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The Underrepresented French Trombone:
A Recording and Written Document of Rarely Performed 20th Century Trombone
Literature of the Paris Conservatory

Kyle Alan Remnant

A Doctor of Musical Arts Document Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

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FACULTY COMMITTEE:

Committee Chair: Dr. Andrew Lankford

Committee Members/ Readers:

Mr. Kevin Stees

Dr. Lisa M. Maynard

To my wife Kaity, for her support and encouragement through this academic endeavor,
and for her love and steadfastness through everything else.

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I hold deep appreciation for many individuals who have helped me on this document, without whom I am certain this would remain incomplete. First and foremost, I owe a great deal of thanks to Dr. Andrew Lankford who served as the advisor for this project. More than that, his mentorship over the course of two graduate degrees has been paramount to my success. Dr. Lankford has worked tirelessly to provide a keen eye to proofread drafts, a discerning ear to listen to recordings, and an invaluable voice of reason to guide me through the many phases of this project.

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Abstract

The purpose of this project was to highlight some of the lesser-known trombone solos within the *oeuvre* of the Paris Conservatory *Solo de Concours* (Solo Contest). While the output of solo works through the Paris Conservatory has been well documented for over a century-and-a-half, there are numerous compositions that have not reached the canonical status of the works of Tomasi, Guilmant, Castérède, and others. Several *Prix de Rome* winners composed for the trombone as a solo instrument; among them are Alfred Bachelet, Henri Büsser, Jules Mazellier, Raymond Loucheur, Yvonne Desportes and Claude Pascal. Regrettably, no reference recordings exist for many of the trombone solos written as contest pieces for the Paris Conservatory, including those composed by winners of the *Prix de Rome*. This project maintains a two-fold goal of recording an album of previously unrecorded trombone works from twentieth-century France, and providing a written document to include composer biographies and relevant information about the works performed.

Background and Purpose of the Study

Overview of the Paris Conservatory *Concours* Tradition

The history of the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique et de Danse de Paris (henceforth Paris Conservatory) is well documented. Since its founding in 1795, the conservatory has been the premiere institution for music in France, with one of the strongest and most comprehensive programs of study in the world. Each year, the most exceptional students are awarded medals for achievement in composition, music theory, counterpoint, music history and other areas of study. Students also compete annually in the *Solo de Concours* (Contest Solo) event for their particular instrument.

The trombone studio of the Paris Conservatory joined the *concours* tradition in 1842, under the direction of trombone professor Antoine Dieppo. The first solo selected for the contest was *Air varié* by Hyacinthe Eleonore Klosé, however, like most contest solos from 1842 to 1896, it is no longer extant. The one exception is Jules Demersseman's *Cavatine, op. 47*, which was used in 1877 and 1888.¹ Since 1897, when a new custom began of commissioning works specifically for the contest, a large majority of the solos are obtainable, and many are performed and recorded regularly.²

This document is not the first academic endeavor into the French trombone repertoire, and it is unlikely to be the last. Great detail has been given to the study of certain works within the *concours* tradition, and rightly so. The solos composed for the Paris Conservatory represent outstanding literature for the instrument and challenge collegiate trombone students technically and lyrically. Among the composers and works that have

¹ Glenn P. Smith, "Paris National Conservatory Contest Pieces for Trombone," *International Trombone Association Journal* Vol. 5, no. 1 (1977): 23.

² Jeffrey Jon Lemke, "French Tenor Trombone Solo Literature and Pedagogy since 1836," A.Mus.D., (University of Arizona, 1983), 57.

entered the canon of standard trombone repertoire are: Alexandre Guilmant, *Morceau Symphonique* (selected for the *Solo de Concours* in 1902 and 1928); J. Guy Ropartz, *Piece in e-flat minor* (1908); Camille Saint-Saëns, *Cavatine* (1915, 1922); Joseph Edouard Barat, *Andante et Allegro* (1935, 1940); Eugène Bozza, *Ballade* (1944); Jean-Michel Defaye, *Deux Danses* (1954); and Henri Tomasi, *Concerto* (1956).³

As is common with any instrument's repertoire, many works become widely accepted and canonized while others are underrepresented and rarely performed. A logical correlation exists between the availability of recordings for a particular composition and the frequency the solo is performed. The majority of undergraduate musicians are more likely to select repertoire that is recognizable and accessible over solos that are unfamiliar and have not been recorded. I contend that many solos in the trombone repertoire are overlooked because there are no reference recordings of the works. It is the goal of this project to reintroduce nine trombone solos from the Paris Conservatory *Solo de Concours* tradition that are rarely performed and have not yet been recorded professionally.

Selection of Repertoire

The original concept of this project evolved as a result of a Solo Brass Literature course I took while a doctoral student at James Madison University, which, through a comprehensive survey of trombone solos and recordings, revealed the deficit of reference recordings for many works composed for the Paris Conservatory *Solo de Concours*. The process of selecting repertoire from that list was largely dependent on two factors: the absence of professional and commercial recordings of the solo; and the availability of

³ Smith, 24.

printed scores of the work. Several underrepresented works have been recorded only once and should garner more attention from trombone soloists and teachers, but this study focuses on compositions that do not yet exist on commercially available albums. Some of the unrecorded solos lack printed scores, and were therefore unable to be chosen for this project. There are, however, several previously unrecorded works with available scores and parts.

In selecting from the solos eligible by these criteria, an earnest attempt was made to represent an accurate chronological and stylistic cross-section of *concours* works. Thus, the chosen repertoire spans over a half-century, from 1901-1952. Many of the works exist within binary forms to challenge performers in two opposing styles; often lyrical then technical. However, as will be revealed, there is a progression from binary forms toward programmatic and through-composed solos. The composers and works to be discussed are: Alfred Bachelet, *Morceau de Concours* (1901); Henri Büsser, *Pièce en mi Bémol* (1907); Joseph Edouard Barat, *Pièce en mi Bémol* (1923); Henri Büsser, *Etude de Concert* (1927); Yvonne Desportes, *Fantaisie* (1932); Jules Mazellier, *Solo de Concours* (1934); Raymond Loucheur, *Hjalmar* (1947); Eugène Bigot, *Variations* (1949); and Claude Pascal, *Pastorale Héroïque* (1952).

