

Innovations in Entertainment:
Non-Traditional Content in Brass Chamber Ensemble Performances

by

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ABSTRACT

Performances of three prominent, full-time brass chamber ensembles (the Canadian Brass, Mnozil Brass, and Trompettes de Lyon), are studied for their inclusion of entertainment outside the bounds of traditional music performance. The various additions include acting, choreography, novel changes in instrumentation, props, technical exhibitions, audience interaction, and inherently humorous arrangements. These are identified, categorized, and analyzed for frequency of use. Representative scenes from each ensemble are compared for similarities with the intent of establishing general rules for the usage of each non-traditional element. Differences in overall show structure, compared to that of traditional chamber ensembles, are also discussed.

In a separate component of this project, the author wrote an original show based on the above research, and performed it with the Grand Valley State University Faculty Brass Quintet. The process of creation and observations of rehearsal and performance settings are included in this document to guide the efforts of other prospective show-writers.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF FIGURES	v
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Career Opportunities in Music Performance	1
1.2 Traits of Successful, Career-Oriented Chamber Ensembles.....	2
1.3 Saturation of Traditional Demand for Music.....	3
1.4 Extra-Musical Elements and Chamber Recitals	4
2 CAREERS IN BRASS CHAMBER PERFORMANCE: A BRIEF HISTORY	6
2.1 Brass Chamber Ensembles Throughout History.....	6
2.2 The Canadian Brass and the Ongoing Evolution of Professional Brass Ensembles	8
2.3 Extra-Musical Techniques from the Audience Perspective.....	13
3 ANALYSIS OF NON-TRADITIONAL ENTERTAINMENT IN BRASS CHAMBER ENSEMBLES.....	26
3.1 Acting.....	26
3.2 Characters	34
3.3 Simple Choreography	36
3.4 Featured Choreography and Dancing	39
3.5 Singing	50
CHAPTER	
3.6 Novel Changes in Instrumentation	58

3.7	Props and Costumes.....	61
3.8	Technical Exhibitions	66
3.9	Direct Audience Interaction.....	74
3.10	Humor in Non-Traditional Arrangements	78
4	COHESION AND STRUCTURE	
	IN TOURING CHAMBER ENSEMBLE SHOWS	84
4.1	Themes and Other Methods of Cohesion	84
4.2	Show Structure.....	88
4.3	Order and Proportion of Components.....	89
5	CREATION: WRITING A MODERN SHOW	
	FOR A TRADITIONAL ENSEMBLE.....	96
5.1	Setting Goals.....	96
5.2	Choosing a Theme	98
5.3	Brainstorming	99
5.4	Bringing Scenes to Life	100
5.5	Choosing and Arranging Music.....	113
5.6	Defining Extra-Musical Activity	120
5.7	Scene Order.....	121
CHAPTER		Page
5.8	Advertising.....	121
5.9	Performing	122
6	CONCLUSION.....	124
	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	126

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Percentage of Performance Spent on Theme-Related Scenes.	86
2. Percentage of Time Spent on Scenes of Various Length.....	92
3. Percentage of Scenes of Various Length.	92
4. Amount of Time Spent on Scenes Including Non-Traditional Elements, Measured as Percentages of Overall Performance Time.	95
5. Photo with Audience Member.	109
6: Author's Recital Poster.	122

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Career Opportunities in Music Performance

Careers in music performance usually follow one of three paths. By winning an audition, a musician can gain employment in a large ensemble such as a symphony orchestra or military band. Other musicians pursue graduate degrees in performance in order to qualify for professorial careers at universities with music programs. If a stable career cannot be found in a large ensemble or music school, a musician can pursue a career as a freelancer, which means collecting enough individual performance gigs and private students to earn a living. Truly exceptional performers may try for a career as a soloist, but the opportunities in this area are very few compared to the previously mentioned careers, and are typically only available to performers of certain instruments like violin or piano.

Few students aim for a career spent freelancing, with its unstable income and irregular schedule; most students studying for a career in music performance intend to compete for a job with a large ensemble or university. Competition is fierce, and many graduating music performance majors find themselves choosing between a stint of freelance work while continuing to aspire to more profitable positions, and finding a different profession. Unsurprisingly, many do choose another profession after gauging the level of skill and number of applicants at major auditions, and realizing on the other hand how many additional years of education are required to qualify for professorial positions.

Students mostly ignore the possibility of a career in chamber music, despite multiple demonstrations of this option's viability in recent decades. Succeeding with an original chamber music show requires no audition and no academic prerequisites, only mastery of an instrument and an ability to invent shows that mix music with other fields of entertainment. While requiring a high standard of technical proficiency, chamber ensembles do not require the almost unattainable skill level of a professional soloist. What *do* they require, that discourages consideration of this option?

1.2. Traits of Successful, Career-Oriented Chamber Ensembles

Brass chamber ensembles lack the extensive and prestigious selection of repertoire available to larger ensembles, so one thing full-time chamber ensembles need is a source of new music. While this ensemble type has a few classic pieces of literature, such as the quintets composed by Victor Ewald or Malcolm Arnold, even touring brass ensembles with the standard brass quintet instrumentation rarely play traditional brass music. Instead, some ensembles partner with (or even include) composers in order to perform original music. The Center City Brass gains a unique repertoire by performing and recording pieces written by one of their trumpeters, Anthony DiLorenzo.¹ The Mnozil Brass also performs a number of original compositions written specifically for their ensemble. Other ensembles have access to a skilled arranger, allowing them to adapt not only traditional music of larger ensembles, but also popular music like “Let It

¹ “The Musicians,” Center City Brass Quintet, last modified 2013, accessed December 31, 2016, <http://www.centercitybrassquintet.com/musicians/>.

Go” from Disney’s *Frozen*.² The Canadian Brass and Les Trompettes de Lyon rely primarily on music arranged for their respective ensembles, while the Mnozil Brass arranges some of its own pieces, and composes others.

While a reliance on new music distinguishes modern brass chamber groups, these ensembles display a more striking characteristic: they simultaneously play high-quality music and engage in diverse forms of extra-musical entertainment. The groups studied in detail later, including the Canadian Brass, the Mnozil Brass, and Les Trompettes de Lyon, all require their musicians to act, execute choreography, and interact with the audience in various ways. Beyond the basics, these ensembles often specialize in certain unique features: the Canadian Brass delivers humorous verbal interludes between pieces, the Mnozil Brass’s members perform fluently on non-brass instruments, and Les Trompettes de Lyon uses notably complex choreography.

1.3. Saturation of Traditional Demand for Music

While many music students admire professional chamber ensembles, few consider joining the field. The specializations required by full-time chamber ensembles understandably intimidate students with only music performance training; few have seriously studied arranging or composition, let alone staging, acting, and dancing. However, budding musicians cannot afford to ignore this option much longer; while demand seems higher than supply with regard to diversely entertaining chamber ensembles, demand continues to fall for more traditional ensembles even as the supply of performers increases.

² *Yes, Yes, Yes!* by the Mnozil Brass, Hill Auditorium, Ann Arbor, MI, April 14, 2016.

Indeed, the field of music faces a genuine crisis as an increasing number of qualified musicians seek a dwindling number of jobs. A few established symphony orchestras have collapsed in recent years, and many surviving orchestras have cut costs by leaving vacated full-time positions empty, recruiting cheaper freelancers when necessary to play the missing parts. Available full-time positions are therefore sparse compared to the number of students graduating each year with a bachelor of music degree, resulting in extremely high levels of competition for orchestral jobs. For example, hundreds of trumpet players may apply for an advertised opening, and recent graduates compete against musicians with superior education and experience.

An increasing disconnect between supply and demand for musicians also affects pedagogical positions. Universities employ increasingly stringent standards for permanent faculty positions, with many now refusing to consider applicants lacking a terminal degree. Between this new requirement and the level of competition for orchestral jobs, music performance majors must commit to about a decade of collegiate education before attaining competitive levels of education and technical skill. Students in this field should consider other performance opportunities rather than compete in markets already saturated with talent.

1.4. Extra-Musical Elements and Chamber Recitals

Recent examples of successful, full-time chamber ensembles demonstrate that adding diverse kinds of entertainment to performances improves the ensemble's long-term viability. The variety of entertainment sets groups like the Canadian Brass apart from traditional chamber ensembles and even traditional large ensembles like symphony

orchestras. A liberal dose of humor elevates full-time chamber ensembles even above the traditional mixed-media constructions of opera and ballet, while avoiding the financially burdensome number of paid performers required for those institutions. Demand for unpredictable and comical chamber ensembles even seems to exceed the supply, but few musicians ever attempt to emulate the style of performance prototyped by the Canadian Brass. Recruiting an ensemble's worth of brass players willing to invest in extra-musical techniques presents some difficulties, but probably not enough to account for the scarcity of new ensembles attempting these novelties. More likely, musicians find the differences between extra-musical chamber ensembles and traditional ensembles too numerous and intimidating to seriously consider emulating the former. However, the enhancements of novelty brass ensembles like the Canadian Brass are less inscrutable than they first appear. Through analysis, deconstruction, and application of principles, musicians can plan their own shows in the newer style and find a niche unhindered by the competition for the shrinking supply of traditional employment.

This document studies a selection of successful brass chamber ensembles, namely the Canadian Brass, the Mnozil Brass, and Les Trompettes de Lyon, with brief references to other groups employing related skill sets. It reviews the development and historical significance of the primary three and describes shows typical for each. A detailed analysis of components in their respective performances reveals the purpose of and guidelines for successful application of each technique. A discussion follows regarding the logical procedure for constructing whole performances, accompanied by an original show and the documented process of its creation.

2. CAREERS IN BRASS CHAMBER PERFORMANCE: A BRIEF HISTORY

2.1. Brass Chamber Ensembles Throughout History

Brass ensembles have existed in some form for over a millennium, though at their outset they did not even function as entertainment. Arab military leaders used brass and percussion ensembles in battle as early as the ninth century. The musicians always stayed close to the leader and played continuously during combat, serving a dual purpose of intimidating enemies and reassuring Saracen soldiers that their commander had not fallen.³ Military brass eventually came to be associated with rulers. Kings and emperors of the late middle ages began hiring full-time court trumpeters for military signaling, ceremonial purposes, and finally entertainment, which at that time meant providing table music during meals or performing at tournaments. In the Renaissance era brass instruments began to play early church music, and the sixteenth century saw the development of a distinctive, improvising, five-part brass ensemble described by Bendinelli in one of the earliest trumpet method books.⁴

The trumpet increasingly assumed solo roles during the following Baroque era, but the tradition of brass ensembles continued; French compositions from this time period survive, written for three or four trumpets.⁵ In the Classical era, brass players enjoyed the last of their historical popularity at court. Small trumpet ensembles performed at courts

³ Edward H. Tarr, *The Trumpet* (Chandler, AZ: Hickman Music Editions, 2008), 28-29.

⁴ Tarr, *The Trumpet*, 48-51.

⁵ Tarr, *The Trumpet*, 86.

in Vienna and Munich, and the king of Portugal employed at least twenty-four trumpeters for his court trumpet ensemble, the *Charamela real*.⁶

Clearly, there is precedent for full-time brass chamber ensembles throughout history. However, the modern brass ensemble era could hardly have begun before the invention of the valve at the very end of the Classical era, around 1813.⁷ By this time, many courts had closed or severely scaled back their musical expenditures, and most ceased to sustain brass chamber groups. Consequently, few pieces for brass chamber groups survive from the early Romantic era. Instead, the trumpet took on an increasingly orchestral role following its gradual acceptance by orchestral composers. The musical world lacked a standard brass ensemble for some time after, though Jean François Bellon anticipated the modern brass quintet (comprised of two B-flat trumpets, horn, trombone, and tuba) as early as the 1840s when he wrote the first compositions for a similar instrumentation.⁸ This instrumentation failed to achieve swift popularity; Victor Ewald published the next known piece with instrumentation similar to a brass quintet in 1912.⁹

As Ewald wrote his quintets in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, numerous brass ensembles of other instrumentations appeared in North America. Some of these ensembles included variety-show elements that make them possible precursors to the Canadian Brass. Specifically, the Park Sisters (1885-1910s), the Weatherwax Brothers

⁶ Tarr, *The Trumpet*, 91.

⁷ *Oxford Dictionary of Music*, “Valve,” accessed December 31, 2016, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy.gvsu.edu/subscriber/article/opr/t237/e10595>.

⁸ Barry Kilpatrick, “Bellon: Brass Quintets 1-4,” *American Record Guide*, November 2005, 77.

⁹ Edward H. Tarr, “Ewald Brass Quintet No. 1 opus 5,” McNaughtan Publishing, accessed December 31, 2016, https://www.mcnaughtan.eu/epages/80581116.sf/en_GB/?ObjectPath=/Shops/80581116/Products/%22MN+30010%22.

Quartet (1896-1917), and the Chicago Glee Club (1900-1915) actively toured and between them brought their audiences not only brass music, but also singing, other kinds of instrumental music, character impressions, and readings. Like the ensembles studied in detail later, these early groups had music arranged specifically for their ensemble. Unlike later ensembles, these early groups did not mix music with other elements of entertainment; instead, they presented one kind of attraction per scene in variety-show fashion. Usually, arrangers picked material by famous European classical composers, but performances also included some popular music.¹⁰

2.2. The Canadian Brass and the Ongoing Evolution of Professional Brass Ensembles

In the early 1970s, the Canadian Brass brought a new model to the musical world, one that mixed a high degree of musical ability with humor, speaking, dancing, and acting, all wrapped together in a cohesive concert experience. All five members of the quintet were classically trained orchestra musicians to begin with, but they mastered many other musical styles on their way to success, as well as a variety of entertainment techniques. Later groups imitating the style the Canadian Brass pioneered have similar stories. The members of the Mnozil Brass studied music and played at a bar together as university students. Les Trompettes de Lyon includes members that graduated from a prestigious music school, realized the rarity of traditional performance jobs, and decided to put together a chamber ensemble show. It seems none of the members of these three ensembles had special training in acting, directing, choreography, or any of the other

¹⁰ Randolph Thomas Lee, "Grow a Show: Considerations in Creating Entertaining Performances for the Modern Chamber Ensemble" (DMA diss., Arizona State University, 2012), 1-3.

elements they incorporated into their music; they were formed by classically trained musicians sharing a wider vision of entertainment.

2.2.1 The Canadian Brass

The Canadian Brass probably helped inspire the business models of the Mnozil Brass and Les Trompettes de Lyon. A very high-profile and unique group, the Canadian Brass was (and is) one of the only full-time brass quintets in existence. They began as one of several traditional chamber ensembles formed for community outreach by the Philharmonic Orchestra of Hamilton, which often performed for children or schools. Interviews with ensemble members suggest that playing for youngsters gave them their first opportunity to develop entertaining performances unrestricted by the bounds of traditional performance practice. As they continued to perform for an honest and easily bored younger audience, a show style took shape that prioritized humor and audience connection as highly as musicianship.¹¹

The result shocked many conservative musicians, who regarded the Canadian Brass as something akin to the court jesters of classical music. Indeed, their performances strayed very far from standards for chamber recitals, and included all kinds of extra entertainment for which the group had no formal training. However, the results of their approach still sustain them today. The Canadian Brass continued to grow and thrive, buying music from arrangers as they became too busy with touring to write it themselves. The group has even continued despite many personnel changes. Decades later, with only one member remaining of the original ensemble, the Canadian Brass

¹¹ Lee, "Grow a Show," 7-14.

flourishes on the ideals it held at its inception. They still tour and perform around eight or nine shows a month,¹² and audiences still pack the halls to see their original, unique style of performance. Furthermore, as a natural outgrowth of their business model they now profit from hundreds of brass arrangements published in their name, as well as sales of the dozens of CDs they have recorded.¹³

2.2.2 Les Trompettes de Lyon

In 1989, five music students studying in Lyon, France formed a trumpet ensemble. Like the Canadian Brass, Les Trompettes de Lyon performed traditional concerts at first and moved into the realm of musical comedy later. They began working with professional artistic directors starting in 1997 to solidify their performances into cohesive blends of music and theatre.¹⁴ Among the groups studied in this document, this ensemble distinguishes itself with its homogeneous instrumentation and slightly less itinerant lifestyle.

Trumpet ensembles normally have a limited variety of tone qualities, with a range spanning around two and a half octaves. Les Trompettes de Lyon avoids these limitations by taking advantage of the extended instrumentation in the trumpet family. One member typically plays the bass trumpet, while the others play the B-flat trumpet,

¹² Canadian Brass & Opening Day, "Tour Dates," CanadianBrass.com, last modified 2015, accessed December 5, 2016, <http://www.canadianbrass.com/tour-dates/>.

¹³ Canadian Brass, "Store," CanadianBrass.com, last modified 2016, accessed December 31, 2016, <http://canadianbrassstore.com/>.

¹⁴ Les Trompettes de Lyon, "Les Trompettes de Lyon," last modified 2017, accessed December 31, 2016, <http://www.lestrompettesdelyon.com/en/>.

cornet, flugelhorn, piccolo trumpet, or bass trumpet.¹⁵ Because Les Trompettes de Lyon arranges its own music, their unique instrumentation among touring ensembles is an advantageous element of novelty rather than a liability.

Though the touring schedule of Les Trompettes de Lyon seems mostly based in France, their website claims more than 700 performances on a variety of continents.¹⁶ Compared to the Canadian Brass, this number is relatively small. However, being based in one place allows for more investment in the setting of the show, including lights, fog machines, and many props attached to the performance venue. To find greater development of a performance setting, one would have to look to permanently stationary groups like the Blue Man Group. However, this does not mean that Les Trompettes de Lyon lacks international prominence, particularly with trumpet players. They performed at the 2004, 2010, and 2016 International Trumpet Guild conventions to great acclaim.¹⁷

2.2.3 The Mnozil Brass

The Mnozil Brass has a similar backstory: the seven original members met as music students in Vienna, and formed a casual chamber ensemble to perform at a pub owned by Joseph Mnozil. None of the students suspected the ensemble would become a career, and so it lacked even an official name. As they gained local popularity, though, someone inevitably asked for their name and one of the musicians offhandedly named the group after the pub where they got their start. The ensemble took odd jobs outside the

¹⁵ Peter Wood, "Les Trompettes de Lyon: Concert," Special Supplement to the *International Trumpet Guild Journal*, June 4, 2016, accessed December 31, 2016, <http://www.lestrompettesdelyon.com/images/presse/ITG2016-04-06.pdf>.

¹⁶ Les Trompettes de Lyon, "Les Trompettes de Lyon."

¹⁷ Wood, "Les Trompettes de Lyon: Concert."

pub, with their first “official” performance occurring in 1993. Still casual and flexible, they also formed smaller ensembles to play other gigs.¹⁸

As for repertoire, interviews suggest the Mnozil Brass chose music tailored to their own enjoyment. This included folk, jazz, or popular music, to which most of them had been previously exposed: every member of the Mnozil Brass played in local brass bands from a young age, with repertoire including the “usual” polkas, marches, and “best-ofs.” Despite their background in brass, the members coincidentally discovered that they could sing, which allowed them to add more folk songs and popular music to their repertoire as they began performing serious concerts.¹⁹

In 1995, the Mnozil Brass performed five concerts, and in 1996 there were ten concerts. Due to their lack of financial pressure (they did not consider the group as a career option at this point), they were able to continue picking whatever music appealed to them, which resulted in an amazing variety of repertoire. As the demand for performances grew, they adapted to the pressure by hiring a director, Bernd Jeschek. From their “Seven” show onwards the performances included professionally directed choreography. The ensemble members seem to agree that having a director helped them try new things without becoming bogged down in ideological discussions; like many chamber ensembles, the Mnozil Brass does not have an established leader. The increased rehearsal efficiency must have been a boon as their performances increased to over a hundred per year!

¹⁸ *Die Etwas Andere Blasmusik*, directed by Gerald Gross (Bayerischer Rundfunk, 2005), YouTube, last modified January 7, 2014, accessed December 31, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_-mW2C1adwA.

¹⁹ *Die Etwas Andere Blasmusik*.

Of all the groups studied here, the Mnozil Brass seems alone in attempting to propagate their style of entertainment. As of 2005, the year of publication for Gerald Gross's documentary *Die Etwas Anderes Blasmusik*, the Mnozil Brass annually lead a popular workshop at the Xong Festival in South Tyrol. Footage of the workshop reveals a surprisingly different approach to music: ensembles lack sheet music, and instead students work to understand the shapes of phrases within the structure of the overall piece. The non-traditional approach to learning ostensibly creates a better environment for listening and thinking about how the music will be received by an audience, rather than emphasizing technical perfection.²⁰

2.3. Extra-Musical Techniques from the Audience Perspective

With brief histories established for the three example ensembles, this document will now describe a typical performance for each ensemble. For all three, humor and other non-traditional elements are emphasized above the music, unless the compositions are notable in some way. Descriptions of scenes are written from an audience perspective, in the order presented by the video-recording, for the benefit of readers unfamiliar with the three ensembles. Later sections include detailed analyses of the techniques involved in planning such performances, for those who wish to skip ahead.

2.3.1 Three Nights with Canadian Brass

The DVD recording chosen to represent the Canadian Brass, *Three Nights with Canadian Brass*, contains scenes excerpted from performances in 1985, 1990, and 2003.

