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An Examination of Historical, Pedagogical, and Performance Aspects of the Cimbasso in Standard and Modern Literature

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AN EXAMINATION OF HISTORICAL, PEDAGOGICAL, AND PERFORMANCE ASPECTS OF THE CIMBASSO IN STANDARD AND MODERN LITERATURE

By

Jens Mikel Peterson

A DOCTORAL ESSAY

Submitted to the Faculty of the University of Miami in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Musical Arts

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The cimbasso is an Italian low brass instrument created during the nineteenth century for the operas of Giuseppe Verdi. Although Verdi’s earlier scores utilized different versions of the cimbasso, Verdi’s last operas Aida and Falstaff employed an updated cimbasso similar to the model used today. The presence of the cimbasso within Italian opera literature undoubtedly advanced throughout the twentieth century because of opera musicians who stayed historically correct to Verdi’s writing. As the cimbasso has gained popularity among opera musicians throughout the world, more specifically, Los Angeles, freelance musicians ultimately motivated film composers to write for the cimbasso in film soundtracks. With the current demand for cimbasso in opera and film music, there is certainly a need for an applied cimbasso pedagogy. This research focuses on applicable concepts from trombone and tuba pedagogy and how each concept applies to a cimbasso pedagogy; it also provides musical examples with detailed explanations about how to play the cimbasso, which will be supported with a reference to both standard and modern literature that pertain to the cimbasso.

Ultimately, the research gathered offers musicians a better understanding of the history, the pedagogy, and the performance practice of the cimbasso repertoire.
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CHAPTER 1
PROBLEM STATEMENT

Background

“I wish to insist once again on a fourth trombone. That bombardone is impossible. Tell Faccio to consult the first trombonist if he thinks fit, to see what should be done. I would prefer a trombone basso, which is of the same family as the others; but if this turns out to be too much trouble and too difficult to play, then get again one of those ordinary ophicleides that go to low B. In a word whatever you like, but not that devilish bombardone which will not blend with the others.”¹ This message by Giuseppe Verdi is one of many requests sent to his publisher in regards to fixing balance issues between the trombones and bombardon before the premier of his opera Aida in 1872. The demand by Verdi indicated the need for replacing the bombardon, from the Italian word bombardone: a large medieval stone-firing cannon, which was first applied to the deep brass shawn, and then in the 1820’s to the ophicleide.² In hindsight, the bombardon was known as a modernized Italian version of the ophicleide which incorporated valves and bell like the modern tuba, but Verdi’s message specifically mentions the need for a bass instrument from the same family as the trombone and not the tuba family.

The particular instrument Verdi was insistent upon developed into an Italian bass or contrabass trombone with valves, sometimes known as the “Trombone Verdi,” or in today’s terminology, the cimbasso. At the time, the original cimbasso was defined as a


narrow-bore tuba in BB flat, an ophicleide, and a bass or contrabass trombone; to Italians, the cimbasso was no doubt a trombone. The term *cimbasso* has been used as loose jargon since its creation and the origin of the cimbasso’s name comes from multiple Italian translations of *corno* in *basso, simbasso, gimbasso* and also *gibas*, all of which indicate the lowest of brass instruments used during the nineteenth century. The actual term *cimbasso* was misunderstood for many generations because of its uncommitted name, but its evolution throughout the twentieth century helped to create a universal name and purpose.

Research has suggested that the term *cimbasso* should not be applied to any valve or slide trombone made before 1881, but from when the term ‘*trombone basso Verdi*’ came to light in premieres of his later operas *Falstaff* and *Otello*. Herbert Trevor makes a valid point in regards to appropriate usage for the trombone basso Verdi, but more evidence also suggests that the modern cimbasso has evolved even further since the 1960’s under the Thein Brothers of Bremen, who created a modernized trombone basso Verdi and gave it the name *Cimbasso*. With over a century of development after the first model was created, standard performance practice allows the modernized cimbasso to be used in Italian operas when specified, and in film music; where the need for a cimbasso during film recording sessions is growing.

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The cimbasso’s conception took many years to develop. Historical documentation indicates that composers like Verdi, Puccini, and film composer Hans Zimmer desired a bass instrument within the same family as the trombone; an instrument that not only incorporated the same timbre as the trombone but also allowed anyone playing the serpent, ophicleide, bombardon, or tuba to alternate between bass instruments.

**Need for the Study**

While some historical documentation about the cimbasso’s origination exists, there are still many areas that need to be further examined, such as, excerpts from operas *Aida*, *Falstaff*, *Otello*, and *Turandot*, which will later be compiled in this study into a practice guide to help cimbasso players understand technique through the performance aspects of suggested tempo, musical markings, important sections, and useful knowledge that relates to each section.

In addition, while classical composers have contributed to the upbringing of the cimbasso, modern literature in film music has kept the demand for the cimbasso alive. Numerous motion picture soundtracks include the cimbasso and film composers Hans

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Zimmer and Stephen Coleman have incorporated the cimbasso in noteworthy scores which will be explored and classified in this research as standard repertoire in cimbasso literature.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine standard and modern literature which utilizes the cimbasso and how to apply appropriate background knowledge and technique when desired. Ultimately, this paper will become a player’s handbook for the cimbasso, which will provide professional and amateurs alike with detailed information on the history of the cimbasso, its literature, and applicable methods.

**Research Questions**

The purpose for this study will be achieved through the application of specific research questions designed to illuminate relevant focusses surrounding the cimbasso. These questions include:

1. What works in classical and modern literature exist for the cimbasso and how can they be compiled into a method to learn the cimbasso?
2. How do various composers within my research write for the cimbasso, and how can their compositions help one learn about its pedagogy?
3. Who are the most significant players/artists who have contributed to the evolution of the cimbasso?
4. With no comprehensive methodology available for the cimbasso, what existing performance techniques from other low brass pedagogy can be applied in order to effectively master the cimbasso?

5. What does the future entail for the cimbasso in both standard and modern literature, and how can it evolve further?

**Limitations**

All of the source material for this research is limited to the historical documentation about the cimbasso, existing music written for the cimbasso and low brass technique that can be applied to learning the cimbasso. Each of these sources will outline helpful insight that can later be applied to improving the knowledge and pedagogy of cimbasso literature.
CHAPTER 2

RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter provides a review of the relevant scholarship written about the cimbasso. First, the general background texts about the cimbasso will be reviewed, paying particular attention to the ways in which it has been described by major authors in the field. Second, the more specific history about the cimbasso will be examined, focusing on its use in particular historical periods and in different musical applications. Next is a discussion of pedagogical methods for the tuba and trombone, and how common practice from low brass pedagogy can apply to the cimbasso. Fourth and finally, personal interviews with Jim Self and Doug Tornquist, which focus on the use of the cimbasso within standard literature are presented.

General Background Texts

There are several background texts about the cimbasso and how its inclusion in Verdi’s operas led to its popularity in classical and modern music. Bevan (1978) gives significant historical information about the cimbasso including its introduction as the ‘Trombone Verdi’ into classical literature. Moreover, Bevan suggests that conductors are more inclined to having a tubist learn cimbasso instead of hiring a contrabass trombonist, giving more motive to why the cimbasso is used so frequently in standard and modern literature today.


12 Ibid, 214.
Renato (1996) also provides historical documentation about the cimbasso’s origin and evidence for its use in Verdi’s operas. Verdi’s intention was not only aimed towards creating an instrument that would promote a perfect homogeneity of timbre with the tenor trombones, but would also achieve a stable role in the performances of his earlier operas before 1881.

Herbert (2006) offers detailed research on the trombone family, including the cimbasso and valved instruments within the trombone family. Most notably, Herbert gives information about the cimbasso’s creation in 1881 under the Italian manufacturer Peletti and the results from repeated experiments. The first cimbasso instrument gave splendid results regarding range, timbre, sonority, power, ease and facility of execution, blending perfectly with the other trombones.

In addition, this research will examine additional supplementary texts to provide general background about the cimbasso and its development.

**Cimbasso Literature**

Several composers have written for the cimbasso in standard literature, but Giuseppe Verdi and Giacomo Puccini scored the most notable examples. First, Verdi composed *Aida*, a four act opera written in Cairo during 1871. This opera requires advanced technique for the cimbasso through complex sixteenth note passages, extensive

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14 Ibid, 158.


dynamics, along with rapid grace notes, all emphasizing the purpose for incorporating a valve section on the first cimbasso created. *Aida* encompasses numerous technical passages for the cimbasso and requires a great deal of stamina from any player, giving importance to its use in standard literature.

Second, Verdi’s *Otello*,\(^\text{17}\) composed in 1887, utilizes the cimbasso differently than *Aida* as some areas are doubled with the trombone section while other areas are performed without the trombones. This gives importance to the cimbasso’s role in all acts throughout the opera, and requires any player to understand how each section should blend with and without the trombones in various scenarios.

Third, *Falstaff*,\(^\text{18}\) 1893, was the last of Verdi’s operas which utilized the cimbasso in diverse ways. This comic opera in three acts shows the cimbasso’s agility for solo and sectional passages. While the first act requires the cimbasso to play both smooth and connected solo passages, the third act features the pedal range down to E sharp. Overall, *Falstaff* exemplifies a variety of technical passages and, most importantly, requires ample range and agility to be performed proficiently.

Fourth, *Turandot*,\(^\text{19}\) composed by Puccini in 1926, embodies a more modernized approach to low brass writing through unified parts and a compositional style catered to the updated cimbasso. Puccini’s opera in three acts is efficiently written for the low brass and incorporates a cimbasso part as if it was written for the modern bass tuba. With such


detail to harmony between the cimbasso and trombones, *Turandot* becomes an ideal example for understanding how the cimbasso blends within the low brass unit.

From the scores identified from composers Verdi and Puccini, additional scores from film composers Hans Zimmer and Stephen Coleman will be gathered, transcribed, and an applied exercise will be supplied. Additionally, all cimbasso excerpts utilized in this research will be compiled chronologically, and a suggested method to preparing each excerpt will follow. This will serve as the foundation for preparing excerpts found within standard and modern literature.

**Tuba and Trombone Pedagogy**

Numerous method books have been written to better aid the performance practice of the tuba and trombone, which can also be applied to cimbasso. With extracted key concepts from sources that cater to the timbre and air stream of the trombone and embouchure placement/ rotary valves from the tuba, the basis of a foundation for a cimbasso method can be greatly improved.

