

THE SOPRANO TROMBONE HOAX*

Howard Weiner

The soprano or discant trombone is the stepchild of the trombone family. Developed late in comparison to the other trombones, it hardly found employment by composers of stature; only Johann Sebastian Bach called for a soprano trombone in three of his cantatas. By chance and through the absence of historical knowledge in following generations, however, Heinrich Schütz, Christoph Willibald Gluck, and Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart were also brought into connection with this instrument. Thus, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries various false “facts” concerning the soprano trombone have made the rounds. In concentrated form, they are to be found in *Posaune*, the eighth volume of Hans Kunitz’ series *Die Instrumentation*, first published in 1959 by Breitkopf & Härtel.¹ Kunitz, however, did not content himself with a simple retelling of the usual legends, but added his own embellishments. In spite of the obvious source-historical problems in Kunitz’ book, other writers have apparently considered it to be credible, repeatedly employing it as a source for their own publications. More recently, additional works betraying Kunitz’ influence have appeared, including the article “Posaune” in the new *MGG*.² Besides pricking the bubble of Kunitz’ hoax, I will also present early references and sources that may help us form a new, more accurate picture of the soprano trombone.

In attempting to verify Kunitz’ information, one is immediately confronted by a lack of source references. The reason for this is simple: Little of what Kunitz writes about the history of the trombone is based on historical fact. Let us take, for example, the very first sentence of his version of the soprano trombone’s “historical development”:

The *soprano trombone*, also called *discant trombone*, has belonged to the trombone family from the very start, thus at least since the beginning of the sixteenth century.³

There is no evidence to support this assertion. Neither graphic depictions nor written descriptions of soprano trombones exist from the sixteenth century. Instruments as well as a dedicated repertoire are likewise completely lacking. But even where Kunitz’ source is evident, one has to be very careful:

Since the beginning of the seventeenth century, one differentiated between the following types of trombone:

1. *Trombone Soprano* = Soprano (Discant) Trombone
2. *Trombone Alto* also called *Trombonino* or *Tromboncino* = Alto Trombone
3. *Trombone Tenore* also called *Gemeine Rechte Posaune* or *Tuba minor* = Tenor Trombone

4. *Trombone Basso* also called *Trombone grande* or *Trombone majore* or *Tuba major* = Bass Trombone, *Quart Trombone*, *Quint Trombone*
 5. *Trombone doppio* also called *Oktavposaune* or *Tuba maxima* = Contrabass Trombone⁴

Kunitz does not cite a source for this list, but the terminology points to Michael Praetorius' *Syntagma Musicum*,⁵ this, of course, being the only early seventeenth-century source that provides such an itemization. The following table shows the similarities and, more importantly, the differences:

Praetorius	Kunitz
	1. Trombone Soprano Sopranposaune Diskantposaune
1. Alt oder Discant Posaun Trombino Trombetta picciola	2. Trombone Alto Trombonino Tromboncino Altposaune
2. Gemeine rechte Posaun Tuba minor Trombetta Trombone piccolo	3. Trombone Tenore Gemeine Rechte Posaun Tuba minor Tenorposaune
3. Quart-Posaun Trombon grande Trombone majore Tuba major Quint-Posaun	4. Trombone Basso Trombone grande Trombone majore Tuba major Baßposaune Quartposaune Quintposaune
4. Octav-Posaun Trombone doppio Tuba maxima la trombone all Ottava basso	5. Trombone doppio Oktavposaune Tuba maxima Kontrabaßposaune

As one can see, Kunitz' designations for tenor, bass, and contrabass trombones are largely identical to those given by Praetorius. But something strange has happened with Praetorius'

Alt oder Discant Posaun. The terms no longer agree, and one instrument has become two: The “alto or discant trombone” has become an “alto and a discant trombone.” In this manner, the four types of trombone specified by Praetorius become five in Kunitz.

Since Kunitz is not the only one who has had trouble interpreting Praetorius correctly, it may be worthwhile to examine the original. On page 31 of the second volume of *Syntagma Musicum*, we read:

Posaun ... deren seynd vierley Arten oder Sorten [Trombones ... of which there are four types or sorts] (Figure 1).



Figure 1

Michael Praetorius, *Syntagma musicum* II (Wolfenbüttel, 1619), p. 31.

On page 20 a chart of ranges shows “a complete set”:

Ein ganz Accort. Tromboni: Posaunen. 1. Sort: Octav Posaun. 2. Sort: Quart Pos[au]n. 3. Sort: Gemeine oder rechte Posaun. 4. Sort: Alt Pos[au]n (Figure 2)

