PERCEPTIVE Trombonist

An Annotated Listening
Guide to Orchestral
Excerpts

Volume I

Seth T. Vatt Creator of www.TromboneExcerpts.org

The Perceptive Trombonist

Volume I

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Foreword

By
Ralph Sauer
Principal Trombonist (retired) of the Los Angeles Philharmonic

The Perceptive Trombonist is a fresh approach to the study of orchestral material. The book includes background information and insights into the music, plus an exhaustive list of recordings—all accessible on the website: www.TromboneExcerpts.org. The *Perceptive Listening Exercises* found throughout the book are especially interesting and thought provoking.

In combination with full score study and listening to complete recordings, this wonderful addition to trombone pedagogy by Dr. Seth T. Vatt will help the trombonist go beyond the notes. The understanding of style, concept of sound, and composer's intentions (along with the basics of playing the correct notes, in tune, and in time) will lead to success on the audition circuit and a musically satisfying career.

Russian Easter Festival Overture, Op. 36

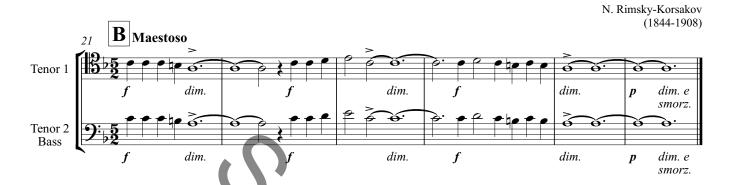
Composed, 1888 by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov (1844–1908)

Six Excerpts for Three Trombones and Tuba

Premiered in St. Petersburg on 15 December, 1888 Orchestra of the Russian Public Symphony Concerts; Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, conductor

First complete recording in Philadelphia, 26 January, 1929 on RCA Victor label 78 rpm Philadelphia Orchestra; Leopold Stokowski, conductor

Russian Easter Festival Overture, Op. 36 Excerpt 1



Rimsky-Korsakov's unique life experiences undoubtedly influenced how he selected the inspirational material underlying his compositions. Just as his service as a naval officer in the Orient influenced the work *Scheherazade*, so too did his 1883 appointment as Mily Balakirev's assistant at the Imperial Chapel spur his interest in Russian sacred music. The liturgical songs inspiring this overture come from the *Obikhod* hymnal, and are listed as follows in successive order of appearance: "Let God arise," "Those who hate him will flee before his face," and "Christ is risen."

The inspirational dichotomy between sacred reverence and pagan celebration in this work is best summed up in the composer's own autobiography, *My Musical Life:*

"This legendary and heathen side of the holiday, this transition from the gloomy and mysterious evening of Passion Saturday to the unbridled pagan-religious merry making of Easter Sunday, is what I was eager to reproduce in my overture."

Stylistic interpretations in recordings of Excerpt 1 range from legato to marcato to accented, while some pre-1970s conductors and performers even prefer sharply punctuated accents. **Overall recommendations** on the following page feature stylistic consistency by presenting a unison sound within the trombone section. In addition, there is significantly less room for expression in this simple melody than in later, more prominent solo passages.

While some selections may sound dynamically conservative, the sacrifice in volume allows trombonists to maintain some idea of musical shape and phrasing. As you listen, contrast this idea with recordings that sacrifice musical shape in favor of playing loud, even to the point of overblowing and being out of tune. There is a time and place for trombones to drive an orchestra with "Russian angst" in their sound, but this is not it.

Overall Recommendations

Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Charles Dutoit – 2010 – CSO Live
Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra, Neeme Järvi – 1987 – Deutsche Grammophon
Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, Zubin Mehta – 1987 – CBS Masterworks
London Philharmonic Orchestra, José Serebrier – 1999 – Reference Recordings
London Symphony Orchestra, Antal Dorati – 1959 – Mercury Living Presence
Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra, Kees Bakels – 2004 – BIS
New York Philharmonic, Yuri Temirkanov – 1991 – RCA Victor Red Seal
Philadelphia Orchestra, Eugene Ormandy – 1959 – Sony Classical Essential Classics
Philharmonia Orchestra, William Boughton – 1988 – Nimbus
St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, Leonard Slatkin – 1981 – Telarc

Other Stylistic Interpretations

Accented Style

Standard Symphony Orchestra, Pierre Monteux – 1952 – Music & Arts Philadelphia Orchestra, Leopold Stokowski – 1929 – RCA Victor

Marcato Style

Berlin Philharmonic, Sergiu Celibidache – 1945 – Audite Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra, David Zinman – 1980 – Philips

Legato

New York Philharmonic, Yuri Temirkanov – 1991 – RCA Victor Red Seal Philadelphia Orchestra, Eugene Ormandy – 1959 – Sony Classical Essential Classics

Tempo Notes

Slower

Halle Orchestra, Vernon Handley – 1988 – EMI Classics New York Philharmonic, Yuri Temirkanov – 1991 – RCA Victor Red Seal Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, Ernest Ansermet – 1960 – Decca Vienna Symphonic Orchestra, Heinrich Hollreiser – 1960 – Tuxedo

Faster

Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Leopold Stokowski – 1969 – RCA Red Seal NBC Symphony Orchestra, Leopold Stokowski – 1942 – RCA Victor Masterworks

Perceptive Listening Exercise

List three to five "character" words that describe emotional undercurrents shared by your preferred recordings. How can you sonically embody these emotions into your own ideal performance?

Tip: Character words like "sorrowful" or "hopeful" trigger a much stronger emotional response than mere descriptive words like "loud" or "big."