*Beyond Boundaries*\(^{20}\) by Alan Raph will serve as an example on how to apply trombone technique to playing the cimbasso. Although the cimbasso and trombone are different instruments, Raph’s book examines technique from various perspectives like tone quality, routines, articulations, range and intervals, all of which can be applicable to a cimbasso method. With close attention to Raph’s trombone technique, most importantly

tone quality, the fundamental concepts can be compiled to create an original method for learning the cimbasso.

Michael Davis’ 20 Minute Warm-Up Routine\textsuperscript{21} is an effective method to improving trombone practice. Davis’ warm-up routine features numerous exercises that help improve trombone technique and stamina. Each exercise is meant to focus on improving the specific areas of one’s daily routine, and the most useful exercises will be examined in relation to improving cimbasso technique. After each exercise is examined, the most beneficial will be supplied for a cimbasso method.

Harvey Phillips’ The Art of Tuba and Euphonium\textsuperscript{22} becomes an indispensable guide for artistic, technical, and practical aspects of the tuba and euphonium for both teachers and players.\textsuperscript{23} Concepts like tone production, embouchure placement, articulation, performance skills and intonation are examined throughout Phillips’ book and can easily be applied to cimbasso pedagogy.

A transcribed version of the Arban method, originally compiled for cornet by J.B. Arban\textsuperscript{24} becomes another significant resource for the cimbasso, as it has for all brass instruments, through the compilation of extensive exercises that incorporate scales, dynamics, slurs, range, flexibility, etc. Transcribed for tuba, this method book will serve


\textsuperscript{23} Ibid, v.

as the backbone for learning fundamental exercises on the cimbasso, which can later be applied to both modern and standard literature.

**Personal Interviews**

To supplement the historical background, comprehensive literature review, examination of musical scores, and discussion of cimbasso pedagogy, this dissertation will also utilize two personal interviews with major performers and teachers of the cimbasso.

Two interviews, the first with Jim Self an acclaimed Los Angeles recording artist, whose numerous motion picture soundtracks include both cimbasso and tuba playing, and the second with Los Angeles based freelance artist Doug Tornquist will supply the reader with familiar aspects of playing the cimbasso. Tornquist’s experiences stem from his numerous recording sessions with Hans Zimmer and the many soundtracks which utilize cimbasso. Both Self’s and Tornquist’s interviews will assist in developing a more comprehensive and thorough background on the cimbasso and allow it to be placed within the larger musical and historical context of film music.
CHAPTER 3

METHOD

Overview

This study examines pertinent methods from trombone and tuba pedagogy, and the most practical examples are applied to learning the cimbasso. After each method in trombone and tuba pedagogy was examined, excerpts from the operatic literature of Verdi and Puccini were studied by date composed. Each of their scores which utilize cimbasso were examined, and the most significant excerpts were then identified, followed by an appropriate exercise to help learn each excerpt. The film scores of Hans Zimmer and Stephen Coleman were also examined in relation to scenes that require the cimbasso to play loud during climatic moments. The operas and film scores presented provide this dissertation with applicable knowledge that musicians can use to prepare significant excerpts along with pedagogy from various low brass methods that support learning cimbasso method. This will aid the training and practice of the literature indicated above.

Source Material

After the analysis of applicable trombone and tuba pedagogy, this study examined the role the cimbasso took in selected scores from the Italian operas of Verdi and Puccini and the film music of Hans Zimmer and Stephen Coleman. Each score was studied, fundamental excerpts were extracted, and exercises written by the author pertaining to the following works were applied:
1. *Nabucco* 1842
2. *Macbeth* 1847
3. *Rigoletto* 1851
4. *La Traviata* 1853
5. *La Forza Del Destino* 1869
6. *Aida* 1871
7. *Otello* 1887
8. *Falstaff* 1893
9. *Turandot* 1926
10. *Pearl Harbor* 2001
12. *Pacific Rim* 2013

Each individual work illuminates the diverse techniques required to play cimbasso and serves as a foundation to its pedagogy, for those who wish to have a broader resource for understanding the cimbasso’s history and literature. Additional materials included books, articles, critical reviews, interviews and Internet websites pertaining to the cimbasso’s history and the repertoire in which it is used. An outline of these materials is included in Chapter Two of this dissertation.

**Data Gathering and Analysis**

Each excerpt was organized by the date created and specific sections pertaining to the cimbasso’s importance within the score were scanned. After significant examples that utilized the cimbasso were identified, applied exercises were written out with a MAC
version of Sibelius 2016. Included in each exercise is a suggested approach to learning the excerpts’ context, proper tempo markings, breath markings, articulations, stylistic indications, slurs, glissando, accents, etc. Each excerpt is displayed, and in a separate appendix, appropriate exercises to learning the excerpts are supplied. These exercises highlight the approach to learning the original composition through suggested performance technique. Having multiple approaches to learning excerpts is crucial to an instrument’s technique, and having the appropriate knowledge when preparing them should be of utmost importance.

Additional materials for cimbasso were collected and arranged according to their relevance to the Statement of Purpose highlighted in Chapter One. This study includes historical information relating to the cimbasso along with standard and modern literature gathered. The musical examples researched serve as a guide which documents cimbasso literature. After the transcriptions of noteworthy excerpts were compiled, with their applicable learning guidelines, related exercises are supplied to improve tone production, articulation, breathing, and intonation on the cimbasso. The combination of the suggested repertoire and exercises, along with the examples from trombone and tuba pedagogy, serve as a guide to understanding the cimbasso better than it currently is shown.

**Interviews**

In addition to this analysis, personal interviews with two professionals in the film industry who play tuba and cimbasso are provided. Jim Self, who is highly recognized for being one of the first recording artists in various film soundtracks on the tuba/cimbasso, was interviewed and his knowledge and experiences guided this research to determine where and when the cimbasso became a standard instrument in film soundtracks. Doug
Tornquist, a Los Angeles freelance tubist and cimbassist, is well known for recording with Hans Zimmer and other film composers, and his knowledge and resources helped guide this research to determine the various film soundtracks which utilize the cimbasso.

The Study

The data gathered and analyzed is presented as a dissertation to musical performers— a guide to the cimbasso, one of the first of if its kind. This is essential as it provides an in-depth look into the development of the cimbasso, the appropriate method to learning the cimbasso, the musical examples in modern and classical literature written for cimbasso, and the knowledge from leading figures who are currently playing cimbasso.
CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter offers a variety of informative findings pertaining to the cimbasso within standard and modern literature. To understand the cimbasso’s purpose in music, first the author will review the cimbasso’s historical background through its evolution in standard and modern literature. Second, the author will extract core concepts from trombone and tuba method books, which will apply to playing the cimbasso. Third, excerpts will be analyzed which are used within standard and modern literature along with suggested technique—allowing others to become more versatile in preparing cimbasso repertoire. The fourth finding in this chapter pertains to the knowledge gained from two professionals who currently play the cimbasso in film and opera.

Background Texts

The development of the cimbasso is very unique compared to most low brass instruments. At first the cimbasso’s name was used as a slang term in Italy. The name cimbasso was everyday musicians’ jargon used in musical scores and its term derives from the abbreviation *corno basso* (bass horn), originally written *c. basso* or *c. in basso*; putting the two words together is ultimately pronounced cim-basso.\(^{25}\) The confusion in the terminology of the word cimbasso has existed since 1825, which is documented in an instrument catalogue used in the La Scala Opera, where the cimbasso looks more like an

ophicleide versus the cimbasso known today (See Appendix A.1). The early references to the term cimbasso applied not to a specific instrument but to an instrument fulfilling a particular function or part, an instrument which provided the lowest notes of the brass section in an Italian opera or orchestra.26

As the term cimbasso evolved throughout the nineteenth century, so did the operas of Verdi and the need for an updated bass instrument. In 1881 Verdi commissioned a double B flat contrabass trombone from the instrument maker Giuseppe Pelitti27 (See Appendix A.2). In this request, there was no need for an unwieldy slide trombone, as the trombone normally used in Italy at the time was the valve trombone, which to this day remains popular in Mediterranean countries (See Appendix A.3). The instrument commissioned by Verdi would go by the name ‘Trombone Verdi’, or more commonly the cimbasso in late nineteenth century performance practice. Now the cimbasso assumed a distinctive ‘T’-shape, with tubing positioned vertically in front of the player and a bell facing forward over the player’s shoulder.28 Originally utilized in Verdi’s opera Otello, the Trombone Verdi was commissioned because Verdi disliked the sound of the bombardone, an instrument that looked like Italy’s early attempt to the modern euphonium (See Appendix A.4). With Verdi’s swift action to replace the harsh-sounding bombardone, the ‘Trombone Verdi’ would soon be incorporated into his last


operas *Othello* and *Falstaff* because it blended well with the trombones through a homogenous yet balanced sound. The resulting instrument was the first example of the cimbasso we know today, thanks to Verdi’s specific requests (See Appendix A.5).

While the Trombone Verdi incorporated valves, so did the other trombones in Verdi’s operas. The use of this type of trombone was universal in Italy, where the supply of players was almost exclusively made up of valved trombonists throughout the middle of the nineteenth century. From that time, trombone parts in Italian opera were written with the valve trombones in mind. Having a low brass section made entirely of valve trombones allowed the low brass section to play faster musical lines and additional technical passages. Verdi’s operas in particular demonstrated the romantic style from the middle of the century, which other composers took a keen interest in later on. As the cimbasso started gaining more popularity throughout Europe, more so in Italy, so did methodology for brass instruments. Most brass instruments that were to find a regular place in the orchestra (including new ones such as the cornet) acquired a dedicated methodology which was inspired by particular mentor performers such as Arban and Dieppo. With improved methodology being integrated into early brass technique, the quality of performance practice unsurprisingly improved during the beginning of the twentieth century.

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31 Ibid, 188.

32 Ibid, 192.
Not only did low brass performance practice improve throughout the twentieth century because of an applied method from arrangers like Arban, it also improved the cimbasso because of the innovations of German instrument maker Hans Kunitz. In 1959 Hans Kunitz designed, for the Komische Oper in Berlin that, a slide bass-trombone which had two valves. This cimbasso bass trombone helped the player to cope with the demands of Verdi’s chromatic writing. The first of these Cimbasso Bass-Trombones was manufactured by Alexander of Mainz but was later redeveloped as a valved instrument by the Thein Brothers of Bremen who gave their instrument the name Cimbasso. 33 Many instrument makers have followed Thein’s direction and it is now possible to choose from a wide variety of cimbassi in the keys of F, E flat, double B flat, and sometimes C from reliable manufactures like Meinl Weston, Rudolph Meinl, Latsch, and Wessex. Like the Kunitz instrument, the modern cimbasso is typically built in F and has four or five valves, and although it is essentially a bass-trombone, its sound is the closest we can come to Verdi’s wishes. The advantages of the modern cimbasso are clear: the sound blends immediately with the trombones and trumpets and this lends the brass of the orchestra a timbre that matches the trombones, which is not present when the tuba is played. Another advantage of the cimbasso is the relatively transparent sound when played quietly. The somewhat dense tone of the average tuba is hard to hide even in quiet dynamics and can often drown singers, giving more advantages to using the cimbasso in operatic settings. In addition, the upright bell of the tuba also has a directional quality not always desired: either pointing at the stage or pointing at the audience. 34 The cimbasso does not have the


34 Ibid, 8.
downfall of a fixed directional sound compared to the tuba, but one should be conscious of adjusting the cimbasso’s bell in different environments to obtain the best tone quality. The concept of sound can drastically change if the cimbasso’s bell is moved by just one inch. In most instances, the bell on a cimbasso should be adjusted so that it is parallel with the trombones bell (See Appendix A.6), although in all other instances the bell should be adjusted to obtain the clearest sound possible in varying environments.

