

Albrechtsberger: *Anweisung zur Composition*  
(Leipzig: 1790). Note presence of low E

Sie die Alt-Posaune.

The image displays two staves of musical notation. The first staff is a single-line treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). It contains a scale of notes: e, cis, d, dis, e, f, fis, g, gis, a, b, b, o, cis, d, dis. The second staff is a double-line bass clef staff with a key signature of one flat. It contains a scale of notes: f, fis, g, gis, a, b, b, e, cis, d. The word 'Schwer.' is written above the second staff. The notes are written as whole notes with stems pointing up or down.

e cis d dis e f fis g gis a b b o cis d dis

Schwer.

f fis g gis a b b e cis d

# Vienna (cont.)

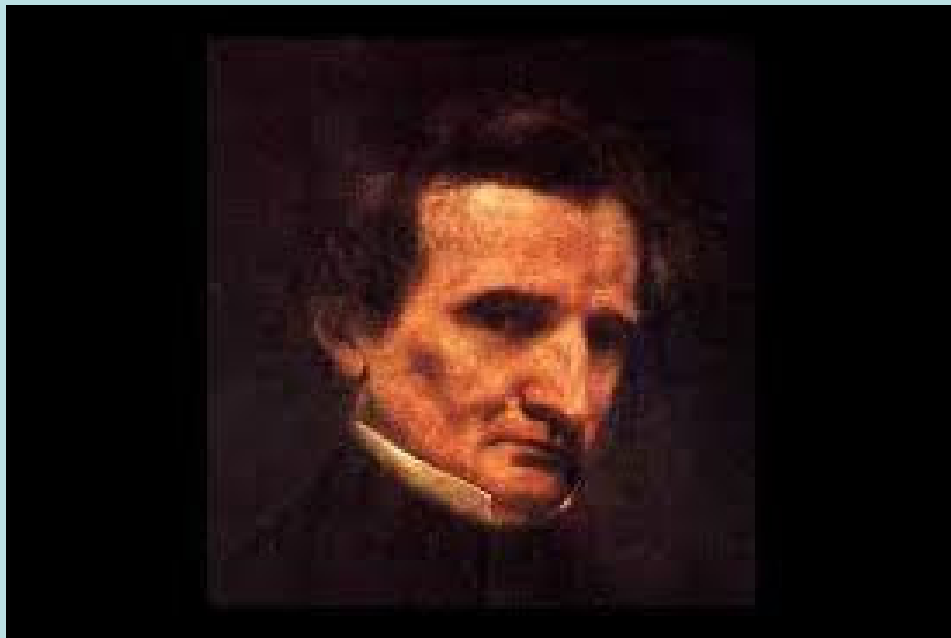
- 1826 & 1837: Revised version of *Anweisung* (edited by von Seyfried) includes Eb alto charts (no 7<sup>th</sup> position)
- Nemetz (trombonist with the Hofoper 1823-1828): *Neueposaune Schule*: Bb alto (recommends a deep trumpet mouthpiece)
- 1833-1837: Valve trombones introduced at Hofopera
- 1863: New valve trombones purchased, in Bb & F (bass)

## Vienna (cont.)

- 1883: Slide trombones purchased (including Eb alto) from Penzel (former Sattler) in Leipzig. German slide players hired to replace almost all of the section
- Weiner: suggests that the Eb alto was used only for the performance of classical works

# Some works/composers

# Berlioz



# Berlioz

*Symphonie Fantastique* (1830; revised 1831-1845)

Weiner...

- Bb 'alto'

Shifrin (with comments from Hugh MacDonald, editor of the *New Edition of the Complete Works*)...

- Alto in early works until 1834 (Harold in Italy)
- Notes alteration in *Roméo et Juliet* (1839) to accommodate for an alto

# Berlioz (cont.)

- *Hungarian March*- alto intended, due to early German performances. Hence, avoidance of jumps to 7<sup>th</sup> position, & low F

The image shows a musical score for Violin, measures 19 through 28. The score is written on three staves. The first staff is labeled 'Viol.' and starts with measure 19. It features a melodic line with various dynamics: *mf*, *cresc.*, and *ff*. A box containing the number '4' is placed above the staff at the beginning of measure 24. The second and third staves provide harmonic accompaniment, with the second staff starting with a *ff* dynamic. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 2/4.

Berlioz: *Hungarian March*  
(Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1901)

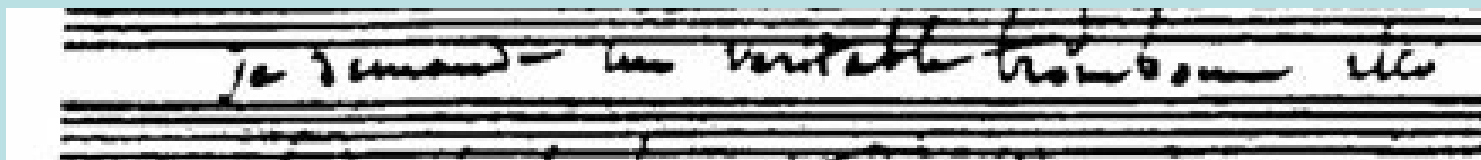
## Berlioz (cont.)

- *Te Deum*- originally for alto, but altered for tenor

# Berlioz (cont.)

My own research...

