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## **2. The history of the alto trombone**

The history of the alto trombone begins with evidence from early art works.

### **2.1. Early alto trombone representations and evidence in written sources**

Unfortunately, there are only a few written proofs about the origin of the first alto trombones. However, one can see trombones in pictures from Early Renaissance that could indeed be alto trombones, e.g. in the painting of Gentile Bellini, the brother of Giovanni Bellini from 1496:

Picture left: In Bellini's painting you can see a group of musicians on the right side (expanded below). Correlating the dimensions of the instrument with the size of the people, it could be an alto trombone.



**Detail of *Procession on Saint Markus place in Venice*  
Galleria dell'Accademia, Venice, Italy**

#### 2.4. The alto trombone from classical music to romantic - use in the orchestra

In musicology, Beethoven is the first to use the complete set of trombones, which he does in his 5th symphony. However, Joseph Krottendorfer, a lesser-known Austrian composer, already used three trombones in his compositions, 40 years before Beethoven's 5th symphony. Since Beethoven though, alto trombone, tenor trombone and bass trombone have become a permanent group of instruments of a symphony orchestra.

The alto trombone voice of the 5th symphony is very demanding and is sometimes even made easier for trombonists due to the fact that the 2nd trumpet plays certain supporting notes. With intensive occupation of the alto trombone (and if one does not look at it as a necessary evil) the alto trombone part in the Beethoven's 5th symphony is a wonderful musical challenge (cf. notation example page 234).

It is advisable to try this part with an alto trombone in F or D, too.

I like to play it on my alto trombone in D, a Thein-Universal with a Hagma valve. The slide combinations are easier. I can compensate easily the high F on the second position. example. As a result, in the unison part, bars 485-492, the sounds are more substantial. The harmony of the high D is easy to pitch and does not sound too far away from the third trombone in timbre.

Whereas the alto trombone was often used as solo instrument in the 18th century (see bibliography, page 195), it was almost solely used as an orchestra instrument in the 19th century. The tenor trombone was simply used to fill out the bigger tonal picture and tonal volume than the alto trombones.

Why was it that the alto trombone was played almost only in the 18th century? On the one hand there was no tradition in America, French and German music. On the other hand, it was perhaps the only instrument used by Handel, Corelli, Vivaldi, Bach or Scarlatti. In the 18th century, the alto trombone was mostly used in the opera house, where it was only being available on special order.

In many countries like Russia and Italy, the alto trombone was used in the 18th century. Fortunately, magnificent musicians like Carsten Swann and Christian Swann – mostly because of the special baroque or classical music.

After Beethoven  
Schubert used  
increase, but  
(See ch



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3.3. Übungen zum Intonieren / Etüdes for Intonation

Vokalise G.Nava op.15

bearbeitet: Peter Körner

Altposaune

2. Posaune

6

11

16

21

27

32

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### Markus Leuchter

Es/B-Altposaune / Alto trombone in Eb /Bb  
Schallbecher / bell:

Messing- und Goldmessing / Yellow and  
Gold Brass

Zug/slide:

Messing-, Goldmessing und Neusilber /  
Yellow or Gold Brass and Nickelsilver

Das professionelle Instrument wurde  
entwickelt in Anlehnung an Modelle der  
verstorbenen Meisterbauer Franz Kuhn und  
Heribert Glassl, in Zusammenarbeit mit  
Prof. Harry Ries, der Instrumente von  
beiden Meistern sowohl orchestral wie auch  
soloistisch einsetzt.

The professional instrument was developed  
in accordance to models of masters Franz  
Kuhn and Heribert Glassl, in cooperation  
with Prof. Harry Ries

He uses both instruments, orchestral and as  
soloist.



