscript{17}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{18}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{19}J. Moore, \textit{op cit.}. 
of violin and bassoon. After the death of Mr. Krause, Jedidiah took over
the watch business and located his shop on the main street in Bethlehem.
According to William Reichel, "Jedidiah Weiss was far better known as a
musician than as a tradesman or man of business." Weiss had inherited
musical ability both instrumentally and vocally. His voice was said to
have remarkable strength and durability from contra D upwards for two and
one-half octaves. As an instrumentalist, Weiss was well known as a
trombone player. In May of 1822, he was one of the people in Bethlehem
asked to perform Haydn's Creation for the Musical Fund Society in
Philadelphia. Weiss played in the Bethlehem Trombone Choir for fifty-
four years.

Jacob C. Till (1799-1880) was born in Hope, New Jersey. His family
moved to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, while he was still a child. While
growing up, Jacob assisted his father in the piano manufacturing business,
but his fondness for music led Jacob to become a professional musician.
He was able to play on wind or stringed instruments equally well. He also
played organ and was appointed for a time as organist at St. John's Church
in Easton, Pennsylvania. Mr. Till was also an active clarinetist in the
Bethlehem Band, instructor for the first military band in Mauch Chunk,
and a member of the trombone choir for fifty-two years.

Charles F. Boekel (1801-1880) was born in Bethlehem on May 16, 1801.
He, like Weiss before, was indentured at an early age to John Krause to
learn watchmaking. However, Krause died soon after Boekel joined the firm,

20W. C. Reichel, op cit., p. 11.
21Ibid., p. 13.
and the apprenticeship was then sponsored by Jedidiah Weiss. The two became life-long friends and shared not only watchmaking, but the love for music as well. Boekel played violin in the Philharmonic and church orchestras, and was leader of the Bethlehem Band for a time. He played alto in the trombone choir for fifty-three years.

Timothy Weiss was Jedidiah's brother. Little is known about Timothy, except that he was probably the best musician in the group. He died in an unusual construction accident.

Although the fame of the men in Moravian trombone choirs has waned somewhat since the passing of the players in the early groups, the trombone choir as an organization has prospered and remained unique to the Moravian Church to the present day.

22The old Collegium Musicum became the Bethlehem Philharmonic Society. The reference here is to that organization.
CHAPTER IV

MUSIC PERFORMANCES

Chorales

Moravian chorales played by the trombone choir were used to signal the start of a church service. They would also announce special occasions and events in the life of the church. The following is a list of such events:

1. The Communion love-feast—first Sunday of the year.
2. The Children's Festival—first Sunday in Lent.
3. The Great Sabbath—the day before Easter, (congregation love feast).
4. The Feast of the Single Sisters and their guests—the first Sunday in May.
6. The Female Missionary Society—"Whit-Sunday," fifty days after Easter.
8. The Communion Festival—Sunday nearest to the 13th of August.
9. The Children's Feast—Sunday nearest to the 17th of August.
10. The Brethren's Festival—the last Sunday in August.
11. The Married People's Festival—the Sunday nearest to the seventh of October.
12. The Boys' Festival—the last Sunday in October.
15. The Diener's Love-feast—fourth Sunday in Advent.¹

The chorales were also used to announce and greet important personages who might be visiting the town. George Washington was so greeted, as was General Sullivan of Revolutionary War fame, and also Benjamin Franklin.

Death announcements were another very important duty of the trombone choir. These always followed the same format. When any member of the congregation passed away, trombones would sound the announcement through the community from the belfry of the central church. Three chorales associated with death were always played. The first was the passion hymn of Hans Leo Hassler (No. 151A).

Figure 1. Chorale and Text Verifying that a Death had in Fact Occurred.²

![Chorale and Text](image)

Text: "From our band a Pilgrim's gone. . ." See Appendix I, K.


²The transposition of the soprano and alto trombones is for Bₜ instruments.
The next chorale, with its particular text and music, denoted the specific choir to which the person belonged.

Figure 2. Married Brethren Chorale and Text Tune 83D.

Text:  "Jesus ne'er my soul can leave,  
This, this is my consolation,  
And my body is the grave,  
Rests in hope and expectation,  
That this mortal flesh shall see  
Incorruptibility."