In the following pages, composers are placed in chronological sequence according to the year their trombone solo was commissioned for the *Solo de Concours*. A discussion of each piece follows, examining form, stylistic features, range demands, and degree of difficulty. Any system which aims to classify and categorize pieces based on difficulty presents challenges and welcomes debate. For this document, I adhere to the European

grade levels presented by J. Mark Thompson and Jeffrey Jon Lemke in *French Music for Low Brass Instruments: An Annotated Bibliography*.⁴

Easy (*facile*) Degrees 1-3

Intermediate (*moyen*) Degrees 4-6

Difficult (*difficile*) Degrees 7-9

Breakdown by American School Levels

Elementary Degrees 1-2

Junior High Degrees 2-3

Senior High Degrees 3-6

College/Conservatory Degrees 6-8

Professional/Virtuoso Degree 9

Exploration of Works Performed

Alfred Bachelet, *Morceau de Concours* (1901)

Alfred Georges Bachelet was born in Paris, in February of 1864. Little is known about his life before his composition studies at the Paris Conservatory with Ernest Guiraud. Some documentation exists of his career as composer and conductor, but there remain many unknowns about Bachelet. He shared *Prix de Rome* honors with Gaston Carraud in 1890, for the cantata, *Cléopâtre*. Officially, Carraud received the “first” First Grand Prize, while Bachelet received “second” First Grand Prize, although both reaped the benefits of the award.⁵ Bachelet gained employment as the chorus master of the Paris Opera in 1907,

⁴ J. Mark Thompson and Jeffrey J. Lemke, *French Music for Low Brass Instruments: An Annotated Bibliography* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana Univ. Press, 1994), 7.

⁵ Denis Havard de la Montagne, “Musica Et Memoria - Prix De Rome,” *Musica et Memoria - Prix de Rome*, accessed December 14, 2020, <http://www.musimem.com/prix-de-rome.html>.

and later was promoted to conductor of its orchestra. After a decade with the Paris Opera, Bachelet moved to the northeast corner of France to replace Guy Ropartz as head of the Conservatory in Nancy, where he remained until his death in 1944.

Due to his affinity toward large programmatic orchestral works, music critics referred to Bachelet as a French Wagnerian, however, unlike Wagner, Bachelet's operas are rarely performed.⁶ *Scemo* (1914) and *Quand la cloche sonnera* (1922) both received mixed reviews from audiences and critics. His greatest success was *Un jardin sur l'Oronte* (*A Garden on the Orontes*), his third and final opera.⁷ Though he was more recognized for his operas during his life, Bachelet's most widely performed and recorded work is his beautiful art song "*Chere nuit*" ("*Dear Night*"), composed for Australian soprano Nellie Melba.

Morceau de concours (Contest Piece) was composed for the Solo Contest in 1901, and selected as the contest piece again in 1925.⁸ The work is composed in two distinct sections. The first, marked *Andante mosso*, is a lyrical section beginning in the key of E-flat minor. Bachelet restates the opening motive in F-sharp minor before introducing the secondary thematic material in B-flat minor.⁹ Between the A section and B section is a transitional cadenza.¹⁰ The second half of the solo is a light *Moderato* march in E-flat Major, the parallel key to the opening E-flat minor. A brief twelve-measure *molto agitato* phrase in G minor provides some contrast within the latter half of the work.¹¹

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Lemke, 57-58.

⁹ Alfred Bachelet, *Morceau de Concours* (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1901), 1.

¹⁰ Ibid, 2.

¹¹ Ibid, 3.

Bachelet's *Morceau de concours* is one of thirteen solos to be selected multiple times for the Solo Contest at the Paris Conservatory since 1897.¹² The work is in continuous binary form, challenging the performer through contrasting lyrical and technical sections. The range spans two-and-a-half octaves, and with very few extended rests in the seven-and-a-half-minute work, the solo tests the endurance of the performer. According to the European system of grading the difficulty of solo works, *Morceau de concours* is listed as grade 6, indicating suitability for advanced high school and early collegiate students.

The initial key of E-Flat Minor is significant, as many of the *Solo de Concours* pieces are composed in or pass through this key. The mode presents intonation challenges for the soloist, particularly demanding heightened sensitivity to fifth position Db3 and Gb3, with additional idiosyncrasies in the upper register. There is no documentation explaining the abundance of this key in Paris Conservatory compositions, but one can conjecture that composers knew the peculiarities of the instruments for which they were writing, and therefore how to appropriately challenge the soloists.

Henri Büsser, *Pièce en mi bémol* (1907)

Henri Büsser was born in Toulouse, a city in southern France in 1872. Büsser's father, himself an organist, recognized his son's musical aptitude from an early age. His first musical experience was with the boys choir of the Toulouse Cathedral. Büsser moved to Paris to study at the *École de Niedermeyer* (Niedermeyer School for Church Music) at the age of 13. He remained in Paris to pursue studies in organ and composition at the Paris

¹² Lemke, 62.

Conservatory. César Franck was his primary organ teacher, and his composition teachers included Ernest Guiraud, Jules Massenet and Charles Gounoud. Büsser, like Bachelet three years earlier, won the “second” First Grand Prize in the 1893 *Prix de Rome* for his cantata *Antigone*. André Bloch received “first” First Grand Prize that year for his setting of the same cantata text.

