

# **J. S. Bach**

# **School for Trombone**

**Two Part Inventions** (BWV 772-786)

**Three Part Sinfonias** (BWV 787-801)

**J. S. Bach (1685-1750)**

Transcribed and edited  
for alto, tenor and bass trombone  
and recorded by Mike Hall

Accompanying sound files include  
complete recording with all voices sounding  
and also

## **Inventions**

Solo Alto – for bass practice

Solo Bass – for alto practice

## **Sinfonias**

Solo Alto – for tenor/bass practice

Solo Tenor – for alto/bass practice

Solo Bass – for alto/tenor practice

Alto and Tenor – for bass practice

Alto and Bass – for tenor practice

Tenor and Bass – for alto practice

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MIKE HALL teaches trombone/euphonium and brass chamber music at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, VA, USA, serves as Literature Reviews Editor for the International Trombone Association Journal and also teaches in the Virginia Governor's School for the Arts. He previously served on the faculties of the University of Kansas and Eastern Michigan University. Dr. Hall has performed extensively throughout North and South America, Europe and China performing a range of styles and literature with symphony orchestras, wind and chamber ensembles and as featured soloist. He also has an extensive background in commercial music backing entertainers, playing in large and small group jazz settings, and performing in theater and studio recording ensembles. His study of Baroque performance practice as applied to modern trombone has led to five solo recordings: *Arcangelo Corelli Solo Chamber Sonatas, Opus 5 - J.S. Bach: The Gamba Sonatas - Benedetto Marcello Solo Sonatas, Opus 1 - J.S. Bach: Art of Fugue and Johann Ernst Galliard: Six Sonatas. Music for a New Millinium*, new sonatas for trombone and piano, was released in 2015. Mike Hall is a C.G. Conn and Selmer Bach performing artist.

The music of J.S. Bach is such a joy to work on and play. Unfortunately, aside from trombone parts in a few cantatas, Bach wrote nothing specifically for trombone as far as we know. So what is the *J.S. Bach School for Trombone*? In 2010 I recorded Ralph Sauer's trombone quartet arrangement of Bach's *Art of Fugue* on alto, tenor and bass trombones. I advanced in so many areas as a player working on this multi-track recording that it seemed wise to record more of Bach's music in order to go further, to build up weak areas of my playing. For me, Bach's music is so compelling, so melodically rich; returning to it was an easy choice. The *J.S. Bach School for Trombone* is therefore a practice project, which I share with the expectation that it will have the same good effect for others it has had for me. In addition, the score provides trombone specific solutions for performing Bach's ornaments, which can be heard in the recordings, whose voices are offered individually as practice tracks. The 15 two part *Inventions* BWV 772-786 and 15 three part *Sinfonias* BWV 787-801 are the text for this school because they are short, loaded with great imitative counterpoint, full of technical challenges that demand accuracy and stamina in various major and minor keys. Their musical rewards make me run to practice them! And they are effective; I wish I had tackled this project prior to recording *Art of Fugue*.

The *J.S. Bach School for Trombone* is designed to expand ability in the upper register of the alto trombone and the 'cash' register of the bass trombone, i.e. the notes below the bass staff. Since I am not a bass trombonist by trade this area has been my weakest. I also wanted to maintain Bach's intervals between voices, a feature no other trombone arrangement of this music offers. To achieve this I simply lowered all 30 pieces a perfect fifth. That's it; no octave displacements or crossing voices. The result? This stuff is quite a bit harder than Ralph Sauer's *Art of Fugue* arrangement, at least for me. The top voice requires real agility up to high  $f^2$  on alto and the bass voice requires the same down to pedal FF. Hearing just how bad I sounded at the start and then devising ways to get, not a perfect, but just an acceptable recording of challenging passages is both brutal and thrilling at the same time. Tone production and technique have to develop together. Musically, it's great to experience the proper interval between voices but lowering the whole experience a fifth challenges brilliance of sound.

The recording is designed for practice and enjoyment and is offered in seven different configurations.

