

Program notes
Harrison Howell, Bass Trombone

Bass Lines for Bass Trombone, David Fetter

David Fetter, born in Washington DC in 1938, taught trombone at the Peabody Conservatory in Baltimore from 1970 to 2016. His trombone performing career includes two years as Assistant Trombone in the Cleveland Orchestra and sixteen years in the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra. Also a composer, arranger, and publisher, Fetter composed *Bass Lines for Bass Trombone*, which features four intentionally demanding etudes.

“Spain,” the second and most popular movement, was given its world premiere by Blair Bollinger, Bass Trombone of the Philadelphia Orchestra, at Temple University in 1996. “Spain” is an unaccompanied solo that demands control of a wide range of the bass trombone. The solo includes octave leaps and intensive rhythms that are influenced by Spanish musical styles and sounds. These phrases work together to paint imagery of the vivid cultural landscape of Spain.

Concertino for Bass Trombone

Ernst Sachse Sachse was born in Germany in 1810. He was a renowned Romantic-era trombonist and trumpeter who performed in orchestras conducted by Franz Liszt and Johann Hummel. He had a notable contribution to the trombone and bass trombone solo repertoire with his compositions that he frequently performed.

Concertino, arranged for piano by Charles Vernon, is one of the first pieces to be considered standard repertoire for the brass trombone. It gained popularity early with many performances around the world, especially by younger bass trombone players. *Concertino* is in three parts. Allegro Maestoso, a brisk and playful introduction, Andante, a slow but majestic melody that becomes harsh toward its conclusion, and a playful theme with two variations.

Songs, William Grant Still

Often referred to as the “Dean of Afro-American Composers,” William Grant Still was a prolific Black American composer who broke barriers in many ways throughout his career. Born in Woodville, MS in 1895, Still was the first Black American to conduct an orchestra in the deep South, the New Orleans Symphony, which is now known as the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra.

“Bayou Home” was composed in 1944 for solo voice and piano. Bayou Home is a folk song depicting a man leaving his home and love interest on the bayou in search of his reason for being alive. This piece was composed in two sections, with the introduction of the song

being through-composed and then a strophic section. “If You Should Go” is based on a poem by Countee Cullen, and is from a larger set of songs he composed called *Songs of Separation*. The text for “Song for the Lonely” was written by Still’s wife, Verna Arvey.

Allegro Maestoso, Jan Koetsier

Jan Koetsier was a Dutch composer born in 1911. He wrote works for brass soloists and chamber groups that show off the capabilities of brass instruments while still being pleasant for listeners.

Allegro Maestoso is a brief but demanding and energetic work, perfectly capturing Koetsier’s compositional style. As one of Koetsier’s better-known compositions, it has become a part of the bass trombone standard repertoire. The piece frequently changes between triple and duple meter, marking the transition between the two key character styles. The first character is excited, bouncy, and bombastic while the second is timid, soft, and elegant.

Devil’s Waltz, Steven Verhelst

Steven Verhelst, born in Belgium in 1981, is a Bass Trombonist and composer who studied with Ban Van Dijk at the Rotterdam Conservatory. He has performed and composed for many professional ensembles in Belgium and the Netherlands, though his compositions are mostly for trombone and low brass instruments.

Devil’s Waltz was composed as a bass trombone duet for Martin Schippers and Tomer Maschkowski and first performed and recorded in 2014. Because of the popularity of *Devil’s Waltz*, Verhelst composed a sequel to the piece called *Angel’s Tango*, and he intends to add a third piece to the series.

Verhelst composed the piece to showcase the bass trombone’s technical and musical skills. The piece’s character is “devilish”, which provides a great opportunity for technical challenge and personality. Verhelst uses sounds such as parallel 4ths and 5ths, hocket, and wide leaps to create an ominously powerful yet playful feel.