

Road  
Not  
Taken

Concerto for Bass Trombone  
and Trombone Ensemble

James M. Stephenson

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# Road Not Taken

Concerto for Bass Trombone and Trombone Ensemble

by James M. Stephenson

Three Movements:

- I. Two Roads
- II. Diverged
- III. All the Difference

Duration: Approx. 16 minutes.

Scored for Solo Bass Trombone and 11-player Trombone Ensemble:

- 1 Alto/Tenor Trombone
- 7 Tenor Trombones
- 3 Bass Trombones

Program Notes:

The title for 'Road Not Taken' was arrived upon after completion of the score, and in a rather 'wandering' manner.

Much of the piece is based on off-beats, set in many different forms; therefore my working title was always "Off the beaten path". This title didn't really hold much water for me, and after a bit of stretching and re-working, I arrived at the current title, based obviously on Robert Frost's famous poem. The more I thought about it, the more connections I began to realize between my musical life, this piece, and the title.

First of all, in my own life, I have chosen the less traveled path. Having been comfortably situated in two steady performing jobs for almost 20 years, my wife and I decided to quit, move to a completely different location, and follow my new-found passion for composing. One might argue also that composing a bass trombone concerto, in and of itself, is a 'road less taken'. It is not the most common choice for a concerto. Lastly, it was my goal to allow for the solo bass trombone to be featured in a manner inconsistent with the often misguided preconceptions: at the request of the dedicatee and co-commissioner, Matthew Guilford, the instrument is presented lyrically, and the upper range is displayed equally, if not more than, the lower.

More technically speaking, the movements themselves are pretty standard in form, with themes, ideas and harmonies recurring and developed throughout the piece to form a consistent whole. An interesting device only used in the slow movement is the introduction of a separate trio of players, who interrupt occasionally with their off-kilter fragments, almost a skipping old record-player. The last movement is quite virtuosic, calling for much endurance, agility and extended range from the soloist.

It is with much gratitude that I dedicate this score to the co-commissioners: the Washington Trombone Ensemble (Sam Woodhead) and Matthew Guilford, the latter of whom I am delighted to reconnect with after our paths again converge more than 20 years after our shared college years at the New England Conservatory.

Jim Stephenson, February 1, 2010

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# ROAD NOT TAKEN

## Concerto for Bass Trombone

and Trombone Ensemble

James M. Stephenson

Score

### I. Two Roads

Andante - chorale ♩ = 66

1 - Alto  
2 - Tenor

3 - Tenor  
4 - Tenor

5 - Tenor  
7 - Bass 1

6 - Tenor  
8 - Bass 2

Solo Bass Trbn.  
(Guilford)

*p* *pp* *p* *pp* *p*

*accel.* *rit.*

*p* *mp* *p*

Detailed description: This block contains the first five measures of the score. It features five staves for the ensemble (Alto, Tenors 2-4, Tenors/Basses 5-7, Tenors/Basses 6-8) and a solo bass trombone staff. The music is in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat. The ensemble parts are primarily sustained chords and long notes, with dynamics ranging from *p* to *pp*. The solo bass trombone part begins in measure 4 with a triplet of eighth notes, marked *accel.* and *rit.*, with dynamics *p*, *mp*, and *p*.

1 - A  
2 - T

3 - T  
4 - T

5 - T  
7 - B1

6 - T  
8 - B2

Solo  
B. Tbn.

*p* *pp* *p* *pp* *p*

*sim.*

*p* *mp* *p*

Detailed description: This block contains measures 6 through 9. The ensemble parts continue with sustained textures. In measure 6, the solo bass trombone part features a triplet of eighth notes marked *sim.* (sustained) and *p*. In measure 7, there is a triplet of eighth notes marked *mp*. The solo part concludes in measure 9 with a half note marked *p*.

Concerto for Bass Trombone - 1st movement

11

1 - A  
2 - T

3 - T  
4 - T

5 - T  
7 - B1

6 - T  
8 - B2

Solo  
B. Tbn.

*pp* *p* *pp* *pp* *p*

*pp* *p* *pp* *pp* *p*

*pp* *p* *pp* *pp* *p*

*pp* *p* *pp* *pp* *p*

*pp* *p* *pp* *pp* *p*

*pp* < *p* *pp* *p*

quick fall-off *p*

quick fall-off *p*

3

3

16

1 - A  
2 - T

3 - T  
4 - T

5 - T  
7 - B1

6 - T  
8 - B2

Solo  
B. Tbn.

Ⓐ Freely

*ppp* *ppp* *ppp* *ppp* *ppp*

*ppp* *ppp* *ppp* *ppp* *ppp*

*ppp* *ppp* *ppp* *ppp* *ppp*

*ppp* *ppp* *ppp* *ppp* *ppp*

*ppp* *ppp* *ppp* *ppp* *ppp*

*ppp* *ppp* *ppp* *ppp* *ppp*

lazy gliss.

*p* *p* *mp* *p*

3

3

3

Concerto for Bass Trombone - 1st movement

22 *quick fall-off* *poco a poco accel.*

1 - A  
2 - T

3 - T  
4 - T

5 - T  
7 - B1

6 - T  
8 - B2

Solo  
B. Tbn.

*p* *p* *p* *p* *mf* *p* *mf*

25

1 - A  
2 - T

3 - T  
4 - T

5 - T  
7 - B1

6 - T  
8 - B2

Solo  
B. Tbn.

