THE BASS TROMBONE AND ITS USE IN SELECTED WORKS OF SMETANA, BORODIN, TCHAIKOVSKY, AND DVORAK

THESIS

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MASTER OF MUSIC

BY

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CHAPTER I

HISTORY OF TROMBONES

An evident reference to trombones appears in Spanish literature in the sixteenth century with the use of the word sacabuche, which in a musical sense means "draw tude."\(^1\) The oldest illustration of a lip-voiced instrument dates back to the middle fifteenth century. During that time, "any brass instrument, roughly trumpet-like, bent into a flattened S-shape, and provided with a freely movable U-shaped telescoped slide connecting the mouthpiece and the middlepipe, could be positively identified as a trombone."\(^2\)

Hans Neuschel, who was perhaps the first recorded maker of the trombone, appears during the last quarter of the fifteenth century. Doppelmayr speaks of Neuschel's skill and reputation, which gained him orders from royal establishments several miles from his home town.\(^3\) During this time the first picture of a trombone was made by the Italian artist Matteo di Giovanni.\(^4\)


\(^3\)Ibid., p. 134.

There is little material concerning the trombone in the first half of the sixteenth century. Virdung (1511) and Agricola (1528 and 1545) both published versions of rather crude woodcuts, but neither gave useful data. The Nürnberg makers Schnitzer (1579), Linczer (1587), and Rheims (1593) provide evidence that the instrument of some three hundred-fifty or more years ago was in all its essentials a finished product which did not need further improvement.

Several trombones have survived from the early seventeenth century. Some are dated and bear their maker's name. During this time the sackbut was cultivated to such a degree that British players were sought by Continental patrons. The church, court, and municipal archives of England and Scotland abound in records of the trombone and its players, fees, and liveries.

A composer of Praetorius' day would find a maker prepared to supply a set of four trombones in different sizes. The most common instrument was the tenor in B flat. The group as Praetorius named it was as follows: Alto—E flat; Tenor—B flat; Bass—E flat or F; and Contrabass—BB flat.

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6Bate, op. cit., p. 134.
At this time, Mersenne mentioned the seven positions of the slide, noting particularly the apparent mystery of overlapping harmonic series yielding the same note with different shifts.\(^7\)

The beginning of the eighteenth century saw the family of trombones complete, but there was an unexplained fall in their popularity in England, France, and Italy. Late in the century Burney explained that difficulty was experienced in finding players to complete the great band for the Handel celebrations of 1784. He writes: "The sackbut or double trumpet was sought, but so many years had elapsed since it had been used in this kingdom that neither the instrument nor a performer on it could easily be found."\(^8\) To quote Adam Carse, "Until near the close of the eighteenth century the trombone was hardly what we now call an orchestral instrument, and again, with the exception of a few isolated cases, parts for trombones are not to be found in opera scores till late in the eighteenth century."\(^9\)

The three trombones used for the opera and the symphony by composers of the early nineteenth century were the E flat alto, B flat tenor, and the F bass. These were the standard trio for fifty years.

\(^7\)Ibid., p. 136.


\(^9\)Bate, *op. cit.*, p. 138.
The Use of Trombones Before the Twentieth Century

There is little sixteenth century social music that has come down to us in actual notation. What music there is suggests that the trombone was expected to possess considerable flexibility of articulation, but fast slide changes belong to a later period. The sackbut, however, was adopted by church composers because of its ability to blend with and support voices, and because of its warm, yet sombre tone. According to printed books published in 1597 and 1616, Giovanni Gabrieli could command up to six trombones. In his Sacre Symphoniae he used a group consisting of tenor and bass voices, first cornet, first viola, and tenor trombones opposed by alto voices with second cornet, second viola, two tenor trombones and one bass trombone. Heinrich Schütz, a student of Gabrieli, made similar use of the trombones in Germany and they were also used in the works of Buxtehude and his contemporaries.

