

# Lenten Procession for 8-part Trombone Choir

by Russell McKinney

I wrote **Lenten Procession** to overdub for a live-streamed Ash Wednesday Service at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Cary, North Carolina, where I have been Minister of Music since 2014.

During the Covid-19 Pandemic, music for St. Paul's services has all been virtually recorded by the individual musicians and submitted to me for editing, engineering, and mixing. As time went on, I got more creative with the musical possibilities for talent within our parish.

In a Zoom meeting the clergy asked if I could supply an instrumental piece of some "solemnity" for the opening Ash Wednesday Processional. I said that I could fashion a trombone choir piece based on some of the Lenten hymn tunes that we use and that nothing says solemn like a trombone choir! As I had done another piece earlier in the church year, they immediately liked the idea.

Overall, the range is low to give it darkness and weight, though it should not get bogged down. On the lowest section of Bass Trombone B In my recording, I used a bigger leadpipe and mouthpiece to simulate a contra sound. Thanks to the magic of recording, I was able play that equipment only for the 8 bars where the part is in the very low pedal register. But I think that the whole Bass Trombone B part could be effectively played on a contrabass trombone.

I envisioned the piece as giving a musical picture of a solemn procession, so I knew the dynamic and intensity of the piece should grow as it went along. I had noticed that hymn tunes *A la venue de Noel* and *Aus der Tiefe rufe ich*, were very similar in phrasing, tune, and harmony. (They are both often used tunes for Lenten hymns in Liturgical Christian Churches.) I also wondered how they might fit together. I decided to present each tune individually by two separate 4-part trombone choirs to establish them in the ear, and then dovetail them into one another a bit as each repeated, building dynamically each time. Then when both tunes sound at the same time, it is almost a competition at a very loud dynamic. I did some tune and harmonic adjustment to *A la venue de Noel* in order to keep *Aus der Tiefe rufe ich* as the dominant tune at the climax of the piece. While I adjusted some harmonies, I did leave some very dissonant moments where their harmonies diverge. To bring it all to a close, I introduced the opening phrase of Southwell ("Lord Jesus, Think on Me" is the oft associated text) with quiet writing for a quartet of trombones. It ends on the comparatively harmonically ambiguous and hollow sound of an octave that fades away.

Full Score

# Lenten Procession

Russell McKinney

for 8-part Trombone Choir

**Solemn** ♩ = 76

Trombone 1A  
*mp legato*

Trombone 2A  
*mp legato*

Trombone 3A  
*mp legato*

Bass Trombone 4A  
*mp legato*

Trombone 1B

Trombone 2B

Trombone 3B

Bass Trombone 4B  
(Contrabass opt.)

7 **A**

Tbn. 1A

Tbn. 2A

Tbn. 3A

B. Tbn. 4A

Tbn. 1B  
*mf legato*

Tbn. 2B  
*mf legato*

Tbn. 3B  
*mf legato*

B. Tbn. 4B  
*mf legato*

**D**

28

Tbn. 1A  
Tbn. 2A  
Tbn. 3A  
B. Tbn. 4A  
Tbn. 1B  
Tbn. 2B  
Tbn. 3B  
B. Tbn. 4B

*ff*

35

Tbn. 1A  
Tbn. 2A  
Tbn. 3A  
B. Tbn. 4A  
Tbn. 1B  
Tbn. 2B  
Tbn. 3B  
B. Tbn. 4B

Tbn. 1A

Tbn. 2A

Tbn. 3A

B. Tbn. 4A

This system contains four staves for tuba parts 1A, 2A, 3A, and 4A. Each staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. All four parts are marked with a whole rest for the entire duration of the four measures shown.

Tbn. 1B

Tbn. 2B

Tbn. 3B

B. Tbn. 4B

This system contains four staves for tuba parts 1B, 2B, 3B, and 4B. Each staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats. The parts feature melodic lines with slurs and dynamics. Part 1B starts with a quarter note G2, followed by quarter notes A2, B2, and C3. Part 2B starts with a half note G2. Part 3B starts with a quarter note G2, followed by quarter notes A2, B2, and C3. Part 4B starts with a quarter note G2, followed by a quarter rest, then a quarter note A2. All parts have a dynamic marking of *p* (piano) at the start of the third measure and a *niente* (pianissimo) marking at the end of the fourth measure. Slurs connect the notes in measures 3 and 4 for all parts.