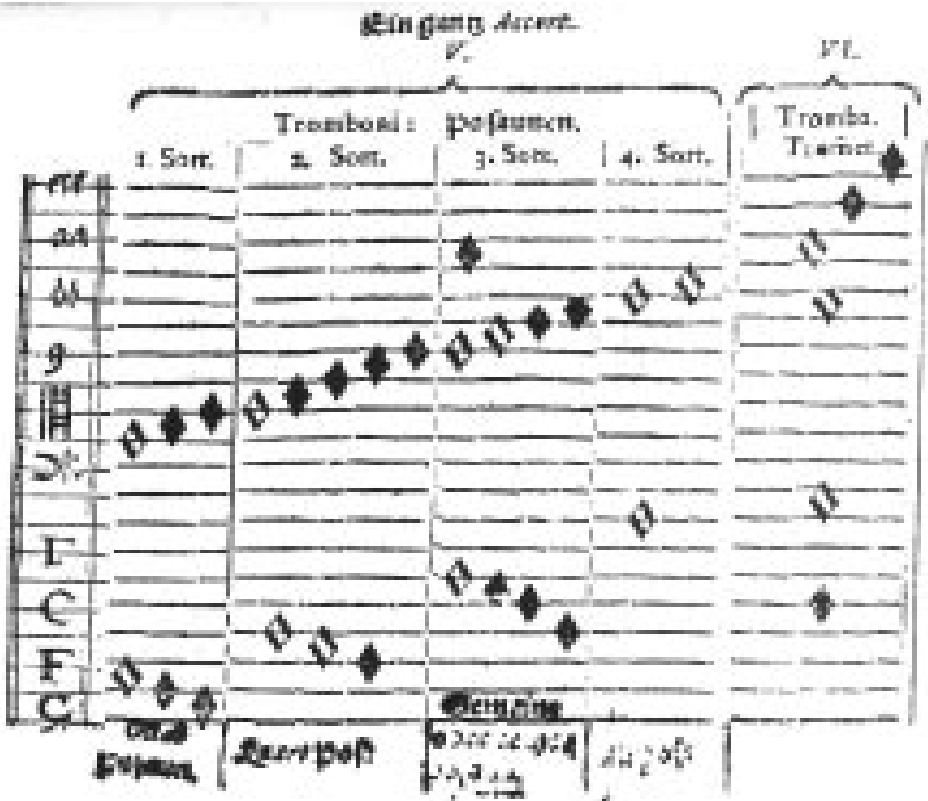


Figure 2
Praetorius, *Syntagma musicum* II, p. 20.

And on page 13:

Ein Accort od' Stimmwerk von Instrumenten, helt in sich etliche unterschiedliche Sorten: Nemlich ... Vierley (Sorten / die) Posaunen: [A set or whole consort of instruments consists of various sorts: Namely ... sets with four sorts / the trombones:] Alt Posaun, Gemeine rechte Posaun, Quart Posaun, Octav Posaun (Figure 3).

DE ORGANOGRAPHIA.

		organographia							
Organographia (Instrumenta non in se habentia sonum proprium)	1. Trasparily (Clarinet / Clar)	Clarinet Bass Clarinet	Clarinet Alt. Tenor Bass	1. 2. 3.	1. Clarinet				
	2. Trasparily	Trompeten Trompeten II	Trompeten Alt. Tenor Bass	Trompeten Alt. Tenor Bass	4. 5.	2. Trompeten			
							Hornen Hornen	Hornen Alt. Tenor Bass	6. 7.
		Fagotten Oboen Oboen	Fagotten Oboen Oboen	8. 9.	4. Fagotten				
						3. Blasparily	Trompeten Hornen Hornen	Trompeten Hornen Hornen	10. 11. 12.
	Fagotten Oboen	Fagotten Oboen	13. 14.	6. Fagotten					
					Hornen				
	4. Blasparily (permanen)	Hornen Hornen	Hornen Hornen	Hornen Hornen	16. 17.	8. Hornen			
							Hornen	Hornen	Hornen
	5. Blasparily (Blasparily)	Hornen Hornen	Hornen Hornen	Hornen Hornen	19. 20.	10. Hornen			
							Hornen	Hornen	Hornen

Figure 3
Praetorius, *Syntagma musicum* II, p. 13.

It should also be noted that the “Theatrum Instrumentorum” appended to *Syntagma Musicum* II contains illustrations of only these four types of trombone. In short, the soprano trombone is neither mentioned nor depicted in Praetorius, and is also not to be found in any other source from the beginning of the seventeenth century.⁶

This, however, does not stop Kunitz from blaming Praetorius for the instrument’s lack of use:

The *soprano trombone*, also called *discant trombone*, has belonged to the trombone family from the very start, thus at least since the beginning of the sixteenth century. After a relatively short time, however, it fell into a sort of “disrepute” among instrumentalists and, as a result, also in the specialist literature, something that has not been rectified to the present day. As early as 1618 Praetorius declared that the soprano trombone was “insufficient in sound and technique.” And this judgement, which is found in such an important and authoritative work as his “*Syntagma Musicum*,” has been uncritically accepted throughout all the following centuries, and indeed, not only in the specialist literature, but also by composers and instrumentalists.⁷

And in another passage,

The reason given by Praetorius, that the soprano trombone was not equal to the other trombones in sound and technique, cannot be considered correct.⁸

Apart from the fact that Praetorius was not talking about the soprano trombone at all, this interpretation is rather arbitrary. Actually, Praetorius’ original text reads quite a bit differently (Figure 1):

Alto or discant trombone: ... with which a melody can be played very well and naturally, although the sound in such a small corpus is not as good as when the tenor trombone, with good embouchure and practice, is played in this high register.⁹

One will also search in vain for the “judgement” that the soprano trombone was “insufficient in sound and technique”—a “judgement” that Kunitz puts into Praetorius’ mouth. This quotation actually stems from Hermann Eichborn, and is found on page 23 of his book *Die Trompete in alter und neuer Zeit*, published in 1881.¹⁰

But Kunitz also identifies other guilty parties:

The real reason for its infrequent use undoubtedly lay in the lack of ability and readiness on the part of musicians to occupy themselves with the instrument.¹¹

Now the “truth” comes out! The musicians are the villains in this piece. They refused to play an instrument for which the composers had not written any music, an instrument that did not even exist for much of the period in question. “The indolence and insufficient technical ability”¹² of these musicians is hardly to be believed. And as if that were not enough,

As the cornett, during the Renaissance technically improved, but still very mediocre in terms of sound quality, came more and more into use during the Baroque period, instrumentalists often made it easy for themselves and simply employed the cornett, with its easy-to-play fingering system, instead of the difficult-to-use soprano trombone.¹³

It apparently rankles Kunitz that another instrument occupies the position he would liked to see occupied by the soprano trombone:

In those cases in which the *cornett* is employed as the *highest voice of a closed trombone group*, it is in fact a *makeshift solution* [italics original].¹⁴

He even speaks of

the vulgar, base, and dull sound of the primitive cornett.¹⁵

And when Kunitz refers to the cornett as an instrument that has been “declared unusable for art music,” as he does on page 798, one has only to turn back one page to determine that it was Kunitz himself who declared,

In view of all this, the cornett cannot at all be considered an instrument appropriate for art music.¹⁶

We do not want or need to defend the honor of the cornett here. The relevant historical sources, not to mention present-day performers such as Bruce Dickey, Jean Tubéry, and William Dongois, give eloquent testimony as to the qualities and possibilities of this instrument.¹⁷ The cornett came upon the scene almost two hundred years before the soprano trombone, and was demonstrably required and employed as the highest voice of the “closed trombone group.” The cornett did not supplant the soprano trombone, nor did the soprano trombone supplant the cornett.