As the cimbasso evolved past the 1960’s, it became more common for American orchestral conductors and/or music directors to request the use of the modern cimbasso when performing the operatic works of Verdi. The modern practice of cimbasso had been gaining popularity due to the availability of newer cimbassi, which allowed musicians to apply the instrument in settings within and outside the opera. By the 1980’s, film music began to incorporate the cimbasso because of tubist’s Tommy Johnson and Jim Self. Both Johnson and Self were well established in film music, but were also pioneers when it came to convincing film composers to utilize the cimbasso in film scores, giving them more opportunities to double the bass trombone part during recording sessions. To this day the cimbasso is used by many film composer’s, most notably Hans Zimmer and Stephen Coleman, where it is commonly heard in climatic scenes when the low brass section plays grandiose moments.

Because of film music, it is standard practice for a cimbassist to play louder and in more registers. The cimbasso favors certain registers depending on the size of the mouthpiece one uses. The deeper the cup and the larger the diameter of the rim allows the

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36 Appendix C.1.
instrument’s low end to play more easily.\textsuperscript{37} A bigger mouthpiece is beneficial in film literature versus operatic literature. However, it becomes quite difficult to play because the musician needs dexterity to complete fast-articulated passages on a larger mouthpiece.\textsuperscript{38} While there are numerous mouthpieces that can be used on the cimbasso, one can apply a larger mouthpiece to play louder passages in film music if desired, while a smaller mouthpiece to play shorter, less aggressive passages in operatic literature.

The cimbasso’s evolution in standard and modern literature makes it an instrument of versatility for tubists and bass trombonists. While its beginning in operatic literature was skewed, due to its name application, the inclusion of cimbasso in opera and film music validates why it is utilized today, because it offers the appropriate blend with the low brass in all settings.

\textbf{Trombone Pedagogy}

The trombone and cimbasso have very similar characteristics when the concepts of tone quality and timbre are applied. While the trombone is smaller in size and utilizes a slide compared to the cimbasso, both instruments are designed with cylindrical bells, allowing the cimbasso to have a similar tone quality to that of the trombone. In order to blend well with a trombone, a cimbasso must have the same timbre through tone production, which happens by applying the same technique from trombone pedagogy.

Alan Raph’s trombone method book \textit{Beyond Boundaries} covers a variety of helpful techniques that apply to cimbasso pedagogy, more specifically tone quality,


\textsuperscript{38} Ibid, 20.
intonation and articulation. In regard to tone quality, one should blow a tone through the instrument, not just into the mouthpiece. This will allow the instrument to resonate by employing a constant stream of air.\(^{39}\) The process of a consistent air stream is crucial to maintaining a stable sound on the cimbasso and should always be a priority. There is no such thing as using too much air—strive to take in full comfortable amounts of air, which will help the embouchure to have ample support. Tone resonance is greatly different in the trombone family compared to the tuba family, which is why it is very important to first develop good tone quality before further advancing on the cimbasso. It makes all the difference between a rough-edged sound compared to a polished sound.\(^{40}\)

While the application of tone production is important to a strong foundation on the cimbasso, so is intonation. Because both the trombone and cimbasso have a close relation in sound quality, intonation technique on the trombone also applies to the cimbasso. Raph offers a three-step process from trombone pedagogy to help solidify this concept.\(^{41}\)

1. Tune the instrument to itself. Play a scale or arpeggio and listen critically to the relationship of the intervals. Play intervals and adjust one to the other. Play a scale on a well-tuned keyboard and listen to the 3rd, 5th and 7th intervals. Once the instrument is tuned, play each interval against the root and determine their relationship. After, it will be simpler to play

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\(^{40}\) Ibid, 10.

\(^{41}\) Ibid, 22.
scales with minor adjustments needed.

2. Tune the instrument to a general pitch (A in the orchestra, B flat in the band). Once the pitch is matched, use it as a basic starting point. The ability to relate one pitch to another will continue to strengthen with time.

3. Practice tuning the instrument to the overall structure of music, more specifically chords, i.e. the root, 3rd, 5th, etc. This will improve chordal relationships, and train the ear to relate to the other frequencies of instruments.

Intonation varies on all brass instruments due to their size, shape and timbre, but creating the correct pitch should always be part of a musician’s routine. Timbre may vary on the cimbasso compared to the trombone, but good intonation stays constant and needs to be standard practice. By tuning the cimbasso to sustained notes on a keyboard, or drones, the intervallic relation between notes will improve during one’s daily practice. This helps improve intonation throughout the cimbasso’s range.

Articulating on the trombone and cimbasso are also similar because both horns receive back pressure or resistance when a note is being produced. With back pressure being an obstacle to overcome on the cimbasso, a player should be aware of the problems that cause back pressure and the solutions for overcoming resistance. Locking and freezing are two of the most common issues when articulating on the cimbasso and trombone, which Raph addresses. Locking, for instance, is when a player breathes too early and holds the inhalation or locks the breath until ready to play a note. This stops the rhythmic flow of breathing and blowing. It often increases anxiety and can also interfere
with the concept of meter. While locking stops the flow of breathing before articulation, freezing creates the same issue. Freezing happens when a player takes a breath, and when wanting to make an attack, nothing happens. Many players with this issue find that they have to resort to various emergency methods of getting the tone started, i.e., sneaking into a note through breath articulations, or smashing into a note because of air compression.

Both locking and freezing are problematic when articulating on the cimbasso and should thus be avoided. If the tendency to lock or freeze happens, one must resort to playing everything rhythmically in relation to a beat, for example, set, breathe and attack in tempo. Whether there is a strong beat to respond to or a comfortable routine to produce rhythmic impetus, one should feel that the articulation is always part of the rhythm. By applying Raph’s concepts of tone production from trombone methodology, one is able to establish core concepts that can later be applied to cimbasso pedagogy.

Trombone exercises are applicable to improving cimbasso technique because both the cimbasso and trombone have a similar relation: tone production. Davis believes that his warm-up is designed to give all brass players a routine that enhances skill through exercises that improve sound, time, and pitch. Davis’ 20 Minute Warm-Up Routine

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43 Ibid, 38.

44 Ibid, 38.

incorporates four fundamental exercises that certainly apply to improving cimbasso technique, while emphasizing the velocity of air.

First, Davis’ “Sound” exercise helps form one’s range through evenness of sound and dynamic range. This exercise should primarily be practiced at a slow tempo with smooth, connected breaths. Next, one can improve dynamic contrast by starting pianissimo, making an even crescendo into the fortissimo, taking a connected breath, and articulating the next note an octave below at the same dynamic, maintaining an even sound through the decrescendo. This exercise should be applied in all ranges of the cimbasso.

Figure 1. Davis, Michael. 20 Minute Warm-Up Routine. “Sound,” 7.

Second, the exercise “Air It Out” helps improve smoothness of sound. By incorporating a slurred intervallic exercise written for trombone into cimbasso pedagogy, the foundation for a smooth, connected range is achievable. This exercise should be practiced slowly in all dynamic ranges with the end goal of evenness. It is recommended that this exercise be prepared from the middle range downward to expand the pedal range on the cimbasso.
Third, exercise “Tonguing” should be utilized as a cimbasso exercise because in relation to resistance on the trombone, the same resistance applies to the cimbasso. This exercise improves consistency in articulation and precision in attack. While refining this exercise, one should focus on the articulation markings. Legato accented notes require a defined front of the note followed by a taper, while giving full value to each note, allowing metric space. “Tonguing” should be practiced with the suggested tempo of 87 BPM to 120 BPM in all dynamics and all registers, improving accuracy on all ranges of the cimbasso.

Finally, Davis’ fourth warm-up exercise, which applies to cimbasso is “Interval Attack”. “Interval Attack” improves articulation starting in the mid register by expanding the range chromatically upward and downward. The purpose of this exercise is to maintain a constant sound through each accented note, allowing the same metric space and dynamic contrast. Suggested tempo should vary between 72 to 120 BPM. Applying
this exercise to cimbasso method will greatly improve one’s articulation and foundation. This exercise will improve blend with any trombone section in future applications.

Figure 4. Davis, Michael. 20 Minute Warm-Up Routine. “Interval Attack,” 18.

Tuba Pedagogy

At Least ninety percent of tone production depends on air supply and a supported airstream. The embouchure, combined with breath control, provides the other ten percent in refining tone quality.\textsuperscript{46} Phillips’ book \textit{The Art of Tuba and Euphonium} supports core

concepts of tone production, embouchure placement and articulation which is applicable to the cimbasso because compared to the tuba, the cimbasso also utilizes the same mouthpiece and embouchure placement. While both instruments utilize the same mouthpiece, allowing a tubist to comfortably transition to the cimbasso, the foundation of tone production should not be overlooked. Embouchure placement is vital to one’s tone production, but so is the production of air and articulation.

Inhaling and exhaling air are two parts of the breathing process natural and essential to the life of everyone. However, considerable thought regarding breath support and the breathing process are ongoing concerns and studies of every brass player. In order to make the process of breathing less of a concern on the cimbasso, one must understand what happens when breathing ineffectively. Ineffective breathing is due to the containment of air in the lungs, which is achieved by a natural closing of the glottis (the part of the larynx consisting of the vocal chords), thus preventing any escape of air from the lungs until the glottis is again opened. Containment of air in the lungs is usually for a brief period of time, although such containment may be prolonged in performance. Thus, it is important to avoid tension in the neck area, shoulders and arms, and to avoid holding air in the mouth, which may cause undesirable, explosive production of sound when released. The habit of tension and holding air in the mouth before playing is imperative


48 Ibid, 23.
to avoid. The cimbassist can prevent this by incorporating a checklist of things to be aware of while playing:

1. Sit in an upright comfortable position and adjust the cimbasso’s peg stand so that the cimbasso comes back to the face and the mouthpiece contacts parallel with the embouchure.
2. Do not hold air in or hesitate before playing. Instead, take in full, connected breathes of air and exhale with the same connected air stream.
3. Always have plenty of air inside the lungs and keep the air stream constant when exhaling.
4. Practice and expand the cimbasso’s dynamic range to its full potential.
5. Do not practice the same dynamic range for long periods of time.
6. Always keep the shoulders and chest relaxed when inhaling.
7. Never sit in a stiff position and always feel natural with the cimbasso while in playing position.

