

The
PERCEPTIVE
Trombonist

An Annotated Listening
Guide to Orchestral
Excerpts

SAMPLE

Volume 2

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The Perceptive Trombonist

Volume II

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Foreword

By

Ben van Dijk

Bass Trombonist of the Rotterdam Philharmonic

After reading **The Perceptive Trombonist, Volume 1**, introducing it to – and using it with my students in our orchestral section classes, I'm convinced this guide will help us to understand our role in the orchestra so much better. Besides all the wonderful tips by Dr. Vatt on sound, intonation, style, articulation, timing, blending and dynamics, the list of recordings is of great value and gives students a possibility to hear different interpretations of the same passages. One has to learn to be able to show flexibility in order to be able to play under different conductors or to play in different orchestras. There is not only one correct interpretation!

I am now in my 40th season of symphonic orchestra playing, and I must say, my success came largely from “learning by doing.” I would have loved to have this new resource of orchestral trombone “inside information” at the beginning of my career. Seth has really nailed it. What a gift **The Perceptive Trombonist** is for all of us!

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Introduction

Thank you for investing in this volume of **The Perceptive Trombonist: An Annotated Listening Guide to Orchestral Excerpts**.

One of the goals of this project is to bridge the unnecessary gap between those who prefer the ease and vast range of excerpt books, and those who entirely dismiss excerpt books in favor of full parts. In an attempt to form a more comprehensive context and listening-based model for study, this book goes beyond the top tenor and bass trombone excerpts most commonly requested on orchestral auditions by including supplemental excerpts from the same pieces.

Each volume is organized by composer and each excerpt is reproduced from original parts, along with tuba and trombone section accompaniments where appropriate. The material is presented in score format on individual lines for easy reading. It should be noted that there is no substitute for full-score study, and I encourage you to do so with the knowledge that this book will only augment that experience.

True, there are numerous orchestral excerpt books and materials already available, but what you are holding in your hands is unique. It is not merely a collection of trombone and tuba parts. Rather, it is a study, discussion, and perceptive listening activity book exclusively designed for use in tandem with the audio content found free of charge on www.TromboneExcerpts.org. The massive influx of recordings on the website can be intimidating, and you might be wondering, “Where do I start?” Think of this book as a series of lighthouse beacons, designed to help navigate your own pathway through uncharted waters.

Commentary and general discussion about practice strategies is largely based on observations heard in the available recordings. Rather than tell you how each excerpt is supposed to sound, a list of audio examples is provided as *prescriptive* listening to help you achieve your goals. Categories of interest include overall recommendations, tempo notes, blend and balance, unique musical ideas, and conductor interpretation.

Targeted listening leads to targeted practice, allowing you to work smarter, faster, and more efficiently on these basic musical elements. Perceptive listening exercises scattered throughout the book are designed to give your ears a different angle on this material. Use them for a fresh approach when the music gets tired, applying the same exercises and concepts to other excerpts. At the end of this volume is a list of essential recordings that time and again were listed as overall recommendations, and that serious trombonists should consider owning.

It is not my place, or desire, to pass any kind of judgment on this material. None of us is qualified to say that any particular audio example is devoid of value. In fact, many examples are suggested for particular musical elements despite their flaws in others, often regardless of logistical issues like microphone placement, live venues, and audio fidelity.

I recommend a positive and productive approach of defining what is “applicable” to your end goals as a trombonist. Therefore, the guided listening suggestions made in this book are meant to illustrate the realm of interpretive possibilities for each piece. As my teacher, Ralph Sauer, would tell me, “There is no good or bad, only better.” Above all else, find the prime audio examples that connect with you.

Immerse yourself in the sound of brass titans, living and long gone, plying their craft under the batons of legendary conductors. Play along with the recordings under the caveat that this fosters a reactionary mindset, rather than one creating in the moment. Imitation is often our best teacher, but understand that nothing committed to disc, stream, tape, clay cylinder, or hard drive is perfect, nor does it have to be. If it serves, reflects, and transforms the human spirit in your moment of need... Well, that’s music. It’s perfect for you.

Never before has orchestral trombone education benefited from such a multimedia approach. Our ultimate goal is to help drive trombone playing and pedagogy into the digital 21st century, and if you would like to directly support projects like this book and our website, please make a pledge on our Patreon page at: <http://www.patreon.com/TromboneExcerpts>

I sincerely hope this book, and the future volumes to come, prove invaluable to you and the trombone community.

Best Wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Seth T. Vatt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Seth" being the most prominent.