Nevertheless, an instrument has to have something to play, so Kunitz attempts to conjure up a repertoire:

The great masters, such as Schütz, Bach, Gluck, and Mozart employed the soprano trombone in the four-part trombone group usual at that time, and indeed until the end of the eighteenth century.¹⁸

With this statement Kunitz calls up four of the most important composers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as witnesses for his hoax.

The soprano trombone was initially a full-fledged member of the trombone group, as can be recognized from the works of Heinrich Schütz, in which the closed, four-part trombone group, made up of soprano, alto, tenor, and bass trombones, is to be found.¹⁹

And

As already stated ... the four-part group with the soprano trombone still predominated in the works of Heinrich Schütz.²⁰

But just how “predominant” is the “four-part trombone group” in the works of Heinrich Schütz? Schütz called for trombones in thirty-two works, of which nineteen have a three-part, and only seven a four-part trombone group. And none of these seven works require a four-part trombone group with soprano, alto, tenor, and bass trombones.

For Kunitz, the combination of soprano, alto, tenor, and bass clefs is the “usual manner of notation”²¹ for the “centuries-old, traditional, pure four-part trombone group.”²² My research has turned up seventy-three four-part trombone groups in sixty-eight instrumental and vocal works of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with a total of fifteen different clef combinations. The most frequent was the combination alto-tenor-tenor-bass, which appeared twenty-three times. Kunitz’ “usual manner of notation” did not turn up at all.

It should be noted, by the way, that one cannot infer the intended instrument simply from the clef of the part. A part in alto clef, for instance, does not necessarily demand an alto trombone. Much more important is the tessitura. For example, although many of Schütz’ “high” trombone parts are notated in alto clef, all but a few remain within the range given by Praetorius as normal for the tenor trombone—*E - a'* (See Figure 2).

An ensemble of soprano, alto, tenor, and bass trombones, notated in Kunitz’ “usual” clef combination, is found in three cantatas by Johann Sebastian Bach: *Ach Gott, vom Himmel sieh' darein* (BWV 2), *Ich hatte viel Bekümmernis* (BWV 21) and *Aus tiefer Not schrei' ich zu dir* (BWV 38). Strangely only Cantata 2 attracts Kunitz’ attention; Cantatas 21 and 38 are simply ignored. Instead, Kunitz attempts to smuggle the cantatas *Sehet, welch' eine Liebe* (BWV 64) and *Also hat Gott die Welt geliebt* (BWV 68) into the canon of works with soprano trombone, although the highest parts of these works are labeled *cornettino* and *cornetto*, respectively. Kunitz’ reason?

Bach is to be considered one of the last representatives of the pure four-part trombone group, employing the real trombone family, reaching from the soprano to the bass instruments, whose usual notation: [soprano, alto, tenor, bass clefs] also predominates in his scores where he employs trombones, even when he sometimes ... labels the highest part with “cornetto.”²³

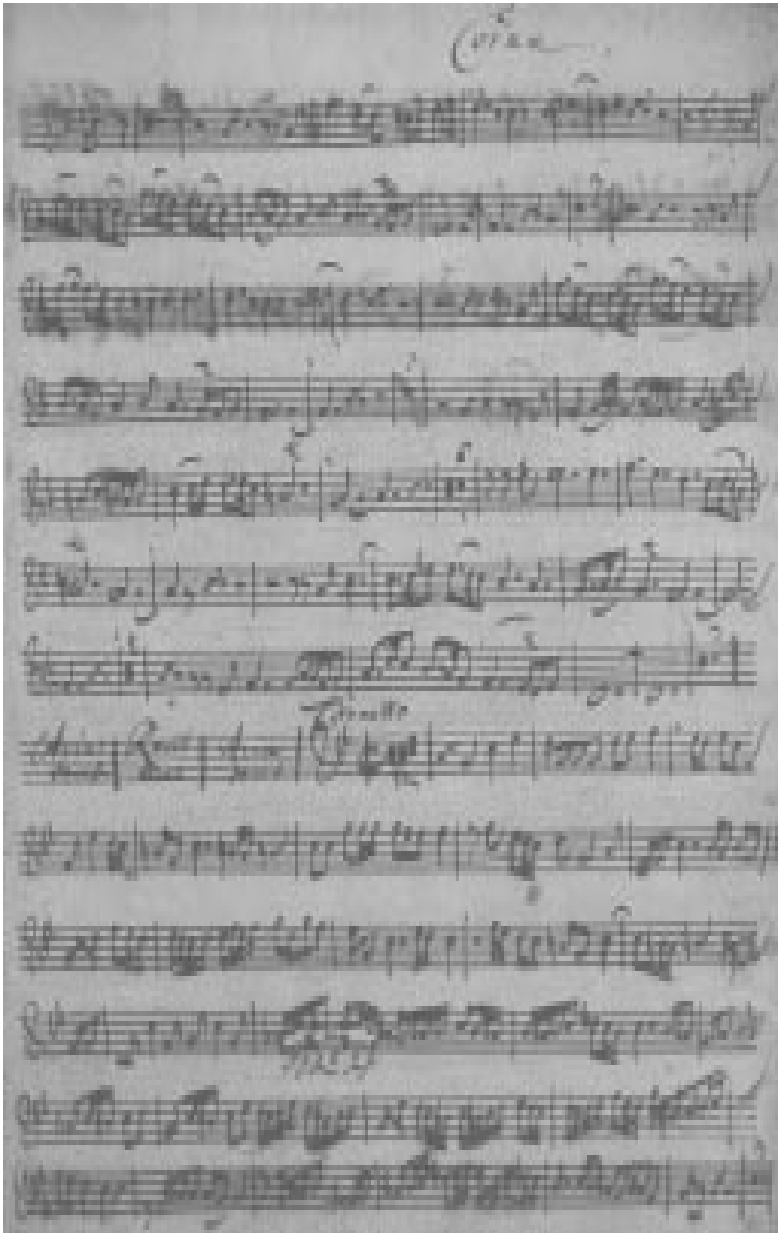


Figure 4

J.S. Bach, *Also hat Gott die Welt geliebt* (BWV 69), autograph parts, *Corno* (mvt. 1) and *Cornetto* (mvt. 5). (Leipzig, Bach-Archiv).