The trombones made rare appearances in the seventeenth century opera and oratorio. Monteverdi and Cesti were among the composers who wrote for the trombones. Four trombones were employed in the first performance of Orfeo at Mantua in 1607, but this was a special occasion and not typical of the age.

11 Bate, op. cit., p. 217.
12 Ibid.
From Monteverdi to Bach the use of the trombones changed little, and Mattheson's statement of 1713 that they were seldom used except in church and for solemn occasions can be taken to represent a much wider generalisation. Bach's main use of the trombone was to reinforce the voice parts in his fifteen cantatas.  

Handel's use of the trombones is as a more characteristic and independent orchestral voice. It is significant that in 1749 Handel revived his oratorio Samson without trombones, indicating a decline in this instrument's popularity. Trombone parts were also omitted from some of the earlier printed editions of Saul and Israel in Egypt. Handel usually wrote for a group of alto, tenor, and bass trombones.

There is little change during the eighteenth century in the manner of using trombones. The treatment of the trombones is mainly harmonic, with the parts placed together. The bass trombone was not confined to the lowest note of a chord but crosses the other lines. Gluck used trombones in unison during the same period.

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13Ibid., p. 218.


During the period of the Viennese classicists there was little change in the use of trombones. Mozart utilized the complete trombone section in his Requiem, but trombones were seldom used in the concert orchestra (see Fig. 1). Still, Beethoven introduced the trombones in his Symphony No. 5 (see Fig. 2) and wrote essential parts for the trombone in his Funeral Equale and the Miserere and Amplius for four voices and four trombones published posthumously in 1827.¹⁶

With the rise of the military band in the early 1800's, there was a greater need for trombones. The tuba began to play the bass parts in military music. The trombone, and especially the bass trombone, accordingly could leave its supporting role and reveal itself as a powerful melodic voice.

Prior to the mid-century, the trombone parts consisted mainly of soft harmonies and detached chords. Now, with the introduction of melodic material for the trombone, composers were not restricted in their writings. Berlioz, however, never neglected the old style when it suited what he had to express. In 1844 he wrote that the trombone might "chant like a choir of priests" or "take part in the world clamour of the orgy."¹⁷

Although in previous years the trombone had been used in many operas, it was not until the nineteenth century that the

¹⁶Bate, op. cit., p. 219.
¹⁷Ibid., p. 71.
5. Confutatis maledictis

Fig. 1--Mozart, Requiem, "Confutatis maledictis," measures 1-2.
Fig. 2.--Beethoven, Symphony No. 5, fourth movement, measures 1-5.
trombone began to find a regular place in the symphony orchestra. This new style of writing for the trombone was a major factor in its development in the symphony as well as other serious works. Finally, these new melodic parts provided unlimited opportunities for the trombone to show its many capabilities.

The Structure of the Bass Trombone

The body of the trombone consists of two straight cylindrical tubes, the mouthpiece and the middlepipe, and a bellpipe of small length that includes the expanding part of the instrument. These three sections lie parallel to each other and are connected by two bows. In the past, these were cylindrical bores, but with modern machinery this limitation no longer exists and many makers prefer a tapered bell-bow so the expansion of the bell begins in the bend. Sometimes the bell and bow are produced in one piece. The mouthpiece and middlepipe form the inner of two pairs of closely fitting telescopic tubes; the outer members are connected by a second bow and form the U-shaped slide.

The bass trombone in F is about twelve feet long (closed slide) compared to nine feet for a B flat trombone. About eight feet form the U of the slide. When the slide is closed, the length is four feet. Therefore, when the bass trombone slide is opened, it is beyond the reach of most players. A hinged rod is used to handle the two or three lowest slide positions.
There is also a duplex or transposable trombone. It is a large bore tenor trombone with additional tubing attached to the bellpipe which can be switched in and out by a single valve used by the left thumb. This instrument appeared around 1850 in France, where a piston valve was usually preferred to a rotary one. However, it was in Germany that the idea really took root and flourished at the beginning of the present century. The addition of the valve led to the replacement of the old bass in F by the new tenor-bass in Bb-F.