Following his time at the Paris Conservatory, Büsser led an active career as organist, conductor, composer and educator. He accepted the position of organist at the *Église Saint-Clodoald* (Church of Saint-Cloud) in 1893, and remained in that post for three decades. Büsser began conducting the *Théâtre du Château-d’Eau* in 1900, then the orchestra of the *Opéra-Comique* in 1905.¹³ He taught at the Paris Conservatory as early as 1904, and was promoted to full professor of composition by 1931.¹⁴ One of Büsser’s students was Henri Dutilleux,¹⁵ who composed *Choral, Cadence et Fugato*, the 1950 selection for the Paris Conservatory *Solo de Concours*.¹⁶

Büsser composed in several genres, but was most recognized for his operatic scores. His light-hearted subject matter and Debussy-esque compositional technique was a departure from the Wagnerian style, which pervaded the opera halls of Europe by the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁷ Büsser’s successful operas included *Daphnis et Chloé* (1897), *Colomba* (1921) and *Les Noces corinthiennes* (1922). In addition to his original works, Büsser was an active editor and arranger. Some of his most notable orchestral adaptations included Claude Debussy’s *Petite Suite* and *Printemps*. Other arrangements of works by

¹³ Montagne, “Musica et Memoria – Prix de Rome.”

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Smith, 24.

¹⁷ Montagne, “Musica et Memoria – Prix de Rome.”

Berlioz, Gounoud and Fauré demonstrate Büsser’s approach to making the French music of his time more widely accessible to performers and audiences.

Büsser contributed heavily to the growing repertoire of solo literature for wind instruments with works for flute, clarinet, bassoon, horn and trombone. His output of brass solos is especially noteworthy for this document. Due to the absence of recordings of the trombone works included on this project, I have turned to recordings of his other brass compositions. Two horn solos, *Cantecor in B-flat minor*¹⁸ and *La Chasse de Saint Hubert*,¹⁹ have proven to be excellent sources for understanding Büsser’s compositional style for brass. Büsser composed four solos used in the trombone *Solo de Concours* at the Paris Conservatory. Of those works, *Cantabile et Scherzando, Op. 51* (1913, 1924) is the most widely performed in recitals, but is rarely recorded. *Piece in e-flat minor, Op. 33* (1907, 1920), *Etude de Concert, Op. 79* (1927, 1971, 1978) and *Phoebus Variations, Op. 87* (1933) are rarely performed and have not been recorded professionally. All of these works remain in print, with the exception of *Phoebus Variations*, and all are excellent options for recital literature.

While *Etude de Concert* will be discussed in further detail later, the focus of the remainder of this section is Büsser’s earliest solo for trombone, his *Piece in e-flat minor*. Interestingly, the 1907 contest solo was later published by International Music Company in 1972 as *Concertpiece, Op. 55*, a discrepancy in both title and opus number. The font used on the original publication does make the “33” look similar to “55,” however the

¹⁸ Henri Büsser, *Cantecor in B-Flat minor, Op. 77*, with Hervé Joulain and Ariane Jacob, recorded 2020, on *Melodies: 17 Original Horn Themes*, TYXart TXA19142, 2020, streaming audio, <https://jmu-naxosmusiclibrary-com.eu1.proxy.openathens.net/catalogue/item.asp?cid=TXA19142>.

¹⁹ Henri Büsser, *La Chasse de Saint Hubert*, with Peter Damm and Peter Rösel, recorded 1989, on *Französische Musik für Horn und Klavier*, Berlin Classics 0093922BC, 1989, streaming audio, <https://jmu-naxosmusiclibrary-com.eu1.proxy.openathens.net/catalogue/item.asp?cid=0093922BC>.

reason for the title change is unknown. Like Bachelet's 1901 contest solo, *Piece in e-flat minor* challenges the trombonist's intonation in an uncommon key.

The work is composed in two parts, presenting lyrical themes in e-flat minor followed by technical flourishes in the relative E-flat major. With a total of one-hundred forty-one measures, an expected performance time is approximately four minutes. Technical demands include a range of E2 to Cb4 and a two-measure trill from F4 to G4. The solo is almost entirely in triple meter, with two non-consecutive measures of common time.²⁰ The European scale labels the difficulty of *Piece in e-flat minor* as grade 6, implying suitability for late high school to early collegiate students.²¹

The opening is marked *Andante poco adagio* (quarter = 72), with a stylistic instruction of *espressivo e sostenuto* at the soloist's first entrance in measure three.²² This section invites frequent rubato and nuance from the performer, and should remain lyrical and reverent throughout. The *A tempo* at measure twenty-nine marks the return of the opening motive, but performers may wish to interpret the marking as *piu mosso* to provide contrast from the initial presentation of the melody. This musical decision also would contribute energy to prepare the transition into the cadenza and *animando* which conclude the first section of the solo.

The second half of *Piece in e-flat minor* is marked *Allegro* (quarter = 144-152),²³ but performers of this solo may discover choosing a brisker tempo with downbeat emphasis will create more energetic musical lines. The four-measure piano introduction to the *Allegro* omits the downbeats, giving rhythmic importance to the trombonist's first entrance

²⁰ Henri Büsser, *Pièce en mi bémol*. (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1907).

²¹ Thompson and Lemke, 23.

²² Büsser, *Pièce en mi bémol*, 1.

²³ *Ibid*, 2.

on the first beat of measure sixty-three. Büsser includes the words *trés rythmé* (very rhythmic) in the solo part in measure sixty-three, and again when the main theme is heard an octave higher in measure ninety-seven. This serves to establish a spirited and pulse-oriented approach to the end of the solo.

Büsser's *Piece in e-flat minor* is an ideal solo for undergraduate juries and recitals. Although brief in duration, this solo requires beautiful lyricism and strong technical facility from its performers. The contrast of the two sections also provides an enjoyable experience for the audience. *Piece in e-flat minor* is copyrighted by Alphonse Leduc and distributed in North America by Hal Leonard.²⁴ The 1972 version, *Concertpiece, op. 55* by Henri Büesser, is available through International Music Company in New York City.²⁵

Joseph Edouard Barat, *Pièce en mi bémol* (1923)

Joseph Edouard Barat was born in Paris in September 1882. His father was a musician with the Republican Guard Band. Barat enrolled in the Paris Conservatory where he studied piano with Paul Vidal, harmony with Emile Pessard, and composition with Georges Caussade. After graduating, he became a military musician and held positions as bandmaster in Lyon and Paris. Barat died in 1963, at the age of 80.

