THE HOMOGENIZATION OF TROMBONE SOUND PREFERENCES

The effects of a more global society on national styles.
DEVELOPMENT OF TROMBONE

- Manufacturing developments during the industrial revolution had the greatest impact on the overall design of the trombone.
- Advancements in valve technology altered the trombone during the twentieth century.
The rotary valve allowed the trombone to easily change keys.
The Thayer Axel-Flow Valve is the most recent significant development. It allows for a smoother key change.
**Trombone Bore Sizes**

- Before 1900, the size of trombone bores varied by country
- Jazz influence helped standardize the sizes
- **Small**
  - 0.450” to 0.500”
- **Medium**
  - 0.500” to 0.540”
- **Large**
  - 0.540” and larger
TROMBONE LITERATURE

- Romantic era is responsible for more prominent feature of trombones in orchestral settings.
- Trombonists such as Arthur Pryor was one of the greatest influences on solo trombone.
- Jazz also influenced trombone solo literature.
- Contest pieces for the Paris Conservatory largely responsible for the classical repertoire.
- Brass ensembles grew in popularity after World War I and more small ensemble music was written.
The Soviet Union and the Berlin Wall

- Trombone playing styles were highly nationalized
  - Not much communication between the Eastern European countries and the rest of the world
- The regimes promoted a national style
- Western influences were looked upon with disdain
- Performance opportunities, for both the viewer and the performer, were infrequent
- Professional grade trombones were hard to come by
After the collapse of Eastern European communism, trombonists attempted to share their musical abilities with the Western World
  - The American and European ideals of professional trombone playing were quite different

Music and musicians were shared much more freely
  - Borders more permeable
  - Recordings more easily attainable
A Survey of Playing Styles Today

- Trombonists from several countries were asked to participate in a survey.
- The selection was played in several different styles:
  - Legato, separated, and dynamic differences.
THE SURVEY: AN OVERVIEW

- Participants:
  - US – 12
  - France – 1
  - Denmark – 1
  - Germany – 1
  - Norway – 2
  - No comment - 2

- Demographics:
  - Educator – 5
  - Student – 8
  - Hobby – 8
  - Professional – 5
  - No Comment – 2

- Preferred tone quality:
  - Almost all answered “resonant” and “full”
  - Americans tended to answer “clear”
  - Europeans tended to answer “brilliant”
Interpretation 1: Legato and even dynamics
  - Almost all answered “more dynamics”

Interpretation 2: slower and wider vibrato
  - European participants wanted “more dynamics”
  - American participants found the vibrato to be too much

Interpretation 3: more staccato
  - All agreed that the selection needed to be more legato, but some believe the selection could be interpreted that way

Interpretation 4: the most separated
  - No one believed the selection could be interpreted that way.
  - All agreed it needed to be more legato
When asked for the names of influential trombonists, almost all answered either Christian Lindberg or Joe Alessi.

- Each participant mentioned trombonists from their region as well.

- The method for attaining vibrato was evenly distributed between Jaw and Air.

- In terms of brands of trombones, many preferred Bach.
  - The European participants, statistically, preferred Courtyos more.

- Mouthpiece preference was different for every participant.
CDs and other recordings are more widely available
- Only a select number of trombonists are recorded on major labels
  - Portrays very specific styles of playing
- Sharing of media influences others
- Today, it is easy to listen to trombonists from all over the world using the internet
INTERNATIONAL LISTENING

- Branimir Slokar’s, a Russian trombonist, embodies the homogenized Western/Soviet style.
- Antoly Skobolev is also a Russian trombonist who plays with the typical Russian style.
  - His trills and legatos are much more separated than the American style.
- Armin Rosin is a German trombonist whose style is characterized with a legato and having quick vibrato.
- Michel Becquet is a French trombonist who plays with fluidity and a voice-like style.
Sharing of Musicians

- Borders became permeable in the early 1990s
  - More trombonists travelled
  - Many who had not heard trombonists from other countries before gained access
- Today, festivals bring together the many national styles of trombone playing
  - This influences other national styles
A HOMOGENIZED SOUND

- Before the fall of the Berlin Wall and Soviet Union, sounds were very nationalized
- Open borders allow for influences to cross great distances
- Technology spreads ideal styles and interpretations
- These influences have slowly assisted in homogenizing the trombone sound
  - Today, interpretations are less distinct than in decades prior
WHAT THIS MEANS FOR THE FUTURE

- The trombone playing style will continue to grow more homogenized.
- Common expectations will lead to higher levels of virtuosity.
  - With less and less possible interpretations, perfection is more important.
- Access to resources will allow more trombonists to receive instruction at a higher level.
  - Internet and live master classes are more accessible because of ability for people, and information to travel.