While German-speaking countries were switching from the F bass to the tenor-bass instrument, English opinion was in favor of a smaller-bored bass in G. Extra tubing and a valve changed the instrument to a G-D bass. The bass in G and the one in G-D became the standard alternative instruments for the third trombone part in England.

The Bass Trombone in the Twentieth Century

There are several types of bass trombones in use today. Bass trombones may or may not have valve sections. Bass trombones without valve sections are pitched in G and F and are used in Europe as well as in the Salvation Army bands in America. In the United States, the principal bass trombone is a Bb instrument with a valve.

18Bate, op. cit., p. 55.
The Bb-F bass trombone is in the key of Bb until the valve is pressed. When the valve is pressed, the instrument is lowered a perfect fourth to the key of F. While this is considered a feature of the bass trombone, its use in the tenor instruments is not unknown. Because the slide length of the modern trombone has been shortened for easy access to its seventh position, the F valve still does not complete the chromatic pedal scale. The customary procedure to secure low B has been to make the slide of the F section long enough to lower it to E. This method is not altogether satisfactory, however, and several manufacturers have overcome this difficulty with a second valve and trigger lowering the instrument to E, making the missing note instantly available.

A bass trombone is much larger than a tenor trombone. Usually, bass trombones have a bore between .555 and .565, and a bell that measures from nine to eleven inches. The bore sizes of a tenor trombone are usually from .465 to .493, and the bells measure from seven to eight and one-half inches.

Bass trombones mouthpieces have larger and deeper cups than do tenor trombone mouthpieces. The throat opening is also larger for the bass trombone mouthpiece. These differences are easily visible to the eye without any kind of measurement.

The sound of a bass trombone is heavier, darker, and richer than that of a tenor trombone. The bass line is played by the bass trombone while the tenor trombone usually
plays baritone or tenor parts. Since the ranges of the tenor, baritone, and bass voices overlap, so do the ranges of the tenor and bass trombones. However, this does not mean that they can be used interchangeably on the trombone parts. The tenor trombone should not play the bass trombone parts even if the range makes this possible. This is no more correct than having tenors singing the bass part in a choir. The bass trombone quality is different; it is impossible for a tenor trombone to reproduce the same sound.

The practical range of a bass trombone is from C₂ to F₄. Many bass trombonists are capable of playing lower and higher than the practical range, depending upon the ability of the performer. It should be noted that his range does not cover pedal tones. The practical range of the tenor trombone is E₂ to B♭₄. Again, many players are able to increase the higher range but not the lower range since the tenor trombone does not have the tubing necessary to produce the tones from low E♭ to C.
CHAPTER II

THE USE OF THE BASS TROMBONE

IN SELECTED ORCHESTRAL WORKS

Smetana's Use of the Bass Trombone

In the introduction of the overture to *The Bartered Bride*, the brasses, including the bass trombone, play what might be called "glorified timpani" parts. These parts form the harmonic foundation against which the entire string and woodwind sections expound the brilliant and frantic chief theme of the overture (Fig. 3, p. 14).

In the overture of *The Bartered Bride* the string sections play the exciting melody in unison and octaves. The trombones, and especially the bass trombone, add sharp, rhythmic accents to promote the unwritten crescendo. These punctuated notes are also played by the bassoons, French horns, trumpets, and timpani, but are most effective from the trombones, since their notes are written in a powerful range for the trombones. (Fig. 4, p. 15)

In the excerpt of Figure 5 the bass trombone plays a bass part while the tenor trombones play a harmony part. Although this line is a separate part, it is really a simplified bass part, which was one of Smetana's styles of writing for the bass trombone. The bass trombone was capable of playing the
OVERTURE
THE BARTERED BRIDE

F. Smetana

Fig. 3—Smetana, The overture to The Bartered Bride, measures 1-7.
Fig. 4—Smetana, The overture to *The Bartered Bride*, measures 8–30.
Fig. 5—Smetana, The overture to The Bartered Bride, measures 144-153.
entire bass part, but Smetana probably wanted to keep the bass trombone part lighter by omitting some of the bass notes.