²⁰ *Die Etwas Andere Blasmusik*.

The division of material into three different time periods provides a fascinating cross-section of the Canadian Brass's career. The perspective highlights some differences but also demonstrates that the ensemble's vision remains remarkably consistent across decades despite personnel and repertoire changes between the three performances. The DVD is ordered with the 2003 show first, followed by the 1990 show and finally the 1985 performance; the descriptions of scenes below observes the same order.

The Canadian Brass opens their 2003 *Amazing Brass in Concert* show with Samuel Scheidt's "Galliard Battaglia." Some of the ensemble members look directly at the audience while performing, but otherwise this first scene is purely musical. The second scene begins with a humor-packed four-minute verbal introduction by Charles Daellenbach, the tubist of the ensemble. He introduces the piece to follow: Bach's "Toccatina and Fugue in D Minor," arranged by Frederic Mills, one of the founding members of the quintet. Once the piece begins they just play the music without any extra entertainment, though their stands are lowered to facilitate visibility of the players by the audience. The following three scenes are purely musical, with no introductions. In the third, fourth, and fifth scene the Canadian Brass performs a Luther Henderson arrangement of W. C. Handy's "Saint Louis Blues," a "Quintet" composed for the ensemble by Michael Kamen, and a medley of Tommy Dorsey pieces put together by Paul Ferguson. The sixth scene concludes the selections from the 2003 show with "Hornsmoke: A Horse Opera in One Act" by Peter Schickele. "Hornsmoke" beautifully showcases the extra-musical techniques the Canadian Brass is known for, including narration, acting, dancing, plenty of humor, and careful choreography. The plot of the skit is fairly simple: in the Western town of Spit Valve, a young man and women meet, fall in love, have a shotgun wedding, and finally get killed by the notorious outlaw, B-flat Bart. The narrator partially communicates the storyline, but much of the audience's understanding comes from wordless acting and clever musical references (like the "Here Comes the Bride" melody).

Selections from the show recorded in 1990, *On Stage at Wolf Trap*, include five scenes: "Strike Up the Band," "Largo al Factotum," "Amazing Grace," "Flight of the Bumblebee," and "Gilda and the Five Dukes." The Canadian Brass performs their arrangement of Gershwin's "Strike Up the Band" mostly traditionally but at one point some of the musicians clap with the music and the audience joins in. Rossini's "Largo al Factotum" from *The Barber of Seville* is performed considerably less traditionally, as a tuba solo. Daellenbach, the tubist, enters the stage and promptly sneezes instead of playing on cue. Later, he misses another entrance because he is emptying his water key. In a final musical joke, Daellenbach acts like a stereotypical soloist as he arpeggiates down octave by octave. The ensemble prepares to enter, but the tubist forestalls them by

descending yet another octave into his extreme low range. Next, the Canadian Brass verbally and humorously introduces “Amazing Grace” before performing a purely musical rendition. Another humorous verbal interlude follows, introducing the idea of Rimsky-Korsakov’s “Flight of the Bumblebee” arranged for solo tuba and brass accompaniment. Daellenbach begins to play at an impressive tempo, but begins to show signs of discomfort halfway through, making faces and shaking his fingers as if the piece is too much for him. After a brief period of this apparent discomfort, one of the trumpeters, Ronald Romm, comes over and fingers the rest of the piece for Daellenbach, an impressive feat and a very comical one. The Canadian Brass chooses to end this portion of the CD with a scene called “Gilda and the Five Dukes,” a mashup of jazz snippets and music from Verdi’s *Rigoletto*. It features a guest opera singer playing the part of Gilda, who sings for a few phrases before being interrupted by jazz music. This pattern occurs again and again, with some additional jokes like the lyrics “naughty boy” in the middle of an otherwise Italian libretto, until the singer gives in and begins scat singing along with the jazz. While humorous to a broad audience, the marginally scandalous interactions in this scene hold additional meaning for audience members familiar with *Rigoletto*, in which the beautiful young Gilda falls in love with a lecherous duke.

Recorded in 1985, the scenes from *Live from the Peach Tree Theater* offer a glimpse into an earlier, more experimental phase of the Canadian Brass. The ensemble opens their performance with an arrangement of the gospel song, “Just a Closer Walk with Thee,” played while the musicians walk down the aisles of the audience. The second scene begins with a verbal introduction and then features one of the trumpeters on the classic cornet solo, “The Carnival of Venice.” More spoken jokes follow in the third scene before an arrangement of Fats Waller’s “Handful of Keys,” featuring the piccolo trumpet. A lengthy yet entertaining introduction by Daellenbach precedes the next piece, a traditionally rendered arrangement of Bach’s “Little Fugue in G Minor.” Another extensive introduction sets the stage for the fifth scene, titled “Tribute to the Ballet”: the audience is given to understand that the musicians used to play in a ballet pit orchestra, have never seen a ballet themselves, and are nevertheless going to attempt to dance some ballet from secondhand descriptions. A series of hilarious skits ensue based on excerpts from different ballets, in which the amusement is derived from humorously awkward dancing, the visual effect of the players attempting to dance while playing an instrument, and the trombone player donning a pink tutu. The sixth scene begins with a verbal introduction, followed by a mashup of the “Hallelujah Chorus” from Handel’s *Messiah* and “When the Saints Go Marching In,” titled “Saints Hallelujah.” No extra-musical entertainment is involved, but the arrangement itself draws laughter from the audience. In the seventh scene, the Canadian Brass performs the “Tuba Tiger Rag,” an arrangement of the Original Dixieland Jazz Band’s “Tiger Rag” featuring a solo tuba part. Preceded again by a verbal introduction, the scene also includes singing, acting, and simple choreography. Daellenbach acts the part of the arrogant soloist, indicating that the trombonist should place the microphone for him, and then taking his sweet time starting the piece. The other players

briefly and futilely try to block the tubist from view, then step to the side and sing some of the lyrics of the piece. To end the piece, Daellenbach plays down stepwise, sinking closer and closer to the floor until he plays the last note with the tuba bell touching the floor. The eighth and final scene of the DVD, “Boy Mozart,” strays furthest from a traditional chamber music recital. Synthesizer music plays after a spoken introduction, and the ensemble members sing while wearing sunglasses and an old-fashioned wig. The lyrics are fairly humorous, including a line referring to Mozart as a “fancy cars” and “movie stars” kind of guy. The players begin to play along with the synthesized accompaniment and mix in instrumental excerpts from Mozart’s music. They sing another couple verses and then reference another Mozart piece on their instruments. Finally, the singing is mixed with playing and the piece ends.²¹

Taken as a whole, *Three Nights with Canadian Brass* entertains more thoroughly than a video recording of a traditional chamber music concert. The DVD features a large variety of musical styles, including music from the Baroque, Classical, and Romantic eras as well as gospel songs, ragtime, early jazz, and even techno. They perform most pieces from memory. Musically, the Canadian Brass presents itself as a world-class ensemble; its repertoire and technical mastery give it a sturdy base of entertainment upon which to build the rest of the show. Verbal interludes between most of the musical selections keep the audience engaged, while Daellenbach’s jokes give the Canadian Brass a reliable and characteristic sense of humor.

Each of the three shows on the DVD contain at least one challenging fusion of entertainment styles: “Hornsmoke,” “Gilda and the Five Dukes,” and “Tribute to the Ballet” stand out as centerpieces in their respective shows. Scenes like these provide a spectacle unavailable from traditional ensembles, and elevate the Canadian Brass to a different category of entertainment entirely. Moreover, these three scenes feature different forms of entertainment: acting, singing, and dancing, respectively. Not only

²¹ *Three Nights with Canadian Brass*, by the Canadian Brass, (Opening Day Recordings, 2004), DVD.

does the Canadian Brass change its musical selections from year to year, but it creatively adapts new and diverse forms of entertainment into its show.

In addition, the Canadian Brass keeps the audience engaged with smaller and easier but often unpredictable instances of extra-musical entertainment. Their “Flight of the Bumblebee” features a brief but very impressive feat of coordination, while the “Saints Hallelujah” mixes two disparate eras of music while requiring no extra effort on the part of the musicians. The “Tuba Tiger Rag” plays on the stereotype of the arrogant soloist with just a few instances of acting. By adding a few of these diversions to each show, the Canadian Brass gives the entire performance a mixed-entertainment characteristic without needing to prepare many rehearsal-intensive “centerpieces.”

2.3.2 Magic Moments (The Mnozil Brass)

Obtaining the same quality of perspective with the Mnozil Brass required the purchase of three separate DVDs. The earliest of these, *Seven*, documents the ensemble’s first professionally directed show in 2005. The next DVD in chronological order, *Magic Moments*, depicts the Mnozil Brass hitting its stride: the different members of the ensemble develop their own stage personalities, the organization of the show contains a loose theme, and their unique humor seems more thoughtfully adapted for a wide audience. *Blofeld* keeps the same stage personalities and excellent sense of humor but relies more extensively on a theme for content. Their most recent show, *Yes, Yes, Yes!* (yet to be released on DVD), contains no discernable theme at all. *Magic Moments*, summarized below, stands on comfortable middle ground with regard to theme.

Magic Moments begins with a traditional two-minute fanfare, the only purely musical scene in the first half of the show. The second scene begins with the ensemble members reaching in their coat pockets. Leonhard Paul, the bass trumpet player, produces a recorder, while the rest of the ensemble continue checking various pockets for their recorders and looking increasingly abashed. Finally, the recorder-less members shrug, and all begin performing an arrangement for six voices and one recorder. During the piece, Paul demonstrates simple bits of stage magic, like putting his recorder in a coat pocket and removing a miniature recorder from another performer's pocket. In the third scene the ensemble plays a piece arranged for whistle, stamping feet, and brass. It includes choreography, dancing, and small jokes like a trumpeter playing a high note, then clutching his face and yelling "Ow." More stage magic begins the fourth scene: two performers hold a sheet in front of a posing trumpeter, and when the sheet is removed, the trumpeter holds a clarinet. He acts shocked about this, but fluently performs a jazz ballad while simultaneously making eyes at a young lady in the audience. The Mnozil Brass performs another jazzy tune in scene five; halfway through, the trumpets seem to go rogue and are driven offstage by the low brass. With the trumpeters absent, the four low brass players perform a humorous sibling rivalry skit, loosely accompanied by music. Upon the conclusion of the low brass quartet, the trumpets are heard playing a trio offstage at the beginning of the seventh scene. The low brass prepare to "attack," then play a blisteringly loud series of notes, silencing the trumpets. As the low brass players celebrate their success, however, the trumpeters play again, and the low brass mime their planned vengeance. This time, the low brass play an introduction to the famous "Trumpet Concerto" by Alexander Arutunian, and the trumpeters gallop onstage playing the solo line. They continue galloping for the rest of the scene, then in the eighth scene all ensemble members mime dismounting from horses and entering a saloon for a drink. The ninth scene features mariachi-sounding music and one of the trombonists acting the part of a female prostitute looking for work. "She" finds a buyer in the tenth scene, and the other ensemble members perform an arrangement for four voices and guitar. However, the prostitute falls in love with the guitar player instead of following through with her earlier customer. The two male rivals resort to acted violence, during which the former guitar player plays a brief trumpet solo while being slowly flipped in a complete circle by other ensemble members. He "dies" shortly thereafter, and the rest of the ensemble drags him off, singing a funeral hymn. The eleventh scene concludes the first half of the show and features an arrangement of the "Magnificent Seven Theme," performed as the ensemble remounts their "horses" and gallop offstage.

Scene twelve, following the intermission, features hip, modern-sounding music written for one trumpet, one trombone, and beatboxing done through a megaphone. The ensemble members not playing on this tune enter the stage and perform mockeries of modern dancing one by one. The thirteenth and fourteenth scenes are purely musical, and the Mnozil Brass plays an upbeat and lyrical piece, respectively. Scene fifteen also lacks humor, but the lighting changes and the players follow a slow choreography, either sitting motionlessly, standing, or walking from one place to another. The effect is eerie, matching the tone of the

music. In the sixteenth scene the Mnozil Brass performs another purely musical scene, but with some non-traditional elements like tapping trumpet mouthpieces for a percussive sound and using a mouthpiece against the bell rim of a trombone for a triangle-like effect. The ensemble returns to silent acting in the seventeenth scene, this time with some truly terrible stage magic done by Leonhard Paul. The tricks are so bad that they become funny; the acting of the ensemble rather than any skill at magic carries the scene by making the audience laugh. In the eighteenth scene there is only music, but in the nineteenth Paul starts the scene by taking a full minute to sit down in a chair and take off his shoes and socks. Remarkably, the awkwardness achieved by Paul is taken so far that it again becomes funny; the audience really connects with his strange character and laughs when he does something gross or unexpected. After that brief, silent spectacle the tuba player enters and begins playing a slow, simple bass line. A trombone player enters, places his slide between Paul's toes, and begins playing with Paul's foot controlling the slide. Another trombone player enters and does the same, followed by two trumpet players who offer their valves to Paul's two hands. The last member of the ensemble pulls the chair out from under Paul, leaving him suspended in midair, simultaneously coordinating the pitches of four different instruments each playing a different line. The buildup and final image are circus-like. Following this, the twentieth scene is a twenty-second rendition of the tune ending Looney Tunes clips, "That's All Folks." The twenty-first scene is a music-only performance of "Very Superstitious," featuring a trombone soloist. In the twenty-second, the Mnozil Brass plays a choreographed medley of disco pieces, in which various members sing and act out the words of different songs. Scene twenty-three is a mostly musical affair, but with a little dancing mixed in. The ensemble members dance more in the twenty-fourth scene, imitating Michael Jackson's characteristic "Thriller" dance to a bass line sustained by the tuba, after the whole group plays the opening notes. In the twenty-fifth scene, the ensemble performs a purely musical arrangement of the theme from "Peter Gunn." Paul introduces the members of the ensemble in a unique way in scene twenty-six. While the other members perform soft background music, Paul takes a trombone and plunger and uses these to imitate speech while the other members of the Mnozil Brass come forward one by one to take their bows. Paul "introduces" them and "announces" their names. The twenty-seventh scene features the whole ensemble, but Paul's playing is very out of tune. Acting offended, the other ensemble members try to make him stop playing and eventually remove the mouthpiece from his instrument. Harkening back to the stage magic in previous scenes, Paul produces a second mouthpiece and continues to play, still badly. In the end it turns out he's been playing with a red rubber ball (featured in earlier magic scenes) in his mouth. For an encore, the twenty-eighth scene, the low brass play a tune while the trumpet players act out a skit of rocking their trumpets to sleep and putting them to bed. The low brass tiptoe offstage.²²

²² *Magic Moments*, by the Mnozil Brass, directed by Ferdinando Chefalo (Larpurnu Film Production, 2010), DVD.

A series of mostly unrelated scenes comprise the Mnozil Brass's *Magic Moments* performance, held together thematically with occasional magic tricks. Original compositions and music from the last hundred years make up the majority of musical selections, which are performed from memory. The Mnozil Brass seems to prioritize originality rather than familiarity, and usually avoid pieces from older eras of music. Despite the relative lack of "classical" compositions, the musical selections in *Magic Moments* still give a sense of broad variety by introducing a large variety of emotions through their original pieces, and by using songs from many genres of popular music. While the Canadian Brass uses music from the Baroque, Classical, and Romantic eras, the Mnozil Brass uses music from Stevie Wonder, Michael Jackson, and the Bee Gees, music arguably more distinguishable to a modern audience than different historical eras of music. As an example of unusual mood for a brass show, the fifteenth scene stands out as especially strange. For three minutes, this extremely somber music uses one very slow accompaniment pattern and only one moving line at a time.

Magic Moments embraces extra-musical entertainment, but a couple of lengthy "centerpiece" scenes stand out as particularly memorable: numbers ten and nineteen in the description. These both involve a large amount of acting and feats of strength or coordination that most brass players would consider impossible, like playing a trumpet upside down or playing a trombone with one's foot. Scene ten additionally incorporates a narrative, extensive choreography, guitar-playing, singing, and a silently acted action scene. Scene nineteen includes audience interaction and a circus-like buildup of difficulty. Both scenes seem to assure the audience that they attend a chamber music show unlike any other.

In addition to the two show-stoppers, the Mnozil Brass's *Magic Moments* includes a large number of other highly-involved scenes featuring a selection of non-traditional entertainment. From an amorous clarinet solo, to literally galloping around the stage playing the "Magnificent Seven" theme, to an entire scene spent miming a Western saloon sketch, the Mnozil Brass demonstrates not only a huge amount of musical talent, but a selection of other talents impressive in their own right. They distribute this sort of scene liberally throughout the show, leaving only six of the twenty-eight scenes of *Magic Moments* as wholly traditional chamber brass music.

2.3.3 Canard Laqué (Les Trompettes de Lyon)

Les Trompettes de Lyon has published several DVDs, but accessing them is difficult for customers outside Europe. At this time, the author has access to only one, *Canard Laqué*, which is summarized below.

Canard Laqué opens with one member of the trumpet ensemble walking onstage and beginning to play, after looking around as if curious why he is alone onstage. The other members enter one by one, each seeming to give an explanation for why they were late before joining in the music. After the last member enters and begins playing, the music becomes familiar: it is the "Triumphal March" from Verdi's *Aida*. The second scene is a heavily choreographed arrangement of Khachaturian's "Sabre Dance," in which the players move around the stage and also change trumpet direction in unison. The third scene contains an arrangement of Jaime Teixidor's "Amparito Roca," played while acting out a humorous skit: the shortest member of the ensemble plays a solo line in the arrangement, and insistently mimes that the other members should not stand above him. By the end of the skit, everyone but the diminutive soloist lies on the floor. In the fourth scene, only four of the five members play at a time, with choreography such that members of the ensemble are continuously replaced by the player who was resting. The music for this skit is "Entry of the Gladiators," by Julius Fučík. The fifth scene, featuring a brief arrangement of Rossini's "William Tell Overture," is sung in perfect solfege. It also features some acting, but this seems to be for visual effect rather than humor. Following the fifth scene there is a minute when two of the ensemble members speak to the audience. The sixth scene seems to be a variation on the game of musical chairs set to music.

The seventh scene continues the musical chairs idea, accompanied by Rossini's overture to *The Barber of Seville*, ending with a humorous configuration of one player sitting on a chair, two players sitting on his knees, and the last two sitting on *those* players' knees. In the eighth scene, Les Trompettes de Lyon plays a piece entitled "Afrique du Ministoire Jazzique," presumably a new composition intended for this ensemble. They spin while playing, which could be considered the first scene of this show to involve dance. Another new composition named "Marche des Nouveaux Nés" graces the ninth scene, and involves a complicated feat of choreography. One member sits on a chair and the rest line up behind him in order of shortest to tallest. The trumpet players in the back hold two trumpets, one on either side of their head, and alternate playing into one or the other. The tenth scene consists of a short fanfare, which stops because the trumpeter has an oddly muffled tone. He removes a stuffed animal, a duck, from the bell of the trumpet, and the ensemble members all greet the duck like an old friend. In the eleventh scene they place the duck in an open trumpet case and perform Grieg's "Morning Mood" followed by a lullaby, Brahms' "Guten Abend, gute Nacht," to the duck. The music becomes softer and the ensemble pretends the duck is almost asleep until one of the players blasts the last note of the tune. The twelfth scene is another lullaby-like piece, Tchaikovsky's "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairies." The trumpet case is closed and the ensemble shushes the audience. Les Trompettes de Lyon performs the next five scenes, thirteen through seventeen, as portraits of five famous trumpeters are unveiled on the back wall of the stage. Maurice André is the first to be revealed, and the ensemble kneels before his portrait and perform Bach's "Badinerie," a piece André was known for. A portrait of Miles Davis appears for the fourteenth scene, and the ensemble plays one of Davis's classics, "Round Midnight." Following the established pattern into the fifteenth scene, the ensemble plays a piece written by the man in the third portrait, Boris Vian. Some of the trumpeters sing and snap their fingers in the sixteenth scene, in which they perform "Just a Closer Walk with Thee" and "When the Saints Go Marching In" in front of a portrait of Louis Armstrong. The seventeenth scene features "La Tactique du Gendarme" and a portrait of Bourvil. Light and mist from fog machines surround the five portraits in the eighteenth scene, accompanied by relatively somber jazz from the trumpet ensemble. The nineteenth scene begins with a big, staged argument between the trumpeters, with everyone raising their voice and speaking very quickly. The light changes and they assume a statuesque pose together, performing Claudio Monteverdi's "Quel Augellin che canta." They stay completely still for the length of the entire piece, but as soon as it finishes, they comically return to their argument. The twentieth scene includes both a march and a folk song section. The march contains acting and choreography, in which one of the members plays a drill sergeant and they all march around the stage in patterns reminiscent of marching bands. A folk song is attached to the end of the march, which the ensemble sings. Some jokes are included in the music; there are gasping breaths and an instance where an ensemble member holds a note too long. The twenty-first scene begins with one member introducing the next piece, possibly as his own modern composition. The piece itself appears to be deliberately awful. The twenty-second scene also

begins with a humorous introduction, followed by an arrangement of Prokofiev's "Suggestion Diabolique." There is no choreography in this scene, but instead more mist from the fog machines and something of a lightshow. One of the ensemble members runs through the audience at the start of the twenty-third scene, leaving the others to perform the opening to Strauss's "Also Sprach Zarathustra." The missing member runs back onstage at the end of the scene carrying a giant balloon. A skit ensues in the twenty-fourth scene, in which the ensemble members keep the balloon in the air by bouncing it with their trumpet bells, all the while performing a transcription of the "Pasodoble" from Manuel Penella's *El Gato Montés*. The twenty-fifth scene begins with "La Sonnerie aux Morts," here performed with one trumpeter playing the trumpet and the other four playing the percussion part by unscrewing their valve caps and depressing the valves for a rattling effect. The scene ends with "La Marseillaise." A tango ensues in the twenty-sixth scene; four members play while one dances with his trumpet, then later all five play and dance the same coordinated steps. Scene twenty-seven is a duck-hunting skit. A pattern repeats: a member of the ensemble plays a hunting call, then another member throws a rubber duck into the air as a third member takes aim with his trumpet. There is a flash and a bang and the duck finishes falling to the floor. In the twentieth scene, the members of Les Trompettes de Lyon pose in such a way that they seem to stand at an angle, and perform an arrangement of "Le Temps des Cerises," a famous French song from the 19th century. Two jazz pieces follow in scenes twenty-nine and thirty, Charles Aznavour's "For Me, Formidable" and Charles Trenet's "La Mer," respectively. The former scene includes some strutting and dancing, while the latter begins with a humorous spoken intro and a trumpeter humorously imitating a lighthouse, spinning slowly in circles with a mute adapted to hold a flashlight. Scene thirty-one finishes the show with a medley of pieces ranging from the "Chicken Dance" to "The Light Cavalry Overture;" when the piece ends, hundreds of multi-colored rubber ducks rain from the ceiling. An encore, scene thirty-two, reprises the "The Light Cavalry Overture," but this time mixed with a sung folk song. A quacking noise is heard, the ensemble members reach in their pockets for bread crumbs to feed the imaginary duck, and the show ends.²³

The Canadian Brass and the Mnozil Brass share a similar mixture of traditional musical performance, mixed-entertainment centerpieces, and scenes with minor extra-musical involvement; Les Trompettes de Lyon seems to operate with a different strategy. *Canard Laqué* includes no completely traditional scenes at all, instead its music is saturated with choreography; consequently, the members of Les Trompettes de Lyon memorize all their music out of necessity. *Canard Laqué* also differs from *Magic*

²³ *Canard Laqué*, by Les Trompettes de Lyon, directed by François Bulteau (Bonne Pioche, 2002), DVD.