The complete choir designations along with their corresponding chorale (text and music) are as follows:

1. Married Sisters Tune 79  
   "His sighs and groans unnumbered...."

2. Widowers Tune 132  
   "His goodness and His mercies all...."

3. Widows Tune 149  
   "Ye who Jesus' patients are...."
4. Single Brethren Tune 185
"Faithful Lord, our only joy and pleasure...."

5. Single Sisters Tune 37
"My happy lot is here...."

6. Teen Boys Tune 23
"Here on earth Christ's bitter passion...."

7. Teen Girls Tune 14A
"When I depart my latest breath...."

8. Little Boys Tune 39A
"Wherein is for children true bliss to be found...."

9. Little Girls Tune 82D
"Should not I for gladness leap...."

The list of choir designations contains no duplication of music or text, making identification purely a matter of familiarity with the music.

Finally, after the choir hymn, the Hassler would be repeated as a benediction. At the gravesite, the sequence of three chorales would be played again with the words sung by the congregation.

Figure 3. Hassler Choral and Text Tune 151 A.

\[\text{Soprano}\]
\[\text{Alto}\]
\[\text{Tenor}\]
\[\text{Bass}\]

Text: "May I too, once relying. . . ."
See Appendix I, L.


\[3\text{For the complete verses of the hymns, see Appendix I.}\]
Anthems

The Moravian anthem, usually three to five minutes in length, utilizes mixed voices and instrumental accompaniment. Large choral sections are separated by instrumental interludes, and the instruments also add an introduction and coda. Moravians believed that the meaning of the words was of the utmost importance, and they consequently avoided the use of fugal or polyphonic sections. Instead, the music contains rhythmic articulation, antiphonal effects and solo-duet passages.\(^4\)

The trombone choir was not used on anthems as much as the strings and woodwind instruments. Moravians, however, used whatever instruments were available, and it is logical to assume that at least some anthems were accompanied with trombones, especially on those days when trombones were present for other duties. An example of an anthem that lends itself well to adaptation for trombone is "Seek Ye His Countenance in All Places," by Johannes Herbst.\(^5\)


\(^5\)Johannes Herbst (1735-1812). The original of this piece was written for a sacred service performed May 4, 1785, in Gradenfry, Germany. Herbst was then serving as superintendent of that congregation.
Figure 4. Keyboard Introduction "Seek Ye His Countenance in All Places."

German text from Psalms 105:4, 34:6
English version by K. K.

Keyboard

Johannes Herbst (1735-1812)
Edited and Arranged by Karl Kraeger

Bedachtsam [Andante]

Figure 5. Trombone Adaptation from Keyboard part to "Seek Ye His Countenance in All Places."

Soprano
Alto
Tenor
Bass
Concerted Music

There are only two collections of concerted trombone choir music extant, those of Cruse and of Weber. First names of these composers are unknown. The three Cruse "Sonatas" are the only pieces specifically scored for soprano, alto, tenor, and bass trombones. These works are undated and are identifiable only by the composer's signature.

Figure 6. Title Page from Cruse "Sonata No. 1" (Archive Copy).

The Sonatas, like most anthems (and other music) in use in the early American church, appear to be classical in style.
Concerted music for the trombone choir was probably centered around the proceedings of the Collegium Musicum, and later the Philharmonic Society. There was some concern that the trombones were too involved in secular rather than liturgical use and when a set of four Bethlehem trombones was sold to the Lititz church in 1771, leaders of that church stated their views very clearly:

By all means they (the trombones) should be put to use, but not for general use. Rather, they will be used only on communion days, at funerals, and to announce a homegoing. Our beginning here depends only upon arranging it so that the brethren who play them (the trombones) are introduced to it in a liturgical way and will practice at regular times under constant supervision and direction.6

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The Moravian trombone choir was primarily a functional group. They supported the life of the church and the community in whatever ways were demanded, and exhibited to the majority of the congregation great joy and satisfaction in their work.
CHAPTER V

MORAVIAN TROMBONE CHOIRS OF TODAY

The Bethlehem Choir

There are, of course, other notable trombonists who played in the Bethlehem Moravian choirs after the era of Weiss, Boekel, and Till. Some of them are as follows.

Robert Rau (1844-1906) was a pharmacist, and leader of the choir for about forty years. He played all four trombones (soprano, alto, tenor, and bass) equally well, and was also known for his well-developed tenor voice. Rau excelled in arranging and composing new works for the trombone choir.