Although Fig. 6, page 18, is another example of a simplified bass part for the bass trombone, Smetana here wrote notes which could only be played on a bass trombone. In most cases the bass trombone part can be played on a tenor trombone, but the difference, as mentioned in Chapter 1, is that the quality of the bass trombone is darker and heavier and cannot be produced on a tenor trombone.

In the overture of The Bartered Bride, accented quarter notes and half notes from the bass trombone help to increase the dynamic level. The bass trombone line is independent, but is again a simplified version of the bass line, a practice previously noted in Smetana's writing (see Fig. 7, p. 19).

Some of Smetana's writing for the bass trombone is not very melodic. A third-line D is played for six measures in the overture of the opera The Kiss (see Fig. 8, p. 20), while the driving, familiar melody is played by the bulk of the string and woodwind sections. Although the bass line lacks melodic interest and is quite "common," the different time values add some variety to the part.

In the overture to the opera Libussa the bass trombone and tuba function as a separate group and play in unison or octaves. The proclaiming sound of the bass trombone and tuba is answered boldly by the tenor trombones.
Fig. 6—Smetana, The overture to The Bartered Bride, measures 307-316.
Fig. 7--Smetana, The overture to The Bartered Bride, measures 337-346.
Fig. 8—Smetana, The overture from The Kiss, measures 1-6.
Fig. 9—Smetana, The overture to the opera *Libussa*
In the example from the overture to the opera *Libussa* (see Fig. 10, p. 23) the melodic tenor trombone part is boldly reinforced by the bass trombone and tuba. The trombones and tuba play in unison, while the trumpets and French horns divide the rhythmic background material. Smetana uses all trombones and the tuba to produce a diminuendo. In addition, Smetana shows that the bass trombone is capable of producing both a majestic and "light" quality in his music.

**Borodin's Use of the Bass Trombone**

An illustration of one of Borodin's standard methods of writing for the section of trombones can be seen in his *Symphony No. 1* (Fig. 11, p. 24). At letter B, with the exception of the first note, the bass trombone plays one octave lower than the tenor trombones. This dramatic melodic line was scored only for the trombones, a feature which was employed by the late nineteenth century composers. The light scoring by Borodin of the other sections in the orchestra makes the *marcato* trombone part more powerful.

An unusual scoring for the trombones also occurs in Borodin's *Symphony No. 1*, first movement (Fig. 12, p. 25). The second trombone and bass trombone play an important melodic line while the first trombone rests, a practice which was not common during this period. Borodin relied on the trombones to play an independent melodic line instead of having the part doubled by other orchestral instruments.
Fig. 10--Smetana, The overture to the opera Libussa
Fig. 11—Borodin, Symphony No. 1, first movement, measures 40-47.
Fig. 12—Borodin, *Symphony No. 1*, first movement, measures 96–104.
In the following example from Borodin's Symphony No. 1, first movement (Fig. 13, p. 27), the bass trombone forcefully plays a bass part in harmony, octaves, and unison with the tenor trombones. Heavy accent marks are used to emphasize the rhythmic punctuations while all trombones play loudly.

The strings play short and light notes to begin this rapidly developing passage from the "Scherzo" of the Symphony No. 1 by Borodin (Fig. 14, p. 28). The intensity level is increased by the bassoons, clarinets, and oboes, and brought to a climax by all the winds. For the first time, the bass trombone blares a pedal B flat, a note which gives support to the other instruments.

The example from the fourth movement of Borodin's Symphony No. 1 (Fig. 15, p. 29) shows one of the few times a solo melodic line was given to the bass trombone by Borodin. There is much movement by the other sections of the orchestra, while one instrument, the bass trombone, is responsible for the solo melodic line. This practice was seldom used until the late nineteenth century.