Although there is limited documentation of his life, J. E. Barat is a well-known composer to brass musicians for his many solo works. His trumpet compositions include: *Andante et Scherzo* (1926); *Andante et Allegro* (1934); *Lento et Scherzo* (1949); *Orientale* (1957); and *Fantaisie in mi bémol* (1958); most of which are performed regularly in

²⁴ HalLeonard.com, "Piece Op.33 In E Flat (Trombone & Piano)," Hal Leonard Online, accessed January 23, 2021, <https://www.halleonard.com/product/48182934/piece-op33-in-e-flat-trombone--piano>.

²⁵ "Shop the International Music Co. Catalog," Shop the International Music Co. Catalog, accessed January 23, 2021, <https://internationalmusicco.com/search.php?shop=shop&sp=>.

universities and conservatories around the world. Tuba players are most familiar with his *Introduction et danse* (1973, posthumously), but Barat composed three other works for the instrument as well: *Morceau de Concours* (1934); *Reminiscence de Navarre* (1950); and *Introduction and Serenade* (1963). The French tuba for which Barat composed is smaller than the modern orchestral tuba, so the aforementioned solos are more appropriately performed on euphonium.

Studying and performing Barat's *Andante et Allegro* (1935, 1940) is a rite of passage for trombonists. This solo appears on a half-dozen commercially available recordings,²⁶ and is regularly selected for undergraduate juries and recitals. Before Barat was commissioned to compose *Andante et Allegro* for the Paris Conservatory *Solo de Concours* in 1935, his *Piece in e-flat minor* already had been selected twice as the contest piece; first in 1923, and then again in 1929. *Piece in e-flat minor*, like the other works discussed to this point, comprises two contrasting sections. The first section is lyrical, marked *Lent – Andante*,²⁷ and the second section moves to the parallel key, E-flat major, and is marked *Allegro*.²⁸ There is a brief return to the opening *Lent* theme, now major, before the piece concludes with the *Allegro* theme once more. Both the lyrical and technical themes open with a descending perfect fourth, a common intervallic relationship used in many of Barat's works. In the *Lent - Andante*, the melodic and harmonic material becomes predominantly chromatic after the larger intervals of the opening theme.²⁹ The *Allegro* consists of numerous scalar passages, which weave in and out of several modulations.³⁰

²⁶ Sorensen.

²⁷ J. Ed. Barat, *Pièce en mi Bémol*. (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1923), 1.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 2.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 1.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 2.

Pièce en mi bémol is well-suited for late high school to early collegiate players, according to its grade 6 designation.³¹ For the sake of comparison, the same European-style grading method deems Barat's *Andante et Allegro* as slightly more difficult at grade 7.³² The range of the work is F2 to Cb4, and at two-hundred-five measures, the solo is approximately six-minutes in duration. *Pièce en mi bémol* is in print through Alphonse Leduc and distributed by Hal Leonard.³³

Henri Büsser, *Etude de Concert* (1927)

The third trombone solo by Henri Büsser to appear in the *Solo de Concours* is his *Etude de Concert*. This work has been selected as the Paris Conservatory contest piece three separate times: 1927, 1971, and 1978.³⁴ In departure from his earlier contest works, *Etude de Concert* does not consist of two distinctly contrasting sections. Rather, it is ternary in composition, with a noticeable ABA¹ form. The opening *Moderato maestoso* A section is firmly in d minor.³⁵ The *piú moderato* B section is tonally ambiguous, but settles in d minor before a solo cadenza leads into the *Tempo I* A¹ section in D Major.³⁶

Etude de Concert received a difficulty of grade 8, suggesting it is more advanced than the other solos discussed to this point.³⁷ Inherent challenges in this solo do not come from its duration, as an average performance of this work concludes in four minutes or less. The challenges are present in several passages that reflect the *Etude* (study) nature of the

³¹ Thompson and Lemke, 16.

³² Ibid, 15.

³³ HalLeonard.com, "Piece In E Flat (Trombone & Piano)," Hal Leonard Online, accessed February 8, 2021, <https://www.halleonard.com/product/48182190/piece-in-e-flat-trombone--piano>.

³⁴ Thompson and Lemke, 23.

³⁵ Henri Büsser, *Etude de Concert*. (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1927), 1.

³⁶ Ibid, 2.

³⁷ Thompson and Lemke, 22.

title and require the soloist to have complete control of technical facility. The solo regularly alternates between tenor and bass clefs, and contains several chromatic and wide intervallic passages. Each section of the work requires the performer to play both *cantabile* and *marcato*, which creates contrast and drama as the piece unfolds. The range of the work is E2 to C#5, but the C#5 is especially challenging as the apex of a sixteenth-note F# Major arpeggio. The piece concludes with a two-beat trill, D4 to E4, followed by an octave leap to D3 on the final downbeat.³⁸ *Etude de Concert* is extant, and is available through Alphonse Leduc and Hal Leonard.³⁹

Yvonne Desportes, *Fantaisie* (1932)

Yvonne Desportes was born in Germany in 1907. Both of her parents were artists; her father was a composer, and her mother a painter. She began her musical studies in the preparatory division of the Paris Conservatory at the age of eleven, and enrolled in the Conservatory level in 1925. Some of her teachers included Marcel Dupré and composition instructor Paul Dukas. In her fourth year of competition, Desportes won the *Prix de Rome* First Grand Prize in 1932 for her cantata *Le Pardon*. She was just the fifth woman to win the prestigious honor: Lili Boulanger (1913, won jointly); Marguerite Canal (1920); Jeanne Leleu (1923, won jointly); and Elsa Barraine (1929).

Professionally, Desportes was hugely successful, composing over five-hundred works in symphonic, operatic and instrumental genres. She was as influenced by “The Russian Five” as she was by her compatriots and colleagues in France. Her sensitivity to

³⁸ Büsser, *Etude de Concert*, 2.