If we apply Kunitz' own criterion, however, we would automatically have to disqualify the highest part of Cantata 68 as a soprano trombone part. This autograph cornett part is not in soprano, but treble clef (Figure 4). The highest part of Cantata 64, labeled *cornettino*, also lacks a characteristic typical of a Bach trombone part: unlike all of Bach's authenticated trombone parts, this one is not transposed.²⁴

But why does Kunitz ignore Cantatas 21 and 38, even though both offer authentic soprano trombone parts?

It should be noted that the "cornetto" parts in Bach's cantatas were indeed written for the *Stadtpeifer* cornett in those cases in which they support, with simple sustained tones, the cantus firmus of the choir, without organic relationship to the trombone parts.²⁵

Accordingly, in Kunitz' view the cornetto and soprano trombone parts with a cantus firmus or simple chorale melody are actually cornett parts, and the cornetto and cornettino parts with numerous fast notes are actually soprano trombone parts!

In any case, especially at the beginning of the eighteenth century, the instrumentalists' arbitrary practice of simply substituting the cornett for the specified, but technically more difficult to control, soprano trombone had become so widespread that not only was a genius like Johann Sebastian Bach forced to make concessions in order to secure a performance of his cantatas, but at times the soprano trombone itself was designated as "cornetto."²⁶

These absurd assertions surely do not require comment. The last of these, however, comes up again in connection with Christoph Willibald Gluck:

Thus Gluck too made use of the soprano trombone under the name *Cornetto* in the Italian version of the score of his *Orpheus*.²⁷

Exceptionally, Kunitz cites a seemingly reliable source here, namely Hector Berlioz, who in his *Grand Traité d'Instrumentation* from 1843 did in fact state:

Only Gluck, in the Italian score of *Orfeo*, wrote for the soprano trombone, under the name *Cornetto*.²⁸

I must admit that I was rather astonished when I first read this. But Berlioz too was only human, and humans can err. In 1862, nineteen years after his treatise appeared, Berlioz published an essay about the 1859 production of *Orfeo* at the Théâtre Lyrique, in which he wrote,

At the time in which Gluck wrote *Orfeo* for Vienna, a wind instrument

was in use that even today is employed in some churches in Germany to accompany the chorales, and is called the cornetto. It is made of wood, has a conical bore and is played with a mouthpiece of brass or horn similar to that of a trumpet.

In the religious funeral ceremony held at Euridice's grave, in the first act of *Orfeo*, Gluck combined the cornetto with three trombones to accompany the four parts of the choir.²⁹

And the soprano trombone sneaked out the stage door. At first glance, Mozart's Mass in C Minor, K. 427, would also seem to provide evidence for the use of the soprano trombone. But when Kunitz claims that Mozart "explicitly labeled the trombone parts as Posaune I - IV,"³⁰ he is again fantasizing. In his autograph score, Mozart signaled where the trombones were to play and pause by means of appropriate indications in the vocal parts. Only in the first movement, Kyrie, are there three such markings in the soprano part: in measure 6, *tro:* (Figures 5 and 6), in measure 27 *Senz: trom.*, and in measure 86 *senz: tr.*. According



Figure 5

W.A. Mozart, Mass in C Minor (K. 427), autograph score, fol. 1^r (Kyrie) (Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin—Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Musikabteilung mit Mendelssohn-Archiv).

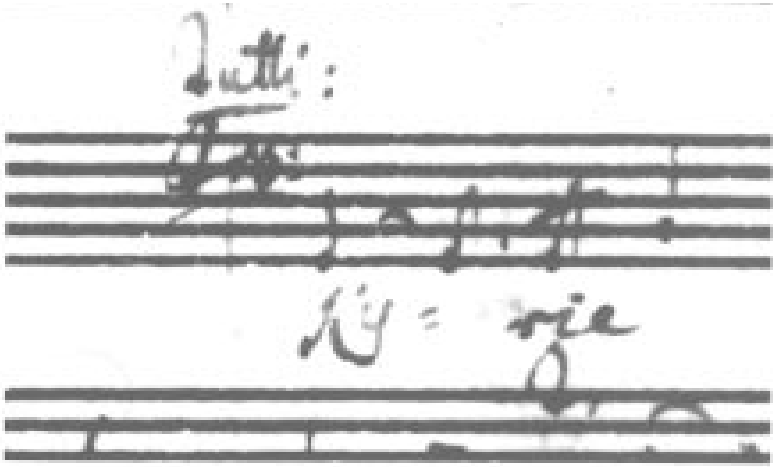


Figure 6
Detail of Figure 5.

to the editors of the *Neue Mozart Ausgabe*,

All indications for the participation of the trombones in the Kyrie were added to the autograph by Mozart only at a later point in time. This can be discerned at numerous places by the placement of the respective annotations or through the superscription over already existing characters. It is possible that Mozart performed this process rather mechanically and did not take care how often and in which part he placed the entries.³¹

There is, however, weighty evidence for Mozart's actual intentions. In the Sanctus, for example, Mozart himself wrote the indications *Trombone Imo*, *Trombone 2do*, and *Trombone 3tio*, corresponding to the alto, tenor, and bass vocal parts, respectively (Figures 7 and 8). Figure 9 shows a brace from the Hosanna, marked *3 Tromboni*, this too in Mozart's hand.