In Figure 16, page 30, the bass trombone plays a low bass part in unison with the double bass. As stated before, tenor trombones could not play the five-semitone gap between the E below the staff to pedal B flat. Therefore, the bass trombone acts as a tuba and adds the "bottom" to the orchestra.

Borodin's music demanded good performers as he did not limit his writing to any particular range. In Figure 17,
Fig. 13—Borodin, *Symphony No. 1*, first movement, measures 105-113.
Fig. 14—Borodin, Symphony No. 1, "Scherzo", measures 85-94.
Fig. 15--Borodin, *Symphony No. 1*, fourth movement, measures 40-44.
Fig. 16—Borodin, Symphony No. 1, fourth movement, measures 254–260.
The bass trombone plays a very low bass line. The range of this line extends beyond the reach of tenor trombones; therefore, there is no doubt that this line is a true bass trombone part, since it would have to be played by a bass trombone.

Borodin did not always write forte passages for the bass trombone. In this example from On the Steppes of Central Asia (Fig. 18, p. 33), the bass trombone plays a soft, simplified bass line. The trombones, with the help of the cello and double bass, support the soft, melodic French horn part. It is also interesting to note that Borodin wrote the trombone parts in three different clefs.

In the overture to the opera Prince Igor (Fig. 19, p. 34) the bass trombone and tuba divide a simplified bass line. Borodin wisely gave the continuous eighth note pattern to the contra-basses and kept the bass trombone free from awkward slide position changes.

A notable countermelody is stated boldly by all trombones in the Polovetsian Dances. Although this is a tutti passage, no other instruments play the important, familiar countermelody. The tuba and contra-basses are responsible for the "bottom" of the section, while the violins, flute, oboe, and clarinet play the lively melody (see Figure 20, p. 35 and Figure 21, p. 36).
Fig. 17--Borodin, Symphony No. 1, fourth movement, measures 268-276.
Fig. 18—Borodin, *On the Steppes of Central Asia*, measures 103-110.
Fig. 19—Borodin, The overture to the opera Prince Igor, measures 57-64.
Fig. 20—Borodin, Polovetsian Dances, from the opera "Prince Igor", measures 25-27.
Fig. 21--Borodin, Polovetsian Dances, from the opera "Prince Igor", measures 28-30.
Tchaikovsky's Use of the Bass Trombone

Tchaikovsky's popular overture Romeo and Juliet contains sections where the bass trombone has important parts. In measure 149 the bass trombone strikes a powerful note of the chord, while the strings have an agitated sixteenth note melody line. From measure 150 to 153 the bass trombone plays a fortissimo rhythmic part, which supports the lively melody. Throughout this section the bass trombone plays in octaves with the tuba and contrabasses (see Figure 22, p. 36).

Unlike most of Tchaikovsky's brilliant bass trombone parts, the bass trombone in Figure 23, page 39, is employed in a simple whole-note treatment. This delicate, independent bass line is played very softly. Also, it is interesting that the tenor trombones and tuba do not play during the tutti section.

However, generally the bass trombone, tuba, and tenor trombones play at the same time. The entire orchestra in the example from the overture Romeo and Juliet (Fig. 24, p. 40), with the exception of the bass drum and the two trumpets who have the melody, has the same driving rhythm. This dynamic section is sounded especially forcibly by the trombones since the range is not exceptionally low.

The trombones are utilized in many of Tchaikovsky's works and the composition Capriccio Italian is no exception.
Fig. 22—Tchaikovsky, The overture Romeo and Juliet, measures 151-154.
Fig. 23--Tchaikovsky, The overture Romeo and Juliet, measures 226-231.
Fig. 24—Tchaikovsky, The overture *Romeo and Juliet*, measures 338-341.
Tchaikovsky once described *Capriccio Italien* as "one of my most effective and brilliant orchestral works."\(^1\)

In the example from *Capriccio Italien* (Fig. 25, p. 42), the important rhythmic background is given to the brasses, while the string section plays the famous expressive melody. Throughout this section, Tchaikovsky employs changes of dynamics to increase and decrease the emotional atmosphere. The bass trombone continues its supporting role with help from the tuba.