³⁹ HalLeonard.com, “Etudes De Concert Op.79 (Trombone & Piano),” Hal Leonard Online, accessed February 13, 2021, <https://www.halleonard.com/product/48182201/etudes-de-concert-op79-trombone--piano>.

musical nationalism is evident in her *French Suite for 4 Clarinets* (1939),⁴⁰ which draws inspiration from the form of Renaissance dance suites and the harmonic language of French Romantic composers. Desportes' international curiosity is abundant in her works, including *Suite Italienne for Four Flutes in C* and *Sicilienne et Allegro*. Her talent for portraying humor through music is evident in *La Foire aux Croûtes* ("The Flea Market," 12 miniatures for percussion and piano),⁴¹ *Caracteres* ("Characters," for clarinet quartet),⁴² and *Variations sur le nom de Beethoven for orchestra*. In addition to her work as a composer, Desportes taught solfège and counterpoint at the Paris Conservatory for three and a half decades. Yvonne Desportes died the day after her eighty-sixth birthday in 1993.

Desportes composed four solo pieces for the trombone, three of which were published in 1981. *Des chansons dans la coulisse* (*Songs Within the Slide*), *L'exploit de la coulisse* (*The Feat of the Slide*), and *Un petit air dans le vent* (*A Little Tune in the Wind*) are all short character pieces for the instrument. Her first solo for trombone was written for the *Solo de Concours* in 1932, a busy year for the *Prix de Rome* winner. *Fantaisie* is a four-and-a-half-minute piece that explores the sonorities of French Impressionism with the imagery of Spanish bullfighting. The range of the work is Bb1 to Cb4, but there is an *ossia* part to avoid the pedal B-flat, which would make the lowest note an F2. A three-measure

⁴⁰ Yvonne Desportes, *French Suite for 4 Clarinets*, YouTube, with The Concinnity Quartet, Matthew Erickson, Sarah Hafley, Matthew Jansen, and Sean Widger, posted by InterHarmony International Music Festival, December 8, 2013, accessed December 18, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5h3988Ky_A.

⁴¹ Yvonne Desportes, *La Foire aux Croûtes*, Duo Vivace, recorded 1993 on *Pictures For Piano And Percussion*, Audite95.433, 1993, streaming audio, 27:46. <https://jmu-naxosmusiclibrary-com.eu1.proxy.openathens.net/catalogue/item.asp?cid=Audite95.433>.

⁴² Yvonne Desportes, *Caracteres*, Sextuor de Clarinettes, recorded 1994 on *Claritmico*, Antes Edition BM31.9040, 1994, streaming audio, 15:42. <https://jmu-naxosmusiclibrary-com.eu1.proxy.openathens.net/catalogue/item.asp?cid=BM31.9040>.

cadenza features a descending chromatic scale which finishes with a perfect fifth leap to the pedal B-flat.⁴³ *Fantaisie* is rated as a grade 6 solo, suggesting suitability for late high school and early collegiate students.⁴⁴

The solo alternates between slower tempi and *Allegro scherzando* (quarter = 112). The tempo indications in the slower sections deserve some attention from the performer. An *Andante* (quarter = 58) opens the work, a *Piú lento* (quarter = 63) includes a soaring Impressionist melody, and a highly chromatic cadenza resolves into the final *Allegro scherzando*. A three-measure *Moderato* (quarter = 60) interrupts the first *Allegro scherzando* section, which performers should approach as the most difficult transition in the solo since there is no consistent subdivision between the two tempos. The melodic contour of the work varies between wide arpeggios, chromatic passages and occasional repeated notes for rhythmic intensity. *Fantaisie* is no longer in print, but copies are in circulation through Interlibrary Loan.

Jules Mazellier, *Solo de Concours* (1934)

Jules Mazellier was born in 1879, the first of many major life events to occur in years ending with 9. He won the *Prix de Rome* in 1909, was married in 1929, and passed away in 1959. Mazellier moved to Paris to study at the Conservatory just prior to the turn of the century, where he studied with composition teacher Charles Lenepveu and competed multiple times for the *Prix de Rome*. After a second-place finish in 1907, Mazellier won the First Grand Prize in 1909 for his setting of the cantata *La Roussalka*.⁴⁵

⁴³ Yvonne Desportes, *Fantaisie*. (Boston: The Cundy-Bettoney Company, 1970), 2.

⁴⁴ Thompson and Lemke, 29.

⁴⁵ Montagne, "Musica et Memoria – Prix de Rome."

Mazellier composed across several genres, including operas, symphonies and chamber instrumental works. He is perhaps most remembered for his work in opera, both as composer and conductor. He set the texts of several different librettists in his career, but set his own libretto for his comic opera, *La villa Médicis* (1923). The three-act work was rediscovered in 2012 and rescored as a one-hour concert version, which was performed in the fall of 2013 at the Autunno de Musica Festival in Italy's Villa Medici.⁴⁶ Mazellier was appointed conductor of the *Opéra-Comique* from 1918-1922, and later taught in the choral area at the Paris Conservatory from 1930-1945.⁴⁷ In 1929, Mazellier married Marthe Ingrand, a dramatic soprano twenty-three years his junior.

Several of Mazellier's instrumental works were used for the *concours* at the Paris Conservatory, however, the only piece commissioned for the trombone contest was the generically titled *Solo de Concours* in 1934. This composition is in continuous binary form, with an opening *Andante espressivo* (quarter = 54) followed by a contrasting section marked *Allegro risoluto* (quarter = 100).⁴⁸ Mazellier's operatic approach to melodic invention is evident throughout the first half of this solo. The key signature implies b minor, but the primary theme of the *Andante espressivo* is in e minor. The secondary theme begins on the dominant B Major. The *Allegro risoluto* is firmly within b minor tonality, giving the initial key signature delayed authenticity.

Solo de Concours was given a difficulty grade of 7, deeming it a worthy pursuit for university- or conservatory-level students.⁴⁹ The range of the work spans two octaves and

⁴⁶ "Autunno in Musica," Villa Medici, accessed January 9, 2021, <https://www.villamedici.it/en/other-events/autunno-in-musica/>.

⁴⁷ Montagne, "Musica et Memoria – Prix de Rome."

⁴⁸ Jules Mazellier, *Solo de Concours*. (Paris: Buffet Crampon, 1934), 1.

