

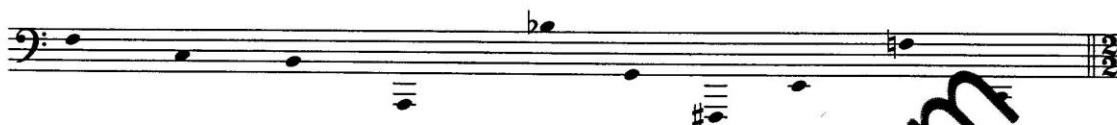
SONATA FOR BASS TROMBONE

In Memory of Ray Premru

I

John Kenny

A See Performance Notes





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♩ = 54 - 60

III

Slowly Gentle and dreamy a tempo

8ve ad lib. 8. *mp rit. sub. p*

8. *sub. p* Loco

a little more urgent

libero 5 6 *faster* *f*

a tempo *liss. mu'* *rit. m'*

A *mf*

o/+ o + o + o

o + o + o

Walk to ♮

B

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III

♩ = 52/60
Mysterious

Chu Ku Tss Huff
ff pos. *p* *sfz* *f* *fp* *f* *fp*

Harmon +
 as plunger o

Hu fu hu Ss
sfz *f pos.* *sfz* *mf* *sfz* *mf*

Bounce mute out to sound like a tabla drum *

+ / o lip gliss.
sfz *mp* 8 hu feh

(Outside mouth piece) Falsetto
f *p* *sfz* *ff* *f pos.* *mp*

ee ee ee

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JOHN KENNY:
SONATA FOR UNACCOMPANIED TROMBONE

Having previously written sonatas for unaccompanied tenor and alto trombones, it was a logical progression to write one for the bass trombone. Many of the finest trombonists I have known have been bass players, and as a teacher I am continually meeting highly talented young exponents of the instrument – yet, sadly, whilst the solo repertoire for tenor trombone has expanded enormously over the past 30 years, there still very little challenging solo material which is truly idiomatic for the bass trombone. There are wonderful players who need music to interpret: a new generation of bass trombonists should have the opportunity to explore their potential as concert soloists and composers need to be encouraged to write for this exciting medium. The available palette of sounds and techniques specific to the bass trombone need to be more widely explored: this piece, its sister *piece On Banburgh Beach*, are my own first contributions to that effort.

The Sonata is in three movements, the 1st begins with a sequence of notes derived from the shape of the trombone itself – that is, by moving the slide at a slow, regular pace from fully closed to full extension and back, and allowing the embouchure to fall onto notes in a comfortable relaxation/tension cycle. This 22-note pattern is used at first with great freedom, becoming increasingly structured into a melodic theme, with a series of commentaries. The availability of two independently operated valves offers the possibility of a multiplicity of glissandi, breath effects, and multiphonics far beyond those of the tenor or alto trombones, and there is a preliminary exploration of these sounds before the opening sequence returns, leading to a brief coda.

The 2nd movement begins and ends with a gentle, dreamy melody, followed by a first dip into the world of lip multiphonics, before a bolero of sorts takes over. The player moves in and out of a derby hat mute on a stand, trying to achieve the effect of a split personality: bass vamp and lead voice. The upper voice becomes increasingly wild, with its partner achieved by a more complex exploration of lip multiphonics over different valve combinations. The opening theme returns, this time distorted both by continual valve trills of microtonal intervals, and by moving in and out of the hat mute in waves.

The 3rd movement makes considerable use of breath sounds, both in vowel and consonant forms. Elegiac in intent, it seems to be harking back to something, but exactly what is hazy: is there a longing for the conventional sound of the trombone, for the meaning behind the wordless speech-sounds, or for the musical styles of a bygone era? There are references to all three ideas, interrupted by a brief but violent jazz based episode; but the movement closes with a gentle falling melody projected backwards through the empty tuning slide of one section of valve tubing, rather than forward through the bell.

The piece was begun of August 11 1999, the day on which southern England experienced a total solar eclipse, and completed on September 22nd. It was commissioned jointly by the British Trombone Society, the International Trombone Association, and Warwick Music.