Having a definitive understanding of how to utilize air is essential to the fundamentals of playing the cimbasso. After developing a comfortable foundation for air support, incorporating the correct embouchure placement comes next.

The basic embouchure for all brass instruments is essentially the same. Perhaps the simplest definition for a brass embouchure is a mouth with “firm corners,” not tight corners, not corners pulled back, not corners pushed forward, but corners made firm

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where they naturally lie. An embouchure with firm corners and comfortable lip placement within the mouthpiece can greatly improve tone production while also instilling good habits. It is important to note that the majority of successful low brass players utilize a mouthpiece placement of approximately sixty percent upper lip and forty percent lower lip.

Figure 5. Phillips, Harvey, *The Art of Tuba and Euphonium*. 26.

This ratio is due to the upper lip staying constant while it vibrates, while the lower lip becomes the changing variable, allowing for change in shape, thickness, and tension.

While developing a healthy embouchure, it is essential to always maintain firm corners, little tension, no air pockets between teeth and lips, and a relaxed throat.

After an open, yet connected breath, and balanced embouchure is secured, a clean articulation follows. While discussing articulations, the attack and release of a note is of particular importance. In order to successfully articulate a note on the cimbasso, one must

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always strive to synchronize a connected inhalation/exhalation with a clear articulation. The result will be a clear, resonant tone with no abrupt attack, pop, or non-resonant buzz. While starting a note is of importance, so is ending a note. The cleanest release for a note or tone is to cease the projection of air without closing the throat, mouth or lips, avoiding cutting off the air stream with the tongue, allowing the tone to end projected, tapered, and unrestricted. The combination of a clear articulation and released note happen when a player’s oral cavity is established. The different vowel sounds, their shaping, and pronunciation are all defined and refined by the position and action of the tongue in the mouth, i.e. (oral cavity). The oral cavity serves as the resonating chamber for brass instruments. The slightest alteration of the cavity’s size and shape is affected by movement of tongue or lower jaw.

Integrating well-established concepts of tone production, embouchure placement and articulation are essential to developing a healthy foundation on the cimbasso. The numerous insightful concepts presented from Phillips’ book undoubtedly apply to cimbasso methodology and will help improve a player’s initial development.

While core concepts from Phillips’ book apply to cimbasso development, Jean Baptiste Arban’s book for cornet methodology offers helpful exercises that also apply to cimbasso pedagogy. Transcribed for tuba, the Arban method includes an abundance of exercises that help to improve low brass fundamentals through concepts that develop tone production, range, intonation, and dynamic control. The purpose of each exercise within

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52 Ibid, 34.
the *Arban* is to not exhaust the player, but to provide thoughts and information that stimulate every performer’s fundamentals. Numerous exercises within the *Arban* apply to low brass pedagogy, but certain exercises apply to the cimbasso. All exercises examined should be practiced starting from a comfortable slow tempo, later progressing to a faster tempo and not moving onward until perfected.

Exercise 16 is a beneficial exercise for forming consistency in articulation through ascending and descending passages. This exercise is written in a comfortable range which applies to the cimbasso, allowing one to focus on producing the best possible consistent sound. Exercise 16 should be practiced in all dynamics so that the fundamental range on the cimbasso is well established.

Figure 6. Arban, J.B. *Complete Method for Tuba*. 21.

Exercise 17 applies to cimbasso technique because it helps improve articulation through scalar legato passages. Correlated to exercise 16, exercise 17 is also written in a comfortable range for the cimbasso, allowing one to improve a consistent sound. The

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goal of this exercise is to make even blocks of sound i.e. defined fronts of the notes, defined endings of the notes, in all dynamics.

Figure 7. Arban, J.B. Complete Method for Tuba. 21.

While staccato and legato articulation are of importance, so is improvement of slur. Exercise 12 not only helps develop slur but also helps dynamic control and connected inhalation/ exhalation. One should begin each measure at a piano dynamic and crescendo smoothly without changing the timbre, slurring to a forte dynamic. During the quarter rest, the cimbassist should take in a full, connected breath and start the next measure piano with a smooth articulation. The player should strive to develop the smoothest slur during this exercise while maintaining a balanced crescendo throughout. The novice should note that exercise 12 can also be played in retrograde, so that descending flexibility is also well developed.
Slurring on the cimbasso is important because unlike the tuba, the cimbasso expels a faster and more supportive air stream, requiring the player to breath more frequently. Exercise 18 helps develop a smooth sound on the cimbasso through scalar thirds followed by descending thirds. This exercise is necessary because one should strive to make the most even sound through a supportive airstream in all dynamics, without allowing any notes to stick out.

The final exercise in Arban’s book improves technique on the cimbasso through interval flexibility. Exercise 1 can be very challenging because it should be practiced in
all keys so that range and flexibility are both developed. While practicing exercise 1 in all keys is important, so is varying the articulation and tempo, i.e., legato articulation at 70 BPM, or staccato articulation at 100 BPM. Varying this exercise will not only improve flexibility, but will also establish a healthy embouchure placement that stays consistent in all registers.

Figure 10. Arban, J.B. *Complete Method for Tuba*. 127.

![Musical notation](image)

**Standard Literature**

Standard literature written by Italian composers Verdi and Puccini highlight the cimbasso’s significance in operatic literature through its purpose to supply a bass line, which depends on the dynamic intensity, blending with the trombone and bassoon section. Within the low brass section, the cimbasso regularly carries the bass line, while the trombones supply the tenor line during moments of musical intensity. In other instances, the cimbasso becomes an extension of the bassoons when less intensity is needed but more bass support. This requires any cimbassist to pay close attention to what each composer has written by applying technique that fits each individual excerpt.

Major excerpts from Verdi’s and Puccini’s operas will be examined by their date created, musical importance to the cimbasso and ultimately a method will be supplied to help prepare each excerpt to further advance cimbasso technique.
Nebuchadnezzar or its abbreviated name *Nabucco* was first presented March 9, 1842 in Milan and is Verdi’s third opera and first notable success, which established his career as a recognized operatic composer. Creating musical force, the first act of *Nabucco* opens with the trombones and cimbasso playing a unified brass chorale in the *andante maestoso* which joins the full orchestra in measure nine, creating musical force. This excerpt is of importance because it showcases how well the cimbasso blends with a trombone section through a homogeneous chorale, later requiring dynamic intensity. The cimbasso excerpt in *Nabucco* should be performed with clarity in mind, which can be achieved through a consistent sound in all dynamics. To achieve the articulation and dynamic range specified (piano to fortissimo), a cimbassist should apply a method during practice to improve the articulation and dynamic contrast specified (See Appendix B.1 for Exercise).

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Another opera that utilizes the cimbasso is Verdi’s tenth opera *Macbeth*. Composed in 1847, *Macbeth* tells the story of General Macbeth’s longing to be king, and both he and Lady Macbeth devise a morbid plan to take over the throne.55 *Macbeth* put Verdi in the spotlight, becoming his first opera to explore gruesome themes that incorporated witches and ghosts, along with scenes depicting supernatural voices.56 In Act 1, Scene 2, Verdi writes for the cimbasso in a way that requires one to sustain notes at pianissimo while smoothly connecting whole notes over each phrase. This section not only requires smoothness of sound but also dynamic contrast during the crescendos. Dynamic contrast can be difficult to support on the cimbasso when there are intervallic jumps, but can be improved by incorporating a long tone exercise that starts in the middle of the cimbasso’s range and expands outwards. The dynamic contrast of pianissimo to

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56 Ibid, 25.
fortissimo allows smooth phrases which is important to learning this excerpt (See Appendix B.2 for Exercise).


Composed in 1851, *Rigoletto*, an opera in four acts, based on a five act poetic drama set in the court of François I of France, is a story about how the monarch king uses his position to satisfy his lust, while his hunchback jester named Triboulet, excites and aids him. During the first act, Verdi writes a complex line for the cimbasso, requiring one to have a full dynamic range, clear articulation, and stamina to stay fortissimo throughout the *piu mosso*. The method that best applies to this excerpt helps expand dynamic range, connected slur, and articulation, through a chromatic exercise that requires fast connected breaths and full volume on each fortissimo (See Appendix B.3 for Exercise)

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Verdi’s next opera that utilized the cimbasso was *La Traviata*. A three act opera composed in 1853 based on the play *La Dame aux Camelias* by Alexandre Dumas – a bourgeois story about a simple girl next door, became Verdi’s most intimate operas.\(^{58}\) During the second act where Verdi writes “velocissimo” (very fast), the cimbasso, along with the whole orchestra, plays the same musical line at the same dynamic. This passage may seem simple to play, but in reality, the trombone section and cimbasso both need to have the same articulation and dynamic intensity while playing the passage. The best exercise to improve articulation and volume in this scenario is by taking the same motive/rhythm and applying it to an exercise that repeats chromatically downward at the same

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dynamic. When practicing the exercise for La Traviata, one should always play every note with the same intensity (See Appendix B.4 for Exercise).

Figure 14. Verdi, Giuseppe. La Traviata. Milan: Ricordi, 1853.

Composed in 1869, La Forza del Destino is undoubtedly Verdi’s most daring attempt at creating a ‘patchwork’ drama, or as he once called it, an ‘opera of ideas’.  

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This four act opera tells the story of the inseparable love between young Don Alvaro and Donna Leonora and the determination to keep them apart by Leonora’s protective father. After its premier, La Forza del Destino reached something of a low point in the early years. Due to its sprawling action and mixture of comic, tragic and picturesque scenery, La Forza del Destino found no resonance in a climate dominated by the Wagnerian model, but it ultimately gained popularity by the 1930’s. The cimbasso part in La Forza del Destino is unique compared to Verdi’s other operas because rhythmically, it is the most complex. The cimbasso, trombones and bassoons have the same triplet motive, with decrescendo markings beneath. This specific section should be prepared on the cimbasso with rhythmic accuracy being the most important factor. By writing the rhythm out differently and applying varied articulations to this excerpt, rhythm and the correct phrasing will become more controllable when applied to the cimbasso (See Appendix B.5 for Exercise).