August Leibert (1848-1921) played for fifty-three years and led the group for fifteen of those years.

George E. (Guss) Sigley (1866-1943) was leader for twenty-one years and a member for forty-two years. Mr. Sigley is credited for having a scrapbook with many programs, membership lists, and memorabilia concerning his tenure in the group.

S. C. Chitty served from 1879 to 1901 and is responsible for Tune 581K that is used to close all funeral services except those for children.\(^1\)

Several names still associated with the old trombone tradition are Richman E. Meyers, who no longer plays but still writes about the group;

Carl Smigley and Bernard Beitel, who have played "as long as anybody can remember"; and Don Kemmerer, who is leader of the choir today (1984).

The Bethlehem trombone choir today performs essentially the same tasks as it did two hundred years ago. The difference now is that the number of obligations has decreased. For example, very few people request the funeral service any longer. The purity of the choir no longer seems to matter, as the brass band has replaced the trombones for many functions. One reason that the use of the trombone choir has declined is that the number of players of the soprano and alto trombones has diminished, and interest in learning these instruments has dwindled to a select few. For a time, the congregation itself held classes to perpetuate the playing of the smaller horns, but that effort has been abandoned.

There are some events which still draw large numbers of players. The Bach Festival and Easter Celebrations are well attended. However, the most popular event using trombones in the Moravian Church today is the Moravian Music Festival. The Festival began in 1964 and has grown in popularity to the present day. It is held in different cities each year, hosted by the Moravian Church or Moravian Music Foundation in that location. Approximately six hundred musicians attend, many of them trombonists, and they are all eager to learn and play more Moravian music. The emphasis is usually on

\[2\] A direct quote from a telephone conversation of the writer and Henry Williams, currently the person in charge of the Moravian Music Foundation in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

\[3\] The Bach Festival began in March of 1900. It was opened with a chorale by trombones. That function is still performed today.
early American-Moravian Church music, and a guest conductor with training in that area is invited to participate. In 1984 the Festival was held in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and featured guest conductor and authority of Baroque and Classical music, Thomas B. Dunn.⁴

Other Moravian Trombone Choirs

There are several contemporary churches other than the one at Bethlehem that have active Moravian trombone choirs. They span the entire country and may be found at Lititz and Bathabera in Pennsylvania; Downey, California; Longwood, Florida; and Edmonton, Alberta (Canada). These contemporary choirs perform primarily Baroque, Renaissance, and Classical musical arrangements that have been adapted to fit the soprano, alto, tenor, and bass instrumentation. Jeffrey C. Reynolds, bass-trombonist in the Los Angeles Philharmonic, is the leader of the Downey, California, choir. He has collected and arranged a large amount of material for soprano, alto, tenor, and bass trombones, with additional parts for other brass instruments. These trombone choir arrangements will soon be published,⁵ and will offer encouragement to newly-formed choirs seeking playable literature. Similarly, an increased availability of instruments should encourage the formation of new groups. The soprano and alto trombones

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⁴ Thomas B. Dunn was a church musician in Baltimore. He studied at John Hopkins, Peabody Conservatory, Harvard, and the Amsterdam Conservatory.

⁵ Some music is already published by Robert King. Most of the new music will be published by Fredrick Publishing Company, 20 North Charles Street, McPherson, Kansas 67460. For a list of available music see Appendix II.
have been extremely difficult to purchase since around 1951 when they became too costly to produce. The instruments can now be purchased either individually or in matched sets.\textsuperscript{6}

\textsuperscript{6}Instruments can be purchased from D. E. G. Music Products, P.O. Box 400, Lake Geneva, Wisconsin 53147. Price List in Appendix III.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

In the recent past, Moravian history and particularly Moravian music has been generally neglected by historians and musicologists. This is not surprising, in view of the church's early practice as a closed society. Today, interest seems to be increasing, and enthusiasm for the musical tradition is spreading to people outside the Moravian Community.

The trombone choir is also gaining popularity. For years the only two choirs in the United States were located at Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, and Downey, California. Now these and other choirs (many of which have non-Moravian membership) are beginning to reach audiences through radio and television. These appearances, along with a small but noticeable increase in research activity, are helping to preserve the Moravian Trombone Choir in our American Society.
APPENDIX I

WORDS OF HYMNS FOR THE TEN CHOIRS
OF THE MORAVIAN CHURCH

A. For the Married Brethren. Tune 83 D

"Jesus ne'er my soul can leave,
This, this is my consolation,
And my body is the grave,
Rests in hope and expectation,
That this mortal flesh shall see
Incorruptibility."