### Rath

R11 Altposaune/Alto Trombone

Es gibt zwei Grundmodelle/two basic models

Bohrungen/bore:

R11Z (0.481"/0.491"), R11K (0.481"/0.500"),

Schallbecher/bell: R11 6 3/4" oder/or 7"

Kranz auf Wunsch/garland on request

Zwei Leadpipe Sets/Two Leadpipe Sets: "Z" , "K" , Messing,  
Nickel, Silber und Bronze/Yellow Brass, nickelsilver or  
bronze:

Stimmzug im Zug/tuningslide in the slidepart

<http://www.rathtrombones.com/instruments/alto.ht>



**Ralph Sauer**  
**Former Principal trombone Los Angeles Philharmonic**



1. What alto trombone model do you use at the moment?

*Shires with B-flat valve. .485/.495 slide, red brass bell.*

2. What were the reasons / criteria for your selection of this particular alto trombone?

*I wanted a versatile instrument, suitable for orchestra or solo.*

3. After playing on your trombone, what are some of the pros and cons?

*It does what I need it to do, without any negatives.*

4. What was your first alto trombone model?

*My first alto was made by Adolf Dost (Munich), then I played a Schilke (that eventually became the Yamaha model), then a 1916 Conn restored by Larry Minnick.*

5. Which mouthpieces do you use and why?

*I use a screw rim (Schilke 51). The underparts are a Bach 4C and a Bach 12E, both modified by Bob Reeves to match the rim.*

6. How did you learn to play the alto trombone?

*I taught myself.*

7. Any entertaining/comical stories?

*When using the alto, the women in the orchestra always took pity on me, because it was so small.*

# Requiem "Introitus"

W.A. Mozart  
K 626

Adagio / Requiem

Alto Tromb

Tenor Tromb

Bass Tromb

8 **A**

I

II

III

13 **B**

I

II

III

18

I

II

III

*p*

25 **C**

I

II

III



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# Pelleas and Melisande, Op. 5

Arnold Schoenberg

5

44 *Sehr warm, in breiter Bewegung.*

Musical score for Trombones I-IV and Alto Trombone, measures 44-49. The score is in 3/4 time and features a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The tempo/mood is *Sehr warm, in breiter Bewegung.* The music is characterized by a steady, rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, often grouped in pairs or triplets. Dynamics range from *p* (piano) to *pp* (pianissimo). The Alto Trombone part includes a triplet of eighth notes in measure 44. The Trombone I part has a dynamic marking of *mf* (mezzo-forte) in measure 45. The Trombone II part has a dynamic marking of *pp* (pianissimo) in measure 45. The Trombone III part has a dynamic marking of *pp* (pianissimo) in measure 45. The Trombone IV part has a dynamic marking of *pp* (pianissimo) in measure 45.

Musical score for Trombones I-IV and Alto Trombone, measures 50-54. The score is in 3/4 time and features a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The tempo/mood is *Sehr warm, in breiter Bewegung.* The music is characterized by a steady, rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, often grouped in pairs or triplets. Dynamics range from *p* (piano) to *ff* (fortissimo). The Alto Trombone part includes a triplet of eighth notes in measure 50. The Trombone I part has a dynamic marking of *ff* (fortissimo) in measure 50. The Trombone II part has a dynamic marking of *ff* (fortissimo) in measure 50. The Trombone III part has a dynamic marking of *ff* (fortissimo) in measure 50. The Trombone IV part has a dynamic marking of *ff* (fortissimo) in measure 50. The instruction *Stalgernd.* (Staccato) is present in measures 51-54 for all parts.

**Trumcor:** Altposaunen-Übedämpfer/ Alto trombone Practice Mute

Modell ALTO STEALTH

Der Hersteller schreibt / The manufacturer writes:

*This practice mute is unique in the way, that it respond sevenly to all registers. When used for warming up or quiet practicing, one experiences air resistance and articulation compression, that are similar in feel to those conditions found in normal playing.*

**Wallace:** Übungsdämpfer für Flügelhorn/Altposaune/ Alto trombone and Flugelhorn Practice Mute

Dreifach verwebte Fasern, extrem dicht und dabei leicht und fest, Spieleigenschaften fast wie beim offenen Spiel.

Triple intertwined fibres, extremely dense and light and firm at the same time. Play qualities almost like with the open play.

**Yamaha:** PM-6X für Flügelhorn / Altposaune / Alto trombone and Flugelhorn Practice Mute

Der Silent Brass Dämpfer ist ein Tonabnehmerdämpfer mit integriertem Mikrofon. Das Spielgefühl kommt dem natürlichen Blaswiderstand nahe. Durch das kompakte Design passt der komplette Dämpfer in den Schallbecher und kann somit ebenfalls im Koffer gelagert werden.

The Silent Brass mute is a pickup damper with integrated microphone. The feeling while playing comes close to the natural wind resistance. Because of its compact design, the complete damper fits in the bell and can therefor also be stored in the case.

