

Paris Conservatoire Prima Vista Collection for Trombone and Piano

Chris Houlding - Trombone
Eugenia Smirnova - Piano

The Paris Conservatoire has a long tradition of commissioning competition solos from leading musicians of the time but what is perhaps less widely known is that composers were also invited to write a much shorter sight reading exercise with piano accompaniment. Compiled by William Waterhouse, the distinguished British bassoonist and musicologist, this brief series of characterful novelties provides an engaging perspective of the late Romantic style.

1. Moderato ben ritmico (1879)

Théodore Dubois (1837-1924)

Not to be confused with Pierre Max Dubois, a student of Milhaud, our heroic appetiser is by the much earlier Théodore Dubois dating from 1879. Like his solo work for trombone, *Concertpiece in A Flat Major* which probably dates from the same year, it proclaims the contrast between rhythmic 'marcato' and expressive 'cantabile', a fundamental technical demand to be acquired by every trombonist.

2. Maestoso (1888)

Adrien Barthe (1828-1898)

The first of two contributions by Adrien Barthe dates from 1888, the year before his celebrated *Solo de Concours*. It challenges the trombonist to display an immaculate legato style while paying particular attention to the use of tone colour and late Romantic rubato to bring the persuasive melodic line to life.

3. Andantino cantabile (1892)

Adrien Barthe (1828-1898)

The jubilant key of E flat characterises Barthe's second miniature composed in 1892, confirming the composer's accomplished skill in creating flowing melodies combining even, dotted and triplet eighth notes which presents a common challenge for performers.

4. Andante (1902)

Alexandre Guilmant (1837-1911)

The composer Alexandre Guilmant is familiar to most trombonists through his popular and accessible solo work, *Morceau Symphonique* written in 1902, the same year as this short prima vista Andante. Reminiscent of a classical minuet these twenty seven bars demonstrate consummate taste and elegance.

5. Andantino (1906)

Issac Albeniz (1860-1909)

Probably the only work written specifically for trombone by Spanish composer Issac Albeniz, this brief Andantino provides a delicious glimpse of the composer's homeland. Written while living in France and only three years before his death, it characterises his mature style. Pitched relatively low in the register, this poses an additional challenge for the trombonist to achieve a smooth and fluid legato. Listen to his epic masterpiece for piano entitled *Iberia* which dates from the same period to experience his unique style.

6. Andante molto sostenuto quasi adagio (1908) Guy Ropartz (1864-1955)

Written in 1908 both the well known *Piece in E Flat minor* and this accompanying sight reading test show the influence of the composer's teacher César Franck while capturing the flavour of his native Brittany. Like the iconic *Piece in E flat*, the lengthy melodic lines and precise phrase marks represent a musical and technical challenge for the more advanced trombone student.

7. Moderato (1888)

Philippe Gaubert (1879-1941)

First published by Alphonse Leduc 1912, the ‘other’ *Morceau Symphonique* by flautist, composer and conductor Philippe Gaubert epitomises the late flowering of a passionate, operatic style. Dating from the same year, this succinct Prima Vista fancy demonstrates a similar warmth with plenty of opportunity for the trombonist to use alternate positions to achieve an effortless legato.

8. Andantino (1919)

Henri Büsser (1872-1973)

Henri Büsser has two attractive works for solo trombone in his catalogue, yet another *Piece in E flat minor Op. 33* and *Cantabile and Scherzando Op. 51*. The last work in this collection of thought provoking Prima Vista miniatures, dating from 1919, is also the shortest, comprising only 18 bars of charming, most engaging music.

Recorded : Folkwang University of Arts Tonstudio, Essen, Germany

Recording Engineer : Georg Niehusmann

Date : 14th October 2019