And last but not least, we have the *Trombone Imo* part from the first performance of the Mass in Salzburg in 1783 (Figure 10). This part is in the hand of Salzburg court musician Felix Hofstätter, who frequently copied music for the Mozart family. As can be seen, this part too corresponds to the alto voice line. There is obviously no place here for a soprano trombone.³²



Figure 7

W.A. Mozart, Mass in C Minor (K. 427), autograph score, fol. 69^r (Sanctus).



Figure 8

Detail of Figure 7.



Figure 9

W.A. Mozart, Mass in C Minor, K. 427, autograph score, fol. 70^v (detail of Hosanna)

With this we have uncovered the main points of the hoax and exposed Kunitz' history of the soprano trombone as a fabrication. Under normal circumstances, one would certainly dismiss Kunitz' book as a bizarre mixture of fantasy and fact (with the former greatly outweighing the latter) in the guise of a serious treatment of the trombone's history and usage. Yet Kunitz has managed to become an important source of "knowledge" about the soprano trombone, offering twenty-two pages of information on this instrument to those willing to overlook some very obvious flaws. Given the almost complete lack of documentary evidence concerning the soprano trombone, it is perhaps not surprising that many scholars and players have been willing to take Kunitz' information at face value. Be that as it may, by refuting the myths that until now have obscured our view of the soprano trombone, I hope to have created a much-needed *tabula rasa* as starting point for serious research into the instrument' history. To this end, I should also like to offer the early references and sources that I came upon while researching the present article.

The earliest piece of evidence is an actual instrument: A soprano trombone by Christian Kofahl, dated 1677, is the earliest known instrument of this type (Figure 11).³³



Figure 10

W.A. Mozart, Mass in C Minor (K. 427), *Trombone I^{mo}* part of the original performance material, Salzburg, 1783. (Reproduced with the kind permission of the Heilig Geist Kloster, Augsburg.)



Figure 11

Soprano trombone by Christian Kofahl, Grabow (Germany), 1677 (Kremsmünster,

Musikinstrumentenmuseum Schloss Kremsegg; photo by Lars Laubhold).

Several printed sources mention the soprano trombone. In his *Abbildung der Gemein-Nützlichen Haupt-Stände* (Regensburg, 1698), Christoff Weigel wrote that “the trombones are also made in various sizes, namely soprano, alto, tenor, bass, and quart trombones.”³⁴ In a similar work, Johann Samuel Halle’s *Werkstätte der heutigen Künste* (Brandenburg and Leipzig, 1764), it is stated that “there are four trombones; soprano, alto, tenor, and quart or quint trombones.”³⁵ A third source comes from Norway: The *Musikaliske Elementer* by Johann Daniel Berlin was published in 1744 in Trondheim. In the chapter “On playing the cornett,” Berlin wrote,

The cornett ... is generally used in loud and splendid music, and in accompaniment or together with trombones; it is employed on the highest part when there is no soprano trombone.

§2. However, even in such a case [*sic.*], one still prefers the cornett to the soprano trombone, because the cornett can be played gracefully.³⁶

Two manuscript sources from Leipzig are of interest to us here. Shortly after assuming the position of Thomaskantor in 1701, Johann Kuhnau submitted two inventories to the Leipzig town council, itemizing the music and instruments in the possession of the *Thomasschule*, the *Thomaskirche*, and the *Nicolaikirche*. In the second inventory, dated 22 May 1702, he stated,

Since the trombones are good church instruments, the ones here, however, very old and beat up and therefore not suitable to be used, it would be necessary to acquire new ones, and namely a pair of soprano trombones, in their stead.³⁷

Later, another hand added, “ist geschehen” (“it has been done”).³⁸

Almost seventy years later, on 2 August 1769, Johann Friedrich Doles, Bach’s pupil and successor as Thomaskantor (served 1756-1789), evaluated the playing of a candidate for the position of *Stadtpfeifer*:

The 1st *Kunstgeiger* Pfaffe... 3) The simple chorale on the soprano, alto, tenor, and bass trombone (the last of which none of his colleagues plays better than he and his brother, and which requires good lungs) he played well.³⁹

The earliest surviving works with soprano trombone parts also come from Leipzig, namely the three cantatas by Johann Sebastian Bach mentioned above. The above-mentioned Doles wrote twenty-six so-called *figurierte Choräle* and a cantata that require four trombones, with a soprano trombone apparently doubling the chorale melody in the highest voice.⁴⁰

Two Passions by Georg Philipp Telemann have soprano trombone parts, although not in their original versions. A St. John Passion from 1761 and a St. Mark Passion from 1767 were adapted in 1793 and 1788, respectively, by Telemann’s grandson Georg Michael Telemann for performances in Riga, where he was employed as church music director.⁴¹

And finally, there is a sizable repertoire of wind music with parts for soprano trombone, which comes from the Herrnhuter Brüdergemeine or Moravian Brethren. In Europe and in America the Moravians frequently employed a four-part trombone group with soprano, alto, tenor, and bass trombones. Among the collections of music from the second half of the eighteenth century that have come down to us are two from the Moravian community in Zeist, Holland. The first is a chorale book in score with 169 chorales for trombone quartet;⁴² the second, preserved in part books, contains twenty-nine pieces for trombone quartet.⁴³ In the holdings of the Moravian Music Foundation in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, there is a manuscript containing six sonatas for trombone quartet written by a composer named Cruse⁴⁴ (Figure 12) and a set of trombone chorale books dating from around 1790⁴⁵ (Figure 13). A similar set of trombone chorale books is also preserved in the Brethren’s House, Lititz, Pennsylvania.⁴⁶

Thus the soprano trombone apparently first appeared during the last quarter of the seventeenth century and found its primary usage in the Protestant Church, where it occasionally strengthened the soprano voice in the chorales. Foremost in using the instrument in this manner were the Moravians, who also developed an appropriate instrumental repertoire. In this way, the soprano trombone has led a marginal, yet honorable existence since the eighteenth century—and certainly has not deserved to have false honors heaped upon it by Hans Kunitz.