Moments and *Three Nights with Canadian Brass* in that the French trumpet ensemble rarely plays music written less than a century ago. Their reasons may be related to copyright law and the relative ease of choosing music in public domain. Les Trompettes de Lyon nevertheless looks for musical variety, choosing music from diverse musical eras and diverse cultures. Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, Romantic, and 20th century eras of classical music are all represented, as well as music of France, Spain, Italy, Russia, Norway, Germany, and America. Their program also includes French and American jazz standards.

The extra-musical appeal in *Canard Laqué* relies on several techniques, but mainly choreography. Scenes three, eleven, and twenty-seven involve narrative skits; props are often included in scenes for comedic effect; and the performers occasionally sing. While the members of Les Trompettes de Lyon act, sing, and use props occasionally, they move almost constantly during their performance. Furthermore, every scene performed by Les Trompettes de Lyon involves a unique idea of movement or placement of players on stage. This characteristic of *Canard Laqué* stands out especially when compared to shows by the Canadian Brass and the Mnozil Brass, two groups which often perform in a stationary arc formation. The choreography sometimes includes humor, as in the musical chairs and lighthouse ideas in scenes seven and thirty, but often the ensemble moves with no comedic intent, thus demonstrating another unique feature. When the Canadian Brass or the Mnozil Brass deviate from traditional performance practice they almost always aim to make the audience laugh.

With the emphasis on choreography, the show *Canard Laqué* seems as much a visual work of art as a descendent of the prototypical Canadian Brass performances. The

ensemble thus achieves a performance as singular as those of the other ensembles. All three take entirely different approaches to musical choice and proportions of non-traditional entertainment. Furthermore, each ensemble has a unique specialty; the Canadian Brass features verbal humor, the Mnozil Brass specializes in miming and fluency with non-brass instruments, and Les Trompettes de Lyon focuses on artistic choreography.

3. ANALYSIS OF NON-TRADITIONAL ENTERTAINMENT IN BRASS CHAMBER ENSEMBLES

Although the Canadian Brass, the Mnozil Brass, and Les Trompettes de Lyon construct their shows according to different priorities, all three benefit from a wide variety of entertainment. In fact, these three ensembles have developed roughly the same repertoire of skills; proportions rather the types of skills differentiate their respective shows. The list of skills includes choreography, acting, singing, playing other instruments, dancing, props, technical exhibitions, and engaging directly with the audience. Mastering and combining these skills with music sets career chamber ensembles apart from traditional ensembles, establishing a different niche with a different audience. Thus, groups like the Canadian Brass avoid competition with larger and better-established organizations such as symphony orchestras.

3.1. Acting

Acting allows the audience to see past the music into a narrative or other interactions between the characters onstage. It is the easiest extra-musical feature to plan, but the most difficult to execute. For musicians, learning to act even a small part in the scene can require more mental effort and time commitment than mastering and memorizing the music. Though it requires great effort, acting remains crucial to show construction as the primary source of humor for the three example ensembles. Masters of facial expression, the musicians of the Mnozil Brass rely on their acting skills to establish onstage characters and transport the audience to frequently absurd, usually hilarious narratives. The Canadian Brass acts well and often, usually using their music to augment

the audience's understanding of dramatic interaction. While Les Trompettes de Lyon acts less than the other two, acting still plays a large role in their performance, and their creative use of prop-centered narratives merits analysis.

3.1.1 Case Study: Acting

The Mnozil Brass's saloon sketch from *Magic Moments* exemplifies the potential of acting in a chamber music show; it relies fully on acting and miming rather than music or other forms of entertainment.²⁴ At 30:58, just before the thirty-first minute of the show, the musicians finish the previous scene and cease playing entirely for about the next five minutes. In the interim, there is no music and only one instance of coherent speech at the very end, which sets the tone for the following scene. At 30:58, they “reign their horses to a halt” from the gallop they maintained at the end of the previous scene, and set their instruments down at 31:20 as they mime dismounting from the horses. They find themselves in a line, hunched over each other, and haul each other upright with pained facial expressions as one member cranks a ratchet. Expressions of relative relief follow for six out of the seven. However, the performer furthest to stage right was at the end of the line, had no one behind him to help him straighten his back, and thus remains bent over, gasping like a fish out of water. They crank him too far; now he leans backwards, again conveying his discomfort very effectively through his facial expression and uncomfortable breathing pattern. Finally, they straighten him out, and all seven of them walk one by one into a saloon.

²⁴ *Magic Moments*.

The acting in the saloon is remarkable not only in the skillful miming that reveals a characteristic but imaginary saloon door to the audience, but also in the Mnozil Brass's use of inaction. An amateur actor's instinct tends to rush them through the necessary motions, but the performers in *Magic Moments* know exactly when to stop moving and simply stare at the audience, waiting for the appropriate time to proceed. The lead trumpet, Thomas Gansch, waddles his bowlegged way to the entrance, opens the saloon door and looks directly at the audience. The audience understands the situation and begins to applaud. Gansch waits a full ten seconds, taking a good look at the other occupants of the "saloon," before swaggering over to the bar. The second performer pauses for only a couple seconds to get through the door, but the third walks in taking a drag on a "cigarette." The drag takes six seconds, building something ineffable like audience expectation, and then he hacks a wheezing cough and finds his own place at the bar. The next two take their time at the door as usual, but the sixth exaggerates to the extreme, walking sometimes only as fast as a step every two seconds, all the while with a hideous leer on his face. This speed would be very unnatural for a normal walker, but as the Mnozil Brass demonstrates, reality is sometimes expressed best by exaggeration. The last member saunters in picking his nose with his tie, and eats the "booger." The entrance is complete, memorable on account of its long pauses and the unique actions executed by each actor.

Passing the focus of attention from one individual to the next is clearly a winning strategy; this pattern repeats three more times over the duration of the skit. The next instance occurs almost immediately. Gansch orders a round of drinks by whistling and twirling his finger, and an imaginary drink comes sliding down the surface of the bar,

accompanied by a loud “shhh” sound effect by the ensemble. The exact location of the vessel is, amazingly, defined by facial direction, with six members keeping their eyes trained on an invisible glass as it whizzes past each of them and then off the end of the bar; the seventh member has woefully missed his chance to catch it. They look at him with reproach; he brims with embarrassment and then fiery determination to catch the next one. He succeeds, making a loud clicking noise with his tongue to represent the glass smacking into his hand, and the anticipation on his face is as exaggerated as the sound effect. After this precedent, the stage is set for variations on catching the drink, and every performer proceeds to catch his own beverage in a slightly different way.

They raise their glasses and utter an incoherent cheer before chugging the brew, and then another instance of individual focus follows. Beginning from stage left and progressing predictably to stage right: the first performer issues a large belch, the second a satisfied “Aaaaah,” the third farts, the fourth picks his nose again, this time flicking the “booger” into the audience, the fifth belches a series of belches into the face of the sixth, who retaliates by “spitting” dramatically on the shoe of the fifth. The seventh, confident that the pattern is clear and all expectation is now focused on him, waits a few dramatic seconds before hiccupping.

The final instance occurs immediately after; from stage left to stage right the first six saloon-goers slide their cups back down the counter. The seventh, apparently having found the beer not to his taste, empties his cup over his shoulder, accidentally into the face of another performer. While this instance does not have seven unique takes on the same action (the first six were exactly the same), the direction of attention is still worth noting, as the action moves predictably along the line of performers all the way to the

unique action. Done this way, few audience members could have missed the joke (the beer in the face), which helps the performers segue to the next scene.

3.1.2 Discussion

The saloon skit engaged the audience effectively, drawing them into the narrative and its many jokes. Focusing the audience's attention on individual members of the ensemble allowed the Mnozil Brass to develop unique character expectations for each actor; one is frequently oblivious and goofy, another is a stereotype of arrogant good looks, still another acts with villainous and sardonic undertones. Additionally, the total visual immersion in the scene allowed the ensemble to thoroughly demonstrate its acting mastery, while also providing welcome variety from a mostly musical performance.

Technically, the scene evinces the work of an experienced director in the facial expressions, body positioning, and choreography. With few exceptions, all facial expressions are performed while directly facing the audience. When an interaction necessitates using a facial expression towards another performer, an additional expression directed at the audience follows. The part of the scene where the hapless performer misses his beer contains two examples of this. The left-most actor puts on a surprised face and stares after the missed glass, then looks abashedly at the rest of the ensemble. After these expressions, he looks at the audience and expresses renewed determination. The right-most performer, meanwhile, is facing the audience, shaking his head, and clearly muttering about the recent incident.

Individual and coordinated body postures contribute to the effectiveness of the scene. Individual movements play a large role in the ensemble's entrance to the saloon;

these moments illustrate the difference between extremely skilled and merely competent actors. Some of the actors walk normally, while others exaggerate. Undoubtedly, the exaggerated swaggers contribute more to the comedy of the scene. Coordination occurs when the ensemble members straighten each other after dismounting the horses. For this part of the scene to work, they must match the timing and approximate shape of their bodies. Another instance of coordination defines the bar, an important but mimed prop in this skit. The ensemble members lean on the bar in a similar way and with their arms at approximately the same height, a feat far more difficult than it first appears.

Choreography is minimal in the saloon sketch, but still plays an important role. The more the ensemble can stand in a straight line when getting off the horses and leaning on the bar, the more effective the scene appears. The audience probably takes this coordination for granted, but much rehearsal would have gone into perfecting the formation of the performers. The ensemble's placement at the bar is also carefully thought out; the middle spot must remain open until the last member enters so that the audience can always see the musicians walking in the door. Ensemble members therefore take available places furthest from the door, and in such a way that when all have entered, the performers are evenly spaced.

3.1.3 Comparison Between Ensembles

Certain characteristics exemplified by the Mnozil Brass occur in Canadian Brass and Les Trompettes de Lyon performances as well. In particular, performers in all three ensembles almost always face the audience unless they have a specific reason to look elsewhere. Symmetry also plays an important aspect in choreography; even when these

ensembles perform traditionally, they position themselves in lines or various arced shapes that rely on precise symmetry.

Music-assisted acting is another common theme. All three ensembles combine acting and music so that both the acting and music contribute to a narrative. Large musical narratives typically involve a very simple story, which can be communicated with music and acting only. Most stories use one or two ensemble members as protagonists (often romantically involved), another as the antagonist, and the rest as choreographed, musical onlookers. Now and then a rivalry scene occurs between two factions of an ensemble, in which competing musical lines play a large role. The Mnozil Brass and the Canadian Brass also perform scenes featuring one villain character against the rest of the ensemble.

The Mnozil Brass uniquely incorporates another two categories of acting: scenes involving acting but no music, and scenes including very short pieces of acting. The latter provide flavor rather than advancing a narrative, and typically appear as five-second exchanges sprinkled throughout a performance. Sometimes these brief instances of acting center around a humorous glitch in the music, such as a performer “forgetting his entrance” and then either realizing his mistake or having his memory jogged by a fellow performer. Other times, ensemble members of the Mnozil Brass act surprised by unusual or unexpected behavior in their comrades. In *Blofeld*, the villain laughs whenever another performer experiences a misfortune.²⁵ All brief instances of acting seem planned for comedic effect, and most require exaggerated facial expressions to communicate the necessary amount of information within a limited time period.

²⁵ *Blofeld*, by the Mnozil Brass, directed by Ferdinando Chevalo (Larpurnu Film Production, 2012), DVD.

The Mnozil Brass makes use of another unique scene format with sketches performed in silence or with non-musical sound effects. In the three Mnozil Brass shows studied, there were two instances of these. One of these, the saloon sketch, relies on miming to communicate the sketch. The other music-less sketch lasts only twenty seconds and describes a pit stop on a race course, relying more on sound effects and less on miming. To explain briefly, the brass players imitate the Doppler effects of passing “racecars” and then service one when it screeches to a halt for a pit stop. The “car” accelerates back onto the racetrack with the help of two trombones in parallel thirds imitating the sounds of acceleration and gear-shifting. Rather than facial expressions, this scene relies on the mimed pit stop and the mimicked sound effects to express the setting to the audience.

Most of the Mnozil Brass members have mastered the art of conveying complex emotions with faces alone, but ensembles can also act convincingly without such an impressive repertoire of facial expressions. Les Trompettes de Lyon offers one strategy: the actors can act while simultaneously playing their instrument. A musician playing a brass instrument is limited to his eyebrows and posture for communication, and thus an audience expects much less from their face while they act. With only the music and body language, Les Trompettes de Lyon effectively communicates emotions, ideas, and humor to the audience of *Canard Laqué*. Les Trompettes de Lyon also uses speech as part of a scene, as in their first and nineteenth scene. Adding speech ensures the audience understands the narrative of the first scene without requiring too much faith in silent acting’s ability to convey complex concepts. In their nineteenth scene, the loud argument provides a comical contrast to the lyrical and mellow Monteverdi composition. The

Canadian Brass also includes speech in acted scenes, most notably in “Hornsmoke.” The Mnozil Brass seems to prefer song to speech, perhaps because of their habit of touring internationally. An audience may feel less “left out” by an ensemble singing rather than speaking in a foreign language.

The Canadian Brass introduces another method of ensuring audience comprehension: explain the narrative before the scene even begins. However, this ensemble also demonstrates the effectiveness of using a more professional actor to communicate information to the audience in “Gilda and the Five Dukes.” Their guest singer has a face expressive enough to carry the whole scene herself, while the other ensemble members excuse themselves from too much facial acting by playing their instruments the whole time.

Besides the studied performers, acting seems a nearly universal element among shows combining music with other featured forms of entertainment. Other examples of acting in music include the King’s Singers, the Blue Man Group, and Victor Borge. Victor Borge, in fact, builds his performances out of little but music, speech, and acting. The Blue Man Group incorporates a wide range of other diversions such as technological entertainment, props, and audience involvement techniques, but the character of the Blue Men is the core of their show. The humor and entertainment value of the entire show is built on the quirky, curious, wide-eyed stage personalities of these three blue “aliens.”

3.2. Characters

All acting involves characters in a story, but the Mnozil Brass is unique among the three studied brass ensembles in that individual performers often portray the same

consistent character throughout a show. Indeed, some of the Mnozil Brass performers carry distinctive stage personalities *between* shows. Robert Rother, for example, plays trumpet in the Mnozil Brass; his character often acts bewildered, as when his drink flies off the end of the bar, or his trumpet is transformed into a clarinet. Roman Rindberger, another trumpet player, plays the part of an arrogant and attractive ladies' man. When Rindberger brings a chair to Leonhard Paul and later takes it away in the nineteenth scene of *Magic Moments*, he performs these actions with flair totally uncalled for in a mere chair-mover; Rindberger also plays the amorous guitar player in the tenth scene. The other performers also have their own default personalities, though occasionally they abandon their distinctive characteristics for roles in narratives requiring other characters.

The Mnozil Brass often creates a primary character to lead the progression of a show. In *Magic Moments*, Leonhard Paul stars as an incompetent but enthusiastic magician. Paul plays a lead role again in *Blofeld*, where his villainy similarly connects to the theme and introduces new scenes. *Yes, Yes, Yes!* features Thomas Gansch as a Spanish-speaking show host. The Canadian Brass uses this central character concept as well, but only between scenes.

Diverse characters can be found filling the role of “master of ceremonies” in other non-traditional performances, such as the Cirque du Soleil’s circus-shows. As was true with the Mnozil Brass, these characters are extremely varied, from the all-powerful genie character in *Kooza* to the neglected child in *Quidam*.^{26 27} Cirque du Soleil’s actors remain in character throughout the show, witnessing the main attractions from the

²⁶ *Kooza*, by the Cirque du Soleil, directed by Mario Janelle and David Shiner (Gravitas Ventures, 2013), DVD.

²⁷ *Quidam*, by the Cirque du Soleil, directed by Franco Dragone (Sony Pictures, 1999), DVD.

sidelines and sometimes contributing to musical numbers with song. Interestingly, while the Mnozil Brass uses acting almost exclusively for humor, the Cirque du Soleil's main actors are never humorous; their clowns have a monopoly on comedy.

3.3. Simple Choreography

The Canadian Brass, Mnozil Brass, and Trompettes de Lyon carefully plan the choreography of their shows. Most of the time the choreography does not stand out, and instead facilitates other effects rather than attracting attention. For instance, sometimes the members of the Mnozil Brass stand in a straight line, and other times they stand in an arc. The audience might not even consciously recognize the choreography in those formations unless a performer makes a wrong move.

Even more traditional ensembles consider and rehearse walking on and offstage as well as bowing in unison, but when professional chamber groups act, simple choreography becomes a crucial aspect of the scene. In addition to moving the actors where they need to be, choreography also helps direct the audience's attention and enhances their understanding of extra-musical entertainment. Choreography directs attention through the direction actors face, and particularly the directions actors look; humans are highly attuned to what other people are looking at and often follow another's gaze, allowing actors to shift attention from themselves to someone else. Simple choreography also enhances narratives by grouping actors onstage in ways that divide different factions of actors, and placing important actors in prominent positions. In general, attention focuses on actors standing closer to the audience, closer to the center of the stage, or apart from a larger group.

3.3.1 Case Study: Simple Choreography

The choreography in the tenth scene in *Magic Moments*, a scene popularly referred to as “Slow Motion,” provides many examples of actors positioned to enhance a narrative.²⁸ The configurations performers pause in, and the paths they take to get there, effectively direct attention to the important elements of the scene. At the beginning of the scene a trombonist, Zoltan Kiss, wakes up to find Gerhard Füll, playing the “girl” Kiss paid for an evening’s “entertainment,” making out with the guitar player of the previous scene, Roman Rindberger. Three groups of actors define this scene: Kiss stands downstage (close to the front of the stage) and audience right, expressing his grief to the crowd. The pair of lovers occupy the center of the stage, locked in a passionate embrace. The other musicians, who play no specific role in the skit, stand upstage and audience left, in a diagonal line facing the main actors. The setup serves to make all the performers visible while still establishing an order of importance; the audience’s attention should be on Kiss, with an awareness of the couple but little awareness of the four remaining actors. Kiss seizes Rindberger and Füll and throws them different directions, Füll to audience right and Rindberger to the four minor actors. The actors direct their eyes to Kiss, now centered and downstage, who swings the guitar menacingly. As Kiss moves to smash the guitar against the head of the guitarist (Rindberger), the lights abruptly change color and all actors begin acting out a fight scene in slow motion.