An example of brilliant bass trombone writing appears in the *piu presto* section of *Capriccio Italien* (see Fig. 26, p. 43). Forceful staccato chords are sounded by the brasses, while the lively flowing melody is continued by the strings, clarinet, and flute. The bass trombone supports the bass line in octaves with the tuba and contrabasses at a dynamic level that is extremely loud.

In Tchaikovsky's successful *Overture of 1812*, the bass trombone functions as an important member of the orchestra. Tchaikovsky utilizes the low ranges of the instrument from measures 59-64 (see Fig. 27, p. 44). Again, the bass trombone, tuba, and contrabasses boldly state the melodic bass line.

One of the most important bass trombone parts in the *Overture of 1812* appears in measures 267-269 (Fig. 28, p. 45).

Fig. 25—Tchaikovsky, *Capriccio Italien*, measures 28-35.
Fig. 26—Tchaikovsky, *Capriccio Italien*, measures 549-554.
Fig. 27—Tchaikovsky, Overture of 1812, measures 59-61.
Fig. 28—Tchaikovsky, Overture of 1812, measures 267-269.
The popular melody is played by the bass trombone and bassoon. Few examples can be found where the melody relies only upon the bass trombone. The bassoon part is important also, but since the strings are playing fortissimo, the bass trombone is used in order to make this line heard.

Tchaikovsky did not restrict his writing for the trombone. In his Symphony No. 5 (see Fig. 29, p. 47), the trombones boldly announce the dotted eighth followed by a sixteenth-note melody with the entire orchestra. However, in the following measure (measure 85) the trombones alone strike a loud chord which supports the excited melody.

Generally, solo melodic lines for the bass trombone are uncommon during the late nineteenth century. However, Tchaikovsky wrote several bass trombone lines which were also doubled by the bassoon (see Fig. 30, p. 48). It is interesting that Tchaikovsky scored the bassoon line at a higher dynamic level than the bass trombone line. One only wonders if the difference in scoring would help the bassoon part be heard since it is fairly easy for the bass trombone to produce a very loud low A.

In measures 159-164 of the Symphony No. 5 (Fig. 31, p. 49), the bass trombone plays one octave lower than the tenor trombones. This brilliant melody is effectively answered by the trumpets, while the tuba and contrabasses supply the "bottom" to the orchestra. This dynamic section functions almost as a brass fanfare. Since the intensity of the line is not decreased, the emotional tension continues at a high peak.
Fig. 29—Tchaikovsky, *Symphony No. 5*, first movement, measures 83-87.
Fig. 30—Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 5, first movement, measures 98-101.
Fig. 31—Tchaikovsky, *Symphony No. 5*, measures 159-164.
The bass trombone, like the other members of the low brass section, does not always play forte or fortissimo. Beginning in measure 122 (see Fig. 32, p. 51), Tchaikovsky employs the bass trombone to change the musical texture. The low brass chord is heavily sounded with a sudden decrescendo. Each expressive chord is sounded successively more lightly, and adds subduing beauty.

Unison scoring for the trombones is another technique of Tchaikovsky (see Fig. 33, p. 52). At letter N in his Symphony No. 5, fourth movement, the trombones strike a whole note C followed by the other members of the C major chord, while the melody is presented by the woodwinds and strings. Tchaikovsky demands that all instruments, not just the trombones, produce much sound.

The bass line functions as the melody in Figure 34, page 53. The entire brass section and the contrabasses play the brilliant line, while the bass trombone and tuba play in unison, with the exception of the first note. The tenor trombones are in octaves with the bass trombone and tuba. In this section, the low brasses perform as a team of two tenor trombones against the bass trombone and tuba.