*mp* *mf* *f* *mf* *mf* *f* *mf* *f*

Concerto for Bass Trombone - 1st movement

Ⓑ Spirito (♩ = c. 120)

Musical score for section B, *Spirito*, measures 1-8. The score is in 4/4 time with a tempo of approximately 120 beats per minute. It features six staves for the Trombone section: 1 - A, 2 - T; 3 - T, 4 - T; 5 - T, 7 - B1; 6 - T, 8 - B2; and Solo B. Tbn. The music is characterized by a driving, rhythmic pattern with frequent accents and dynamic markings of *f* (forte). A *loco* marking is present in the Solo B. Tbn. part. A dynamic marking of *ff* (fortissimo) is shown below the Solo B. Tbn. staff with an *8vb* (8va below) indication.

Ⓒ Tempo Primo ♩ = 66

Musical score for section C, *Tempo Primo*, measures 31-34. The score is in 2/4 time with a tempo of 66 beats per minute. It features the same six staves for the Trombone section as in section B. The music is more melodic and features dynamic markings of *f* (forte), *pp* (pianissimo), and *mp* (mezzo-piano). A *fz* (forzando) marking is shown below the Solo B. Tbn. staff, followed by a dynamic change to *mp*. A triplet of eighth notes is marked with a '3' in the Solo B. Tbn. part.

Concerto for Bass Trombone - 1st movement

37

1 - A  
2 - T

3 - T  
4 - T

5 - T  
7 - B1

6 - T  
8 - B2

Solo  
B. Tbn.

*pp* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp*

*pp* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp*

*pp* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp*

*pp* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp* *pp*

*p* *pp*

44

1 - A  
2 - T

3 - T  
4 - T

5 - T  
7 - B1

6 - T  
8 - B2

Solo  
B. Tbn.

*ff* *ff* *ff* *ff* *ff* *ff*

*p* *mp* *ff*

Concerto for Bass Trombone - 1st movement

ⓓ Allegro (M.M. ♩ = c. 144)

Musical score for measures 1-4. The score is in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The instruments are: 1 - A (Alto Saxophone), 2 - T (Tenor Saxophone), 3 - T (Tenor Trombone), 4 - T (Tenor Trombone), 5 - T (Tenor Trombone), 7 - B1 (Baritone Trombone), 6 - T (Tenor Trombone), 8 - B2 (Baritone Trombone), and Solo B. Tbn. (Solo Bass Trombone). The dynamics are marked *mf* (mezzo-forte) for measures 1-3 and *f* (forte) for measure 4. A large slur covers the first four measures across all parts.

Musical score for measures 53-56. The score is in 4/4 time with a key signature of one flat (Bb). The instruments are: 1 - A (Alto Saxophone), 2 - T (Tenor Saxophone), 3 - T (Tenor Trombone), 4 - T (Tenor Trombone), 5 - T (Tenor Trombone), 7 - B1 (Baritone Trombone), 6 - T (Tenor Trombone), 8 - B2 (Baritone Trombone), and Solo B. Tbn. (Solo Bass Trombone). The dynamics are marked *mp* (mezzo-piano) for measure 53, *ff* (fortissimo) for measures 54-55, and *f* (forte) for measure 56. A large slur covers measures 53-56 across all parts.



Concerto for Bass Trombone - 1st movement

57

1 - A  
2 - T

3 - T  
4 - T

5 - T  
7 - B1

6 - T  
8 - B2

Solo  
B. Tbn.

*ff* *mf* *p* *p*

*p* *mf*

62

1 - A  
2 - T

3 - T  
4 - T

5 - T  
7 - B1

6 - T  
8 - B2

Solo  
B. Tbn.

*pp* *p* *pp* *p* *pp* *p*

*f* *mp* *mf* *mp*

lazy gliss.

Concerto for Bass Trombone - 1st movement

66

1 - A  
2 - T

3 - T  
4 - T

5 - T  
7 - B1

6 - T  
8 - B2

Solo  
B. Tbn.

*mf* *p* *p*

(F)

1 - A  
2 - T

3 - T  
4 - T

5 - T  
7 - B1

6 - T  
8 - B2

Solo  
B. Tbn.

*mp* *f* *p* *mf* *p*



Concerto for Bass Trombone - 1st movement

87

1 - A  
2 - T

3 - T  
4 - T

5 - T  
7 - B1

6 - T  
8 - B2

Solo  
B. Tbn.

Musical score for measures 87-91. The score is for a concert band with parts for 1st and 2nd Alto Trombones, 3rd and 4th Trombones, 5th Trombone and 7th Bass Trombone, 6th Trombone and 8th Bass Trombone, and a Solo Bass Trombone. The key signature is B-flat major. Measure 87 starts with a 13-measure rest for the 1st and 2nd Alto Trombones. The 3rd and 4th Trombones play a rhythmic pattern of quarter notes. The 5th Trombone and 7th Bass Trombone play a rhythmic pattern of quarter notes. The 6th Trombone and 8th Bass Trombone play a rhythmic pattern of quarter notes. The Solo Bass Trombone is silent. Dynamics include *p*, *f*, and *fp*. A crescendo and decrescendo hairpin is shown over measures 88-90. A fermata is present at the end of measure 91.

92

1 - A  
2 - T

3 - T  
4 - T

5 - T  
7 - B1

6 - T  
8 - B2

Solo  
B. Tbn.

Musical score for measures 92-95. The score continues with the same instrumentation. Measure 92 starts with a 13-measure rest for the 1st and 2nd Alto Trombones. The 3rd and 4th Trombones play a rhythmic pattern of quarter notes. The 5th Trombone and 7th Bass Trombone play a rhythmic pattern of quarter notes. The 6th Trombone and 8th Bass Trombone play a rhythmic pattern of quarter notes. The Solo Bass Trombone is silent. Dynamics include *pp*, *p*, and *f*. A fermata is present at the end of measure 92. A circled 'H' is above measure 93. A 13-measure rest is shown for the 1st and 2nd Alto Trombones in measure 94. The Solo Bass Trombone has a final note in measure 95.