⁴⁹ Thompson and Lemke, 41.

a fifth, from F#2 to C#5. While there are several passages in tenor clef, the majority of the solo is written in bass clef. A straight mute is required twice, as the secondary theme from the *Andante espressivo* returns in the latter half of the work, but the performer must be prepared to remove the mute quickly and transition back into un-muted playing in just a few short beats.⁵⁰ The solo is one-hundred forty-six measures long, with an expected performance time of seven minutes. There is conflicting information on the current publication status of *Solo de Concours*. One online retailer claims the work remains in print and is available through International Music Company,⁵¹ but the publisher's website maintains no catalogued entries composed by Jules Mazellier.⁵²

Raymond Loucheur, *Hjalmar* (1947)

Raymond Loucheur was born in 1899 in Tourcoing, a northern French city on the Belgian border. He studied in the Normandy city of Le Havre before moving to Paris. While enrolled at the Paris Conservatory, he studied with many notable teachers, including harmony with Nadia Boulanger, composition with Paul Vidal and conducting with Vincent d'Indy. Loucheur won the *Prix de Rome* in 1928, for his setting of the cantata *Héraklés à Delphes*.

Loucheur spent most of his career as a music educator and advocate for music education. He held several significant teaching posts within France before being named the director of the Paris Conservatory from 1956-1962. As a composer, Loucheur wrote ballets,

⁵⁰ Mazellier, 2.

⁵¹ "Solo De Concours in B Minor," Solo de Concours in B Minor by Jules Mazellier " Sheet Music for Trombone, accessed February 10, 2021, <https://www.all-sheetmusic.com/Wind-Instruments/Trombone/Solo-de-Concours-in-B-Minor.html>.

⁵² "International Music Co. Catalog," Shop the International Music Co. Catalog, accessed February 10, 2021, <https://internationalmusicco.com/search.php?shop=shop&sp=>.

vocal solos, chamber music, symphonies and other orchestral works. One of his most notable orchestral pieces, *Rapsodie Malgache* (1945), was composed for the fiftieth anniversary of Madagascar's attachment to France. The four movements of this work depict different aspects of Malagasy life: *I. Les Musiciens (The Musicians)*; *II. Les Piroguiers (The Canoers)*; *III. Les Sorciers (The Wizards)*; and *IV. Les Guerriers (The Warriors)*. Loucheur's blending of national and exotic elements creates a unique sonic narrative of the French-Malagasy relationship.

Loucheur composed *Hialmar* for the *Solo de Concours* in 1947. *Hialmar* is seventy-five measures in length, but is over six minutes in duration due to slow tempi throughout. The quarter note equals forty-six at the beginning of the solo, and is marked at seventy-two at the climax of the piece.⁵³ The solo is ideal for advanced college-level performers with a difficulty of grade 7. The degree of difficulty is due to long, sustained phrases and range demands. The range of the work is three octaves and a fourth, A1 to D5. There is an *ossia* option to play a Bb4 instead of the D5 at the end of measure thirty-seven, however, there is no such *ossia* for the Db5 in the measure prior. Similarly, measure sixty-five includes an *ossia* to replace the D5 with a B#4, but does not offer an *ossia* for the C#5 one beat later. Measures forty-nine to fifty-two call for *Sourdine*, but the performer must make a quick transition to *ôtez la Sourd* in two beats.⁵⁴

Loucheur based this solo on an 1862 poem by Charles-Marie René Leconte de Lisle (1818-1894), *Le cœur de Hialmar (The Heart of Hialmar)*. The poem is set between the moment an army has lost its battle and when its last soldier, Hialmar, draws his final breath. His dying wish is for a raven, "the dark messenger," to break open his chest and deliver his

⁵³ Raymond Loucheur, *Hialmar* (Paris: Editions Durand, 1947), 1.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

heart to his beloved. The text offers a grave depiction of war from the perspective of one soldier's heartbreak. Loucheur immediately introduces the "heart" of Hjalmar's character in the pulsing piano accompaniment, and the soloist begins the lament in measure three. There is no discernible correlation between the nine stanzas of Leconte de Lisle's poem and the form of Loucheur's solo, however, Loucheur breaks from *Solo de Concours* tradition to present a through-composed work that matches the drama and heartbreak of Leconte de Lisle's text. *Hjalmar* also provides a contrast to the contest norm, as its programmatic approach presents the performer with the additional challenge of musical storytelling, which is largely absent from earlier solos with generic titles. Editions Durand currently publishes this solo, and it is distributed by Hal Leonard.⁵⁵

Eugène Bigot, *Variations* (1949)

Eugène Bigot was born in 1888 in Rennes in the northwest of France. After winning awards in harmony at the Rennes Conservatory, he moved to Paris to study at the Conservatory with Xavier Leroux and Paul Vidal.⁵⁶ By awards earned, Bigot does not seem as accomplished as other composers in this document, however, his career as a conductor was one of great renown, holding posts with *Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France*, *Concerts Lamoureux*, *Opéra-Comique*, and the Orchestra at the Paris Conservatory from 1923-1925.⁵⁷ He also conducted *Ballets Suédois* and composed several ballet scores while

⁵⁵ HalLeonard.com, "Hjalmar - Trombone and Piano," Hal Leonard Online, accessed February 12, 2021, <https://www.halleonard.com/product/50564008/hjalmar>.

⁵⁶ Denis Havard de la Montagne, "Eugene Bigot," Musica et Memoria, accessed January 2, 2021, <http://www.musimem.com/bigot.htm>.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

touring with the ensemble. Although not primarily a composer, he wrote several instrumental works for trombone, saxophone, horn, organ and piano.

Two of Bigot's trombone works were commissioned for the *Solo de Concours* at the Paris Conservatory. The 1931 selection, *Impromptu*, begins with a simplistic chant, which is then altered several times as if the soloist is improvising on the initial tune. This work is the more widely performed of the two contest solos, and has been recorded by trombonists Hiroyuki Odagiri and Jacques Mauger,⁵⁸ the latter of whom is a graduate of the Paris Conservatory. Bigot composed *Variations pour trombone et piano* (henceforth *Variations*) in 1949, and the work was selected again as the competition piece in 1981. As the title of the piece suggests, this solo is a set of variations based on a theme which Bigot introduces at the end of the introduction. It is worth noting that while theme and variation solos are commonplace in the trombone repertoire, this form was not typical within the contest tradition at the Paris Conservatory.