Figure 12

6 Sonaten auf Posaunen die Cruse (Winston-Salem, NC, Moravian Music Foundation, SCM 261, Salem Collegium Musicum collection).



Figure 13

Trombone chorale book (1790s?), soprano trombone part (Winston-Salem, NC, Moravian Music Foundation, SCM 261, Salem Collegium Musicum collection).

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NOTES

¹ This article is a revised version of a paper read at Toronto 2000: Musical Intersections. A German-language version appeared in the *Michaelsteiner Konferenzberichte* 60 (Blankenburg: Stiftung Kloster Michaelstein, 2001), pp. 67-82.

¹ Hans Kunitz, *Die Instrumentation: Ein Hand- und Lehrbuch*, vol. 8, *Posaune* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1959). See also Hans Kunitz, *Instrumenten-Brevier* (Wiesbaden: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1961, 2/1971).

² Works that cite Kunitz include the books *The Trombone* by Robin Gregory (London: Faber and Faber, 1973) and the *Handbuch der Musikinstrumentenkunde* by Erich Valentin (Regensburg: Gustav Bosse Verlag, 1986), the articles “Le Trombone alto” by Benny Sluchin in *Brass Bulletin* 61 (1988), “Strumenti a Fiato” by Georg Karstädt in the encyclopedia *La Musica* (Turin: Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 1966), and “Posaune” by Christian Ahrens in the new *MGG* (in which Ahrens at least calls some of Kunitz’ assertions into question). The *Lexikon Musikinstrumente*, ed. Wolfgang Ruf (Mannheim: Meyers Lexikonverlag, 1991), *Reclams Musikinstrumentenführer* by Ermanno Briner (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 1988), and Jörg Richter’s article “Die Diskantposaune” in *Brass Bul-*

letin 62 (1988) do not mention Kunitz, but the connection is clearly discernible.

³ Kunitz, *Posaune*, p. 794. “Die Sopranposaune, auch Diskantposaune genannt, gehört von Anfang an, also spätestens seit Beginn des 16. Jahrhunderts zur Familie der Posaunen.”

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 588. “Seit Anfang des 17. Jahrhunderts unterschied man folgende Arten ... der Posaune:”

⁵ Michael Praetorius, *Syntagma Musicum*, vol. 2 (Wolfenbüttel, 1619; rpt. Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1958), pp. 32-33.

⁶ An inventory from 1613 does mention “Zwey kleine alt oder Discant posaune” (“two small alto or discant trombones”) but from the context it is obvious that, as in Praetorius, alto trombones are meant. In a later inventory (1636) of the same collection these instruments are listed as “Zwey kleine discant Posaunen.” See Ernst Zulauf, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Landgräfllich-Hessischen Hofkapelle zu Cassel bis auf die Zeit Moritz des Gelehrten* (Ph.D. diss., Universität Leipzig, 1902), pp. 118, 134. See also Anthony C. Baines, “Two Cassel Inventories,” *Galpin Society Journal* 4 (1951): 33.

⁷ Kunitz, *Posaune*, p. 794. “Die Sopranposaune, auch Diskantposaune genannt, gehört von Anfang an, also spätestens seit Beginn des 16. Jahrhunderts zur Familie der Posaunen. Sie ist jedoch bereits nach verhältnismäßig kurzer Zeit sowohl bei den Instrumentalisten als auch demzufolge in der Fachliteratur in eine Art ‘Verruf’ gekommen, der bis auf den heutigen Tag nicht richtiggestellt worden ist. Schon Praetorius erklärt nämlich im Jahre 1618, daß die Sopranposaune ‘an Klang und Applikatur nicht genüge’ und dieses in einem so bedeutenden und maßgebenden Werke, wie es sein ‘Syntagma musicum’ war, enthaltene Urteil ist durch alle folgenden Jahrhunderte hindurch kritiklos hingenommen worden, und zwar sowohl von der Fachliteratur als auch von den Komponisten und den Instrumentalisten.”

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 589. “Die hierfür von Praetorius angegebene Begründung, daß die Sopranposaune den übrigen Posaunen an Klang und Technik nicht gleichgekommen sei, kann nicht als zutreffend angesehen werden.”

⁹ Praetorius, *Syntagma* II, p. 31. “Alt oder Discant Posaun: ... mit welcher auch ein Discant gar wol und natürlich geblasen werden kan: Wiewol die Harmony in solchem kleinen Corpore nicht so gut, als wenn auff der rechten gemeinen Posaun, durch guten Ansatz und Übung, ein solche höhe kan erreicht werden.”

¹⁰ Hermann Eichborn, *Die Trompete in alter und neuer Zeit* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1881), p. 23. “an Klang und Applikatur nicht genüge.”

¹¹ Kunitz, *Posaune*, p. 589. “Der wirkliche Grund für ihre seltenere Verwendung lag vielmehr zweifellos in der mangelnden Fähigkeit und Bereitschaft der Spieler, sich mit diesem Instrument zu befassen.”

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 796 “die Indolenz und das mangelnde technische Können.”

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 795. “Als nun der in der Renaissance technisch verbesserte, jedoch klanglich nach wie vor sehr minderwertige Zink (*cornetto* bzw. *cornettino*) in der Barockzeit immer mehr in Gebrauch kam, machten es sich die Instrumentalisten vielfach leicht und verwendeten an Stelle der schwer zu bedienenden Sopranposaune einfach den infolge seines Grifflochsystems leicht spielbaren Zink.”

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 795. “In derartigen Fällen also, in denen der Zink als oberste Stimme eines geschlossenen Posaunensatzes eingesetzt ist, handelte es sich um eine Verlegenheitslösung.”

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 795. “den rohen und unedlen, glanzlosen Klang des primitiven Zinken.”

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 797. “Nach alledem ist der Zink überhaupt nicht als ein der Kunstmusik zugehörendes Instrument anzusehen.”