Some performers assume support roles in the combat, carrying projectiles or helping actors keep their balance and fly through the air. After the guitar strikes Rindberger at 0:32 in the YouTube clip, the eye direction of the performers focus on the

²⁸ *Magic Moments*, “Mnozil Brass Slow Motion,” YouTube, last modified September 20, 2012, accessed December 31, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ajV_X0g7ibU.

guitarist as he careens across the stage, drawing attention away from the supporting actors that carry him through a complete midair flip. After playing a brief trumpet solo, Rindberger fires a mouthpiece “bullet” from his trumpet towards Kiss, which Thomas Gansch carries across the stage in a supporting role. Gansch and the other performers use eye contact to direct the audience’s attention to the bullet while it makes its way across the stage towards Kiss from 1:17-1:31. Kiss returns fire in the form of a shoe, but due to camera angle exact choreography is difficult to ascertain. The shoe connects with Rindberger, and by the time camera angle allows a full view of the stage again all eyes are on the stricken guitarist as his trumpet falls into his hands. At 2:18, all actors but Rindberger freeze in place as he plays a final solo. Kiss looks gleefully towards the audience while the other five performers focus on the “dying” Rindberger. In addition to eye contact, the director brings the five non-combatant actors closer to the ground to help bring attention to the soloist, surrounding Rindberger on all sides that do not obstruct the audience’s view of him.

3.3.2 Discussion

Simple choreography directs the audience’s attention to the most important part of a scene during instances of extra-musical entertainment. The Mnozil Brass saturates “Slow Motion” with simple choreography, including actor placement and eye direction, to ensure as many audience members can follow the narrative as possible. Narratives in particular require audiences to recognize a majority of plot points to understand the story, so performers must accurately direct attention or risk losing some of the audience.

3.3.3 Comparison Between Ensembles

An analysis of “Hornsmoke” reveals many of the same considerations with regard to eye direction and placement of actors onstage. When the Canadian Brass wants to draw attention to a particular actor, that key actor looks at the audience and other actors look at the key actor. More important actors also stand closer to the audience. *Canard Laqué* offers an additional approach, based on movement, for directing audience attention in its third scene. The four taller trumpet players stand motionless while the center of attention, the short trumpeter, looks and moves around. Movement, in addition to position and eye direction, effectively draws attention to a main character or event.

3.4. Featured Choreography and Dancing

As opposed to simple choreography, ensembles sometimes use choreography as the featured extra-musical aspect of a scene. Featured choreography enhances a scene independently of acting and without necessarily providing humor; like a marching band, ensembles utilize this kind of choreography to provide visual as well as aural art. Les Trompettes de Lyon employs this kind of visual art almost constantly; the Canadian Brass and Mnozil Brass rarely do. All three, however, use dance as a visual stimulus. Dancing is particularly easy to include in musical shows, as dance is inherently related to music but provides a non-traditional element to chamber ensembles: music and dance are not traditionally performed by the same people simultaneously, so in this setting the combination still seems novel. Although relatively rare, dancing interludes appear in almost every show studied and thus present a good topic of extra-musical study.

3.4.1 Case Studies: Dancing

The Canadian Brass presents an archetypal chamber music and dancing scene in their “Tribute to the Ballet,” a scene intended as a parody of traditional ballet but containing informative choreography.²⁹ The performers form a straight line and face the audience at many points throughout the performance. While very simple, this formation is effective in many scenarios, allowing the audience to easily compare the movements of multiple performers. Uses of this formation occur at 0:40, 3:48, 5:25, 6:20, 8:35, and 9:00 in the footnoted YouTube clip. In almost every one of these instances (the example at 6:20 is the only exception), this straight line serves to highlight “unintentional” differences between the performers. Whether a ballet move is interpreted differently by all the performers, or a single member appears to perform a step incorrectly, a straight line confers the joke easily and clearly to the audience. At 5:25, for instance, the Canadian Brass plays a movement from “The Nutcracker.” Four of the five performers move one of their legs in unison; the fifth alternately moves the wrong leg and continues moving when the other performers are still.

Another common and simple formation is a straight line of accompaniment performers with a soloist in front. These occur in this scene at 1:09, 6:39, and 7:00 in “Tribute to the Ballet,” and are used to draw attention to a single performer. At these times, the person in front has both a musical solo and a joke that only involves the one person. At 1:09, the humor comes from the absurdity of running onstage and jumping while holding a tuba, and also the tubist’s slow collapse to the floor near the end of this

²⁹ Canadian Brass, “Tribute to the Ballet – Live from Atlanta 1985 Part 3 – Canadian Brass,” YouTube, last modified December 30, 2010, accessed December 31, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uWjNgWR7Ts0>.

section. At 6:39, the trombone soloist (a man) returns to the stage wearing a pink tutu. At 7:00, the “dead” tubist returns to life in order to play his own funeral music. The example of the Canadian Brass at these moments reveals a clear lesson: when audience attention should focus on a single performer, putting the key performer in front of a line of other performers is an effective, simple solution.

At 4:25 another choreographic scenario deserves attention: here the Canadian Brass makes use not only of the two dimensions of the stage, but also the vertical dimension. By having one player kneel in front, three stand in a row in the middle, and one stand on a chair behind, the Canadian Brass adds texture and interest to the scene. The configuration also adds to the miniature narrative of this section, by initially separating the tuba (standing on the chair) and the horn (kneeling in front), and when the tuba manages to get off the chair and onto the hornist’s knee the audience gets an idea of what may have been the narrative of the original ballet scene.

Incorporating dance into a chamber music show does not require devoting scene-sized segments to dance; in fact, the Canadian Brass compiles “Tribute to the Ballet” from a series of small ballet excerpts and dances. Smaller instances of dance are also effective, such as the square dance in “Hornsmoke” and the isolated instances of dancing in the Mnozil Brass’s “At the Movies.” In both instances the dancing provides no crucial narrative but rather a brief diversion from the rest of the scene.

The Canadian Brass’s “Hornsmoke” contains only one instance of dancing, and it lasts from about 4:32 until 5:19 in the YouTube clip – under a minute.³⁰ The dance serves as a wedding celebration within the larger scope of the drama, but contains no

³⁰ Canadian Brass, “Hornsmoke (A Horse Opera in One Act) - Canadian Brass,” YouTube, last modified March 11, 2011, accessed December 31, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wk7iBt8EPmM>.

acting itself. Technically, the dance requires little skill; most of the dance focuses on the movements of dancers across the stage rather than on an individual dancer. Following the example of many folk dances, the four performers trade places with one another and rotate as a group to take up a different position in their onstage square. Most of these movements take eight beats each to perform, leaving the performers plenty of time to move comfortably while simultaneously playing an instrument. Nine of these movements comprise the entire dance, yet this modest amount of choreography contributes a lot of value to the scene. The Canadian Brass does not risk dancing for so long that the audience grows bored, but rather interrupts the dance less than a minute after its beginning with the entrance of the narrative's villain.

The Mnozil Brass inserts several brief dance interludes into their "At the Movies" arrangement.³¹ They arrange the original overture to include a variety of other pieces cleverly mixed in, and dance to some of these rogue excerpts. The first of the four instances of dancing in this scene occurs from 2:55-3:20 in the YouTube clip. The music abruptly transitions to "If I Were a Rich Man" from *Fiddler on the Roof* and as if to accent the silliness of the unexpected music, individual performers bob down on one beat and up the next, with this movement traveling from stage right to left and back. A brief circle dance follows, with the circle unfolding into their customary arc just in time to transition back to the "Light Cavalry Overture."

The second dance occurs from 3:43-4:18, and follows a similar pattern. This time the Mnozil Brass suddenly transitions from "Light Cavalry Overture" to "I Could Have Danced All Night" from *My Fair Lady*, and the dancing coincides again with the first

³¹ Mnozil Brass, "Mnozil Brass – At the Movies," YouTube, last modified June 21, 2010, accessed December 31, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i3QwiUDt2-E>.

beat of the new piece of music. Six of the performers come together in front of the seventh and then go back to their original positions, at which point the seventh, middle performer comes forward and then back to his place. This dance pattern repeats but with the six musicians crossing to the opposite sides of the stage. The music transitions to a mixture of the “Light Cavalry Overture” with “I Could Have Danced All Night,” and the musicians use this time to reposition themselves onstage for an excerpt from Stravinsky’s “Rite of Spring.” A little later “I Could Have Danced All Night” returns for a few seconds (4:54-5:01), and the musicians again use this time to reposition. A final brief dance occurs from 37:48-37:58 on the DVD, but unfortunately this is not included in the YouTube clip.³² Here, the Mnozil Brass plays a folk variation of the “Light Cavalry Overture,” and the trumpet players perform a short dance without moving from their place in the arc.

3.4.2 Case Study: Featured Choreography

Because *Canard Laqué* (and every other DVD produced by Les Trompettes de Lyon) is difficult to buy outside of Europe and unavailable on YouTube, the scene chosen for this case study comes from another group of performers. The Cirque du Soleil’s show *Quidam* includes a scene called “Statue (Vice Versa),” in which acrobats entertain the audience with only strength and the positioning of their bodies.³³ YouTube has a version of this scene, but it lacks the first part of the scene and some of the audience

³² *Seven*, by the Mnozil Brass, directed by Bernd Jeschek (Hoanzl, 2004), DVD.

³³ *Quidam*

reactions intended by the choreographer.³⁴ DVD timings are therefore used during the following discussion.

From beginning to end, “Statue” fascinates by way of choreography. At 1:06:23 the lead performer of the previous scene walks off arm in arm with the lead singer, and a group of actors in strange white outfits begin slowly rolling onstage, as children roll down a hill. Around the middle depth of stage left, the singer turns to sing a brief piece. Deep in stage right, three motionless figures with bowed heads appear frozen in the act of walking. The scene creates three points of attention here, but gives priority to the middle group of rolling actors by placing them in the center and furthest towards the audience. The large amount of space between each group ensures little doubt about where the divisions occur, despite the fact that the three frozen figures are dressed exactly the same as the rollers in the middle group.

The rolling figures, meanwhile, have rolled into a human mound and at 1:07:00 another character, a bare-chested man with painted skin, emerges from the top of the mound. Some seconds later, a woman follows in similar paint and garb. Done in slow motion, this entrance fascinates with its strangeness. Even the white-clad rollers have a mystery about them, helping the new performers out of the ground while themselves stacked in a three-dimensional puzzle such that only their eight feet touch the floor, but each of them uses another’s set of legs for support. Their task finished, the rollers collapse and begin rolling towards the rear of the stage (except one, which rolls the “wrong” direction and halts parallel to the main two performers, seemingly balancing their presence slightly to stage right with his own presence stage left.

³⁴ Cirque du Soleil, “Duo La Vision at Cirque du Soleil 1999-2001, 2009-2010,” YouTube, last modified December 15, 2010, accessed December 31, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rhFI2NDG3e4>.

With the introduction finished, the main act of the scene begins at 1:08:00. Brute strength appears at first glance to be the focus of the scene, but deeper analysis reveals an equal emphasis on symmetry and geometry. The performers maneuver themselves with solemn slowness into a variety of astonishing positions, pausing for applause when they reach a point in their act where their bodies form a shape of particular symmetric and geometric interest. The first of these occurs at 1:08:49. In near-silence the two performers have maneuvered for nearly a minute until the woman is upside down, shoulder to shoulder against the standing man, with her legs straight in the air mirroring his, and their arms together reaching out at perfect right angles to the line of their bodies. Though they have been silent until this point, the audience recognizes a cue for applause. This pattern of silence and maneuvering, then a momentary pause at the end of a long process, repeats many times throughout the scene. Other moments calculated to earn applause occur at 1:09:53, 1:10:57, 1:11:21, 1:11:48, 1:12:11, 1:12:48, 1:13:20, 1:13:52, and 1:14:16.

Difficulty and display of strength in a given moment does not correlate to audience applause. Instead, the applause is triggered by straight or parallel lines and perpendicular angles: in other words, the choreography is as crucial to the scene as the skill and strength of the performers. Interestingly, the DVD audience almost misses a cue for applause at 1:11:48, seemingly because of less impressive angles than the other points of choreographed cues.

The panorama at 1:12:43 provides another opportunity to consider the larger picture of choreography. While the main attraction of “Statue” performed at the center of the stage, the previous occupants of stage left and right were replaced. The actor playing

the father figure of *Quidam* replaces the singer as the occupant of stage left, while the mother figure replaces the frozen walkers occupying stage right. Both train their eyes on the main performers, helping to focus the audience's attention on the main attraction even as the choreographer adds complexity to the scene. Further stage left, a figure wearing a tutu dances. A large section of center stage slowly rotates, giving the audience a more complete view of the two "statues" in its center. Another actor, a roller left over from the scene's introduction, seems frozen at the edge of the rotating section, maintaining a slow orbit around the performers. Meanwhile, ghost-like figures appear high above the upstage floor, adding a three-dimensional element to the choreography. Their long robes flutter gloomily above the heads of the other actors as the ghosts glide towards the audience. Upon reaching the end of their journey, literally above the audience, they turn and face the two main performers, reaffirming them as the focal point of the scene.

3.4.3 Discussion

The Mnozil Brass's "At the Movies" demonstrates valuable rules for convincing choreography. Medleys (a series of consecutive, related pieces in one arrangement) and mashups (two or more pieces mixed together and/or synchronized) lend themselves to choreography, and the Mnozil Brass matches changes in the music with different positions onstage and occasionally dancing. This scene can also teach the value of symmetry in group dances. Musicians dabbling in dancing tend to impress with formation rather than individually fancy footwork, and symmetrical formations look clean without requiring elaborate planning. The choreography during the snippets of "If I

Were a Rich Man” and “I Could Have Danced All Night” rely on a circle formation and on an arc that folds down the middle, both simple but symmetrical formations. The Canadian Brass’s “Hornsmoke” and “Tribute to the Ballet” also favor symmetrical formations over asymmetry. Similarly to the dancing in “Hornsmoke,” the dancing in “At the Movies” takes place over a short span of time, and the ensemble quickly returns to focusing on the music; brief interludes of dancing add a lot of value to a performance.

For scenes pairing music with dance continuously, the Canadian Brass’s “Tribute to the Ballet” reveals some important guidelines. This scene pairs music matched with choreography borrowed from the ballet the music originates from; performing a dance unrelated to the music requires connecting them somehow, while performing a dance related to music as the Canadian Brass does requires no explanation. Furthermore, the Canadian Brass alternates between instances that feature a single dancer and instances that feature all performers equally. This pattern seems to sustain audience interest by providing variety. The arrangement further promotes variety by rapidly cycling through music from different ballets.

In this case, and in the cases of the other brass ensembles, variety compensates for a low level of dancing skill. Besides variety, other factors can maintain audience interest despite unrefined dancing. Situations designed to parody a dance form or create humor from a performer’s ineptitude seem particularly effective. The twelfth scene of *Magic Moments* exemplifies both the mockery and ineptitude concepts. Performers of the Canadian Brass regularly cross-dress in dancing scenes, designating their gender in *Three Nights* with a tutu in one instance and a skirt and bonnet in another. This also adds to the

humor of a scene, though cross-dressing may simply be a consequence of the lack of women among these ensembles.

As with dance, which is older than written history, featured choreography was adapted by brass chamber ensembles from other sources, in this case the marching band ensemble. Marching bands began performing block formations in addition to music as early as 1907 as a way to add visual effects to music, well before Les Trompettes de Lyon began professionally mixing visuals with sound on the concert stage.³⁵ Some elements of featured choreography are the same for chamber ensemble, such as aiming to form shapes pleasing to the eye, and using a series of moves and pauses as a way of emphasizing aspects of the music.

Coordinating movement with music seems to entail changing visual ideas only when the music changes. The musical change could be as simple as the beginning of a new phrase, but bigger visual changes should match a change of mood or style in the music. Aiming to create pleasing shapes sounds like a subjective goal, but at the very least this means creating formations that look deliberate. Symmetry and even spacing between performers ensure that formations look deliberate; if a particular set does not contain symmetry or easily measured spacing, as in the nineteenth scene of *Canard Laqué*, the formation must have some other sort of aesthetic value. These rules apply to movements as well as pauses in the choreography. Spacing between ensemble members should appear deliberate during movements, which usually means the ensemble members move at approximately the same speed and remain evenly spaced.

³⁵ Purdue Bands and Orchestras, "About," Purdue University, last modified 2017, accessed December 31, 2016, <https://www.purdue.edu/bands/ensembles/aamb/about/>.

Les Trompettes de Lyon innovates with featured choreography by taking advantage of the more personal and controlled setting of chamber ensemble performances. Formations unique to the field of featured choreography, such as “Statue” from *Quidam* as well as scenes nine and nineteen from *Canard Laqué*, rely on an audience close enough to notice details rather than only the formation of performers on a field. Scene thirty, with the spinning “lighthouse” trumpeter, works because Les Trompettes de Lyon can plan to dim the stage lights for a particular scene.

As “Statue” and certain scenes from *Canard Laqué* demonstrate, choreography can even be used to trigger applause before a scene finishes, giving onstage positioning another purpose than simply looking pretty. Choreography also becomes increasingly important as more props are added to a scene; Les Trompettes de Lyon often includes objects like chairs, portraits, and other props in their planning. The Cirque du Soleil does likewise, particularly at the opening of *Quidam*, when the scene includes chairs and a coat rack.

3.4.4 Comparison Between Ensembles

While Les Trompettes de Lyon emphasizes featured choreography throughout *Canard Laqué*, the Canadian Brass and the Mnozil Brass use choreography for its own sake very rarely. Convincing instances of this are difficult to find in the studied performances, though a YouTube clip (from another Mnozil Brass show) called “Der Drache” reveals some instances of featured choreography from 4:59-6:45.³⁶ Other than this one example, the Canadian Brass and Mnozil Brass seem to use choreography only

³⁶ Mnozil Brass, “Mnozil Brass Der Drache,” YouTube, last modified April 21, 2012, accessed December 31, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qIGrTE5bEVU>.

when it serves another purpose as well, such as advancing a narrative or moving to address the audience.

The Cirque du Soleil, better defined as a circus-show than a traditional circus, fills its productions with featured choreography. While timing and placement are crucial in traditional circuses as well—just ask a trapeze artist—the Cirque du Soleil takes this a step further by choreographing every scene, and every transition from scene to scene, usually to music. In a traditional circus, a ringmaster would handle the transitions, similarly to how the Canadian Brass segues from scene to scene. The Cirque du Soleil forges its way into non-traditional territory with its reliance on choreography, much like Les Trompettes de Lyon.

3.5. Singing

Singing hardly qualifies as an extra-musical addition to a chamber brass show. However, the novelty of professional brass musicians singing certainly adds value to a performance even as it defies tradition. In fact, this seems to work both ways; the King's Singers often imitate the sounds of instruments (or even sing *through* instruments) to perform traditionally instrumental works, as exemplified in their music video, "King's Singers Rag."³⁷ As for the frequency of singing in career brass ensembles, the Canadian Brass, Mnozil Brass, and Trompettes de Lyon sing in every performance studied in this document. Besides providing variety, singing can also enhance the meaning of music by way of lyrics, or add comedy to a scene. Despite the entertainment value of singing, few brass chamber groups indulge in this skill besides full-time ensembles.

³⁷ The King's Singers, "The King's Singers – King's Singers Rag," YouTube, last modified December 11, 2009, accessed December 31, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S3uEqi8fQ7E>.

3.5.1 Case Studies: Singing

Singing takes special effort to include in a show, but little effort to describe. This discussion therefore outlines scenes from each ensemble for enhanced perspective. Les Trompettes de Lyon briefly adds song to their tribute to Louis Armstrong, a remarkable trumpet player with an equally remarkable voice. In “Boy Mozart,” the Canadian Brass explores an even mix of singing and brass playing. Finally, two specimens from the Mnozil Brass, a performance of “Bohemian Rhapsody” and the disco medley from *Magic Moments*, illustrate the technique of arranging a whole pop song for voice and brass, and combining singing with acting, respectively.

For Les Trompettes de Lyon, singing provides a brief but humorous diversion from their mostly solemn set of tributes to legendary trumpet players.³⁸ Louis Armstrong, the fourth of the five legends, built his reputation not only on his skill as a jazz trumpeter but also on his distinctive singing voice, famously featured in Armstrong’s rendition of “What a Wonderful World.” Les Trompettes de Lyon performs an instrumental version of “Just a Closer Walk With Thee,” then transition to “When the Saints Go Marching In.” In the latter tune, some ensemble members snap and sing the lyrics in English (the rest of their show is in French), attempting to emulate the growling tones of Armstrong. The imitation is imperfect, but recognizable.

The Canadian Brass combines singing and playing as well in their “Tuba Tiger Rag,” but additionally try a unique approach in their scene, “Boy Mozart.”³⁹ Eugene Watts introduces the scene by explaining that Charles Daellenbach has always dreamed

³⁸ *Canard Laqué.*

³⁹ *Three Nights with Canadian Brass.*

of being a rock star, and implores the audience to fulfill his wish by turning up their enthusiasm. The audience applauds and the piece begins with synthesizer music over the speakers. The trumpeters, who have been facing the back of the stage, turn around; they are wearing sunglasses. Daellenbach re-enters the stage wearing not only sunglasses, but also an old-fashioned necktie and white, curly wig. The whole ensemble begins to sing in unison, with lyrics detailing a fictional, glamorized account of Mozart's career to the accompaniment of the synthesizers. After a couple of verses, the tubist plays a melody by Mozart that conveniently fits within the chord changes of "Boy Mozart," while the other ensemble members play along with the accompaniment. Another sung verse follows, then another interlude borrowed from Mozart. The piece concludes shortly thereafter. The whole scene involves uncomplicated dancing, a simple visual groove sprinkled with brief instances of synchronized movement.