- Complete recording with all voices sounding

#### Inventions

- Solo Alto – for bass practice
- Solo Bass – for alto practice

#### Sinfonias

- Solo Alto – for tenor/bass practice
- Solo Tenor – for alto/bass practice
- Solo Bass – for alto/tenor practice
- Alto and Tenor – for bass practice
- Alto and Bass – for tenor practice
- Tenor and Bass – for alto practice

These recordings have not been edited together as in standard practice. I simply practiced individual phrases till I could play them at tempo. Then I recorded them one at a time, jumping from voice to voice to make the music unfold as I envisioned it. I used ProTools' internal metronome as a general guide but added the click track heard in individual tracks after recording was finished. I suggest learning *J.S. Bach School for Trombone* the same way, in phrases. Listening to a solo voice provides a guide for style and ornaments. Once a particular phrase is learned, practice along with its counterpart(s) playing from your computer or phone. This can be done with speakers or earphones. I find the standard iPhone/iPod earphones work great. They sit in your ear but do not close off the ear canal, so you can hear yourself play pretty well. I learned and recorded this whole project using iPhone earbuds. Performing whole *Inventions* continuously is obviously the final step but the real gains come from focused practice of individual phrases. Playing these with buddies can also bring much enjoyment.

Recording your own playing provides a huge shortcut to learning. I suggest using software that shows audio waveform against a 'bars and beats' grid so you can see tonal and rhythmic accuracy: Audacity, Garage Band, etc. Why is this helpful? So often, notes feel like they are right in time but the waveform shows they are behind or ahead of the beat. Then you listen more closely and begin to hear what you see. With practice, over repetitions and time, we learn to hear more accurately and will therefore gain the ability to play more accurately. This is just one example of many improvements that can come through critical study of our playing using recording devices.

The score includes technical and ornamental solutions notated for the instruments given above.

Here is what the notations mean:

- v = valve engaged
- the number = slide position
- # or ♭ before number = slide position raised or lowered slightly
- number hyphen number = start the trill on the first slide position given, then move to the next given position.
- "lip" or "valve" indicates how the trill is made.

For bass trombone:

- v = f valve
- t = g-flat trigger engaged
- tv = both valve and trigger engaged

Each two part Invention is accompanied with a few words I wrote while learning and recording the piece. These words offer select advice about technique, phrasing, ornaments, etc, but mostly they relate my own experience in something of an informal blog format. I hope you will find them encouraging as we perhaps identify with each other in this fascinating and rewarding process of growth. Enjoy! Mike Hall

## Invention No.1 (BWV 772) Recording completed July 31, 2016

For me, the idea here is to just get started, to get accustomed to trading back and forth from alto to bass one phrase at a time, which is necessary to make the recording. Ranges are not extreme for long; just play on time and in tune. No tempo rubato... simple, clean, clear. This *Invention* sort of functions as a measure of basic skill, a control for the harder *Inventions* to come. I played *mf* and marked no articulations; that will come later. Middle of the road tenuto is a good choice here. Dynamic contrasts should always be present and come naturally as phrases develop in our ears.

What are the words and numbers above notes in the score?

I mark trills with their technical solutions. For example, in the first bar alto part, 'valve' means that this trill is made with the B $\flat$  valve; v4 means slide position 4 with valve engaged; the 4 after the hyphen is a slide position with valve not engaged. The trill starts on the upper neighbor, v4 (f $^1$ ), and moves to 4 (e $^1$ ), the printed note, i.e., the trill is made with the valve. In m.2 a similar trill is marked 'lip.' This is a lip trill where both notes are played in slide position 4. The luxurious rests and simple counterpoint are enjoyable; No.1 is a pleasure.

# Invention No.1 in C Major transposed to F Major (BWV 772)

J. S. Bach (1685-1750)

transcribed and edited by Mike Hall

♩ = 70

Alto Trombone

Bass Trombone

1 bar click

valve v4-4

lip 4

4

valve v $\flat$ 4-4

7

valve 4-v $\flat$ 4

10

lip v $\flat$ 4

13

## Sinfonias Nos.1-15 (BWV 787-801)

Recording of the *Sinfonias* was begun December 22, 2016. Having learned and gained much from recording the *Inventions*, I moved into learning and recording the three-voice *Sinfonias* without comment, following the same early morning one to two hour practice sessions established with the *Inventions*. My bass trombone playing has continued to improve and become more consistent. These pieces continue to challenge technically and are even more musically satisfying than the two part *Inventions*. I hope you enjoy them as much as I have. Mike Hall

### Sinfonia No.1 in C Major transposed to F Major (BWV 787)

$\text{♩} = 56$

Alto Trombone

1 bar click

Tenor Trombone

Bass Trombone

4

valve vb4-4

7