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60 Ibid.
Aida is one of Verdi’s later operas, which was produced in Cairo, Egypt during 1871. This opera is in four acts and seven scenes, and the storyline is about Aida, an Ethiopian princess who becomes captured and brought to Egypt, and later placed into slavery by the King of Egypt. Radames, a military commander under the King of Egypt, falls in love with Aida and is torn between his feelings for Aida and his loyalty to the King.\footnote{Costantino, Alexander. The Cimbasso and Tuba in the Operatic Works of Giuseppe Verdi: A Pedagogical and Aesthetic Comparison. 2010. Internet resource. 23.} The most important excerpt that utilizes the cimbasso in Aida is at the end of Act I where the trombones and cimbasso have a thirty second note grace note pick up into sixteenth note scalar passages. This excerpt should be prepared with an exercise that is written similar to what is originally composed, but it incorporates different scales, so the
repetition of articulation, style, and dynamic control are greatly improved (See Appendix B.6 for Exercise).

Figure 16. Verdi, Giuseppe. *Aida*. Milan: Ricordi, 1871.

In the original score, *Otello 1887*, was Verdi’s first opera that utilized the redesigned “Trombone Basso Verdi”. Composed in four acts, *Otello* incorporates all elements of Italian opera, most notably a massive storm scene, a triumphant chorus, and even a drinking song. Each element Verdi requested gave all scenes throughout the opera dramatic purpose along with particular detail to beauty. Verdi’s musical lines continued to be melodic throughout each act, and in the typical Italian style, longer rather than shorter phrases.62 With Verdi’s grandiose approach to writing *Otello*, the cimbasso part in

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the final act is a great example of how Verdi writes with musical force. The section examined in the fourth act requires the cimbasso to have full control of the fast tempo and fortissimo dynamic in the first four measures, while matching the trombone section. By the fifth measure the cimbasso and bassoons carry the same musical line through a continuous chromatic decrescendo phrase. This excerpt tests one’s ability to balance with two different instrument families, while maintaining a fortissimo dynamic and smooth phrase in the final measures (See Appendix B.7 for Exercise).


*Falstaff* was Verdi’s final opera and last work to be specifically written for the “Trombone Basso Verdi”. Produced in May of 1893, *Falstaff*, a comic opera in three acts became very popular in the opera community because critics and musicians believed this work to be a brilliant example of Verdi’s orchestration and refined melodic invention. Based on Shakespeare’s “Merry Wives of Windsor,” *Falstaff* tells the story of a fat, arrogant, and cowardly knight named Falstaff who attempts to lure two wealthy married women in hopes of making money off of them. Although Verdi’s orchestration is more developed compared to his earlier works, he still glues the storyline together by writing for the trombone basso like he did in his earlier operas. Supporting the bassoons and
double basses, it also strengthens the trombone section. The cimbasso solo in the first act is an ideal example of how Verdi writes the cimbasso part for a solo instrument, by giving it a melody with the bassoons, clarinets and English horns. This specific example should be played triumphantly on the cimbasso during the accented quarter notes while also connecting in the triplet arpeggios. When applying this passage to cimbasso pedagogy, one should incorporate a descending exercise in the same style as Falstaff, focusing on the smoothest and most consistent phrases possible (See Appendix B.8 for Exercise).


Verdi may have been the first Italian composer to give importance to the cimbasso in Italian opera, but Italian composer Puccini also recognized the cimbasso during the twentieth century. He utilized it in his final opera *Turandot* composed in 1926. Puccini died before finishing *Turandot*. Based on a pseudo-Chinese fairy tale, where Puccini attempted to balance exoticism and colorful orchestration with his melody-centred and emotionally direct style. This style strongly influenced the new genre of scoring for film music, which influenced television music as well. *Turandot* was

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performed after Puccini’s death at La Scala on April 25, 1926. Arturo Toscanini, who conducted the performance, concluded the opera at the point Puccini had reached before dying.\textsuperscript{64} The cimbasso excerpt that is the most prominent happens at the end of the first act where the cimbasso and the entire orchestra play the same motive during the \textit{rallentando}, by sustaining a fortissimo line with force that moves between accented triplets and thirty-second notes. When practicing this excerpt, it should gradually build in dynamic contrast. First start by playing a condensed version of the motive at a pianissimo dynamic. Later build into the fortissimo, while staying focused on achieving the most resonant sound possible as the dynamics increase (See Appendix B.9 for Exercise).

Figure 19. Puccini, Giacomo. \textit{Turandot}. Milan: Ricordi, 1926.

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\textbf{Modern Literature}

Film music composed during the twenty first century has greatly advanced how the cimbasso is used in modern literature today. Film composers Hans Zimmer and

\textsuperscript{64} “Giacomo Puccini.” \textit{Britannica Academic}, Encyclopedia Britannica.
Stephen Coleman are worthy of mentioning because they helped showcase the cimbasso by including it in numerous film soundtracks, allowing the cimbasso to be heard in cinemas throughout the world. Film scores are essential to the cimbasso’s development in modern literature and significant excerpts from Hans Zimmer’s and Stephen Coleman’s film soundtracks will be examined and an applicable exercise will be supplied to aid cimbasso method.

The orchestral soundtrack composed by Hans Zimmer in 2001 for the motion picture *Pearl Harbor*, depicts musical moments of love, loss and war. A film about the December 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor, Zimmer composes for a large orchestra utilizing four cimbasso’s in the original film score. The musical theme “Bombs Overhead” expresses Zimmer’s musical ability to score for low brass on the scene depicting Japanese pilots dropping bombs on the United States Navy. In the transcription supplied, the cimbasso plays a constant quarter note line at dynamic forte, gradually accelerating as the battle scene intensifies. An exercise that will improve this excerpt incorporates dynamic contrast, range expansion, articulation, and consistency of sound (See Appendix B.10 for Exercise).

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65 Appendix C.2.
Hans Zimmer’s orchestral soundtrack to *Pirates of the Caribbean* 2003, showcases the cimbasso during the musical theme “To the Pirates Cave”. This musical theme happens throughout the movie during moments of climatic battle and chase. The cimbasso passage is marked “forcefully” during this section where the trombones and cimbasso supply musical jabs and accents depicting the atmosphere of characters fighting or fleeing. This excerpt should be prepared on the cimbasso through an exercise that
increases in dynamic and range, that emphasizes the same articulation that Zimmer indicates (See Appendix B.11 for Exercise).


Stephen Coleman utilized the cimbasso in the film *Pacific Rim* 2013, where gigantic robots built by mankind battle a race of monsters trying to overtake the world. During the musical theme “2,500 Tons of Awesome”, which depicts the battle between machine and monster, the cimbasso plays the monsters motive in the pedal range along with the rest of the brass. The excerpt supplied is a transcription of the recording in the movie, which demonstrates the force and range at which a cimbasso plays. This excerpt requires the cimbassist to develop a consistent pedal range and a solid dynamic range. When preparing this excerpt on the cimbasso, one should apply an exercise that helps develop the pedal range gradually at a constant dynamic (See Appendix B.12 for Exercise).
Interviews

The purpose of this paper is not only to examine musical examples of cimbasso literature but also to provide personal insight from professionals who have greatly impacted the way cimbasso is used in modern literature. The film industry has preserved the need for cimbasso since the 1970’s, specifically in Hans Zimmer’s soundtracks, but the reason why stems from the professionals who inspired film composers to incorporate cimbasso in film music, and the professionals who are active freelancers. This section will focus on two interviews that highlight the experiences and knowledge of Jim Self and Doug Tornquist, both professional recording artists in the film industry.

Jim Self has been a Los Angeles-based freelance musician ever since 1974. Self has recorded on over fifteen hundred motion picture soundtracks and hundreds of television shows. His solos can be heard in the films Jurassic Park, Home Alone, Dennis the Menace, Sleepless in Seattle, Avatar, Toy Story 3, Bridges of Spies, Wall-E, King...
Kong, Star Wars 7, and his most famous sound role as the “Voice of the Mothership” from the film Close Encounters of the Third Kind. These are only a few of Self’s impressive film roles, not to mention the 1990’s Naked Gun scores, which utilized cimbasso. Self is a pioneer to the cimbasso and it can be argued that without him, the cimbasso would have never been scored by film composers, or evolved to where it is today (See Appendix C.1 for Interview).

Acclaimed tubist and cimbassist Doug Tornquist, started his career in film music after he received his Doctor of Musical Arts Degree from the University of Southern California in 1987. Tornquist’s film career started in 1989 after he was invited to play tuba for the Edward Scissorhands soundtrack and ever since, he has recorded on over four hundred film, television, and video game soundtracks with the tuba and cimbasso. Two of the most famous soundtracks that Tornquist performed on were composed by Hans Zimmer for the films Pearl Harbor and Pirates of the Caribbean. Both used cimbasso. His impressive career as a studio musician has grown to this day through the many film scores that require the tuba and cimbasso, which is why an informative interview with Tornquist will be presented, highlighting his knowledge and experiences in the studio with the cimbasso (See Appendix C.2 for Interview).
Summary of Research

This research consists of various findings which pertain to knowledge that can be applied to better understand the cimbasso. Each finding supports the cimbasso’s progress in standard and modern literature through historical texts, applied pedagogy, fundamental excerpts, and conducted interviews. These examples highlight the significance of understanding the cimbasso and its purpose throughout history.

First, the background texts examined supply historical evidence pertaining to the cimbasso’s development throughout history. While the cimbasso made its first appearance in Italian literature, primarily in Verdi and Puccini’s operas, the cimbasso, nevertheless, evolved throughout the twentieth century due to instrument manufacturers. The modern cimbasso appealed to low brass instrumentalists throughout the world, eventually leading to the standard practice of utilizing a cimbasso in all of Verdi’s operas and a range of Puccini’s operas. Throughout the early twentieth century the cimbasso remained in Italian literature, until it gradually made its way to the United States where American tubists began to use the cimbasso in American opera houses. While the cimbasso commenced its appearance in opera literature stateside, the cimbasso ultimately found a new home in film literature because of the freelance film artists around. Today, the cimbasso is utilized throughout the world in opera and film music, which stems from when Verdi approached his personal instrument maker Peletti and asked him to build a ‘Trombone Verdi.’
Second, trombone and tuba pedagogical texts were examined to outline tone quality, timbre, embouchure placement, tone production, articulation, air supply, along with applicable exercises, all of which apply to cimbasso pedagogy. Because the trombone and cimbasso have a close relation in sound quality, fundamental concepts from trombone pedagogy were examined and the most pertinent models were extracted to support improved tone quality and timbre. After each example was collected an applicable exercise followed, providing one with trombone technique that applies to the cimbasso. Tuba pedagogy in relation to trombone pedagogy applies to the cimbasso because the concepts of air supply, embouchure placement, and articulation are analogous. Applicable concepts from tuba pedagogy were identified and an applied exercise was supplied, so that technique on the cimbasso can be improved. The examples identified from trombone and tuba pedagogy conclusively serve as the foundation to improve cimbasso pedagogy.

