

MUSIC APPRECIATION 101 PART II

BRASS H-T-T-T PLUS PREVIEW

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Last month's article focused upon the woodwinds of a symphony orchestra. Brass will be the highlight of this article. The Southern Arizona Symphony Orchestra includes a full brass section as do all symphony orchestras, and the normal section includes H-T-T-T; 4 french_Horns, 3_Trumpets, 3_Trombones and 1_Tuba. Earlier compositions call for 2 horns and 2 trumpets where more modern works can call for 8-10 horns, 4-6 trumpets, 4 trombones and 2 tubas.

The prime member of an orchestral brass section is the french horn where the name differentiates it from the english horn which is an alto oboe in the woodwinds. Horns have circular conical tubing with a wide flaring bell at the end and a small funnel-looking mouthpiece. Deriving from the hunting horn, the orchestra horn has 4 rotary valves and can play the widest range of pitches of any orchestra instrument. Stopping is a technique where the player can insert the hand in the bell to create a special sound and mutes may also be used. Horn sounds can be brilliant and powerful but also quite mellow and delicate which allows it to be included in woodwind scoring. Concertos for the natural horn by Haydn and Mozart and the modern(1835) valved horn by R. Strauss and Hindemith are occasionally performed.

Next are trumpets which are cylindrical most of the tubing length flaring into a bell at the end with a cup shaped mouthpiece as are trombones and tuba. The cornet is the same length but has conical tubing giving a mellow sound and used in bands not orchestras. The trumpet of today produces a brilliant tone and has 3 piston valves although German trumpets have rotary valves. Some examples of great trumpet music can be heard in the music of Mahler, Wagner, R. Strauss, Shostakovich, and Respighi.

Lower pitched are the trombones of which there are 3 types: tenor, bass, and valve trombones. The tubing is a cylinder, giving it a dramatic effect, flaring into a bell. They have a slide that changes the length of the tubing allowing pitch changes. Valve trombones are rarely used as they have poor tone quality. The sacbut was the medieval ancestor of the trombone. The instrument is used to great effect in the music of Wagner, Berlioz, Hindemith, and Rossini.

Lastly are the bass tubas which have conical tubing flaring into a bell with a cupped mouthpiece. This is played in an upright position in the lap of the performer and has 4 or 5 valves. Tubas became much used in 19th and 20th centuries with Prokofiev treating it as a melody instrument.

For the opening SaddleBrooke concert on Saturday October 8, SASO will perform Sones de Mariachi of Galindo, Mendelssohn Violin Concerto in Em, March of the Kitchen Utensils by Vaughn-Williams, The Moldau of Smatana, and Liszt's Les Preludes. For more information about concerts, tickets and SASO go to www.sasomusic.org