¹⁷ See for example Marin Mersenne, *Harmonie universelle* (Paris, 1636); Giovanni Maria Artusi, *Delle Imperfezioni della Moderna Musica* (Venice, 1600); Girolamo Dalla Casa, *Il Vero Modo di Diminuir* (Venice, 1584); Johann Mattheson, *Das Neu-Eröffnete Orchestre* (Hamburg, 1713); Johann Mattheson,

Der Vollkommene Capellmeister (Hamburg, 1739); Roger North (ca. 1720), *Roger North on Music*, ed. John Wilson (London: Novello, 1959).

¹⁸ Kunitz, *Posaune*, p. 794. "Die großen Meister wie z.B. Schütz, Bach, Gluck und Mozart setzten die Sopranposaune jedoch in dem damals, und zwar bis Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts, üblichen vierstimmigen Posaunensatz ein."

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 589. "Die Sopranposaune [war] zunächst ein vollwertiges Mitglied der Posaunengruppe, wie z.B. aus den Werken von Heinrich Schütz zu erkennen ist, in denen der geschlossene, von Sopran-, Alt-, Tenor- und Baßposaune gebildete *vierstimmige Posaunensatz* zu finden ist."

²⁰ *Ibid.* "Wie bereits dargelegt ... herrscht in den Werken von Heinrich Schütz noch der vierstimmige Satz mit der Sopranposaune vor."

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 797. "übliche Notierungsweise."

²² *Ibid.*, p. 798. "den seit Jahrhunderten üblichen reinen vierstimmigen Posaunensatz."

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 797. "Bach [ist] als einer der letzten Vertreter des reinen vierstimmigen Posaunensatzes unter Verwendung der echten, vom Sopran- bis zum Baßinstrument reichenden Posaunenfamilie anzusehen, dessen übliche Notierungsweise: [Sopran-, Alt-, Tenor-, Baßschlüssel] auch seine Partituren beherrscht, wo er Posaunen verwendet, wenn er auch bisweilen ... die oberste Stimme mit 'Cornetto' bezeichnet."

²⁴ A whole-tone transposition was necessary to bring the trombones, which were in "choir pitch," down to the "chamber pitch" of the woodwind and string instruments. This transposition is reflected in the surviving trombone parts as well as in the organ and some of the cornett parts of the original performing material.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 808. "Zu bemerken ist noch, daß die 'Cornetto' Stimmen in den Kantaten Bachs in denjenigen Fällen wohl tatsächlich nur für den Stadtpfeiffer-Zink geschrieben sind, in denen sie ohne satzmäßigen Zusammenhang mit den Stimmen der Posaunen mit einfachen, gehaltenen Tönen den Cantus firmus des Chores verstärken."

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 797. "Immerhin hatte besonders zu Beginn des 18. Jahrhunderts die eigenmächtige Gepflogenheit der Instrumentalisten, einfach den Zink an Stelle der vorgeschriebenen, aber technisch schwieriger zu bewältigenden Sopranposaune zu verwenden, eine solche Verbreitung gefunden, daß sich nicht nur ein Genie wie Joh. Seb. Bach zu Konzessionen bereitfinden mußte, um eine Aufführung seiner Kantaten überhaupt zu ermöglichen, sondern daß man bisweilen sogar die Sopranposaune selbst als 'Cornetto' bezeichnete."

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 798. "So setzte auch Gluck in der italienischen Fassung der Partitur seines 'Orpheus' ... die Sopranposaune unter der Bezeichnung 'Cornetto' ein."

²⁸ Hector Berlioz, *Grand Traité d'Instrumentation et d'Orchestration modernes* (Paris, 1843), p. 199. "Gluck seul, dans sa partition italienne d'Orfeo, a écrit le Trombone soprano sous le nom de Cornetto."

²⁹ Hector Berlioz, "L'Orfée de Gluck," *A travers chants, Études musicales, adorations, boutades et critiques* (Paris 1862), pp. 110-11. "Il y avait, à l'époque où Gluck écrivit l'Orfeo à Vienne, un instrument à vent dont on se sert encore aujourd'hui dans quelques églises d'Allemagne pour accompagner les chorals, et qu'il nomme cornetto. Il est en bois, percé de trous, et se joue avec une embouchure de cuivre on de corne semblable à l'embouchure de la trompette."

Dans la cérémonie religieuse funèbre qui se fait autour de tombeau d'Eurydice, au premier acte d'Orfeo, Gluck adjoignit le cornetto aux trois trombones pour accompagner les quatre parties du choeur."

³⁰ Kunitz, *Posaune*, p. 806. "die Posaunenstimmen ausdrücklich als Posaune I - IV bezeichnete."

³¹ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Messe in c (KV 427)*, ed. Monika Holl and Karl-Heinz Köhler, *Neue Mozart Ausgabe I/1/1*, vol. 5, (Kassel, Basel, etc. 1983), p. XVII. "Alle Bemerkungen zur Mitwirkung der Posaunen im Kyrie wurden von Mozart erst zu einem späteren Zeitpunkt in das Autograph

nachgetragen, wie an mehreren Stellen durch die Platzierung der betreffenden Anmerkung oder durch das Darüberschreiben über bereits vorhandene Schriftzeichen zu erkennen ist. Es ist möglich, daß Mozart diesen Arbeitsgang mehr mechanisch ausführte und nicht so sehr darauf achtete, wie oft und in welchen Stimmen er Einträge anbrachte.”

³² And Kunitz presumably would have resisted the temptation to designate his beloved soprano trombone as “*Trombone nullo*.”