Seth T. Vatt
D.M.A. Arizona State University

Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Op. 68

Composed, 1855-76

by

Johannes Brahms (1833–1897)

Excerpt for Alto, Tenor, and Bass Trombone

IV. *Adagio – Più animato – Allegro non troppo,
ma con brio – Più allegro*

Premiered in Karlsruhe, Germany on 4 November 1876
Court Orchestra of Karlsruhe; Felix Otto Dessoff, conductor

North American premiere at Steinway Hall in New York on 15 December 1877
The Damrosch Orchestra (members of New York Philharmonic); Leopold Damrosch, conductor

First extant recordings:
London, 28 November 1923 on UK Columbia label
London Symphony Orchestra; Felix Weingartner, conductor

Berlin, 1923 on Deutsche Grammophon label 78 rpm
Berlin State Opera Orchestra; Oskar Fried, conductor

Symphony No. 1 - Mov. 4

Excerpt 1

J. Brahms
(1833-1897)

47 **C** **Più Andante**

Trombone 1
p dolce *pp* *cresc.*

Trombone 2
p dolce *pp* *cresc.*

Bass Trombone
p dolce *pp* *cresc.*

55

mf *dim.* *pp*

mf *dim.* *pp*

mf *dim.* *pp*

Brahms's First Symphony was a landmark composition on multiple levels. Germany's people had been searching for someone to take up the mantle that Beethoven left behind with his Ninth Symphony, and for quite some time. Brahms approached this responsibility with great respect and awe, though not without considerable doubt in his own abilities. As he once told his friend and fellow conductor, Hermann Levi, "I shall never write a symphony. You can't imagine what it is like to have that giant marching along behind one."

Many sons torment themselves trying to live up to a father's impossible standards. Imagine the pressure of being publicly anointed a 20-year old Germanic musical Messiah by none other than Robert Schumann, only for that same mentor's sanity to be compromised by an attempted suicide and death in an asylum soon after. Brahms knew it was imperative to get it right, both on a personal level, and for a proud German musical tradition. Despite the success of *A German Requiem*, a combination of procrastination, conflict between modernism and conservative tradition, and a desire to deliver material unique from Beethoven, led Brahms to spend nearly two decades, depending on which scholarly timelines you trust, writing what his friend, the conductor Hans von Bülow, referred to as "Beethoven's Tenth." For Brahms, having nearly two decades of work met with critical praise excised, at least in part, his doubts and opened a floodgate for his remaining three symphonies.

The trombone section shares Brahms's feelings of responsibility in many regards, as this excerpt stretches the comfort zones of even the most experienced players. After waiting for what seems like an eternity, all eyes and ears fall upon the trombone section in anticipation of one of the most beautiful chorales in all of symphonic literature. Alone and nakedly exposed, it is imperative, to get it right.

Perceptive Listening Exercise: Tonal Color

Listening for musical elements of tonal color via alto and tenor trombone

Brahms wrote his trombone parts specifically for alto, tenor, and bass trombones. Letters exist of him insisting on their use, yet modern performance practice of the first part on alto largely depends on the 1st trombonist's personal preference. Alto offers a more brilliant soft sound that blends with the trumpets. Which examples can you identify as being led by an alto trombone as opposed to a tenor?

Tonal Color

Philadelphia Orchestra, Eugene Ormandy – 1968 – Sony Classical
 Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Grzegorz Nowak – 2010 – Royal Philharmonic Orchestra
 USSR State Symphony Orchestra, Evgeny Svetlanov – 1982 – Scribendum
 Vienna Symphony Orchestra, Wolfgang Sawallisch – 1962 – Philips

Tempo Notes*Faster*

Berlin Philharmonic, Nikolaus Harnoncourt – 1996 – Teldec
 Helsingborg Symphony Orchestra, Andrew Manze – 2012 – CPO
 London Classical Players, Roger Norrington – 1977 – EMI Classics
 New York Philharmonic, Andrey Boreyko – 2012 Live – NY Philharmonic Radio Broadcast
 Philharmonia Orchestra, Otto Klemperer – 1956 – EMI Classics
 Radio France Orchestra, Otto Klemperer – 1955 Live – Sony Music
 Stuttgart Radio Symphony Orchestra, Roger Norrington – 2000 Live – Hänssler Classics
 Tonhalle Orchestra, Zurich, David Zinman – 2011 – Deutsche Grammophon

More Deliberate

Berlin Symphony Orchestra, Kurt Sanderling – 1990 – Capriccio
 Boston Symphony Orchestra, Bernard Haitink – 1994 – Philips
 Concertgebouw Orchestra, Herbert von Karajan – 1943 – Deutsche Grammophon
 New York Philharmonic, Leonard Bernstein – 1960 – Sony Classical
 Philharmonia Orchestra, Guido Cantelli – 1953 – Warner Classics
 Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Bernard Haitink – 1972 – Philips

Slower

Brussels Belgian Radio & TV Philharmonic Orchestra, Alexander Rahbari – 1989 – NAXOS
 Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Georg Solti – 1979 – Decca London
 Cleveland Orchestra, Lorin Maazel – 1976 – Decca Eloquence
 Munich Philharmonic, Christian Thielemann – 2005 – Deutsche Grammophon
 Munich Philharmonic, Sergiu Celibidache – 1987 Live – EMI Classics
 NBC Symphony Orchestra, Arturo Toscanini – 1951 – RCA Red Seal
 New York Philharmonic, Lorin Maazel – 2007 Live – NY Philharmonic Radio Broadcast
 Philharmonia Orchestra, Arturo Toscanini – 1952 Live – Testament
 Vienna Philharmonic, Herbert von Karajan – 1960 – Decca London

Perceptive Listening Exercise: Top 5

Combine musical elements to make your own ideal interpretation

Choose your five favorite recordings that address this excerpt's challenges in exemplary fashion. Pull individual musical elements from each to form an amalgamation that is playable in your mind's ear, or your "mental tape recorder."