Third, significant excerpts written for the cimbasso in standard and modern literature were gathered. Each excerpt was examined, identifying the background and the importance of the cimbasso part, while an exercise for learning each excerpt was later supplied. Each of the excerpts researched are standard in cimbasso repertoire, and the background/application to each excerpt will help one apply the appropriate method to playing each selection. As a result, the examination of literature written for the cimbasso along with applicable exercises will serve as a model that will help cimbassists improve excerpts through applied knowledge and applicable exercises.

Fourth, the interviews conducted with studio musicians Jim Self and Doug Tornquist shed light on the development and purpose of the cimbasso in film music.
Through their experiences and knowledge, both Self and Tornquist have quickly shaped the way cimbasso is utilized in the film industry today. Self and Tornquist have been recorded on countless film soundtracks with the cimbasso, validating the cimbasso’s rapid growth and use within the film industry. The cimbasso’s role in film music is similar to the role it takes in Italian opera, because it supplies the bass line with a sound that matches the trombones during climatic moments. But compared to operatic composers, film composers are currently scoring more and more for the cimbasso. This creates more opportunity for cimbassists in an expanding professional market today.

Conclusions

Through the remarkable history and growth of the cimbasso in opera and film music, it has been determined that the cimbasso is not only a standard instrument in Italian operas but also in film music. Ultimately, a more thorough guidebook needs to be created which includes literature that helps one learn the appropriate method on the cimbasso, so that operatic literature and film soundtracks are correctly applied. Learning opera literature on the cimbasso may be essential to obtaining a job in a professional opera orchestra because it can be the determining factor if there is any similarity between finalists during an audition. In regards to film music, the research conducted concludes just how often the cimbasso is used in film soundtracks, which dates back to the 1970’s. With a growing presence in film music, the demand for a cimbasso in modern literature will most certainly continue. Overall, the author believes that from the research gathered, the cimbasso will only continue to become more prevalent in music. With the supplied historical documentation, cimbasso pedagogy, arranged excerpts, and gathered
professional knowledge, these findings will help prepare cimbassists for the many opportunities that lie ahead in standard and modern literature.

**Modeling a Cimbasso Method**

Playing the cimbasso needs to be approached with the trombone and tuba in mind. From the trombone and tuba pedagogy supplied, along with the suggested methods to prepare standard and modern literature, the author has created the foundation for an applied cimbasso method. Through the examined pedagogical examples written for trombone and tuba, the author gathered the most fitting ones that apply to learning the cimbasso. Each example will greatly help instrumentalists improve technique on the cimbasso, so that excerpts in standard and modern literature are better understood. The excerpts compiled will educate instrumentalists about cimbasso repertoire, while supplying insightful recommendations to help guide performance practice. The combination of cimbasso method and excerpt preparation will undeniably advance cimbasso pedagogy, allowing more low brass instrumentalists with the proper insight to pursue cimbasso performance.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

The conclusion of this research has led the author to discover numerous instances where the cimbasso can be further researched. The cimbasso’s solo repertoire is very limited, which allows one to further investigate transcriptions or newly composed literature for others to learn. With more transcriptions or literature, musicians young and old would become more interested in learning the cimbasso and a pedagogical method for
cimbasso solo playing would ultimately need to be formed. With the creation of more
solo repertoire, the cimbasso’s presence in middle schools, high schools, conservatories,
and college music programs would increase. This would also create more opportunities
for professionals to privately teach cimbasso. Another instance for future research would
be if one formed a collection of film music which utilizes cimbasso. With this collection,
one can compile an excerpt book that catalogues all of the film excerpts, along with
advice on how to help prepare each excerpt. With a cimbasso excerpt book that focuses
on film examples, one can further improve cimbasso method and apply it to modern
practice.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Trombone Basso-Verdi

Example A.3. Italy, Valve Trombone (1881).

Example A.5. Wessex E Flat Cimbasso.
Example A.6. Adjusted Cimbasso Bell.
Example B.1.

Nabucco Exercise

\( \text{c} = 80 \)

\( \text{connected inhale/exhale} \)
Example B.2.

Macbeth Exercise

\[ \text{\textit{\textbf{Macbeth Exercise}}} \]

\[ \text{\textit{\textbf{Macbeth Exercise}}} \]

\[ \text{\textit{\textbf{Macbeth Exercise}}} \]

\[ \text{\textit{\textbf{Macbeth Exercise}}} \]

\[ \text{\textit{\textbf{Macbeth Exercise}}} \]

\[ \text{\textit{\textbf{Macbeth Exercise}}} \]

\[ \text{\textit{\textbf{Macbeth Exercise}}} \]

\[ \text{\textit{\textbf{Macbeth Exercise}}} \]

\[ \text{\textit{\textbf{Macbeth Exercise}}} \]
Example B.3.

Rigoletto Exercise

\[ \text{Tempo: } \text{Breath= eighth note} \]

\[ \text{sim.} \]

\[ \text{p} \]

\[ \text{ff} \]
Example B.4.

La Traviata Exercise

$\text{f} = 92$

\begin{align*}
\text{Example B.4.}
\end{align*}
Example B.5.

La Forza Del Destino Exercise

\[ d = 60 \]

\begin{music}
\[ \text{\ldots} \]
\end{music}
Example B.6.
Example B.7.

Otello Exercise

\( \frac{\text{Breath} = \text{eighth note}}{\text{Breath} = \text{eighth note}} \)
Example B.8.

Falstaff Exercise
Example B.9.

Turandot Exercise
Example B.10.

**Pearl Harbor Exercise**

\[ j = 120-190 \]

tempo varies

[Music notation]

Now play the same exercise in retrograde starting ppp-fff.
Example B.11.

Pirates of the Caribbean Exercise

\[ \text{\textcopyright 1951 by} \quad \text{Hal Leonard Music Publishing Co.} \]
Example B.12.

Pacific Rim Exercise
APPENDIX C

INTERVIEWS

Example C.1.

Interview with Jim Self: Los Angeles Freelance Tuba/ Cimbasso Studio Musician

Jens Peterson: I would like to ask you questions about the cimbasso and your history playing it. First, how did you pick it up and how did you start learning the cimbasso?

Jim Self: Okay, well I knew about the cimbasso because it was used in Italian opera and everything, but it had not been used in Los Angeles at all. We didn't even have opera here until the middle 80s, and I became a tuba player with the L.A. Opera in '86. But before that, I had taken an instrument that was a contrabass trombone that I have, double B flat, 680 bore, made in the 50's by Miraphone, but it was huge bore, not the one that they make now, which is 620 bore, this was 680, almost tuba bore. Anyway there's pictures of all of this on my instrument page on my website.

JP: Yeah I was looking through that.

JS: Anyway I took that instrument, which had a double slide on it, pretty useless as a cimbasso because it's a contrabass trombone because it's very hard to play. So I had a valve section made for it. Bob Pallansch in the Army band made it for me and later on Larry Biding made a valve section out of Sousaphone guts, so I have a double B flat cimbasso.

JP: So how did this instrument sound?

JS: It's a huge, big instrument, because in the movies they like loud, low and edgy sounds– this instrument was great at that because it's a double B flat. It's terrible to play up high, I must say that. If you had to go above an F you don't want to play it.

JP: Oh really.

JS: Really risky for missing a note.

JP: So this would pertain to producing edgy hits with a trombone section?
JS: Yeah, exactly and I started taking it around to studio calls that I was working on with tuba and bass trombonists and some writers liked it, a few of them, and this was during the late 70's, I think it was before I was in the opera and shortly after I moved to L.A. I got a few gigs on it and a few T.V. shows. Eventually I started using it a little bit more, but the big change in the movie business was when Tommy Johnson got one. I don't know when that was, I think it was during the mid 80's. He got a double C cimbasso.


JS: He originally got an F one and it was a Rudy Meinl and then he bought a double C which is a huge thing, the bell was like a Euphonium bell, but it was sort of similar to my B flat in a way, because it was low, edgy, and loud, and Tommy was the king of the hill in the studios at that time and he just started showing this cimbasso to writers and pretty soon it became the standard double for tuba players. They really liked it and so from those years on up to today it's the more ... Before that I would say the bass trombone was the standard double for a tuba player and before it was string bass or electric bass, but the last 30 years or so it's been the cimbasso and it's been in maybe 50% of the big movies. It's really loud and edgy and it often doubles with contrabass trombones.

JP: Okay, so you and Tommy Johnson around the same time were playing the cimbasso in film music?

JS: Yeah. Once Tommy got one, his fame and his credentials in the business helped propel it. So he started getting a lot of work on it and then I did because of it. I got very busy in the movies and then pretty much every other tuba player that's worked in the movies has had to play cimbasso now. But I've also been in the L.A. opera for 30 some years and I've always played cimbasso in the opera.

JP: Okay and would you play... All Italian literature on the cimbasso. Like Verdi and Puccini?

JS: Exactly.

JP: And would you stay historically correct... Would you for example play all Verdi on cimbasso or would you switch to tuba on some?

JS: Yes. Verdi hated the tuba for some reason, but the correct instrument is a cimbasso. That's what he wrote for and sometimes it's called bass trombone, that's what it's called in Puccini, but the correct instrument is cimbasso. That's the instrument to play in Italy.
JP: Exactly.

JS: They didn't play tubas in Italy until Respighi or something like that until the early twentieth century, so there is a story about Verdi and his last two operas, which used the cimbasso in Falstaff and Aida.

JS: And we have a great conductor with the opera in L.A. James Conlon. I've always played those operas on cimbasso, but he says, he saw a note from Verdi about the cimbasso and personally I think he's wrong, but I'm not going to fight with my boss. He asked me to play bass trombone, which I did about three years ago and it went great. I was really happy with it. But the other trombone players, my colleagues, they are happy with me being the fourth player when I need to, as long as it's not too technical. So Falstaff is too technical for me on the bass trombone. And for what it's worth it's really hard on any bass trombone because of the slide.

JP: Yeah it is.

JS: Falstaff uses valve lines, chromatic lines. Anyway, so that's the story about Verdi, but all the other operas before those last two, I've always played cimbasso on them.