Tchaikovsky does not neglect the bass trombone as a member of the brass choir in his Symphony No. 6 (see Fig. 35, p. 54). The entire brass section adds warmth to the movement with soft, solemn harmonies, and provides the listener a complete contrast of brass timbre.
Fig. 32—Tchaikovsky, *Symphony No. 5*, fourth movement, measures 119-127.
Fig. 33—Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 5, fourth movement measures 208-213.
Fig. 34—Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 5, fourth movement, measures 304–311.
Fig. 35--Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 6, first movement
New thematic material is utilized by Tchaikovsky in this "call and answer" section of his Symphonic No. 6 (see Figure 36, p. 56). The trombones supply the "answer" while the other members of the orchestra play either the melody or sustained chords. Again, the intensity level is fortissimo and a marcato marking helps draw attention to the subject.

Dvorak's Use of the Bass Trombone

Dvorak used the bass trombone for many different effects. In the example from his Symphonic Variations (see Fig. 37, p. 57) the bass trombone plays one octave lower than the tenor trombones. All trombones are playing loudly; therefore, the bass trombone must play quite loudly to balance the two tenor trombones. It is also interesting to note that this independent melodic line is actually a simplified bass part. Dvorak probably omitted some of the bass notes to make the bass trombone part "cleaner" and easier to play. One can only imagine how unmusical a bass trombone would sound when playing low trills and slurs.

In the Symphonic Variations the bass part is often divided between the bass trombone and tenor trombones. As a result of this division, this driving bass part is easier for the trombones to play, especially the bass trombone, since there is time for the performer to take a quick breath. Much weight is added to the line by the use of accents (see Fig. 38, page 58).
Fig. 36—Tchaikovsky, Symphony No. 6, first movement, letter D.
Fig. 37—Dvorak, *Symphonic Variations*, op. 78, measures 365-371.
Fig. 38—Dvorak, *Symphonic Variations*, Op. 78, measures 380–383.
Beginning with measure 387 in the *Symphonic Variations* (Fig. 39, p. 60), the trombones play boldly in octaves. The notes are marked with heavy accents, and Dvorak wrote "marcato" to emphasize the part. All trombones play this melodic line, which is completely independent from other orchestral parts. Dvorak shows his confidence in the trombones by not having the line doubled.

Although Dvorak often wrote bass lines for the bass trombone, he realized that bass trombone writing required an independent approach which cannot be carried over from the stringed contrabasses. In the following example from his *Symphonic Variations* (Fig. 40, p. 61), Dvorak gave the bass trombone an eighth-note rest in measure 42. With this exception, the bass trombone plays the restless bass line one octave higher than the double bass, and in unison with the bassoons.

In his *Symphonic Variations* (Fig. 41, p. 62), Dvorak did not always write *forte* and *fortissimo* passages for the bass trombone. On occasion, he utilized the bass trombone to help make gradual dynamics changes. This simple bass line is in unison or octaves with the bassoons, timpani, and contrabasses, and was not scored for the tenor trombones.

Although the bass trombone and contrabasses play a "timpani" part in octaves in Figure 42, page 63, it should be noted that the bass trombone part would be difficult to play on a tenor trombone since one could use only the slide positions one and six for B flat and low F. By using a bass
Fig. 39—Dvorak, Symphonic Variations, Op. 78, measures 384-389.
Fig. 40—Dvorak, *Symphonic Variations*, Op. 78, measures 415-424.
Fig. 41—Dvorak, Symphonic Variations, Op. 78, measures 534–541.
Fig. 42--Dvorak, *Symphonic Variations*, Op. 78, measures 615-621.
trombone, one could make the slide changes more easily. The B flat and low F are both played in first position. Dvorak builds the dynamic level of the bass line with the addition of the tenor trombones in measure 621, while the melody flows from the first flute, first clarinet, first violins and violas.

