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The History and Evolution of Performance Practice on and Manufacture of the Trombone
Through the 17th Century:
A Bibliography

The history of the trombone is a topic that lay neglected until relatively recent times in terms of musicology. At first glance this neglect does not make sense, given that the trombone is one of the oldest instruments in its modern form; however, charting the use of the instrument during the first several centuries becomes a difficult task: on the one hand, the trombone was considered by major early sacred composers to be too sacred to be used often, while on the other hand, the secular music in which it was employed was either not written down or instrumentation was not specified. The last forty years have seen much progress in the research and work of those interested in the trombone's past. Because of this, the online periodical indexes proved to be the most useful, while earlier print indexes did not proffer as much information. In terms of reference tools, few dictionaries or encyclopedias are dedicated to brass instruments, and virtually none deal specifically with the trombone. Additionally, bibliographies and indexes have only recently begun to appear concerning the instrument.

The purpose of this type of research is firstly to gain knowledge of and recreate the instruments of the past. Once the instruments have been constructed, the goal is to recreate the performances of the past in their proper original style. The idea of recreating instruments and performance in this manner falls firmly into the positivist view of research and performance. The primary tool for this research is historical research

methodologies. This bibliography includes a wide range of topics and therefore requires several different approaches in the process of research. Specific subtopics that are heavily used to determine the history of the instrument include iconography, text criticism, and organology. In order to determine appropriate performance practice, biography, text criticism of treatises, source studies, and even some iconography can be used. The research into manufacture is more challenging, as few surviving instruments exist from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

Due to the increase in historical research in the last forty or fifty years, the research on the origin and development of the trombone in relation to its use by early musicians proved to be the most abundant. Much discussion in this area has been prompted by the confused relation of the trombone with the slide trumpet. Slightly less specific but prevalent information on performance practice of the time also exists. Due to the scarcity of older instruments, information regarding the manufacture of the instrument is the most difficult to find. General metalworking techniques can be found, but compared to research on piano or violin manufacture, the research concerning trombone manufacture is limited.

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