Variations begins with a *Cantabile* introduction (quarter = 56) in the key of B-flat Major. The introduction offers the soloist the opportunity to showcase their lyrical sensitivities. Bigot introduces the thematic material at the end of the *Cantabile*, before the modulating accompaniment provides the transition into the *Comodo* section (quarter = 92), now in the key of G Major. The soloist presents the full statement of the theme, a ten-measure extended phrase with pentatonic familiarity. As the *Comodo* section continues, the performer must navigate rhythmic and melodic embellishments to the theme.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Dale Sorensen, "Solo Trombone CDs," Discography - Solo Trombone CDs, accessed December 11, 2020, <http://www.islandtrombone.com/soloCD.html>.

⁵⁹ Eugène Bigot, *Variations* (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1949), 1.

Bigot's next variation, *Gracioso* ("clown-like"), features playful dialogue between pianist and muted soloist. This section requires rhythmic precision to navigate off-beat glissandi and inconveniently placed grace notes.⁶⁰ A *Scherzando* in 3/8 (eighth = 184) follows, which the soloist undoubtedly should approach as one strong beat with three small subdivisions. This section should be performed nimbly, despite the technical difficulties: brisk arpeggios, metric modulation, a two-measure trill from Gb4 to Ab4, and a sustained Db5.⁶¹ Bigot concludes the work with an *Impetuoso* variation in 6/8 and 2/4 (dotted quarter = 168). Technical challenge exists more abundantly in the accompaniment, which flourishes while the soloist provides a powerfully rousing finish to the piece, heavily based on the thematic material heard throughout the work.⁶²

The difficulty of *Variations* warranted a rating of grade 7, which is optimal for study and performance by collegiate musicians.⁶³ Range demands provide some challenge, as the piece covers over two-and-a-half octaves from F2 to Db5, although an *ossia* passage ascends to D5. The glissandi and trills also create a degree of difficulty. The solo is two-hundred forty-seven measures in length, and the duration is between five-and-a-half and six minutes. *Variations* is available through Alphonse Leduc/Hal Leonard.⁶⁴

Claude Pascal, *Pastorale Héroïque* (1952)

Claude Pascal was born in Paris in 1921, into a family with modest means. He was an excellent student at the Paris Conservatory, winning awards in the disciplines of music

⁶⁰ Ibid, 2.

⁶¹ Ibid, 2-3.

⁶² Ibid, 3.

⁶³ Thompson and Lemke, 18.

⁶⁴ HalLeonard.com, "Variations (Trombone And Piano)," Hal Leonard Online, accessed February 10, 2021, <https://www.halleonard.com/product/48181306/variations-trombone-and-piano>.

theory, harmony, counterpoint and music history. He also won an award in composition while studying with Henri Büsser. Perhaps the crowning achievement for Pascal, however, was composing the 1945 *Prix de Rome* winning score for the cantata *La farce du contre Bandier*. He won the prize jointly with Marcel Bitsch, another composer who has written for the trombone *Solo de Concours (Ricercale, 1970)*⁶⁵. Claude Pascal passed away in February 2017, at the age of 96. His death marked the end of the *Prix de Rome* era, as he was the last living recipient of the award that was discontinued in 1968.⁶⁶

Pascal enjoyed an active and diverse career as conductor, educator, music critic and composer. He led the *Opéra-Comique* as its director, taught at the Paris Conservatory, and reviewed musical performances for Paris's newspaper *Le Figaro*. Pascal is best known as a composer who maintained an openness to contemporary sounds, but felt most comfortable in traditional systems of tonality.⁶⁷ His vast *oeuvre* of compositions displays his eclectic musical palette, spanning the symphonic, vocal, instrumental and chamber genres. His notable works for brass include *Sonata for horn and piano* (1963), *Six Pièces Variées* for trumpet (1965) and *Equinoxe* for horn (2004).⁶⁸ Pascal composed *Improvisation en forme de canon* for trombone and piano in 1958, a piece that has not received any known performances or recordings.⁶⁹ His *Sonate en 6 minutes 30* for tuba or bass trombone (1966) has been performed, and there are video recordings on YouTube.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Lemke, 60.

⁶⁶ Pierre Gervasoni, "Mort Du Compositeur Claude Pascal," *Le Monde.fr* (Le Monde, March 7, 2017), https://www.lemonde.fr/musiques/article/2017/03/07/mort-du-compositeur-claude-pascal_5090254_1654986.html.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Denis Havard de la Montagne, "Claude Pascal," *Musica et Memoria*, accessed January 10, 2021, http://www.musimem.com/Pascal_Claude.htm.

⁶⁹ Sorensen.

⁷⁰ Claude Pascal, *Sonate en 6 minutes 30*, YouTube, with Denson Paul Pollard and Kimberly Carballo, posted by Denson Paul Pollard, July 30, 2020, accessed January 10, 2021, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TsXpTJI_JEU; Claude Pascal, *Sonate en 6 minutes 30*, YouTube, with

Pascal was commissioned to compose the 1952 trombone contest solo at the Paris Conservatory. *Pastorale Héroïque* does not follow the standard binary form of previous contest works. Instead, Pascal took a through-composed approach to this solo. The initial stylistic marking is *Allant* (quarter = 126),⁷¹ and there are few changes in tempo, aside from instances of *poco ritardando* and a *cadence* toward the end. The challenge in this work comes from range demands and rhythmic precision to differentiate dotted-eighth-sixteenth and eighth-note triplets. The solo part in *Pastorale Héroïque* ranges from Bb1 to C#5, although there is an *ossia* part that provides the performer the option to play Bb2 instead of the pedal.⁷² If that choice is made, the lowest note of the work becomes F2. The European method of evaluation deems the difficulty of this work a grade 5.⁷³ This is, perhaps, the grade with which I most disagree out of the repertoire discussed. The technical facility of the average high school student, which is represented by a grade 5 designation, is unlikely to navigate significant portions of this piece.