JP: Exactly, because Verdi wrote to his publisher about creating a cimbasso for Falstaff and before Verdi, Italian operas were using different versions of the cimbasso which later evolved. I believe Verdi would have preferred the cimbasso we have today if it existed.

JS: Of course, there was no standard instrument. Every player had his own different instrument back then. It might have been made by the local trumpet builder in town, who knows, and they're all different, different keys and everything.

JP: For my dissertation, I'm taking on the approach of studying the documentation and music written by Verdi and Puccini and later I'm incorporating film music, by showing where it's evolved since, which this is very new talking to you because I'm trying to figure out what put the cimbasso on the map for film music. And my question for you is what was the first major concert you played with the cimbasso and how did it happen?

JS: Well I can say that the first... I was the first one to use it in L.A., but on Verdi’s Requiem and some symphony concerts and now everybody's doing it. At that time the instrument was almost unheard of. This was 30-40 years ago and the instruments around were terrible, most of them. The first time I used it in studios was on a T.V. show and I can't think of the
name of it and the composer. I know one of the big movies ... Did you ever see the Naked Gun movies?

JP: Yeah when I was a kid.

JS: Yeah funny stuff and I played bass trombone and cimbasso and some tuba on those three movies. Not solos or anything. In fact, I've never played a solo in all the hundreds of movies I've done on cimbasso, never on trombone.

JP: Really? Never a cimbasso solo?

JS: It's always slow and edgy so it's almost like another bass drum.

JP: And almost like section playing I guess?

JS: Almost no, I mean it's not musical, the stuff composers write, they just want hits and a bomb sounds. I tried to think of the early movies, but once Tommy Johnson started doing it then we were doing a lot of them. Usually doubling tuba and bass trombone.

JP: Okay.

JS: Sometimes Tommy and I would be on the same movie and one of us would be playing bass trombone and the other tuba.

JP: Okay. And what would be the most famous movie or film score that you played cimbasso on?

JS: Well let's see it doesn't even register in my mind at the moment probably because from I'd say mid 80's for 30 years roughly, those were my busiest years in the studio. I would play cimbasso on action films.


JS: Although I must say I was John Williams tuba player for five years. John never wrote for the cimbasso.

JP: John Williams didn't write at all for the cimbasso?

JS: He hates it. I don't know whether he hates it, but a lot of composers, like Bruce Broughton hate it. I know that and it's not a pretty sound. It can be played pretty, but you have to be cool, because you can really bark on the cimbasso. Most people don't sound great on them, but I've used it a little bit in jazz playing, just a little bit, but not any of my recordings. On my website there's an article that lists 300 movies that I played on. I'd say out
of the 1500 or so I've done. I sorted of list of them as the best, or most memorable or the ones that had the best tuba parts or solos or good brass scores. A good bit of those in those 30 years were doubling on cimbasso.

JP: Okay, because I'm trying to locate film music scores. I want to make a comparison of how Verdi wrote for the cimbasso compared to modern composers.

JS: There's absolutely no comparison. Verdi wrote differently than film composers. In opera I played F cimbasso, again on my website there's an instrument page and I had basically three cimbassos. My great big double B flat and my sort of hybrid instrument which has been used in the movies and stuff. In the opera I have two F cimbassos. One is a Klassen that I bought a few years ago, which is the standard F cimbasso. Personally I have trouble, I like the sound of it, but I've had a little trouble with pitch on it. One of the cool things about it is the tuning slide's at the top and you can adjust any note. But I used it off and on for years, but then 20 years ago or something, Yamaha made me an instrument that they called the Jimbasso.

JP: The Jimbasso?

JS: But it's based on the guts of a Yamaha 621 F tuba, but with a long lead pipe going in the reverse way through the valves. So it's a five valve F cimbasso, there's pictures of it. It looks like a Euphonium with a bass trombone bell basically.

JP: I saw the picture of that online.

JS: And that's what I use all the time at the L.A. opera and because it's a cool instrument, the other musicians like it, it blends better with the trombones. You get too big on those things and it stands out. You also have to make sure the bell is pretty much on the same angle as the trombones.

JP: As the trombones, I know.

JS: You'll kill the conductor.

JP: I've noticed when I play cimbasso with my trombone friends I have to put the bell down because the sound can completely change if it's all the way up. It's amazing how the sound can change just by adjusting one inch.

JS: I've learned to really like this instrument, this Yamaha and it's a one of a kind and I can't believe that other people haven't picked up on it, because I've had it for many years and I swear it's the best instrument and the other
players I have like it, so for the opera that's the instrument I use all the time now.

JP: And going back to the film music, do you know of any way I could find film music written for cimbasso? Because online it doesn't exist or even through catalogs.

JS: It's almost always a double on tuba, so it would be in the tuba part.

JP: It would be in the tuba part?

JS: It would probably say cimbasso at the top of the page though. But it's hard to say, because every studio calls it a little different.

JS: There's so many. These are just 300 I put up on my website about four or five years ago and I'm trying to think which ones stand out... I worked with James Horner for 28 years and he wrote scary tuba parts for me. He did write cimbasso.

JP: James Horner did?

JS: Yes, he did and I remember a movie we did called *Batteries Not Included* and on that film I played bass trombone and cimbasso and sometimes in the same cue, like a long cue, having to switch back and forth now and then, but it doesn't stand out as a particularly important cimbasso film.

JP: So it's doubled just like you said earlier?

JS: Again just looking through this list here. It's very hard to say. James Newton Howard is another guy I worked for, for many years and John Debney.

JP: I played with James Newton Howard last year here in Miami.

JS: You did?

JP: Yeah, he did a film concert where he would do various previews of each of his films and we would play to it being projected in the hall. And I didn't have a cimbasso then and now regret it.

JS: That's why the guys all over the world are buying cimbasso’s now. After they get their three tubas they need to play a cimbasso.

JP: Okay and Hans Zimmer also is using cimbasso... I think the most.
JS: He uses it an awful lot. Tommy Johnson was his tuba player and Doug Tornquist is the guy that works for him now. I did a lot of movies with him over the years.

JP: So would you say I might contact Doug?

JS: Yes. Doug would have some information. He plays a Rudy F, but he's mastered the low notes really well on it, so he can get that big sound.

JP: Yeah, because he’s played on *Pirates of the Caribbean* and a lot of scenes in the movie sound like that.

JS: He started that sound ... He's the king of the hill right now in the studios.

JP: He is? Okay.

JS: Unfortunately, there's so much less work. It's not like the gravy days that Tommy and I had.

JS: There's a lot of movies I did in films that used the cimbasso, but when you listen to a movie and you hear something low, it just sounds like a loud bass trombone, or loud contrabass trombone, and it's often a cimbasso. Once in a while it's an actual contrabass trombone player or it's doubled with it. You see it’s in these big movie sessions where they have eight trombones or something, and two tubas.

JP: I saw a video of the brass section in the movie “Inception” and they had two tubas, cimbasso, eight trombones. It was massive.

JS: Well a lot of the big movies have to have that extra brass and it's all for effect... you have to realize that movies ... It's often after, well not necessarily, but they put folly sounds on the movies or sound effects, like an explosion or a horse clopping along, all kinds of sound effects are overdubbed into movies and the big action films have tons of that stuff and a lot of them are synthesizer driven and it's all kinds of electronic sounds and not just musical sound, I'm talking about percussive sounds and things like that. The big movies, particularly composed by people like Hans Zimmer who is an ex-rock and roll guy, he's been enormously successful, but I can't remember a tuba solo he ever wrote. He doesn't think that way. He doesn't think orchestrally. He has people orchestrating his stuff, he doesn't do that much. He's a nice guy, I like him, and he's been a powerful thing in the business.

JP: And a couple more questions here. Do you have any exercises, like technical exercises that you would incorporate on the cimbasso to learn it versus the tuba?
JS: Oh boy. Well first, I use a tuba mouthpiece, although on my F cimbasso I use a Yamaha mouthpiece, but I have a little shallower cup. But I use the same rim on everything I play including bass trombone.

JP: Okay, me too.

JS: That's the only way I can handle those instruments and I can go from bass trombone where I can feel an A flat, which you can't feel on the tuba. My ears hear that note or whatever. So for me effectiveness doubling it only works if I have that rim. I have all kinds of different cups from a bass trombone to euphonium to cimbasso. Okay that being said, all my career I've been super busy, working almost every day and I didn't practice a whole lot. I practiced for a project. Maybe I'd have a recital, a solo recording, once in a while for something special, but I didn't do a daily routine. I'm not saying that other people shouldn't, but I learned those instruments just by picking them up and playing them basically.

JP: So you would get comfortable with the cimbasso and do similar exercises as it would be on the tuba?

JS: Yeah except I almost never practiced cimbasso or bass trombone. Bass trombone of course requires slide technique and that's the hardest thing for me, going fast. But cimbasso is like a tuba, it's like an F tuba or a double B flat tuba or whatever. You just push the valve down and blow the note. It is of course a different resistance and like I say you can easily stomp on it and get way too loud, and if you try to put the kind of power into a cimbasso like a tuba in Strauss’ music for example, forget it. You're going to bury the orchestra. Now in movies, they have a mic right in front of your bell and they like that. They want it fortissimo, that's why you're playing the damn thing.

JP: So would you say, specifically for film music, there's no limit to the density of sound? That, if I were to incorporate an exercise to maintain a fortissimo or fortississimo dynamic, that would be a good exercise to learn on the cimbasso to get a big sound for film music?

JS: Pretty much. Just play it as loud and hard as you can in a way. I'm very sensitive about tone and I can do it if the job calls for it, but my normal playing is more pretty and melodic and stuff. I don't like to practice my double instruments too much because it kind of messes up my tuba.

JP: So, be a good tuba player first?

JS: Yeah be really good on your tuba and practice that instrument and the F tuba and then apply that... You could play anything, any excerpt, any
etudes or anything like that on the F tuba, which you can also play on the F cimbasso. Or E flat. Do you play E flat?

JP: Yeah.

JS: That may be the ideal.

JP: Well I'm noticing on my cimbasso, especially coming from an E flat tuba, it has a warmer color like an E flat tuba and I'm trying to make a comparison of, for example, Harvey Phillips’ book, about learning the tuba and incorporating different exercises which suggest proper air flow and what not. I'm analyzing Philips’ concepts along with a trombone technique book and choosing which exercises would be beneficial to learn the cimbasso, like a comparative analysis of the pedagogy from two books which apply to the cimbasso.