B. For the Married Sisters. Tune 70

"His sighs and groans unnumbered,
And from His breast encumber'd,
The countless tears forth prest;
These shall at my dismission,
To final rest's fruition,
Convey to me His arms and breast."

C. For the Widowers. Tune 132

"His goodness and His mercies all,
Will follow me forever;
And I'll maintain my proper call,
To cleave to my dear Saviour,
And to His congregation here;
And when call'd home, I shall live there,
With Christ, my Soul's Redeemer."

D. For the Widows. Tune 149

"Ye who Jesus' patients are,
Let your hearts be tending,
Thither where you wish to share,
Bliss that's never ending.
0, may you--constantly
Wean'd from what's terrestrial,
Look for things celestial."
E. For the Single Brethren. Tune 185

"Faithful Lord, our only joy and pleasure,
Shall remain while here we stay,
The our matchless friend and highest treasure,
To adore, serve, and obey;
Thus we may with Thee in perfect union,
Live whilst here enjoying Thy communion,
Till we, having run our race,
Shall behold Thee face to face."

F. For the Single Sisters. Tune 37

"My happy lot is here,
The Lamb to follow;
Be this my only care,
Each step to hallow,
And thus await the time
When Christ my Saviour,
Will call me hence with Him
To live forever."

G. For the Boys. Tune 23

"Here on earth Christ's bitter passion
Is our only consolation;
Trusting in His death and merit.
We with joy yield up our spirit."

H. For the Girls. Tune 14 A

"When I depart my latest breath
Shall unto Him ascend,
As a thanks-offering for His death,
And thus my race will end."

I. For Little Boys. Tune 39 A

"Wherein is for children true bliss to be found?
When by Jesus Christ as his sheep they are own'd
In Him they find pastime, while here they remain,
And joys everlasting in Heaven obtain."

J. For Little Girls. Tune 82 D

"Should not I for gladness leap,
Led by Jesus as his sheep;
For when these blest days are over,
To the arms of my dear Saviour
I shall be conveyed to rest;
Amen! yea my lot is blest."
K. Opening Text for all Funerals. Tune 151 A

"From our band a Pilgrim's gone
Before us to his rest;
We all are nearing to the home,
His lot is with the blest.
All earthly cares are o'er,
What bliss awaits him there;
The Soul will meet its lover,
And in his bounty share."

L. Closing Text for all Funerals. Tune 151 A

"May I too, once relying,
On Jesus' death and blood,
Leave this my body dying,
And then behold my God;
The earth, wherein my body
Shall rest, till rais'd again,
Is hallowed already,
Since Jesus there has lain."

Words of Hymns for the Ten Choirs of the Moravian Church are reprinted from the Moravian Music Foundation Publications No. 4, Historical Notes on Music in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, by Rufus A. Grider, pages 15, 16, 17.
APPENDIX II

A SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY OF TROMBONE CHOIR MUSIC
SUITABLE FOR USE IN THE MORAVIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

March-size Books

SATB CHORALES AND MUSIC OF THE MORAVIAN CHURCH BAND SOUTHERN
PROVINCE. /Fort, available from: Moravian Church Office,
500 South Church Street, Winston-Salem, N.C. 27108, or
Duncan Music Co., 1409 S. Stratford Rd., W-S, N.C. 27103;
$1.50 per bk. Sop in C and B\text{\textsubscript{b}}, F and E\text{\textsubscript{b}}, ten in B\text{\textsubscript{b}} trspsed
and B.C., bs in B.C., and B\text{\textsubscript{b}} trspsed.

SATB CHORALES OF THE MORAVIAN TROMBONE CHOIR./Austin, available
from: Moravian Congregation Office of Bethlehem, PA., 74W
Market St., Bethlehem, PA. 18018. $6.50 per set of the 5
different bks. B\text{\textsubscript{b}} and E\text{\textsubscript{b}} alt, (Fbk in MSS,) ten, & bs in
B.C.