Vocal music has an indelible place in the shows of the Mnozil Brass. Of the three groups, they not only average the most songs in a show, but often perform harmonically challenging music a cappella. Their arrangement of Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody" is one such piece.⁴⁰ The Mnozil Brass begins this piece as the original begins, with complex, a cappella, vocal harmony. A bass trumpet takes the place of a piano about one minute in, filling in gaps between the lyrics. The singers emphasize the first climax in the music with a subito forte in the vocal parts; for untrained singers, the power the ensemble achieves here is truly impressive. When the second verse starts at 2:16, a trombone joins the bass trumpet as instrumental support. The second climax at 2:43 is marked by another three voices switching to brass, leaving only two singers. They easily

⁴⁰ Mnozil Brass, "Bohemian Rhapsody with Mnozil Brass," YouTube, last modified January 3, 2007, accessed December 31, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hBLm747tyn0>.

transition into the next, originally instrumental section, with a trumpet taking the part of the guitar solo and the other six members performing on brass. At 3:25, all seven performers abruptly switch back to singing. They revert back to instrumental playing when another originally instrumental section occurs at 4:27. However, when audience members familiar with Queen expect more lyrics, the Mnozil Brass deviates from a faithful transcription to add a polka at 4:33. Afterwards they return to a more accurate reproduction of the original, with one singer accompanied by brass, and finish the song.

The twenty-second scene of *Magic Moments* features a medley of pop music, including the Bee Gees's "Stayin' Alive" and Jermaine Jackson and Pia Zadora's "When the Rain Begins to Fall," sandwiched in between Stevie Wonder's "Very Superstitious" and another pop tune from the same era.⁴¹ The excerpt featuring singing begins after a musical transition from "Very Superstitious" and "Stayin' Alive." Three of the ensemble members come forward and begin to sing a mostly unaltered version of the original vocal parts, often in three-part harmony, accompanied by low brass. They wear collar microphones and the ensemble moves to a symmetrical formation with the three singers standing in front of the other four musicians. Throughout the excerpt of "Stayin' Alive," which consists of the first verse and chorus of the song, the three singers engage in a variety of choreographed hand and arm movements reminiscent of music videos from the disco era. The other four engage in some simple footwork as they reposition behind the singers.

The music suddenly transitions to "When the Rain Begins to Fall," and the middle singer backs up and acts as if introducing the other two singers, still channeling the

⁴¹ *Magic Moments*.

movement set of '70s music videos. The remaining two singers, both male, clasp hands and press their cheeks together center-stage in an exaggeratedly romantic fashion. Again, the song excerpt includes one verse and one chorus of the original composition; half the verse is sung by one singer, half by the other, and the chorus is sung by both in harmony. This time, instead of stereotypical pop arm movements, the singers act out portions of the song. The first singer looks at his outstretched palm when singing the lyrics, "Right through your fingers," and they both point out into the audience as the first sings, "Find the way" and the second takes over the verse with, "The way I feel for you." A little later, the second singer falls into the arms of the first during the chorus lyrics, "Catch you if you fall." Additionally, the singers act whenever the singing pauses. During a four-measure pause in the verse, the second singer kisses his fingers and comically transfers the kiss to the first singer's nose. After the chorus the singers rejoin the ensemble and all seven musicians play an instrumental version of the verse and chorus before segueing to another piece of music.

3.5.2 Discussion

The Canadian Brass, Mnozil Brass, and Les Trompettes de Lyon demonstrate several different methods for incorporating song into brass chamber ensemble performances. Les Trompettes de Lyon adds a small amount of singing to a tribute for a singer, imitating Louis Armstrong's voice for a humorous interlude within a piece of music. By borrowing music from a distinctive singer, an ensemble can add unexpected variety with very little actual singing, and with perhaps only one ensemble member on

the vocal part. Thus, an ensemble can include vocal music in a show even if few of its members are comfortable singing.

In “Bohemian Rhapsody,” the Mnozil Brass performs one complete pop song for seven brass musicians doubling as vocalists, with instrumentation ranging from seven brass instruments to seven singers. A significant feat of harmony as well as arranging, this piece brings several advantages to their show, including recognizable music, a show of vocal skill, and an exhibition of flexibility as an ensemble. By borrowing a well-known piece of music, the Mnozil Brass rises above one of the key weaknesses of traditional brass ensembles, the lack of widely recognized, classic repertoire.

Additionally, “Bohemian Rhapsody” showcases complex harmonies, giving the ensemble the appearance of vocal mastery through exemplary listening skills despite a lack of formal voice training. In fact, a good ear and the ability to hold steady pitches seem to be the only prerequisites for competent singing, as the Mnozil Brass never uses vibrato and rarely uses much of the dynamic contrast or stylized timing found in the music of professional singers. The arrangement couples major transitions in the music with changes in instrumentation to provide contrast between different sections and emphasize variety. Finally, the polka interlude and the fluidity of the transitions between voices and instruments allow the Mnozil Brass to make the song its own; otherwise, this scene would not add much to the original recording of the piece.

In the pop medley from *Magic Moments*, the Mnozil Brass exhibits its ability to combine song with acting tailored to the lyrics. Much of the comedy in this scene stems from the substitution of the original male and female singers with two male singers acting out an exaggerated romance. Some of the potential for theatrics here comes from the

romantic nature of the song, which the two singers usually acted out during pauses in the singing. The choreography also improves the scene; the two singers generally face their heads straight out at the audience, but their bodies angle towards each other, giving the impression of a three-way conversation, including the audience. Other instances of acting stem from descriptive song lyrics that lend themselves to visual gestures.

Finally, the Canadian Brass provides an example of originally composed song with their “Boy Mozart,” written in the rock and roll style for voice, synthesizer, and brass, and performed with prerecorded accompaniment, costumes, and choreographed movement. Humor in this scene derives from the modernization of a Classical-era composer in both the message of the lyrics and their conversion of familiar Mozart melodies into music for brass and synthesizer. The costumes, a mix of old-fashioned attire and modern sunglasses, add to the effect. While the Canadian Brass performs other striking mixtures of new and old music, such as their “Saints Hallelujah,” the performance of an original song gave their show a unique feature yet to be imitated by another brass ensemble. Furthermore, the arrangement required very little vocal skill with its unison vocal lines and prefabricated accompaniment; most of this scene’s difficulty lay in the creative planning and composition, allowing the Canadian Brass to reap the benefits of variety with presumably little rehearsal.

3.5.3 Comparison Between Ensembles

Singing constitutes one of the seemingly essential elements of a career brass ensemble. All three ensembles studied include multiple instances of song, and the Canadian Brass and Mnozil Brass seem to rely heavily on vocal pieces for variety and

embouchure recovery. Beyond the inclusion of song, however, general rules are difficult to identify. There seems to be a preference for recognizable songs, but all three ensembles also sang less familiar music.

Les Trompettes de Lyon sings twice in *Canard Laqué*. Both songs include lyrics, the first set English and the second French, and both are relatively short occurrences set inside larger medleys. Uniquely, singers in this ensemble performed an imitation of a famous singer's voice. When Les Trompettes de Lyon includes singing in their music, they include no other simultaneous form of non-traditional entertainment.

The Canadian Brass tends to perform vocal music in similar ways to Les Trompettes de Lyon. Songs always include lyrics and actual singing usually fits within a larger, mostly instrumental arrangement. However, they perform a couple of significant exceptions: their "Gilda and the Five Dukes" and "Boy Mozart" emphasize song over instrumental playing. "Gilda and the Five Dukes" features a guest artist, a professional opera singer, as well as acting and some altered lyrics. "Boy Mozart" is unique from the performances of the other groups because of its original composition and intentionally humorous lyrics.

The Mnozil Brass matches the Canadian Brass for emphasis on vocal music, both in quantity and with variety of setting. The Austrian ensemble often sings in a cappella harmony with excellent intonation, an extremely rare occurrence for the other ensembles, suggesting that a relatively greater amount of the Mnozil Brass's rehearsal time goes to vocal work. Aside from the examples of modern pop music favored in the case study section, the Mnozil Brass also sings lyric-less music like the accompaniment parts for the recorder and guitar scenes in "Magic Moments." Perhaps these other instruments cannot

compete with the volume of brass instruments, or the musicians need to rest their embouchures at these stages of the performance (brass players tire easily relative to other instrumentalists, and Mnozil Brass performances often last ninety minutes or more). Lastly, the Mnozil Brass distinguishes its vocal scenes from the other ensembles in that it pairs most of its vocal music with acting.

3.6. Novel Changes in Instrumentation

Unusual changes in instrumentation require more practice and skill than singing, but offer a new set of humor and entertainment possibilities. The Canadian Brass dabbles in instrumentation variations with arrangements including piccolo trumpet, as well as the use of synthesized music in “Boy Mozart.” In *Canard Laqué*, the members of Les Trompettes de Lyon perform on a variety of trumpets and repurpose trumpet valves for a percussive effect in the twenty-fifth scene. If the Canadian Brass and Les Trompettes de Lyon show the tip of the instrumentation iceberg, the Mnozil Brass represents the rest of it. Rather than using only the instruments in the brass family, certain members of the Mnozil Brass play recorder, clarinet, guitar, and even musical saw with convincing skill. Mastery of disparate instruments displays musical skill far beyond singing or fluency in a family of instruments, and the transitions to unrelated instruments offer excellent opportunities for humor.

3.6.1 Case Study: Novel Instrumentation

The Mnozil Brass reveals how much comedy they can produce from an instrument change in the second scene of *Magic Moments*.⁴² The scene begins with all seven of the performers laying down their brass instruments, and then standing in a shallow arc facing the audience. As the applause for the first scene ebbs, the musicians reach dramatically into the inner pockets of their suit jackets. One performer produces a recorder and looks ready to play; the others appear troubled and begin to check other pockets. In a process that takes fifty seconds, the six recorder-less musicians search increasingly unlikely places while acting out a general mood that goes artfully from bewilderment to panic and finally to resignation. The lone recorder player looks devastated, and forlornly begins to play all by himself. After a phrase of recorder music, the rest join in with vocal accompaniment. Lyrics eventually include the words, “Magic moments,” and over the course of the scene the recorder player (Leonhard Paul) performs various acts of stage magic, usually involving the recorder. He puts his recorder in the pocket of another performer, then produces a miniature recorder from the pocket of yet another, who acts shocked and amazed. Later, Paul produces another two full-size recorders from his own jacket. His skill with the recorder appears questionable, but this seems to be a deliberate and even humorous part of the act. In a final bit of humorously transparent stage magic, Paul pretends to put his recorder through the ears of another performer. Shortly thereafter the music changes and the next scene begins.

⁴² *Magic Moments*.

3.6.2 Discussion

The recorder scene from *Magic Moments* is particularly notable because it requires very little skill on the recorder. Rather than relying on instrumental skill, the value of the piece derives from the humorously awkward transition from brass to recorder, and the recorder-related jokes that followed. Close inspection of other Mnozil Brass scenes involving non-brass instruments reveals more labor-saving efficiency. Four out of five times, only a single member of the ensemble masters the unrelated instrument. The arranger deliberately chooses easy, slow music like the clarinet serenade in “Magic Moments” or the recorder ensemble of the second movement of Haydn’s “Trumpet Concerto” in the show *Seven*.⁴³

The comical emphasis on the transition from brass to other instruments is another common theme in Mnozil Brass performances. A trumpet “magically transforms” into a clarinet in *Magic Moments*, to the apparent shock of the trumpeter, who attempts to pass off the instrument on someone else. All seven members of the ensemble produce their recorders without a hitch for the Haydn arrangement, but then proceed to perform with the recorders in their nostrils instead of their mouths. In “Blofeld,” when one of the ensemble members enters the stage with a musical saw, the other musicians abandon the song they were performing and cower away from the saw-bearer.

3.6.3 Comparison Between Ensembles

While the Mnozil Brass specializes in unexpected instrumentation, the Canadian Brass and Les Trompettes de Lyon also engage in at least one instance each of unusual

⁴³ Mnozil Brass, “Mnozil Brass The Mad Flute,” YouTube, last modified September 13, 2012, accessed December 31, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ph2tOh2wFSY>.

instrumentation, as well as several more standard trumpet substitutions. It is likely that all three ensembles aim to introduce more tonal variety into their shows without relying entirely on vocal music. The Canadian Brass introduces humor as well through their synthesized music, but Les Trompettes de Lyon seems solely intent on tonal variety.

Conversely, the Mnozil Brass uses instruments from different families as a featured aspect of their shows. All three surveyed shows, *Seven*, *Magic Moments*, and *Blofeld*, each include an entire scene devoted to performing on another instrument. *Magic Moments* alone contains three separate instances. The Mnozil Brass always accompanies novel instruments with humor, and every scene but the Haydn included acting. Over time, the featured instruments became more exotic. In chronological order, members of the Mnozil Brass have been featured on recorder, guitar, clarinet, melodica, musical saw, and theremin (this last in *Yes, Yes, Yes!*).

3.7. Props and Costumes

A concert stage set for traditional chamber ensemble usually contains only a few items: chairs, stands, instruments, music, and possibly mutes for brass instruments. When something unexpected enters the stage, audiences take special interest. In the surveyed shows, prop items included rubber balls, spider plants, an oversized balloon, a large cloth, portraits, rubber ducks, and a tremendous variety of costumes. Costumes always enhanced narrative scenes. Some non-costume props played small parts of narratives, but others, like the stuffed duck and large balloon from *Canard Laqué*, provided the central focus of a scene all by themselves.

3.7.1 Case Studies: Costumes

The Canadian Brass's "Boy Mozart" and "Hornsmoke" scenes feature costumes worn by each member of the ensemble, while their "Tribute to the Ballet" includes only one costume.⁴⁴ In order to portray the rock star Mozart in the lyrics, the members of the ensemble wore sunglasses, while Charles Daellenbach additionally wore a wig and necktie. "Hornsmoke" also includes relatively simple, cheap costumes, which in this case help designate characters in the narrative. Hats adorn every character, along with one or two other articles of clothing each: the narrator and father figure wears a brown cowboy hat and a red handkerchief around the neck, while the handsome hero wears a tan cowboy hat, black handkerchief, and suspenders. The priest wears a black skullcap and a red handkerchief hangs from his pocket, and the fair maiden sports a bonnet and skirt. Appearing later in the skit, the villain dresses all in black with a black cowboy hat and trench coat. In "Tribute to the Ballet," one character wears a pink tutu for part of the scene.

Costumes appear increasingly frequently in the performances of the Mnozil Brass. *Seven* contains none, while in *Magic Moments* the only costume is a shiny red handkerchief, which designates the "female" actor in the slow motion combat scene.^{45 46} *Blofeld*, on the other hand, contains a full superman costume and wig, a green beret, swim caps and goggles, rose and dark tinted sunglasses, and a pink skirt in addition to costumes designating James Bond and the namesake Blofeld (a villain from the Bond

⁴⁴ *Three Nights with Canadian Brass*.

⁴⁵ *Seven*.

⁴⁶ *Magic Moments*.

franchise).⁴⁷ The Blofeld costume, black garb plus a black bowler hat, has a unique purpose in this show; the wearer stays in character for the entire performance, laughing at and often contributing to the “suffering” of other characters.

3.7.2 Case Study: Scenes Built Around Props

While Les Trompettes de Lyon does not use costumes in *Canard Laqué*, they demonstrate many ways to construct unique scenes around props.⁴⁸ Early in the show they choreograph a scene around a set of chairs, with players switching and competing for chairs. Later a stuffed duck emerges from a trumpet bell and becomes the temporary center of attention; the ensemble spends two scenes playing three pieces to the duck, which they pretend is a conscious entity. Further on, lights illuminate portraits on the back wall of the auditorium and Les Trompettes de Lyon plays a series of pieces at or under the portraits. Finally, at one point in the show a performer leaves the stage and returns with a giant, round balloon. As they perform the next piece, they bounce the balloon from trumpet bell to trumpet bell, passing it around and sometimes impressively spinning between bounces.

3.7.3 Discussion

Non-traditional chamber ensemble performances practically require props or costumes. As Les Trompettes de Lyon demonstrates, props can provide a non-narrative focal point for a scene, adding novelty with little effort. The Mnozil Brass as well as Les Trompettes de Lyon use props to relate to the theme of a show; duck toys adorn *Canard*

⁴⁷ *Blofeld*.

⁴⁸ *Canard Laqué*.

Laqué, while magic show-related items appear often in *Magic Moments*. Props also easily yet firmly establish elements and characters in a narrative; while the Mnozil Brass manages to mime a pit stop and a saloon scene, props vastly simplify a skit and help the audience understand the story. Usually one or two items of clothing sufficiently identifies a character. Sometimes ensembles use musical instruments for a prop function, for instance when the Canadian Brass and the Mnozil Brass substitute a trumpet for a firearm in “Hornsmoke” and “Slow Motion,” respectively. “Hornsmoke” also replaces the priest’s cross with a tuba. Extra trumpets enhance the choreography in the ninth scene of *Canard Laqué*.

When groups cannot make props out of materials at hand, they tend to use simple ones. Complex or expensive props and costumes rarely appear in brass chamber shows; the ensembles need their props to effectively communicate an idea rather than impress the audience. In fact, sometimes half-hearted costumes perform better than full costumes would. For whatever reason, a man badly disguised as a woman is much more comical than elaborate cross-dressing.

3.7.4 Comparison Between Ensembles

Props simply and effectively add variety and thematic material to a show as well as communicating important narrative elements to an audience; all three ensembles use props often. The Canadian Brass and the Mnozil Brass performances include simple costumes as well, mainly for storytelling purposes. All three ensembles favor convenient props that would be readily available anywhere, like chairs and their own instruments; doubtless this makes a touring ensemble more lightweight and streamlined. The

Canadian Brass performs with relatively unremarkable props, while the items used by the other two ensembles are sometimes more specialized..

Les Trompettes de Lyon deviates from the other ensembles in terms of prop extravagance. Possibly due to its relatively less extensive touring schedule, this ensemble can afford to construct a more complex and less portable setting for *Canard Laqué* compared to the shows of the other ensembles. Large portraits affixed to the wall of the auditorium figure prominently for several scenes. A fog machine adds a misty, mysterious atmosphere occasionally. Finally, at the end of the show hundreds or thousands of rubber ducks rain from the ceiling, an impossible stunt at many of the Canadian Brass and Mnozil Brass's performance venues. Presumably, Les Trompettes de Lyon operates from a dedicated auditorium and attract an audience of tourists, like the Blue Man Group, rather than touring to many different cities. This ensemble contrasts with the other groups also in that the musicians act in very prop-centric ways. When a Mnozil Brass or Canadian Brass member appears onstage in a costume the rest of the ensemble pretends not to notice. When a member of Les Trompettes de Lyon produces a stuffed duck or comes onstage with a balloon they become the center of the ensemble's attention. The Mnozil Brass does this once or twice with props, but always as a temporary distraction of a few seconds rather than making a whole scene out of it.

The peculiarities of the Mnozil Brass in this category include many invisible, mimed props. These allow their narratives a unique flexibility but require special effort to communicate to the audience. The ensemble mimes visiting a saloon and working in a pit stop, which would otherwise require props too large and expensive to include. In *Blofeld*, the ensemble also performs several Olympics sketches, including discus

throwing and javelin throwing skits. With actual props these skits would be hazardous and often frightening, but with imaginary props the same skits are harmless and funny.

3.8. Technical Exhibitions

One of the most difficult but rewarding aspects of non-traditional chamber shows, technical exhibitions demonstrate an unexpected skill. Some scenes employing this technique focus on a minor talent timed to music. Others rely on seemingly impossible abilities to delight the audience; circuses, and the Cirque du Soleil in particular, have mastered the skill sets and pacing necessary to perfect this art form. Non-traditional brass ensembles rarely perform scenes in this second manner on account of the difficulty involved, but the rare exceptions create the sort of memories that bring audience members back for a second show.

3.8.1 Examples: Unusual Abilities

Ensembles typically create scenes featuring unusual abilities from a single odd idea or unlikely possibility of brass instrument performance. All three ensembles feature the latter, while the Mnozil Brass and Les Trompettes de Lyon also feature unusual but skillful ideas unrelated to playing. In the cases of unusual abilities, creativity rather than ability limits the possibility of acts.

Quirks of brass playing appear frequently in the performances of the Canadian Brass, Mnozil Brass, and Les Trompettes de Lyon. For example, the choreography of any of three ensembles would cause most other brass players to miss a lot of notes. Les Trompettes de Lyon performs Khachaturian's "Sabre Dance" in *Canard Laqué* while

moving their instruments quickly from left to right.⁴⁹ The square dance in “Hornsmoke” and the dancing in “Tribute to the Ballet,” both from *Three Nights with Canadian Brass*, demonstrate that this ensemble plays at a high level even while performing simple dances.⁵⁰ The Mnozil Brass pushes the bounds of this idea by galloping during the “Magnificent Seven Theme” from *Magic Moments* and flipping a trumpeter through the air as he performs in “Slow Motion,” but the music loses some tone quality as a result.⁵¹

Examples unrelated to choreography include Les Trompettes de Lyon’s performance of “Sonnerie aux Morts,” a piece usually performed with trumpet and drums, with trumpeters also playing the drum part on unscrewed valve caps. The Canadian Brass performs their famous version of “Flight of the Bumblebee” with the trumpeter and tubist coordinating their fingers and sound respectively to play this very technical, speedy piece. Possibilities on non-brass instruments include the Mnozil Brass’s recorder arrangement of Haydn’s “Trumpet Concerto,” in which the ensemble performs on recorders with air from their nostrils.⁵²

Unusual skills usually focus around the normal performance of instruments in strange situations, but occasionally scenes focus on other unusual things. Les Trompettes de Lyon performs “El Gato Montes” while bouncing a balloon between the bells of their trumpets. In *Blofeld*, the Mnozil Brass performs a piece with two performers on the floor

⁴⁹ *Canard Laqué*.

