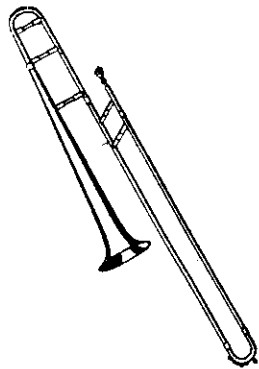


INSTRUMENTS IN THE ORCHESTRA:

(11) The Trombone

THE eleventh of a series of short articles on the instruments of the National Orchestra, written to help interested listeners towards a more informed appreciation of orchestral music and a better understanding of the resources at the command of the conductor.



IT was not until the time of Beethoven that the trombone found a place in the symphony orchestra. Even Beethoven ignored it when composing his first four symphonies, but its debut in the C Minor Symphony was a glorious one. The instrument is descended from the sackbut, which had essentially the same form as the trombone has to-day. The sackbut was a popular instrument throughout Europe and was used in many different combinations of instruments. Handel used the trombone but, curiously, it seems to have fallen from popularity after his death. A quarter of a century after Handel died, a service in memory of him was held in Westminster Abbey, and concerning it Dr. Burney wrote, "In order to render the band as powerful and complete as possible it was determined to employ every species of instrument that was capable of producing grand effects in a great orchestra and spacious building. Amongst these, the Sackbut or Double Trumpet was sought; but so many years had elapsed since it had been used in this kingdom that neither the instrument, nor a performer on it, could easily be found. It was, however, discovered that . . . in His Majesty's military band there were six musicians who played the three several species of sackbut; tenor, base and double base."



Spencer Digby photograph

RALPH OWERS

Principal trombonist of the National Orchestra

But within another 20 years the good doctor

are seven positions of the slide, corresponding to the seven shifts on the violin and the seven positions on valve instruments. A species of trombone equipped with valves is occasionally used.

Among the works in which the trombone has a prominent part are three quartets by Beethoven, Mozart's *Requiem*, *The Symphonie Funèbre et Triomphale* of Berlioz, and several concerti composed by the first travelling virtuoso of the instrument, F. A. Belcke.

The National Orchestra has two B flat trombones and one in G.

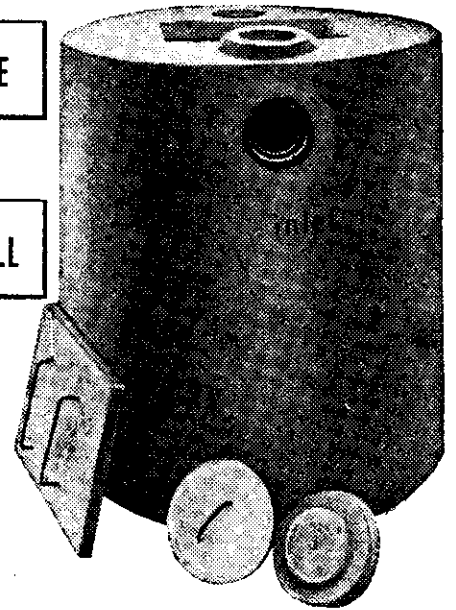
(continued from previous page) musical melodrama, which turns out to be both genuine opera and spine-tingling thriller. . . . an amalgamation of beautiful music and frightening melodrama." Time says it is "thick in horror and thin in music," but that "some of the atmospheric horror music was more blood-curdling than Puccini's." Whether it is good opera or not can only be decided in time, and on closer acquaintance, but at least it is a possibility—if men like Britten and Menotti continue as they are progressing at the moment—that English-speaking opera may yet become a genuinely popular art form.

A WHOLE HATFUL OF GOOD POINTS

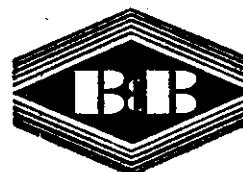


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