JS: I'd like to comment on that whole thing. Guys like you, a scholar, you're a player, but you're doing scholarly work on this project, that comes after the playing and the guys that play the instruments, at least at first never thought about that or what kind of an embouchure or how to use the air or anything like that. We just play and play good, either you're in tune or you're out of tune, you either have a warm sound or a bright or dark sound, you can change all that stuff if you put your mind to it or with different equipment or mouthpieces, but the pedagogy of playing brass instruments came after the playing the instrument and that's standard. I have a doctorate too and I did all kinds of papers and stuff, but my experience has been as a player and I never analyzed things that way, even afterwards with my students I didn't much because I'm much more in favor of just playing the horn, using your ears to develop a good intonation and good rhythm and if you don't have those things, go be a shoemaker.

JP: I have two more questions left. First, where do you see the cimbasso going from here on out? Solo, Jazz, contemporary? Because the addition of cimbasso in film music was the latest trend with you. Do you see it evolving into other avenues?

JS: It all has to do with the enterprising players. It could be more in jazz. I've seen some guys play jazz cimbasso and it sounded pretty good and I've played it on jazz too. I don't like the sound they get out of it, I much prefer tuba. I think there's people who should get on board with this kind of instrument I play. The Jimbasso.

JP: The Jimbasso?
JS: It's more like a euphonium size. And it sits in your lap. It's so much easier to play. An L shape cimbasso is awkward and really easy to tip over or to damage and to set up every time.

JP: And do you have to sit in a specific way to play it compared to a tuba?

JS: Well, Tommy Johnson, once he got into cimbasso and he saw that I was playing this one at the opera a lot, this little Yamaha thing, he said, "That's not a cimbasso." Because it didn't look like a cimbasso. But I'm telling you I've played with some great conductors and many great musicians. Everybody likes this instrument including me and it was a commission made for me by Yamaha, but I didn't ask for it. They didn't charge me anything for it, it was just a one off. To my knowledge, big companies don't like to make one off instruments. I don't know if it's the money or the time and you need to get those things dubbed by individual brass people more than anything.

JS: However, I'm surprised that some company, one of the more major cimbasso makers, doesn't copy that or something like it. It's so much easier to carry around, it's so much easier to take on the job. When I'm playing at the opera and I'm resting 40 measures or something, I usually keep a chair next to me and I just set it on the chair.

JP: You set it on the chair?

JS: Rather than have a stupid stand that can fall over, or the bass guys sitting next to you say, "I can't see you because of it." There's all kinds of hassles with a cimbasso.

JP: So would you say that the future of the instrument relies on a new form of it?

JS: I'd say that's an avenue the cimbasso could go. If players had them and they inspired makers to make them, basically all it is, is in an F tuba that's been re-routed so that it has a long lead pipe, which cimbasso's have and it comes back through the valves, which is based on the small F tuba.

JP: All right.

JS: The cimbasso can't get too big or it definitely won't sound good. I know a lot of tuba/ cimbasso players and they play in opera companies around the country and the world. There's not too many around.

JP: Rare breeds.
Zach Spellman is in the San Francisco opera, very good friend of mine, he plays a Thein cimbasso. It's a German or Dutch instrument and they're very popular here and it's a small bore instrument, but it's L shape, but they're small and he loves it.

It's a Thein cimbasso?

Yes, it is. They make all kinds of brass instruments and they are high end instruments. They're quality instruments. In Europe in some of the orchestras the bass trombone players play them. They probably make all brass, I don't really know, but they are a high end, I think it's a German company.

Okay. And my final question. Besides Doug Tornquist, who you say plays with Zimmer, who else is doing new things with the cimbasso?

There's another tuba player here and former student of Tommy Johnson's that's had a pretty good career in the studios, his name is John Van Houten. He was Michael Giacchino’s tuba player. John is famous out here for playing with a huge sound. He can really put out the air and the power on the cimbasso and you can hear him in those movies, you can't miss it.

Giacchino’s scores used cimbasso?

All of those Giacchino films had it, I can promise you that. Some of them you'll think, wow that really stands out. Listening to it you don't know whether it's the tuba or this contrabass trombone.

That's the thing.

And often though it is cimbasso and sometimes there's two. I've played on many movies where we would both be playing them and really popping it out.
Example C.2.

Interview with Doug Tornquist: Freelance Tuba/Cimbasso Studio Musician

Jens Peterson: My first question is; how did you first start playing the cimbasso in film music?

Doug Tornquist: Well, because a lot of parts are written for it and the studios asked me to play.

JP: Were you freelancing at the time or your name popped up?

DT: Yeah, I've always been a freelancer, so yeah I was freelancing.

JP: Okay. Did that come through a reference and the studios knew that you played cimbasso, or was it more like a double, you played both tuba and cimbasso?

DT: Yeah, that's how it works. We're just expected to have cimbasso.

JP: Okay. What kind of cimbasso do you play on right now?

DT: I have a Rudy Meinl F.

JP: Okay, that's a nice horn. Is there a specific mouthpiece you play on, or for example do you change mouthpieces depending on the repertoire?

DT: Sometimes, but they gave me one when I bought it, which was pretty good on the horn. I can't remember the kind of mouth piece it is, but it must be a Rudy Meinl.

JP: When you first started learning the cimbasso were there any difficulties learning it?

DT: Not really. I already knew the fingerings, so it was simple to pick up.

JP: Not with intonation? For example, I'm learning and playing the cimbasso now, and I notice there's more pressure on it compared to the tuba, and you have to have a solid airstream to play it well.

DT: Well, I suppose. I mean it's a matter of what sound you're after, matching the trombone section is the most important thing.
JP: In terms of sound in film music, what kind of sound are you going after? Does the studio require you to have a specific type of film sound?

DT: No, I wouldn't say that. It's more a judgment call for the player. If they want it louder, they'll ask for it. If it's too loud, they'll let you know. But I wouldn't say there is any sort of specific sound I'm after.

JP: Okay. Just more awareness to blend with the section.

DT: I think so.

JP: Depending on what's written for you, in terms of exercises, do you use any exercises to warm up on the cimbasso compared to the tuba?

DT: No, no.

JP: Or anything to improve technique?

DT: No. Sometimes I play long tones or whatever, but no there's nothing specific to the cimbasso.

JP: What was your first experience like playing the cimbasso in film music and on what piece was it on?

DT: Boy, that's a good question. I have some memory of playing it on *Cars* with Randy Newman, and it might have been *Cars 2*. I don't know. I mean it was between 15 and 20 years ago. Yeah, I mean my first experience playing it was in the opera.

JP: For example, with Hans Zimmer, what film scores of his have you played? For example, standard famous soundtracks?

DT: Well, there was one with Hans Zimmer. It was *Pearl Harbor*. I think he had, geez, either four or six cimbassos.

JP: Really?

DT: Yeah. For some reason he wanted that. I don't really remember when *Pearl Harbor* was, but it was a while ago.

JP: Okay. And all the cimbasso players on the film were tubists?
DT: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. We're just all tuba players who either own cimbassos or we borrow them. I don't even think I owned one back then.

JP: Do you always play with Hans Zimmer, or does it depend on studio location?

DT: Well, it just depends on whether he does it in London or if he does it right here in Los Angeles. We've done a fair number of recordings here in L.A.

JP: *Pirates of the Caribbean?*

DT: Yeah, I've done three of those, two, three, and four. There was a fair amount of cimbasso. I mean *Pirates 2* had three tubas on it I think, and then we all played cimbasso. But after that it was just one, and there was some cimbasso.

JP: Is there any other soundtracks off the top of your head besides *Cars 2*, *Pearl Harbor*, and *Pirates of the Caribbean* that you remember playing on?

DT: Well, sure. You want cimbasso movies. I'd say there was a lot in *Pacific Rim*, and what else? We just finished this one called *Rampage*. There was quite a bit in there. I'm trying to think what else. Oh, all of those Jablonsky films, what do you call them? *Transformers*.

JP: *Transformers?*

DT: Yeah, those movies had a ton of cimbasso. Also, those Brain Tyler movies, *Fast and Furious*, there's a fair amount there. *Batman Versus Superman* had four tubas doubling on cimbasso too.

JP: Well, those are a lot of soundtracks I wasn't aware of that used cimbasso.

DT: Yeah, yeah. It depends on the orchestrator and the composer. I mean there's some composers who I would not expect to see using cimbasso.

JP: Which is interesting, what I'm imagining now is these action packed moments when the cimbasso plays. Those soundtracks require a lot of force for example, and would you know what role the cimbasso takes during those pinnacle moments?
DT: No. I mean I don't because I mean obviously if I'm playing, I can't turn around and look at the screen and see what's going on. But it's usually some big moment of battle, or conflict, explosion, you know, like those *Transformers* movies.

JP: You are playing tuba on these soundtracks too, correct?

DT: Oh, yeah.

JP: Okay. During these moments that express conflict and explosion, do you normally play cimbasso because it has more of a trombone sound?

DT: I guess so. I mean it just depends on what the orchestrator has in mind. Sometimes they write for cimbasso, and then they hear it, and they say, "Okay, don't play it. Play it on tuba or leave it out." I mean a lot of last minute decisions.

JP: Is there a setting that you prefer the cimbasso compared to the tuba?

DT: Well, in film music not really. I mean I would in opera for sure, but we're not talking about that.

JP: Do you have any examples of film music that I can use for my research?

DT: Well, I haven't kept any of that stuff. If something comes across my stand I could mail it to you or something.

JP: If I were to find a spot to transcribe in the films you mentioned. Like a moment that the cimbasso plays a couple lines with the bass. What movie would be best?

DT: On *Pacific Rim* I think I played almost exclusively cimbasso on that. It might be the best example.

JP: I love that movie.

DT: Yeah, but I think that's the one because the orchestrator really wanted the cimbasso, so you might have better luck finding it in that movie because I don't think there was any tuba in the score.

JP: Is the music you play on cimbasso typically sustained? For example, long lines with whole notes?
DT: Oh, yeah.

JP: My last question for you is, do you see any specific way that the cimbasso can evolve from today onward, or any instances you see it being utilized in solo practice?

DT: Well, I don't see it as a solo instrument. I think it works, the way they're built, the sounds you make, the kind of limited range on it I think it's useful as a bass voice of a fairly large brass section, just the way it's used either in the opera or the film scores. It's somewhat interchangeable with the contrabass trombone, and there are some things that contrabass trombones do better than the cimbasso. But yeah, they're usually paired up together often on the same notes, so what you might think you're hearing as cimbasso is actually contrabass trombone.

JP: Okay. I imagine that's how it goes in the low brass, I’m not saying that the tuba and cimbasso have the same quality of sound, but it sounds like the parts are being doubled a lot more often than not.

DT: Yeah, especially with these big orchestras.