Repertoire for Continued Research

Several other solos from the Paris Conservatory present an opportunity for further study. The nine compositions discussed in this project represent under one-third of the unrecorded literature from the *Solo de Concours* tradition, as twenty-two additional pieces fit the scope of this research. Of these solos, sixteen were composed after World War II,

David Zerkel and Damon Denton, recorded October, 2001, posted by David Zerkel, December 12, 2014, accessed January 10, 2021, streaming audio, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_tZXfmfFe70.

⁷¹ Claude Pascal. *Pastorale Héroïque*. (Paris: Editions Durand, 1952), 1.

⁷² *Ibid*, 3.

⁷³ Thompson and Lemke, 44.

offering a specific purview that is historically and harmonically intriguing. The following *Solo de Concours* works have not yet been documented in publicly available recordings.

Georges Pfeiffer	<i>Solo (de trombone)</i>	1899, 1906
Bernard Crocé-Spinelli	<i>Solo de Concours</i>	1903
Théodore Dubois	<i>Solo de Concert</i>	1909
Eugene Cools	<i>Allegro de Concert</i>	1911
Charles Tournemire	<i>Légende</i>	1930
Henri Büsser	<i>Phoebus Variations</i>	1933
Michel Spisak	<i>Concertino</i>	1951
Pierre Lepetit	<i>Piece de Concert</i>	1955
Maurice Franck	<i>Fanfare, Andante et Allegro</i>	1958
Jules Semler-Collery	<i>Fantaisie Lyrique</i>	1960
Georges Hugon	<i>Introduction et Allegro</i>	1961
Alain Weber	<i>Allegro (First mvt. of Concerto)</i>	1964
Alfred Désenclos	<i>Plain-Chant et Allegretto</i>	1965
Claude Arrieu	<i>Mouvements</i>	1966
Marcel Dautremet	<i>Coulissiana</i>	1967
Pierick Houdy	<i>Largo et Toccata</i>	1968
Marcel Bitsch	<i>Ricercare</i>	1970
Charles Chaynes	<i>Impulsions</i>	1971
Edith Lejet	<i>Musique</i>	1973
Jacques Bondon	<i>Chant et Danse</i>	1974
Pierre Durand	<i>Parcours</i>	1975

Jean-Paul Rieunier

Silences

1976

Appendices

Recording Personnel and Information

Recording Location

Bridgewater Church of the Brethren, Bridgewater, Virginia, US

Album Personnel

Trombone: Kyle Remnant

Piano: Amy Robertson, James Madison University

Recording Engineer: SFC Jon Seipp, The United States Army Band “Pershing’s Own”

Artistic Producer and Project Advisor: Dr. Andrew Lankford, James Madison University

Album Artwork: Jordyn Shultz, James Madison University

Liner Notes and Album Artwork

“In naming this album *First Impressions*, I created a title that embodied the recording project on multiple levels: this is my debut CD as a trombone soloist; it is the first available reference recording of each selected piece; and much of the repertoire is distinctly impressionist. In my mind, it was the perfect title for the imperfect work of unearthing underrepresented works in the trombone repertoire.

This recording comprises trombone pieces from the *Solo de Concours* (contest solo) tradition of the esteemed Paris Conservatory. Each academic year, a contest work is composed to test students’ lyrical and technical facility on the instrument. Many contest solos have become part of the standard trombone repertoire, however, the compositions on this album have not received equal popularity and performance frequency.

From Alfred Bachelet's *Morceau de Concours* (1901) at the turn of the 20th Century, to Claude Pascal's *Pastorale Héroïque* (1952) after World War II, *First Impressions* presents a chronological musical journey through nine hidden gems within the *Solo de Concours* tradition. It is my hope that other musicians will recognize the musical and pedagogical value of this music, so that these solos may again receive some consideration in the trombone repertoire."



Figure 1: *First Impressions* Album Cover (Artwork by Jordyn Shultz).



Figure 2: CD Folio Layout (Design through discmakers.com).

French Terminology Within Representative Works

For the sake of understanding a composer's intent, it is important to translate and define each of the written stylistic instructions within the work. Although some French words are close cognates to their English counterparts, this appendix defines every French term that appears in these works. Whereas Italian is the widely accepted language of most composers of art music, and whereas the scope of this study is on the music of French composers, this appendix only defines the French stylistic markings within the representative works, excepting one uncommon Italian term in Eugène Bigot's *Variations*. Terms are defined in order of appearance within each work, and works are presented chronologically.

Bachelet, Alfred - *Morceau de Concours*

<i>bien soutenu</i>	well supported
<i>un peu plus vite</i>	a little bit faster
<i>cédez</i>	yield, slow down
<i>court</i>	cadenza

Büsser, Henri - *Pièce en mi Bémol*

<i>à l'aise</i>	comfortable
<i>très rythmé</i>	very rhythmic

Barat, Joseph Edouard - *Pièce en mi Bémol*

<i>plus vite</i>	faster
<i>1er Mouvt (premiere mouvement)</i>	original tempo
<i>trés rall.</i>	very slowing

Büsser, Henri - *Etude de Concert*

<i>a l'aise</i>	comfortable
<i>animez.</i>	animated, move forward

Desportes, Yvonne - *Fantaisie*

<i>tres large</i>	very large, broad
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Mazellier, Jules - *Solo de Concours*

<i>très soutenu et bien chanté</i>	very sustained and well sung
<i>bien chanté</i>	well sung
<i>mettez la sourd.</i>	mute in
<i>ôtez la sourd.</i>	mute out
<i>en élargissant</i>	widening, broadening

Loucheur, Raymond - *Hjalmar**sourdine* muted*ôtez la sourd.* mute out**Bigot, Eugène - *Variations****mettez la sourdine* mute in*sourdine* muted*ôtez la sourdine* mute out*Gracioso* (Italian) clown-like**Pascal, Claude - *Pastorale Héroïque****allant* going, moving*décidé* decided*clair* clear*pesant* heavy*calme* calm*en ralentissant* slowing down

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