- Insistence of Berlioz in the manuscript of *Symphonie Fantastique* an exception:- “The alto trombone part should not be played, as is often done in France, on a big trombone [i.e. tenor]. I insist on a true alto trombone.”



- 1843: no mention of Bb 'alto' in Traite

# Dvorak



# Dvorak

Shifrin: all symphonies written for two Bb valve trombones, & one F valve trombone

1<sup>st</sup> Symphony (1865).

- German competition- Eb alto?

6<sup>th</sup> Symphony (1881).

- Vienna Philharmonic (although premiered in Prague)- Valved? Bb 'alto'?

7<sup>th</sup> Symphony (1885).

- London Philharmonic Society- Eb/F alto? Tenor?

# Dvorak (cont.)

## 9<sup>th</sup> Symphony (1893)

- New York Philharmonic

## 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, & 8<sup>th</sup> Symphonies

- All premiered in Prague. Valves? Tenor?

Avoid generalisations about composers, without considering the specific performance conditions

# Bruckner



# Bruckner (cont.)

## 4<sup>th</sup> Symphony

- 1880 version- first performance: Vienna, 1881
- Vienna- valves? Tenor? Bb 'alto'?
- Autograph score (1874):- trombones referred to as “alto”, “tenor”, “bass”, & “tromboni”



Finale, from 4<sup>th</sup> Symphony

(Vienna: Musikwissenschaftlicher Verlag, 1936)

# Bruckner (cont.)

## 7<sup>th</sup> Symphony

- First performance: Leipzig, 1884
- Eb alto? Tenor?
- Autograph score:- trombones referred to as “Alt”, “Tenor”, & “Bass”. Shifrin believes this to indicate function.

# Brahms



# Brahms

- 1859- Brahms (in Hamburg), insists on having a “genuine little alto trombone”, & a “genuine bass trombone”, & not three tenor trombones.
- Would undertake a series of trial performances before committing to a final draft
- Avoid associating Brahms with his more ‘radical’ contemporaries (e.g Wagner).
- Was a conservative, with preference for natural horns, lighter sounding pianos, & for smaller orchestras & halls (e.g. Meinengen Orchestra)

# Brahms (cont.)

## Shifrin

- Brahms conservative nature- alto trombone over the tenor, but that there would have been less chances by this time of the century for this to have been realised.
- *German Requiem* (1868) to Fourth Symphony (1885) all require alto

# Brahms (cont.)

## 1<sup>st</sup> Symphony

- 4 Nov. 1876, Karlsruhe, with eight performances between 7 Nov. 1876 & 16 Apr. 1877 in Mannheim, Munich, Vienna, Leipzig, Breslau, Cambridge, London
- Vienna- valve trombones? Tenor? Bb alto?
- London/Cambridge/Leipzig- alto (Eb/F)? Tenor?

# Brahms (cont.)

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Symphony

- 30 Dec. 1877, Vienna/H. Richter  
6 performances between 10 Jan. & mid-June 1878 in Leipzig, Amsterdam, The Hague, Dresden, Düsseldorf
- Vienna- valve trombones? Tenor? Bb alto?
- Leipzig- tenor? Eb alto?

# Brahms (cont.)

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Symphony

- 2 Dec. 1883, Vienna, with thirteen performances between 4 Jan. & 2 Apr. 1884 in Berlin, Wiesbaden, Meiningen, Leipzig, Cologne, Düsseldorf, Bremen, Amsterdam, Dresden, Frankfurt a. M., Budapest
- Vienna/Leipzig- tenor? Eb alto?

# Brahms (cont.)

## 4<sup>th</sup> Symphony

- 25 Oct. 1885, Meiningen, with twenty-three performances between 1 Nov. & mid-June 1886 in Meiningen, Frankfurt a. M., Essen, Elberfeld, Utrecht, Amsterdam, The Hague, Krefeld, Cologne, Wiesbaden, Mannheim, Vienna, Berlin, Leipzig, Dresden, Hamburg, Hanover, Breslau, London
- Vienna/Leipzig/London: alto (Eb/F)? Tenor?

# Practicality- so what?

- The “D” word (definitive)
- What are trying to be authentic to- the first performances, or the composer’s (perceived) intentions?
- Are you trying to be authentic with modern instruments?

# Practicality (cont.)

Bb alto:-

- Trumpet mouthpiece?
- Technique?
- Practical?
- Conductor?
- What's the alternative- only you can answer that. Is the Eb alto closer in tone?

# Practicality (cont.)

- Allow adequate preparation time to prepare for an alto performance
- Consult your players in a section (Downsize? Chicago Symphony Orchestra)

# Recommendations

Be aware of the trombone-related practices surrounding the period/location/work in question

- Ensure the reliability of your sources
- Avoid subjective opinions at this point
- Be aware of imposing modern perceptions (e.g. technical abilities) onto the 19th Century
- Look for a range of options, rather than a definitive answer
- Method books, orchestral lists, orchestration books, contemporary accounts of playing

# Recommendations (cont.)

## The score & parts

- Background of edition (practices of period & location)
- Your definition of the terminology used may be to some extent interpretative
- Acquire sources specific to the work, as well as the region/period involved
- Avoid generalizations based upon the nationality of a composer