³³ This instrument was recently purchased by the Trumpet Museum Schloss Kremsegg, Austria. See Lars Laubhold, “Sensation or Forgery? The 1677 Soprano Trombone of Christiann Kofahl,” *Historic Brass Society Journal* 12 (2000): 259-265. Anthony Baines (*Brass Instruments: Their History and Development*, [London and Boston: Faber & Faber, 1976, 2/1978], p. 179), cites the soprano trombone made in 1733 by J.H. Eichentopf, Leipzig, as the oldest extant instrument of this type. This instrument, formerly in Breslau (Wrocław), was apparently lost or destroyed during World War II, but is documented in the catalogue of the former Breslau collection (Schlesisches Museum für Kunstgewerbe und Altertümer, *Führer und Katalog zur Sammlung alter Musikinstrumente*, ed. Peter Epstein and Ernst Scheyer [Breslau: Verlag des Museums, 1932], p. 43). Sometimes falsely cited (based on the information in Lyndesay G. Langwill, *An Index of Musical Wind Instrument Makers*, [Edinburgh: Langwill, 5/1977], p. 93) as the oldest soprano trombone is an instrument from 1697 by Johann Karl Kodisch, Nuremberg, now in Burgdorf Castle, Burgdorf, Switzerland; it is in fact a tenor trombone.

³⁴ Christoff Weigel, *Abbildung der Gemein-Nützlichen Haupt-Stände* (Regensburg 1698), p. 233. “Die Posaunen sind ebenfalls unterschiedlicher Gattung / als Discant- Alt- Tenor- Baß- und Quart-Posaunen.”

³⁵ Johann Samuel Halle, *Werkstätte der heutigen Künste* (Brandenburg and Leipzig 1764), p. 371. “Posaunen gibt es vier; Discant- Alt- Tenor und Quart- oder Quintposaune.”

³⁶ Johann Daniel Berlin, *Musikalische Elementer* (Trondheim 1744). Cited in Petra Leonards, Edward H. Tarr, and Bjarne Volle, “Die Behandlung des Zinken in zwei norwegischen Quellen des 18. Jahrhunderts,” *Basler Jahrbuch für historische Musikpraxis*, 5 (1981): 347-360, here 352.

³⁷ Cited in Arnold Schering, “Die alte Chorbibliothek der Thomasschule in Leipzig,” *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 1 (1918/19): 275-288, here 280. “Die weil die *Trombonen* gute Kirchen *Instrumente*, die ize vorhanden aber ganz alt und zerbeugt sind, daher auch nicht wohl zum Gebrauch dienen, so wäre nöthig daß an deren Stadt andere neue, und zwar ein Paar *Discant Trombonen* angeschafft würden.” From references in the same document to “3 alte Trombonen, alß Alt, Tenor u. Baß Trombone,” and elsewhere in the same document to “3 alte Trombonen, nehmlich 2 Tenor und 1 Alt Trombon,” we can be reasonably certain that Kuhnau’s *Discant Trombonen* are instruments of soprano size.

³⁸ *Ibid*.

³⁹ Cited in Arnold Schering, “Die Leipziger Ratsmusik von 1650 bis 1775,” *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 3 (1921): 17-53, here 45. “Der 1ste Kunstgeiger Pfaffe... 3) Den simplen Choral auf der Discant- Alt- Tenor- und Baß-Posaune, (welche letztere niemand unter seinen Collegen beßer als er und sein Bruder bläßt, und die eine gute Lunge erfordert), hat er gut geblasen.”

⁴⁰ According to Johann Adam Hiller (*Wöchentliche Nachrichten und Anmerkungen die Musik betreffend*, Leipzig, 23 October 1769; rpt. Hildesheim and New York: Olms, 1970), “the chorale is sung in four parts by the choir to the usual melody, and to support it the composer takes recourse to a choir of trombones.” (“Der Choral wird von dem Chore nach der gewöhnlichen Melodie vierstimmig gesungen, und zur Verstärkung desselben nimmt der Componist ein Chor Posaunen zu Hülfe.”) My efforts to obtain copies of works by Doles containing trombone parts have been unsuccessful; the holdings of the *Thomasschule*, including practically all of Doles’ autographs as well as his works with trombones, were presumably destroyed in December 1943 (personal communication from the

Bach-Archiv Leipzig, 15 November 2000). See also Helmut Banning, *Johann Friedrich Doles, Leben und Werke* (Diss. Friedrich-Wilhelm-Universität Berlin, 1939), pp. 149 and 198-245.

⁴¹ Both works are in the holdings of D-B: Johannes-Passion (Mus. ms. 21 705 — TVWV 5:46); Markus-Passion (Mus. ms. 21 707 — TVWV 5:52). See *Georg Philipp Telemann: Autographe und Abschriften*, ed. Joachim Jaenecke, *Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin - Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Kataloge der Musikabteilung I/7* (Munich: Henle 1993), pp. 140-143. I would like to thank Kantor Johannes Pausch, Hamburg, for calling my attention to the soprano trombone parts in these two works.

⁴² See Klaus Winkler, "Die Anfänge der Bläsermusik bei der Herrnhuter Brüdergemeinde im 18. Jahrhundert," *Das Musikinstrument* 43 (1994): 58-67.

⁴³ Rijksarchief Utrecht, Ms. Z 1157. This manuscript contains twenty-three numbered "sonatas," six unnumbered pieces including *God Save the King* and *Rule Britannia*, as well as fragments of seven other pieces. A modern edition of the "sonatas" has been published as *23 Herrnhuter Sonaten*, ed. Ben van den Bosch (Munich: Strube Verlag, 1988)

⁴⁴ *6 Sonaten auf Posaunen die Cruse*. Collections of the Moravian Music Foundation, Winston-Salem, NC, catalogue number SCM 261 (Salem Collegium Musicum collection). (Sonatas 4-6 are missing the soprano part.) See also Winkler, "Die Anfänge," pp. 61 and 64. Modern edition of Sonata No. 3, ed. Edward H. Tarr and Harry H. Hall (Cologne: Wolfgang G. Haas Verlag, 1997).

⁴⁵ Set of trombone partbooks, copied by Johann Friedrich Peter (1790s?). Collections of the Moravian Music Foundation, Winston-Salem, NC, catalogue number SB 14.

⁴⁶ Communication from Stewart Carter, 13 November 2000.