⁵⁰ *Three Nights with Canadian Brass*.

⁵¹ *Magic Moments*.

⁵² Mnozil Brass, “Mnozil Brass The Mad Flute.”

wearing swim caps and goggles, pretending to engage in synchronized swimming.⁵³

Another scene from *Blofeld* features a mimed pit stop, with sound effects that seem to qualify as unusual skills: the brass players used their instruments to mimic both the Doppler effect of racecars passing and an accelerating car shifting gears. The acceleration particularly impresses because of a rising parallel interval played by the trombones, which is an extended technique of brass ensemble playing rather than a standard occurrence.

3.8.2 Discussion

Ensembles construct scenes with unusual abilities on a variety of organizing principles. In some scenes the unusual ability appears as a quick joke near the end of a piece, as in “Flight of the Bumblebee.” Other unusual abilities feature as one-off amusements in very small scenes, as in the Mnozil Brass’s pit stop sketch. Still other scenes focus on an unusual ability for their duration; ensembles construct these in one of two ways. Either the scene only lasts a minute or two, like the recorder arrangement of the Haydn “Trumpet Concerto,” or the ensemble plans another surprise for the end of the scene, when the novelty has worn off the original ability. Surprises included Les Trompettes de Lyon popping the balloon at the end of “El Gato Montes,” or the Mnozil Brass’s “synchronized swimmers” spewing water out of their mouths on the last note of the piece.

Unusual skills need only add a bit of novelty or surprise to be worth the effort. Whether they are humorous or can be coordinated with music appears to matter little.

⁵³ *Blofeld*.

Unusual skills are often introduced as part of skits including acting, choreography, non-brass instruments, or props, but the potential uses are limited only by imagination.

Unusual skills exemplify the central idea of non-traditional brass ensembles: entertainment comes not only from music, but also from variety and novelty.

3.8.3 Case Studies: Astonishing Abilities

Astonishing abilities surprise and astound, and are necessarily more difficult to execute than to plan. In the previous section the only question about ideas for scenes would be: “How much practice will this technique require?” In the current section the first question would be “Is this technique even possible?” Circuses scour the globe for performers able to perform seemingly impossible stunts, while chamber ensembles have only a few, pre-determined members. Nevertheless, the Mnozil Brass succeeds with this category of scene. By comparing their performance with a Cirque du Soleil example, an observer can infer certain performance rules for scenes involving astonishing abilities.

Mnozil Brass’s *Magic Moments* contains a scene titled “Lonely Boy,” which begins with a single performer, Leonhard Paul, standing onstage by himself.⁵⁴ For the first three and a half minutes Paul acts entertainingly, but in a way unrelated to the topic at hand. Paul, seated on a chair and barefoot in the center of the stage, snaps his fingers at 3:25 in the footnoted YouTube link. The tuba player enters and begins playing a simple, repeated bass line at 4:00, some distance to stage left. Paul snaps his fingers again and a trombone player enters. Placing his trombone’s slide between Paul’s waiting

⁵⁴ Mnozil Brass, “MNOZIL BRASS lonely boy,” YouTube, last modified February 9, 2011, accessed December 31, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eYRMbj6U2Ww>.

toes, the trombone player begins to play at 4:20 as Paul controls the trombone slide with his foot. The audience chuckles.

Paul snaps his fingers again, and by 4:40 he controls the slides of two trombone players, one in each foot. The audience chuckles again, and some applaud. At a third snap, a trumpet player comes onstage, gives control of his trumpet valves to Paul's right hand, and begins playing at 5:03. This time the audience chuckles, then cheers, applauds, and whistles. At 5:35, as a second trumpet is added for Paul's left hand, the audience dispenses with chuckling and immediately cheers and applauds. The final member of the Mnozil Brass, Roman Rindberger, dramatically enters the stage and removes the chair from under Paul at 6:10. The four trumpeters and trombonists continue to support Paul in midair while he controls an instrument with each appendage. Although the music continues, the audience's cheers and applause last for the next thirty seconds, at which point Rindberger replaces the chair and the scene concludes at 6:52, to thunderous applause.

In the Cirque de Soleil's show, *Kooza*, a similar scene occurs, though the nature of the feat differs. At 1:10:10 in this DVD, a man enters the stage followed by a retinue bearing a podium and a multitude of chairs.⁵⁵ After some theatrics, the man begins the main act at 1:11:00, atop the pedestal. Scattered applause accompanies various acrobatic feats as the performer balances with one hand on the top of the structure. Assistants hand up three chairs and the acrobat places them one by one in a stack on top of the podium, climbing as he does so. He performs more tricks while balanced on one hand starting at 1:12:12, displaying an amazing degree of balance and strength, to slightly louder

⁵⁵ *Kooza*.

applause. At 1:13:10 the acrobat adds another two chairs to his tower and performs stunts similar to those before, but dangerously far from the ground. This time the audience watches silently, perhaps out of fear. The performer adds two more chairs, the topmost one balances at a slant, leaning against the back of the chair below it. He executes still more stunts starting at 1:15:50, poses normally straightforward for a trained acrobat but incredibly dangerous in this setting; the chairs appear to merely rest on one another with no form of attachment. This time the applause is long and loud. The performer dramatically relaxes and seats himself, then repositions the chair at a different angle. Balancing on one hand at 1:17:44, he appears to float over the chairs at that death-defying height, and this time there are many cheers mixed in with the applause.

3.8.4 Discussion

While the two scenes from *Magic Moments* and *Kooza* rely on completely different talents, they share an almost identical structure. Leonhard Paul and the acrobat each begin with a simple yet impressive demonstration of their ability, transition to a more difficult demonstration, then a yet more difficult exhibition, and finally reveal the pinnacle of their technique. By performing scenes structured in this way, artists such as these two repeatedly exceed the expectations of the audience, which manifests in patterns of applause. The recurring surprises may even make the final demonstration seem more enjoyable. It often takes a few tries for an audience to warm up to the idea of clapping *during* a scene instead of afterward, but by the elaborate final stunts the audiences in these two scenes make all kinds of appreciative noise.

Imagine if the performers had structured their scenes backwards. A smattering of applause would greet a highly elaborate feat, and then the rest of the scene, outshone by the first stunt and becoming progressively simpler, would continuously let down the audience. The entire act would contain only a single thrill instead of several. The lesson repeats over and over in both Cirque du Soleil shows studied, *Quidam* and *Kooza*. A scene begins with just a little taste of the performer's skill, and the rest of the sequence steadily increases in perceived difficulty. Brief, choreographed pauses separate each new exploit, leaving time for the audience to fully appreciate each trick in a series of techniques and wonder if the scene has yet reached its climax. When the climax finally arrives, the performers usually attempt to communicate the fact, and make the part of the act following the climax as brief as possible. This maximizes audience satisfaction, prevents let-down, and allows a given set of techniques (or maximum chair height) to entertain for as long as possible. The Mnozil Brass demonstrates that this scene structure can work even in the context of a chamber show, given a sufficiently impressive skill.

Nor are these planning techniques unique to non-traditional brass ensembles. Victor Borge performs a scene where he and a partner play a four-hand piano arrangement of "Hungarian Rhapsody No. 5" that begins as expected but involves more and more reaching across each other or rushing to physically switch places as the show goes on.⁵⁶ Rowan Atkinson follows this format in two short musical skits, in which he plays a conductor and a drum set player. After first demonstrating the premise of the skit, he gradually adds complexity and increasingly surprising exploits.^{57 58} The main

⁵⁶ Victor Borge, "Victor Borge – Franz Liszt – Hungarian Rhapsody #2," YouTube, last modified October 28, 2006, accessed December 31, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Aajtw30-YG0>.

characters of the Blue Man Group “discover” they can make music by drumming on PVC pipes; the blue men gradually “find” more ways to change the pitch of the PVC pipe as the skit proceeds.⁵⁹ Each new discovery adds complexity to the music, as the actors humorously feign surprise.

3.8.5 Comparison Between Ensembles

Predictably, the Cirque du Soleil spends the majority of their shows featuring technical exhibitions. Circuses traditionally attract an audience with novelty acts of strength, balance, and flexibility rather than music, and the Cirque du Soleil fulfill this traditional promise. In one particularly impressive instance, a stack of three men, each standing on the shoulders of the next lowest, manage to catch and balance a fourth man thrown to the top of the stack. In another scene, a unicyclist dances with an acrobat, then picks her up and continues to unicycle while she does tricks on top of him.

A chamber ensemble cannot reasonably hope to match the physical expertise of a circus, but among the brass ensembles, the Mnozil Brass uses the most technical exhibitions. They spend 25% of their shows featuring unusual abilities, on average, while Les Trompettes de Lyon and the Canadian Brass average just under 5% and just over 10%, respectively. These statistics hardly surprise; the Mnozil Brass also specializes in miming and playing non-brass instruments, which demonstrates an

⁵⁷ Rowan Atkinson, “Jazzy Conductor Mr.Bean,” YouTube, last modified October 17, 2016, accessed December 31, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x7QdDzeK6xY>.

⁵⁸ Rowan Atkinson, “Rowan Atkinson Live – Star of Mr.Bean – Funny invisible drum,” YouTube, last modified July 29, 2010, accessed December 31, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A_kloG2Z7tU.

⁵⁹ Blue Man Group, “Blue Man Group – Drumbone (Melodifestivalen 2010 Sweden),” YouTube, last modified March 14, 2010, accessed December 31, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Elcq2bqENMM>.

exceptional willingness to spend rehearsal time on novelties. Although the Mnozil Brass uses this set of skills most often, technical exhibitions are also featured in Canadian Brass and Trompettes de Lyon shows. Novelty acts such as these surely have an important place in non-traditional chamber shows.

3.9. Direct Audience Interaction

The techniques discussed previously provide entertainment that an audience can enjoy passively, as they would do with music alone. Direct audience interaction, by contrast, elevates audience members from the position of observer to that of participant. Instances include conversing or otherwise communicating with the audience or audience member, walking through audience space, and inviting audience members to sing, clap, or even come onstage to play a part in a scene.

3.9.1 Case Studies: Direct Audience Interaction

The Canadian Brass built its fame almost as much on the droll speeches of their tubist Charles Daellenbach as they did on their exceptional degree of musicality. In “Amazing Brass in Concert,” recorded in 2003, Daellenbach introduces Bach’s “Toccatà and Fugue in D Minor.”⁶⁰ Pretending to bumble around with barely any real knowledge of the piece, he delivers the words in a conversational way and avoids any hint of formality. Daellenbach begins thusly: “We would like at this time to perform Johann Sebastian Bach’s [pause for emphasis on German “ch” pronunciation] most famous composition, which tonight will be [short pause while he consults the score] the Tocatà

⁶⁰ *Three Nights with Canadian Brass.*

and Fugue in D [another pause as Daellenbach consults an ensemble member] Minor.” He goes on to say, “The fugue is an absolutely perfect fugue by Bach... statement of the theme, imitation of that theme, proper episodic development, (which you’d find in any fine fugue,) uh, [gesturing vaguely at music] some other things, and then, the tuba solo.” Continuing in this manner for over four minutes, Daellenbach inspires not only great interest in the piece through information, misinformation, and humor, he also establishes a connection between himself and the audience. Daellenbach maintains his slightly bumbling, tuba-centric character in other pitches throughout the performance. During these times the audience receives him well and laughs at all his jokes while the ensemble simultaneously receives convenient resting time for their faces.

In *Magic Moments*, the Mnozil Brass finds another way to communicate directly with the audience.⁶¹ A piece concludes; a trumpet player flexes his muscles in various poses while the audience applauds. He assumes one final pose as a large screen is placed in front of him by the two other trumpet players, who “cast a magic spell” through the cloth. When they drop the cloth, the trumpeter’s trumpet has “transformed” into a clarinet. After some acting, the ensemble begins to play a jazz ballad with the clarinetist out front, playing the melody. Forty seconds pass, and the music remains normal except for the fact that the ensemble member fluently plays the clarinet. At around forty-five seconds into the tune, the clarinet player begins to show romantic interest in a specific audience member by facing towards her while playing, smiling, and walking towards her. Alternately bashful and passionate, the clarinet soloist continues in this manner for about the next two minutes, taking measured steps towards that side of the audience and only

⁶¹ *Magic Moments*.

returning to center stage for the last few bars of the piece. The DVD reveals that this scene successfully engages the audience; the object of the clarinetist's romantic overtures can be seen playing along with the act, even blowing a kiss to the clarinet player.

3.9.2 Discussion

Interacting with a whole audience and with a single audience member seem to work equally well. In the first case study Charles Daellenbach addresses the audience as a fellow conversationalist. Speech communicates ideas more quickly than music, so any sort of speech forces the audience to consciously engage in order to interpret the message. Daellenbach improves his connection with the audience by acting the part of a normal, humble guy not above cracking a few jokes at the expense of a long-dead composer. Formal speeches often seem impersonal or remote, and Daellenbach does all he can to promote informality.

The Mnozil Brass, on the other hand, chooses an avatar from the audience to actually participate in the performance. This spontaneous agent receives a much more personal experience, which the other audience members experience vicariously. In *Magic Moments* the scene goes no further than nonverbal communication, but in *Yes, Yes, Yes!* the Mnozil Brass invites an audience member onstage to participate and only return her to her seat one or two scenes later.⁶² This idea appears everywhere in modern entertainment, in various forms. At college football games cheerleaders or promoters often toss goodies like t-shirts into the crowd. A magician may ask for a volunteer from the audience to help him perform a trick. The Blue Man Group choose members of the

⁶² *Yes, Yes, Yes!*

audience to come onstage and interact with their strange characters in various settings.⁶³ In the Cirque du Soleil's *Kooza* the clowns similarly invite an audience member to come onstage and interact without any instructions.⁶⁴

In fact, the Cirque du Soleil clearly delineates specific characters that interact with the audience. Most of their scenes feature circus performers who display strength, flexibility, balance, and daring; these performers play a part similar to musicians in a traditional performance, and do not directly interact with the audience other than to acknowledge applause. Essentially, they pretend not to see the audience until the end of their scene, and often it seems the acknowledgement is built into a larger pattern of choreography. Clowns and mimes, on the other hand, play a different part, which involves acting, miming, comedy relief, and audience interaction. Providing an important counterpoint to the gravity of other performers, clowns appear frequently in *Kooza* and even once in *Quidam*, providing a moment of relative brightness in the gloom of the latter. Both sets of the clowns explicitly interact with the audience; a clown in *Quidam* trains a telescope on members of the audience, while the clowns in *Kooza* often acknowledge the audience and even bring an audience member onstage.^{65 66}

⁶³ Blue Man Group, "Blue Man Group – Audience Participation," YouTube, last modified April 7, 2015, accessed December 31, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=65xH-UpHMEc>.

⁶⁴ *Kooza*.

⁶⁵ *Quidam*.

⁶⁶ *Kooza*.

3.9.3 Comparison Between Ensembles

The Canadian Brass, the Mnozil Brass, and Les Trompettes de Lyon directly interact with the audience in many of the same ways, but the Canadian Brass specializes in this category of non-traditional entertainment. All three ensembles speak directly to the audience, the Canadian Brass frequently and humorously, Les Trompettes de Lyon only once, and the Mnozil Brass usually only to introduce their members. The Canadian Brass walks through the audience to play “Just a Closer Walk With Thee;” Les Trompettes de Lyon also sends one of its number through the audience to retrieve the big balloon. The Canadian Brass and Mnozil Brass both include “acting asides,” moments when the rest of a scene pauses and a performer acts purely for the benefit of the audience rather than to advance a narrative. Examples of this include the maiden from “Hornsmoke” indicating to the audience her approval of the hero’s looks, and Leonhard Paul in “Lonely Boy” reacting to audience noises as if he were suddenly surprised by their presence. However an ensemble chooses to include it, direct audience interaction is an important facet of the modern chamber ensemble show.

3.10. Humor in Non-Traditional Arrangements

Though most of the differences between traditional and career chamber ensembles concern actions outside the music, sometimes career ensembles deviate in the style of their arrangements as well. An approach shared by all three studied ensembles mixes a recognizable piece with music that belongs to a different culture or time period. The Mnozil Brass and Les Trompettes de Lyon also experiment with originally composed parodies of modern music. Arrangements of pop hits or medleys may also fit in this

category, depending on whether audiences still consider pop music on classical instruments a novelty.

3.10.1 Case Studies: Non-Traditional Arrangements

The Canadian Brass performs an arrangement by Luther Henderson called “Saints Hallelujah” in their DVD, *Three Nights with Canadian Brass*.⁶⁷ The trombonist, Eugene Watts, introduces the piece with a scenario: the Canadian Brass wants to perform for the Queen of England one of her favorite pieces (Handel’s “Hallelujah Chorus”), and also one of their own favorites (“When the Saints Go Marching In”). However, they do not have time to play both pieces, and therefore ask an arranger to combine them for brevity. After finishing the introduction Watts plays the first four notes of “When the Saints,” and as he plays a long note the rest of the ensemble joins in with a quick excerpt from the “Hallelujah Chorus.” This pattern repeats two more times before the whole ensemble launches into a statement of “When the Saints” that lasts about a minute and fifteen seconds. The tubist and trombonist continue with “When the Saints” while the trumpeters begin to sing an accompaniment pattern from the vocal part of the “Hallelujah Chorus.” The piece returns to “When the Saints,” then proceeds to a section that blends different aspects of the two pieces together. They transition to a section of just the “Hallelujah Chorus” before returning to “When the Saints” and playing a credible ending for the gospel hymn, before landing on a long note and deviating to one last statement of the “Hallelujah Chorus.” The arrangement ends mostly in the style of Handel.

⁶⁷ Canadian Brass, “Canadian Brass – Saints Hallelujah,” YouTube, last modified October 2, 2009, accessed December 31, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iWE5-Xnr29w>.

The Mnozil Brass parodies both modern and classical music in a skit called “Uraufführung” [Premiere] from their show, *La Crème de la Crème*.⁶⁸ Five members begin by uncharacteristically walking in front of chairs and sitting down together. They quietly pick up their instruments, and the bass trumpet plays a tuning note for the trumpet. The trumpet plays his tuning note, then the bass trumpet swivels towards the trombones, descending a half step in pitch in the process. The trombones tune, and the bass trumpet swivels back to the trumpet, ascending a half pitch. Next, the bass trumpet turns to face the tuba and plays a pedal note of indeterminate pitch. The tuba plays a note and nods his head in satisfaction. The last two members of the ensemble walk onstage playing the stereotypical roles of a soloist and a conductor. After bowing, the conductor announces the name of the piece, nods to the soloist, and signals to the ensemble to raise their instruments. The audience continues chuckling, and the conductor turns to glare at them. They laugh harder, then try to quiet themselves. The conductor begins the piece, an atonal, three-movement construction filled with extended technique and other strange actions.

The first movement passes relatively uneventfully, the soloist stands proud but silent and empty-handed, and the conductor mimes wiping his face with a cloth afterward. To begin the second movement, the tubist plays a low, quiet tone wandering in pitch. He is shortly joined by the trumpeter, who produces a very strange tone indeed, and then by the trombonist playing an absurdly high note for his instrument. The soloist produces a carrot. Another trombonist begins to grunt and make a percussive noise through half a trombone, and the bass trumpet player begins to sing. He continues to sing as he puts the

⁶⁸ Mnozil Brass, “Mnozil Brass 2008 – 9 – Uraufführung,” YouTube, last modified March 24, 2013, accessed December 31, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cilczAvPAoI>.

tip of his tie in his mouth and begins the process of fitting the whole thing inside. The soloist begins to eat the carrot as one might eat corn on the cob, spinning the carrot in his hands slowly at first and then very quickly. He makes exaggerated eating noises as the conductor encourages him until the carrot snaps in half. The tubist screams into the bell of his tuba, and the second movement ends. The third movement consists only of a single staccato chord from the musicians and the soloist spraying carrot across the stage and possibly into the audience. After a handshake, the conductor and soloist exit the stage.

3.10.2 Discussion

“Saints Hallelujah” represents the pure end of the humor-through-music spectrum. The Canadian Brass chooses to include an introduction explaining the piece before-hand, perhaps for the benefit of younger audience members unfamiliar with one or both pieces, but the scene itself contains only music. With a variety of interactions between two audibly disparate styles of music, “Saints Hallelujah” provides both novelty and humor without any non-traditional activity on the part of the performers. For this reason, humorous arrangements are among the easiest of novelties to include in a chamber ensemble performance.