SATB TWENTY TWO CHORALES, Bach/King, King #37, in score form
only $.50 ea. Sop & alt in B\text{\textsubscript{b}}, alt in B\text{\textsubscript{b}} & F, ten in F
(treble) & B.C., bs (& contra or tuba) in B.C.

TTTB 24 EARLY GERMAN CHORALES/King, King #33, in score form
only $.50 ea., all pts in B.C.

TTTB SIXTEEN CHORALES, Bach/King, King #40, Score form $.40 ea.
all pts in B.C.

SATB CHRISTMAS CAROLS FOR BAND OR BRASS CHOIR/Holmes, Rubank,
cond-$1.00 pts-$0.60.

SATB CHRISTMAS TIME Book of Carols/Buchtel, kjos, cond-$1.25,
pts-$0.60. C & B\text{\textsubscript{b}} sop, B\text{\textsubscript{b}} & E\text{\textsubscript{b}} alt, B\text{\textsubscript{b}}, F, E\text{\textsubscript{b}} A.C., B.C.
ten pt, b.s. in T.C. & B.C.

CHRISTMAS, THE JOY AND THE SPIRIT/Nestico, Kendor. cond-
$1.50, pts-$0.75, 2 cornets (B\text{\textsubscript{b}}) F horn, 2 ten trbs (B.C.)
Bar. and Tuba.
Moravian Music for the Posaunenchor

SATB THREE SONATAS Cruse/Reynolds, MSS, Sop in B♭, alt in A.C. ten in ten C., bs in B.C.

SATTB MORAVIAN CHORALE CYCLE/Reynolds, MSS, Sop in B♭ alt in A.C., ten in ten C., ten in B.C., bs in B.C.

SATTB COMMUNION HYMN HUSS/Reynolds, MSS, Sop in B♭, alt in A.C., ten in ten C., ten in B.C., bs in B.C.

TTTB SLEEP THEY LAST SLEEP/Reynolds, MSS, tens 1 & 2 in ten C. ten 3 in B.C., bs in B.C.

TTTB PASSION CHORALE/Graun, MSS, tens 1 & 2 in ten C., ten 3 in B.C., bs in B.C.

TTTB O DEEPEST GRIEF Antes / Reynolds, MSS, tens 1&2 in ten C., ten 3 in B.C., bs in B.C.

TTTB MORAVIAN CHORALES /Reynolds, MSS, 1st pt in ten C., pts 2,3 7 bs in B.C.

SSAATTTBB HOSANNA Leinbach/Reynolds, MSS. 8 pts antiphonal. Choir I Sop in B♭, alt in B♭, Ten in B.C., bs in B.C. Choir II Sop in B♭, Alt in F & E♭, Ten in B.C. bs or ten in B.C. pts/ $2.00.

SSAATTTBB HOSANNA Leinbach/Reynolds, MSS. 8 pts antiphonal. Choir I Sop in B♭, alt in B♭, Ten in B.C., bs in B.C. Choir II Sop in B♭, Alt in F & E♭, Ten in B.C. bs or ten in B.C pts/ $2.00.

SSAATTTBB HARMONY-MUSIC I VARIATIONS on a Moravian Chorale, Kroeger/ American Composers Alliance Sop 1 & 2 in B♭, Alt 1 & 2 in A.C. (F Horn 1 & 2 in B.C. with full score.

SSAAATTTBB LARGO from "Xerxes: Handel/Leibert, Mss, Sop 1&2 in B♭, alt 3, 4, & 5 in A.C. in E♭ or in F, ten 6, 7, & 8 in ten C. or B.C., bs 9 & 10 in B.C.


(MSS - Manuscript)
1984 PRICE LIST FOR TROMBONE CHOIR INSTRUMENTS

From: D.E.G. Music Products
P.O. Box 408
Lake Geneva, Wisconsin  53147

1984 PRICE LIST

\[\begin{align*}
\text{B}^b \text{ Soprano Trombone (also referred as slide trumpet)} & \quad $250.00 \\
\text{F or E}^b \text{ Alto Trombone} & \quad $425.00 \\
\text{B}^b \text{ Tenor Trombone (no F attachment)} & \quad $475.00 \\
\text{B}^b\text{-F Rotary Valve Bass Trombone} & \quad $950.00
\end{align*}\]

These instruments are currently in stock and may be purchased for immediate delivery.
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