In Figure 43, page 65, the bass trombone plays notes which are on the beat while the tenor trombones play notes which are off the beat. Again, the bass trombone plays in octaves or unison with the contrabasses and bassoons. This dynamic melody is reserved for the first violins and the woodwinds, with the exception of the bassoons.
Fig. 43—Dvořák, *Symphonic Variations*, Op. 78, measures 893-899.
CHAPTER III

CONCLUSION

The selected works by the composers studied in this thesis might well stand as illustrative of the normal development of the use of the bass trombone near the close of the nineteenth century. Although notable progress was made by the cited composers in increasing the bass trombone's usefulness in the orchestra, each composer also continued to use the bass trombone as it had been used in previous years, such as in doubling bass parts, harmonic backgrounds, and for strong rhythmic punctuations.

Prior to this time, many composers (G. Gabrieli, Handel, Mozart, Beethoven and others) had written orchestral parts for the bass trombone, but it was not until the end of the nineteenth century that its melodic and harmonic use was extended in the symphonic orchestra. Borodin, in particular, realized the capabilities of the bass trombone and wrote low bass parts, designed only for the bass trombone, and blaring pedal notes. Also, Tchaikovsky's bass trombone parts tend to have a particular color that stands alone rather than blending with the orchestral parts.

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During this time, an important achievement for the bass trombone was its utilization of independent and dependent melodic material. Melodic lines as well as famous counter-melodies appear at various times. As stated by Carse, "The idea of giving trombones independent thematic matter, although by no means unknown, was as yet underdeveloped, nor was it always successful or confidently carried out when attempted, yet it was in this period that composers began to treat the trombone as an independent voice, and took the first steps to promote the instrument to a proper and worthy position in the organization of the orchestral body." ¹

Although the writing of Wagner (1813-1883) preceded the composers studied in this thesis, it is significant that Wagner's style of writing for the bass trombone and the other brass instruments influenced the composers studied in this thesis.

Practically unhampered by the want of notes in any part of his brass group, Wagner's parts for these instruments appear disposed either in complete and satisfying harmony, or the instruments speak as frankly unrestricted melodists. When in harmony the parts are judiciously grouped, and the whole is amply filled up with inner parts, care being taken that all the essential notes of a chord are well represented. The awkward gaps in the brass harmony of his predecessors finally disappeared when valve instruments began to be freely employed; this gave to the heavy harmony of the orchestra a substantial "inside" such as it had never known before. When using brass voices as melodists, in octaves or in unison, Wagner

at once brushed away the last remnant of any such restraint as still lingered even in the scores of Berlioz and Meyerbeer. The loud unison parts for three trumpets and three trombones, so well exemplified in the close of Tannhäuser overture, the various brass-unison themes in the Hollander and in Lorengrin, to mention only familiar examples, show how well Wagner appreciated the telling power of the heavier brass instruments when playing in unison, how fearlessly he made use of the device, and also his sound sense in not allowing the clearness of their utterance to be clogged by harmonic accompaniments played by other brass voices of equal power and penetration. It would have been not only possible, but also much more conventional, to have given the main theme at the close of Tannhäuser overture to trumpets and trombones in harmony instead of in unison; the difference of effect can easily be imagined.  

The effectiveness of the bass trombone in the works of Dvorak, Smetana, Borodin, and Tchaikovsky depends entirely upon the capabilities of the performer. In reinforcing passages of the violoncellos and contrabasses, the bass trombone should try to match the quality of these instruments. The treatment of nuances, shades of expression, changes of tempo within a tempo, and delicate gradations of dynamic and accents are factors which must be positively controlled by the performer. The individual performer is somewhat limited in ensemble playing, but solo lines require a certain amount of personalized expression to make the music "come alive." The importance is in the playing from the heart, even if all lines are not melodic or interesting, as opposed to just playing notes.

\textsuperscript{2}Ibid., p. 274.
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