The Mnozil Brass mixes acting into “Uraufführung,” but utilizes the same source of comedy: the music itself supplies a metaphorical wink and nudge to the audience. The music includes many jokes about common practices and stereotypes in classical music: tuning notes, conductor snobbishness, and elaborate conducting technique. Mostly, though, “Uraufführung” parodies modern music by the juxtaposition of a serious

atmosphere, an original and convincingly modern composition, and a series of ridiculous events including a tie-eating singer and a solo carrot-eater.

3.10.3 Comparison Between Ensembles

All three ensembles indulge in disparate medleys, and the similarities between ensembles even extend to parodies of modern compositional styles. Les Trompettes de Lyon performs a parody of modern music in the twenty-first scene of *Canard Laqué*, and a mashup of the “Light Cavalry Overture” and folk song in the thirty-second scene.⁶⁹ The Mnozil Brass also performs a version of the “Light Cavalry Overture” that rewrites portions of the piece in other styles, including Austrian folk and jazz styles,⁷⁰ as well as many other mashups and the elaborate parody of modern music described above. The Canadian Brass rarely if ever parodies modern music, but *Three Nights with Canadian Brass* includes two jazz-classical mashups: “Saints Hallelujah” and “Gilda and the Five Dukes.”⁷¹ Finally, the Canadian Brass and the Mnozil Brass perform novelty arrangements of well-known popular music. The Mnozil Brass performs Queen’s “Bohemian Rhapsody,” while the Canadian Brass more recently arranged and created a music video based on an arrangement of Lady Gaga’s “Bad Romance.”^{72 73} So many

⁶⁹ *Canard Laqué*.

⁷⁰ Mnozil Brass, “Mnozil Brass – Leichte kavalierie,” YouTube, last modified January 7, 2010, accessed December 31, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0pNw-TISixc>.

⁷¹ *Three Nights with Canadian Brass*.

⁷² Mnozil Brass, “Mnozil Brass – 2005 – 13 – Bohemian Rhapsody,” YouTube, last modified April 12, 2013, accessed December 31, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qSZ67qsObeo>.

⁷³ Canadian Brass, “Bad Romance (Brass Romance) – Canadian Brass,” YouTube, last modified May 4, 2012, accessed December 31, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Cy3tjg1tVw>.

instances of similar usage suggest either intellectually convergent evolution or, more likely, that the ensembles borrow ideas from each other.

4. COHESION AND STRUCTURE

IN TOURING CHAMBER ENSEMBLE SHOWS

4.1. Themes and Other Methods of Cohesion

Certain principles govern the overall construction of non-traditional performances. Themes provide a way to tie together the vignettes that typically compose a show, and also supply inspiration for thematically related music, narratives, and novelties. The Canadian Brass demonstrates another possibility by connecting their scenes with speech instead of a theme.

When speaking between pieces, the Canadian Brass (as well as other chamber ensembles like the King's Singers) re-engages with the audience. Sometimes they only speak of the next piece on the program, but often the speaker refers back to the previous piece, creating a sort of connective tissue between the two scenes. For instance, Eugene Watts speaking between "Tribute to the Ballet" and "Saints Hallelujah" first looks down at his pink tutu and remarks, "Now what do I do...boy, if my mother sees this show I'm dead," before proceeding to introduce the "Saints Hallelujah" as described earlier.

While the Canadian Brass generally avoids themes, the Mnozil Brass and Les Trompettes de Lyon make enthusiastic use of them. Les Trompettes de Lyon's *Canard Laqué* [Peking Duck] predictably relies on a duck theme, with duck-related skits at regular intervals throughout the show. Limited YouTube footage of another of their

shows, *L'Audition*, suggest this show also relies on a theme to give cohesion to the performance.⁷⁴

The three Mnozil Brass performances in Figure 1 increase in theme involvement over time. *Seven* contains only a few weak references to a theme, while *Magic Moments* contains more and stronger references. *Blofeld* contains an astounding number of theme-related scenes owing to the large amount of music the theme encompasses, as well as to frequent theme-related character acting.

The two Cirque du Soleil shows studied are not included in Figure 1, because when measured by the same metrics as the brass ensembles, they have 100% theme involvement due to costumes, setting, and acting. The themes of Cirque du Soleil help them set their circus-shows apart from traditional circuses and produce a large number of unique shows based on similar skill sets. Of any ensemble, the Cirque du Soleil's themes reveal their motivation most clearly as a way to connect the acts of a show. In *Quidam*, the narrative follows a girl neglected by her parents as she imagines various diverting and fantastical scenes: the novelty acts comprising the majority of the show. Similarly, *Kooza* follows the story of a clown unwittingly unleashing a magical being, who then takes the clown on a tour of marvelous places and occurrences. Neither Cirque du Soleil title seems to have any relation to the theme of the performance.

⁷⁴ Les Trompettes de Lyon, "L'AUDITION, spectacle des Trompettes de Lyon, mise en scène Patrice Leconte," YouTube, last modified October 15, 2012, accessed December 31, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hiyfaf-qkCA>.

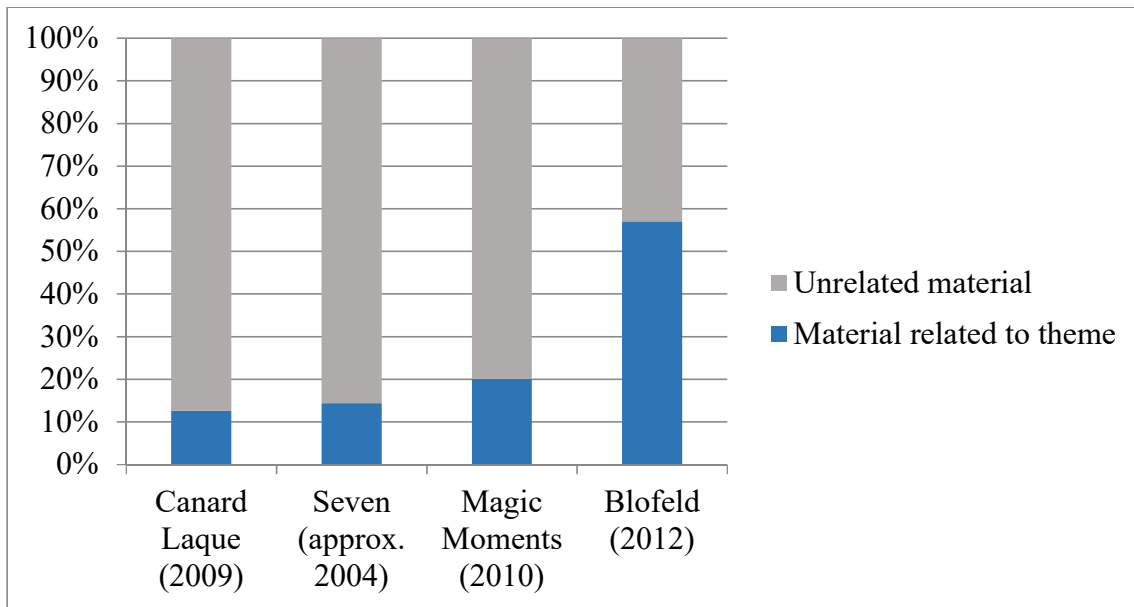


Figure 1. Percentage of Performance Spent on Theme-Related Scenes.

As Figure 1 illustrates, including a theme in a chamber ensemble show requires relatively little thematic material. *Les Trompettes de Lyon* sustains a convincing theme in *Canard Laqué* with just over ten percent of their show involving ducks. Even the most theme-intensive of the studied chamber ensemble shows, *Blofeld*, spent less than sixty percent of the show performing themed scenes. Moreover, the *Blofeld* number is inflated by a number of brief references to the theme, sometimes lasting only a few seconds, in scenes with no other thematic content.

Show planners create and maintain themes through a variety of elements, including acting, related music, and props. Furthermore, themed scenes generally fall into two categories: those establishing the theme and those passively maintaining the theme. Establishing a theme generally requires acting and narratives, while ensembles maintain themes through easier reminders like costumes, props, and character-acting. All the themed shows except *Seven* began their thematic involvement with narrative acting.

In *Canard Laqué*, the members of Les Trompettes de Lyon meet and interact with a stuffed duck character. The first themed scene in *Magic Moments* establishes the magician character and introduces a magic-related prop that returns later. *Blofeld* opens with a series of scenes establishing various themed characters, most notably the villain. Likewise, *Quidam* and *Kooza* both open with narrative acting rather than circus acts, though they additionally use song and miming to tell the respective stories of the main characters.

Thematic reminders require less effort. Often in the Cirque du Soleil shows, performers execute circus spectacles in the foreground while themed characters spectate prominently from the background. Besides reinforcing the theme, the direction these characters face can additionally help guide audience attention during the spectacle. Mnozil Brass's *Blofeld* uses more perfunctory character reminders, often as short and simple as the "villain" character laughing a characteristic villain laugh when a misfortune befalls another performer.

Thoughtful use of props and costumes also reinforce themes. In fact, Les Trompettes de Lyon communicates the duck theme of *Canard Laqué* mainly through prop usage. Instances include conversing with and putting a stuffed-animal duck to bed, throwing rubber ducks in the air and "shooting" them, and a cascade of multi-colored ducks from the rafters during the show's finale.

The Cirque du Soleil uses many themed props: both studied shows begin with a scene or two that establish the characters and story of the show, and which also include several props consequently related to the theme. In *Kooza*, these props are the clown's kite and the genie's magic wand, which feature in several narratives later in the show.

Quidam includes a similarly recurring prop (a bowler hat), but also brings back many other ordinary items from the opening living-room scene in unexpected ways.

The Mnozil Brass also favors recurring thematic props. In *Magic Moments* a red rubber ball features in so many magic tricks that when the tuba player dumps the “magically teleported” ball out of his instrument in the final scene and the audience realizes he probably played the entire second half of the show with the ball there, it provides a real sense of closure. *Blofeld* includes several recurring theme-related props, including the villain’s bowler hat and melodica.

Finally, theme sometimes plays a role in an ensemble’s choice of repertoire. In the Mnozil Brass’s *Seven* and *Magic Moments*, the titles of the performances are taken from songs the ensemble sings in the show. The relation of theme to music ends there for both shows, but in *Blofeld* many pieces support the theme: the Mnozil Brass plays the themes to several James Bond movies during the show, as well as other tunes of similar style. The music of Cirque du Soleil shows *Quidam* and *Kooza* reinforce the theme effectively, though with original rather than familiar music. During *Kooza* the music evokes a sense of wonder and magic to pair with the spectacles the magical tour guide introduces. In *Quidam* the music conveys loneliness and perhaps a little madness; the composer employs recognizable elements of circus music in oddly sad or sinister settings.

4.2. Show Structure

Themes, narratives, and speech hold a show together, but the order of the pieces also seems to follow certain rules. As opposed to traditional performances, novelty shows rely on variety to succeed; their order of scenes seems engineered to produce

maximum contrast with regard to length, musical genre, and non-traditional content. Performances also tend to weight the second half of the show with their most impressive acts, whatever that means for the priorities of a particular ensemble. Additionally, brass ensembles consider the preservation of endurance when building a show. Altogether, many considerations guide the ordering of individual scenes in a larger performance.

4.3. Order and Proportion of Components

4.3.1 Choice of Music

Musical choice in the performances of career chamber ensembles always has two qualities: variety and originality. The Canadian Brass, the Mnozil Brass, and Les Trompettes de Lyon avoid the classic brass quintet literature and instead perform music newly arranged or composed for their respective ensembles. To promote variety, these ensembles usually avoid multi-movement works or long arrangements. Scenes longer than ten minutes use a medley of music or different pieces strung together to accommodate a narrative.

All three ensembles choose music from many different styles and eras. Not only that, ensembles often seem to distribute a particular kind of music throughout a show rather than clump it together. *Three Nights with Canadian Brass* illustrates this preference particularly well: its eight jazz and gospel arrangements (out of nineteen total selections) invariably occur between pieces from other genres. Besides the first two pieces on the DVD (Scheidt's "Galliard Battaglia" and Bach's "Toccatina and Fugue in D Minor"), no two neighboring scenes rely on the same genre or era of music. Perhaps the

sheer number of different styles and eras helps; *Three Nights* contains music from the Baroque, Classical, and Romantic eras of music, as well American gospel hymns, early jazz, ragtime, and techno.

The other two brass ensembles, Mnozil Brass and Trompettes de Lyon, seem to worry less about two pieces from the same era happening in a row. However, both use music from many different styles. *Canard Laqué* includes marches, a tango, early jazz, modern jazz, and classical music from the Renaissance, Romantic, and 20th century eras. Mnozil Brass's *Seven* includes jazz ballads, Latin jazz, Romantic and Classical era music, movie and Broadway music, Stravinsky, German folk music, traditional Eastern-European brass music, marches, and pop music.

Musical mood seems as carefully considered as the era of origin. Most productions use music to evoke a variety of emotions, often alternating between slow and fast, and major and minor modes. However, the organizers of Mnozil Brass's *Blofeld* and the Cirque du Soleil's *Quidam* deliberately make an exception from the general tendency.

Blofeld, a James Bond-themed show, devotes its first twenty-five minutes to establishing a sinister atmosphere. The Mnozil Brass avoids any truly upbeat music until a couple scenes before intermission, and all but one or two scenes in this first segment of the show are directly or indirectly related to the theme. To further emphasize theme over variety, they perform three scenes' worth of James Bond theme music during this period: "Goldfinger," "Live and Let Die," and the classic "James Bond Theme."

The theme of *Quidam* revolves around an original narrative rather than a movie series, but the music (and even the costumes and acting) single-mindedly focuses on the dark mood of the story. It centers on a young girl ignored by her parents, who imagines a

circus world visible only to her and the audience. The Cirque du Soleil website describes the setting thus: “Young Zoé is bored; her parents, distant and apathetic, ignore her. Her life has lost all meaning. Seeking to fill the void of her existence, she slides into an imaginary world.”⁷⁵ Despite the wonders on display in the circus itself, the persistently creepy music gives the scenes a twisted, lonely feeling no matter how many performers are onstage. In other instances, long stretches of silence and relative darkness accompany main acts. Among so many novelty shows trying to raise the spirit of the audience, *Quidam* finds a way to be unique.

4.3.2 Scene Length

With regard to scene length, some general rules apply when comparing the studied brass ensembles. Though the shortest and longest scenes lasted twenty seconds and over fourteen minutes respectively, most scenes lasted between two and six minutes. Figures 2 and 3 illustrates the distribution of scene sizes among different shows. While scenes longer than ten minutes are fairly well-represented, none rely solely on music for entertainment, and most contain narratives or dancing. The longest purely musical scene is the Canadian Brass’s arrangement of Bach’s “Tocatta and Fugue in D Minor” at eight minutes and thirteen seconds (preceded by four minutes of introduction and humor).

⁷⁵ “Quidam,” Cirque du Soleil, last modified 2016, accessed December 31, 2016, <https://www.cirquedusoleil.com/quidam>.

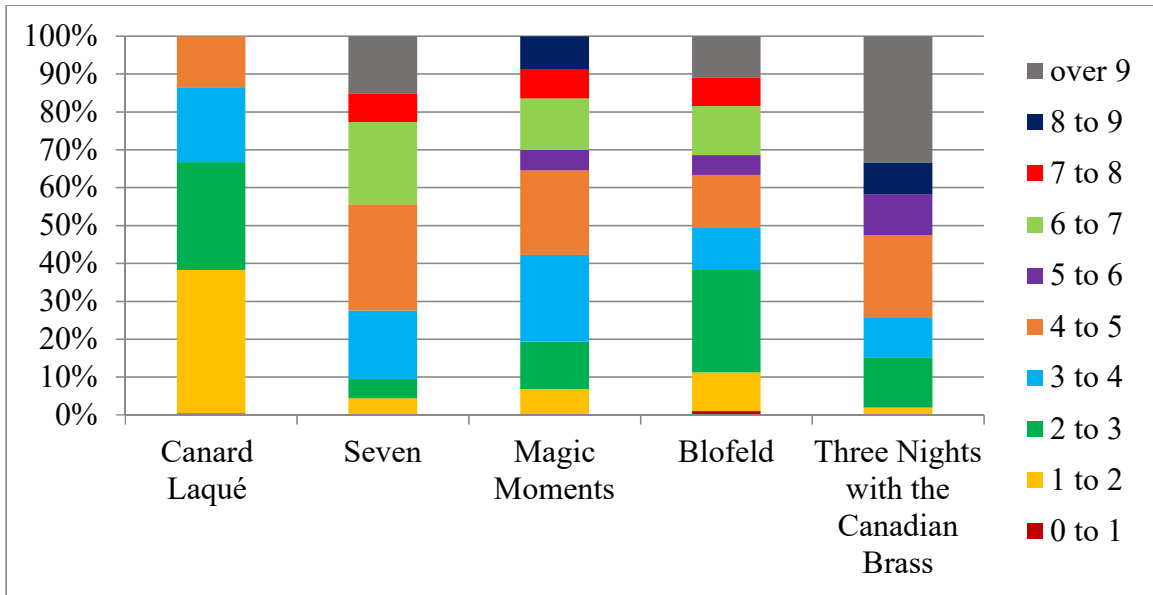


Figure 2. Percentage of Time Spent on Scenes of Various Length.

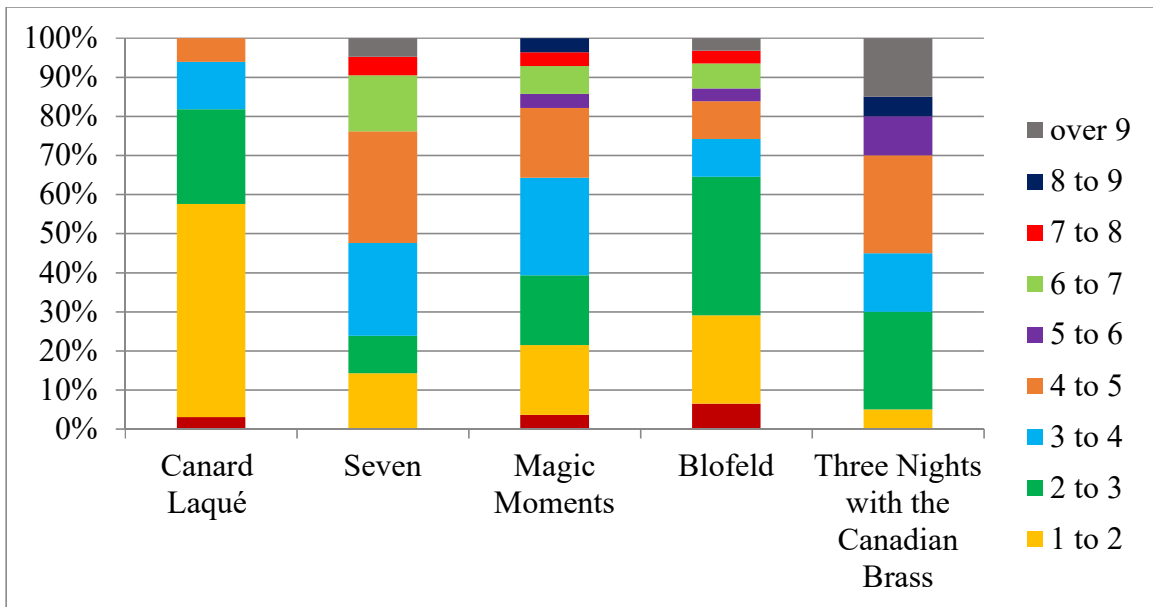


Figure 3. Percentage of Scenes of Various Length.

Figures 2 and 3 reveal that different groups take varying approaches with regard to scene length. Les Trompettes de Lyon, which specializes in choreography rather than acting, dancing, or novelty acts, never exceeds five minutes in a single scene. This scene

length works well for them; by rapidly shifting between varying styles of choreography they maintain extra-musical variety.

The Canadian Brass takes a different approach, with two distinct categories of scenes corresponding with different scene lengths. A third of scenes lasting one to five minutes included extra-musical elements besides verbal introductions. The various novelties of these shorter scenes tended towards simplicity, like humor in the arrangement or walking through the audience. The extra-musical elements typically occupy smaller amounts of the scenes, with the exception of “Boy Mozart,” a highly complex scene of two and a half minutes. The other category of scene includes three scenes longer than ten minutes, all of which the Canadian Brass saturates with acting, dancing, and/or singing. These scenes use music arranged specifically to accommodate these other elements. *Three Nights with Canadian Brass* only includes one piece between five and ten minutes in length, the eight-minute arrangement of Bach’s “Toccatina and Fugue in D Minor.”

The Mnozil Brass operates with similar rules. Purely musical scenes last five minutes or less in the three Mnozil Brass shows studied. Highly involved scenes come in various sizes, but larger scenes always include plenty of extra-musical involvement. The Mnozil Brass differs from the Canadian Brass in that it is willing to put extra-musical elements of various kinds in scenes of any length. However, both tend to build the music around extra-musical elements in longer scenes, instead of the other way around.

4.3.3 Distribution and Proportion of Non-Traditional Elements

Distribution and proportion follow no firm standards, but certain tendencies emerge after viewing many performances. Distribution of non-traditional material varies widely between shows, but groups tend to put more of it in the second half than the first half. Although the three brass ensembles analyzed in this document have different extra-musical specialties, the three groups included at least one scene each from every category they did not specialize in, without exception. Clearly, these groups prioritize including a variety of non-traditional entertainment styles.