Tragic Overture, Op. 81 Excerpt 2

264 **N** **Tempo primo (ma tranquillo)**
Allegro, ma non troppo

275 **O**

294 3. *legato*

Excerpt 2 is similar to Excerpt 1, except here, in a twist of role reversal Brahms gives the outlining chords to the trombones, while the strings, oboe, and flute take up the arpeggio motive. Measure 291 is perhaps the most touching and important moment of the entire overture. The opening melody comes back, a wellspring of sound on D-Major flowing from the horn and trombones, supported by the strings, slowly subsiding until the violins take over.

Overall Recommendations feature great intonation, which provides a stable platform for the string's arpeggios. They also bring out important inner voices while allowing their own later chorale to blossom. Perceptive listening reveals that the pianissimo beginning dynamic might be a bit deceptive, but examples that embrace the challenge of a truly soft dynamic are also listed.

Many recordings, such as those listed in the **Tempo Notes**, swell dramatically and decompress the time at mm. 291, which in turn can cause timing issues with the downbeat and upbeat suspensions crossing through the strings and brass. For the final eight bars, the bass trombone is sandwiched between the tuba and horn, and should stress each resolution, being prepared to linger on G in the penultimate measure's dominant seventh chord. Finally, examples that display a remarkably consistent tempo, be it fast or slow, are given as good starting points for practice.

Overall Recommendations

Berlin Philharmonic, Claudio Abbado – 1990 – Deutsche Grammophon
 Berlin Philharmonic, Nikolaus Harnoncourt – 1996 – Teldec
 Cleveland Orchestra, Christoph von Dohnányi – 1988 – Warner Classics
 Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, Jiří Bělohlávek – 1991 – Supraphon
 Helsingborg Symphony Orchestra, Andrew Manze – 2009 – CPO
 Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra, Riccardo Chailly – 2013 – Decca
 London Philharmonic Orchestra, Wolfgang Sawallisch – 1990 – Seraphim
 New York Philharmonic, Kurt Masur – 1995 – Warner Classics
 Philadelphia Orchestra, Riccardo Muti – 1988 – Philips
 Philharmonia Orchestra, Carlo Maria Giulini – 1962 – EMI Classics
 Philharmonia Orchestra, Otto Klemperer – 1956 – EMI
 Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, Grzegorz Nowak – 2010 – RPO Orchid Classics
 Vienna Philharmonic, Herbert von Karajan – 1964 – Decca London

Truly Soft

Budapest Festival Orchestra, Ivan Fischer – 2011 – Warner Classics
 Cleveland Orchestra, Lorin Maazel – 1997 – Decca Ensemble
 Halle Orchestra, Stanislaw Skrowaczewski – 1987 – Warner Classics
 Philharmonia Orchestra, Carlo Maria Giulini – 1964 – EMI
 Vienna Philharmonic, Carlo Maria Giulini – 1981 – Deutsche Grammophon

Tempo Notes

Decompressed Time and More Rubato (mm. 291)

Brussels Belgian Radio & TV Philharmonic Orchestra, Alexander Rahbari – 1989 – NAXOS
 Concertgebouw Orchestra Amsterdam, Willem Mengelberg – 1942 – NAXOS Historical
 London Philharmonic Orchestra, Marin Alsop – 2004 – NAXOS
 Vienna Philharmonic, Leonard Bernstein – 1981 Live – Deutsche Grammophon

Consistent Time Throughout

Houston Symphony Orchestra, Christoph Eschenbach – 1993 – Virgin Classics
 London Classical Players, Roger Norrington – 1992 – EMI Classics
 Philharmonia Cassovia, Johannes Wildner – 1995 – Amadis
 Standard Symphony Orchestra, Pierre Monteux – 1949 Live – Music and Arts
 Vienna Philharmonic, John Barbirolli – 1967 – EMI

Perceptive Listening Exercise: Ordered Listening

Each of the following examples is exemplary in many respects. As with the previous excerpt's exercise, listen in order, tracking similarities as well as progressive changes in musical elements.

Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Fritz Reiner – 1957 – RCA Red Seal
 SWR Symphony Orchestra Baden-Baden und Freiburg, Michael Gielen – 1995 – Hänssler Classics
 Staatskapelle Dresden, Christian Thielemann – 2012 Live – Deutsche Grammophon