Figure 4 illustrates the precise proportions of content in different performances, including the two Cirque du Soleil shows. Predictably, the circus favors props, advanced choreography, and technical exhibitions. However, the graph also clarifies that the Cirque du Soleil does not rely solely on technical exhibitions for entertainment; up to a third of their shows feature acting or music instead. This balance highlights a major difference between circus shows such as the Cirque du Soleil and traditional circuses.

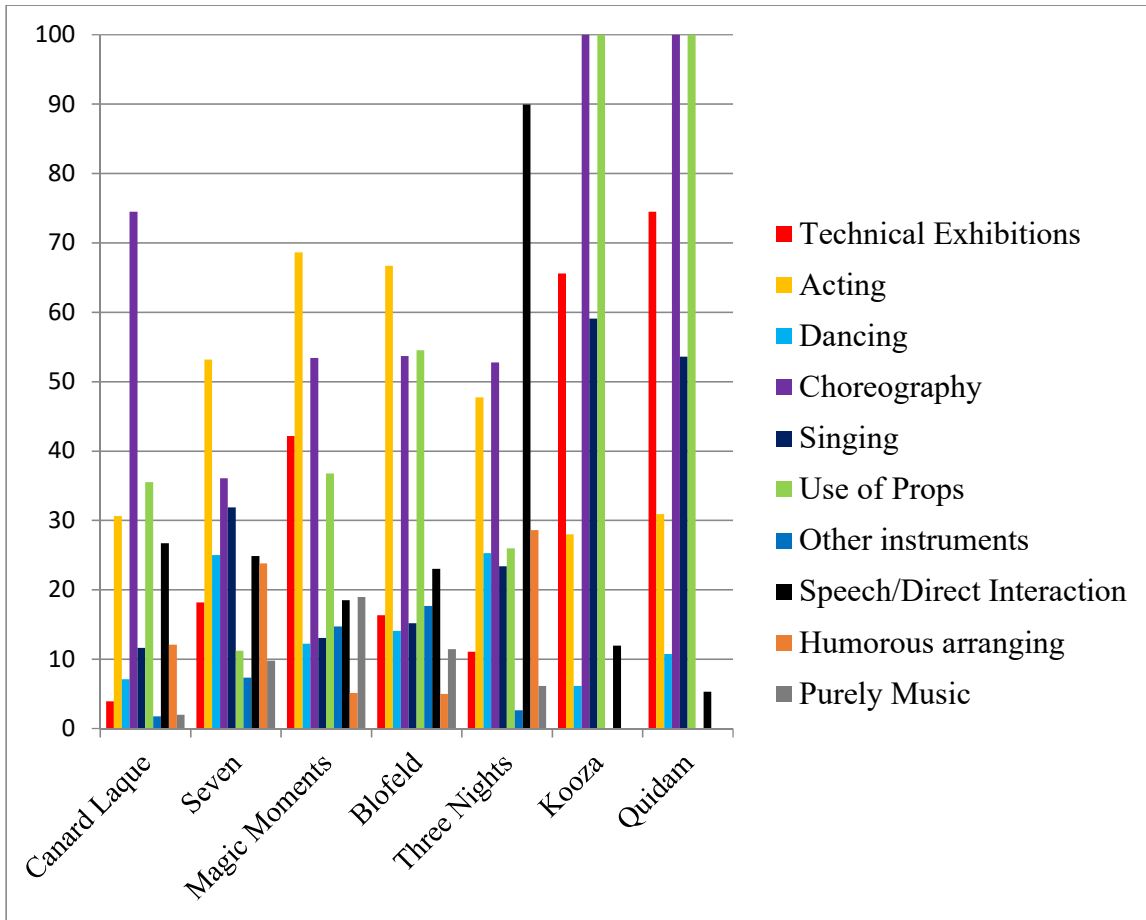


Figure 4. Amount of Time Spent on Scenes Including Non-Traditional Elements, Measured as Percentages of Overall Performance Time.

5. CREATION: WRITING A MODERN SHOW FOR A TRADITIONAL ENSEMBLE

The standardization of different types of non-traditional entertainment across ensembles suggests intellectual borrowing on a grand scale. It also raises the possibility for other chamber ensembles to reverse engineer the defining techniques of existing full-time groups. To explore the process, an original production was created to accompany this document.⁷⁶ Themed after Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, the sixty-minute performance explores the use of costumes and props, speaking between pieces, acting, stage magic, extended technique, playing other instruments, audience interaction, humorous arrangements, and basic choreography. This section attempts to document the process of construction and establish guidelines for creation and execution.

5.1. Setting Goals

Before arranging music or writing skits, several questions should be considered. Will the show have a theme? How many performers will play in it, and on what instruments? Which and how many of each type of non-traditional technique should be included? What kinds of music should it include? The answers to these questions define the entire process of creation, from instrumentation and choice of music for arrangements, to every aspect of extra-musical planning.

Choosing whether or not to include a theme has implications for show cohesion. Either a show must return to thematic content occasionally, or another glue must hold the collection of scenes together. As discussed earlier, themes need not encompass an entire

⁷⁶ Alexander Wilson, "Wonderland Recital," YouTube, last modified October 11, 2016, accessed December 31, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=as14Uh9cjpQ>.

show; two or three thematic scenes adding up to at least 10% of the total show would probably suffice. In lieu of a theme, the Canadian Brass's example of directly addressing the audience between scenes is a serviceable option, but one that requires an excellent sense of verbal humor. Finally, ensembles wishing only to sample the possibilities of extra-musical entertainment may consider playing a traditional first half of a recital, thereby setting low standards for cohesion (audiences rarely question the order or relationship of repertoire in purely musical ensembles), and experiment with techniques borrowed from career chamber ensembles in the second half.

Recruitment preferably occurs before a show-planner begins to arrange, compose, or otherwise collect music for the performance; finding musicians willing to perform outside their comfort zone can present a challenge. In ordinary circumstances, planners should prioritize finding performers willing to help with show construction, as additional thinkers will speed the process of creation considerably.

After recruiting and determining performers' extra-musical malleability, an organizer can decide what non-traditional aspects belong in the performance. According to the data, a performance should include as many different kinds of acts as possible, even if some are only represented in a single scene. Acting appears particularly essential to this style of performance. For an easy aspect of novelty, organizers can arrange humorous mashups or songs significant in pop culture. Creative choreography constitutes another relatively easy addition, provided the ensemble can memorize the music. Without the possibility of memorization, organizers should avoid complex choreography and dancing, as these usually require performers to move away from music stands for extended periods of time.

Though many other aspects are involved in novelty productions by chamber ensembles, musical choice remains crucial to success. Organizers should choose as wide a variety of genres as possible, unless the show contains a theme and that theme relates to a large body of music. Besides instrumentation and copyright, few elements inhibit variety in musical repertoire. Smaller ensembles such as quartets and quintets may have difficulty with endurance when they perform long works with many moving parts, such as opera overtures or other lengthy orchestral works. Trumpet ensembles usually avoid music requiring low range or a range of more than two and a half octaves, while trombone ensembles generally avoid lines including technical, articulate passages. Music written after 1922 is presently protected by copyright; arrangers therefore need to navigate copyright law in order to arrange most jazz pieces and modern popular music. Obtaining permission appears to entail tedious negotiations and fees, but arrangers can circumvent these for particular pieces through participation in arranging programs, such as Sheetmusicplus.com's freely available ArrangeMe program.⁷⁷

5.2. Choosing a Theme

A theme for a chamber ensemble show should have the following qualities: ample content, ease of recognition, and capacity for narrative. Narrow thematic ideas lead to limited or predictable content. Broader themes, such as the duck theme in Les Trompettes de Lyon's *Canard Laqué* work in a wide variety of situations, in this case acts involving duck-hunting, rubber duckies, and a stuffed duck the performers treated as a person. Similarly, the *James Bond* theme of the Mnozil Brass's *Blofeld* show relates to

⁷⁷ "ArrangeMe with SMP Press," Sheetmusicplus.com, last modified 2016, accessed December 31, 2016, <https://smppress.sheetmusicplus.com/arrangeme>.

a large body of music, character tropes from the long-running movie series, and plenty of possibility for narratives. For the example show here, a superhero theme, robot theme, and outer space theme were considered in addition to Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*.

Alice in Wonderland stands out as an auspicious theme for a variety of reasons. First, Lewis Carroll lived from 1832-1898; copyright laws put his entire set of writings in public domain. Second, *Alice in Wonderland* presently experiences a resurgence in pop culture, with many recent books, TV shows, and movies both capitalizing on and increasing popular knowledge of *Alice in Wonderland*'s plot and characters. Disney alone has released three movies based on Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* narratives, in 1951, 2010, and 2016. The third Disney movie, conveniently, arrived in theatres only a few months before the performance of this document's accompanying show. Thus, much of the audience probably recognized the characters and situations drawn from Lewis Carroll's writings. The quirky and colorful characters from *Alice in Wonderland* offer many opportunities for humor and easily recognizable costumes. Between the original two Lewis Carroll novels, *Alice in Wonderland* and *Alice's Adventures Through the Looking Glass*, and the many well-known remakes, this theme also offers an extremely broad range of possible narratives.

5.3. Brainstorming

After establishing a theme, an organizer should spend time brainstorming to ensure that the show includes only the most promising ideas rather than just the first that come to mind. Watching performances by favorite ensembles, like the Mnozil Brass and

the Canadian Brass, can inspire both related and completely original ideas.

Brainstorming with a particular extra-musical content in mind, such as scenes involving recorders or scenes involving acted narratives, helps make a wide range of ideas available.

5.4. Bringing Scenes to Life

Turning an idea into a scene usually requires a chronological series of events, music, and directions for performers. Ordering a series of events establishes cohesion and helps define the requirements of a scene. It also informs musical choice, because the music should support the mood and events of the scene. Finally, action must be translated into precise directions comprehensible to people without the creator's mental vision of the scene. Most often this entails specific actions or acted emotions attached to specific musical cues. For the example show the following were used: extra-musical cues in the music of the performers, and separate, text-only acting directions ordered by measure number for every piece involving extra-musical content.

5.4.1 Narrative Acting

Most "centerpiece" acts in the studied performances included narrative acting. When performed skillfully, acted narratives provide a particularly memorable theme, the kind audience members tell their friends about later. The examples in studied shows rely on simple stories unless the scene includes a narrator; acting and miming communicate ideas imprecisely, and too much complication will lose the audience. For this reason, most musical narratives include one of two (or both) especially dramatic and communicable plot elements: violence and romance. Romance does not figure into *Alice*

in Wonderland, so most of the brainstormed ideas include conflict. A list follows: 1) a chess game acted out by ensemble members, 2) a conflict or trial with the Queen of Hearts, 3) a battle with an offstage Jabberwock (a monster from Carroll's universe) in the style of the Mnozil Brass's "Der Drache," 4) falling down a rabbit hole into Wonderland, and 5) a hunt for the Snark (a narrative based on a lesser known poem by Lewis Carroll).

After much consideration, a chess skit was chosen involving twelve actors: two opposing brass quintets acting as chess pieces, and two non-musical extras off to the side moving pieces on an actual chessboard, which would correspond to the actions of the musicians. Sadly, the completed skit never saw the stage because a second brass quintet was not forthcoming, but creating it was still an educational experience. Besides having a very recognizable subject (most of an audience would be familiar with the game of chess), a chess skit fit loosely with the Alice in Wonderland theme: in *Alice's Adventures Through the Looking-Glass* it eventually becomes clear that she is a pawn on a vast chessboard.

For music, a fairly long piece with lots of different ideas was required. After listening to a dozen, Mozart's overture to *The Magic Flute* emerged as exceptionally well fitted to the narrative. This playful, light overture has plenty of contrasting sections, with which to move the plot of the story forward. Furthermore, the music matched a rough sketch of the skit's sequence of events.

A detailed sequence of events followed, with notes about how many musicians would need rest during instances of acting. The events of the skit, briefly, are as follows. The ensemble begins by playing the first few regal chords of the overture without any hints as to the scene's nature. During the slow section following, two actors enter the

stage carrying a table, a chessboard, and chairs, prompting a mix of acted curiosity and consternation from the brass. The music suddenly becomes quicker, and the chess players set up their board while the musicians simultaneously assume positions on an imaginary chessboard. The musicians reveal token costumes that identify their role. The tubist “kings” wear crowns, the horn-playing “queens” tiaras, and the trombonists have a large cross on a necklace and a red or gold party hat to identify them as bishops. The trumpet players kneel in front as pawns. The chess players make their opening moves, and the musicians parallel the moves onstage, acting as if involuntarily pulled to their new positions. After a few moves, one piece will capture another following a brief, acted scuffle. A convenient pause in Mozart overture allows a diversionary funeral hymn here, during which the victorious piece drags the defeated musician off the chessboard, where they resume playing as a spectator. After one more capture, a piece refuses to move and questions the intelligence of the chess player controlling his ensemble. This prompts a pause and a discussion between the player and the piece, with lots of pointing and incoherent yelling. The chess player establishes his dominance and the piece agrees to move as bidden, but the music transitions to Berlioz’s “March to the Scaffold” as the piece sacrifices himself to save his king. The music reverts to Mozart. After two more captures a king finds himself in checkmate and retreats offstage while the remaining pieces celebrate. As the overture winds to a close the players shake hands, the kings shake hands, and all the chess pieces return to their beginning places, readying themselves for another game at the final cadence.

5.4.2 Dancing or Advanced Choreography

Though less important than acting, dancing and advanced choreography provide worthwhile variety for ensembles willing and able to memorize their music. In many examples the dancing or choreography does not take up a whole scene, but rather provides a brief diversion from traditionally performed music. As a result, choreography need not require much extra rehearsal time to master in conjunction the music. Dancing associates very easily with music, particularly music popularly recognizable as accompanying a specific dance, as in the Canadian Brass's "Tribute to the Ballet." However, dancing and advanced choreography *do* require blocking, or a record showing the changes and formations of the ensemble throughout the scene.

Borrowing inspiration from Les Trompettes de Lyon, several scenes were outlined requiring dance or other advanced choreography. *Alice in Wonderland* does not include instances of dancing, so a favorite dance scene idea involved arranging a recognizable melody in the style of several different dance forms, possibly including the polka, waltz, tango, and swing dance. For each different dance one performer would dance with his instrument briefly in front of the ensemble.

Ideas requiring advanced choreography included movements depicting a carousel accompanied by an arrangement of "The Carnival of Venice." The performers would move around the stage in a circle, bobbing up and down slowly like carousel horses. A themed idea described a game of musical chairs based on the mad tea party from *Alice In Wonderland*, in which Alice takes tea with the Mad Hatter, the March Hare, and the Dormouse. This scene could have included costumes, prop teacups, and the Mad Hatter characteristically announcing when to change seats.

5.4.3 Singing in an Instrumental Show

Singing adds variety without requiring movement, allows the use of words without interrupting musical flow, and additionally gives brass players time to rest their embouchures. High brass instruments in particular encounter endurance problems when performing a long show, and perhaps for this reason, all three brass groups studied here make use of vocal music. Additionally, sung scenes are very easy to plan; an ensemble only needs music in the singing range of the members. Groups can optionally take advantage of unusual ranges in their members. The Canadian Brass and the Mnozil Brass both take advantage of comfortable male falsetto ranges in their arrangements of “Bad Romance” and “Stayin’ Alive,” respectively. However, sung scenes usually require little expertise beyond good listening skills.

Possibilities involving singing were kept simple. One option borrows the main idea from the “King’s Singers Rag,” in which the King’s Singers sing a rag through brass instruments. This skit could have many variations if it involved actual brass players, like musicians switching one by one from brass to voice, or one member imitating percussion sounds through their instrument. Another possibility required matching a Lewis Carroll poem with existing lyrics to an easy song, which would then be replaced by Carroll’s poem (Carroll wrote poetry famed for its strangeness, and many of his poems are included in *Alice in Wonderland*). As it turns out, the poem “Jabberwocky” almost perfectly matches the poetic feet of the lyrics to “O Little Town of Bethlehem.” When ensemble members had reservations about singing, the skit was re-arranged for orator and brass trio, with a fifth member acting out the narrative parts of the poem. One verse of each poem, side by side, appear thus:

Oh little town of Bethlehem
How still we see thee lie!
Above your deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by.

'Twas brillig and the slithy toves
Did [gyre and] gimble in the wabe.
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

5.4.4 Unrelated Instruments

Alternate instruments can take the place of singing as a method for saving endurance, with the additional advantage of offering a multitude of humorous ways to introduce the instruments. More difficult than singing, unrelated instruments both require more practice and have better potential to impress an audience, although the Mnozil Brass offers easier examples with their recorder-based scenes. These involve little actual playing and mostly focus on adding humor to the production of the instruments. In order to plan one of these scenes, an organizer should check with other ensemble members to find out whether any have expertise on another instrument. If so, a piece could be arranged for solo non-brass instrument with brass accompaniment, and humorous ways to produce the instrument brainstormed. If not, the recorder offers a cheap, easily concealed alternative that requires relatively little practice for competency. For these reasons, the instrument has become something of a staple in Mnozil Brass shows.

In the example show, a recorder scene is included, with the addition of a slide whistle to create additional humor from the similarity between the instrument and a trombone. The finalized skit required an arrangement of Henry Fillmore's "Lassus Trombone," a well-known piece featuring a glissando, for three recorders and one slide whistle. One by one, the trumpet players, horn, and trombonist produce recorders and play a few notes. Finally, the tubist produces a slide whistle and plays a slide. The trombonist stares covetously at the slide whistle and offers to trade his recorder for it.

The tubist refuses and the piece begins. As the piece progresses the trombonist offers cash and a credit card in exchange for the slide whistle, all of which the tubist refuses. Finally, the trombonist leaves the stage and returns with a cupcake (in a box labeled “Eat Me” for a reference to the cakes labeled “Eat Me” in *Alice in Wonderland*). The tubist finally agrees to the trade, but alas, the piece ends as soon as the trombonist obtains the slide whistle. The original plan for this skit was quite different; the sequence of events above resulted from the trombonist and tubist editing the scene to fit their own taste and zone of acting comfort. This sort of activity should be encouraged; individuals perform better when they can shape a scene to fit their capabilities and preferences.

5.4.5 Costumes and Props

Costumes and props help tell stories by identifying characters or actions, or provide a visual counterpart to the music. Most ensembles use one or two stylized, representative pieces of clothing for a costume rather than a fully dressing up an ensemble member. Ensembles also tend to employ simple, recognizable props rather than complex, impressive ones. Whenever possible, costumes and props should connect with the theme of a performance; this removes the necessity of establishing an additional connection explaining the purpose of the prop. With a broad theme such as *Alice in Wonderland*, props can also remind the audience of the theme in otherwise unrelated sketches, as described in a previous section.

One scene from the example show includes narrative acting with two *Alice in Wonderland* characters, the Mad Hatter and the Queen of Hearts. During an arrangement of Dukas’s “Sorcerer’s Apprentice,” the Queen of Hearts enters the stage with a pack of

playing cards. She uses these to stop the music by placing a playing card between the lips and mouthpiece of each of the brass players. The playing stops, and the Queen of Hearts laughs and exits the stage. After some awkward silence, the Mad Hatter enters the stage, trades his characteristic Mad Hatter hat for a sorcerer hat akin to the one worn by Mickey Mouse in Disney's "Sorcerer's Apprentice" scene in *Fantasia*, and begins to conduct the ensemble. One by one, the ensemble members "magically" begin to play again. (Unbeknownst to the audience, the cards have circular holes that permit playing while preserving the appearance of the card between the face and mouthpiece.)

For this scene to make sense, the costumes need to convince the audience. The Mad Hatter required nothing beyond his distinctive hat, readily available from online costume vendors. The Queen of Hearts lacks a distinctive hat and a relatively elaborate costume was required, as well as a spoken introduction that mentioned the Queen of Hearts. The other additions fit with their respective characters. The Queen of Hearts in *Alice in Wonderland* commands an army of playing cards, so the playing cards require no explanation. As for the sorcerer hat, the Mad Hatter character's name explains everything; he makes hats for a living, and might be expected to carry around some quirky ones.

5.4.6 Speech and Other Direct Interaction

Speaking to the audience can help tie the pieces of a show together, prepare the audience for a coming scene, or add humor. Other direct interactions function as novelties, either by involving the entire audience or a specific audience member in the performance. Preparing speeches poses little difficulty; the Canadian Brass sets out a

number of excellent templates in their shows. A speaker can talk about the ensemble members, the nature and history of the next musical number, or a curiosity in the coming scene. Humor can derive from instrument-related jokes, like implying that piccolo trumpet playing causes baldness, or from the speaker creating a self-centered or bumbling persona, as Charles Daellenbach often does. Humor varies greatly from person to person, but when speaking to a large crowd the jokes must reach a majority of the audience through shared recognition of an unexpected situation or connection.

The example show includes speaking between pieces in addition to a theme to ensure proper cohesion and facilitate understanding of non-musical aspects of the show. As an example of the sort of unexpected situation that provides an opportunity for jesting with an audience, a speech following the first piece of the second half of the show reads as follows:

That first piece was Stevie Wonder's 'I Wish,' and we're glad you enjoyed it. Actually, we're just glad to see that some of you came back after intermission. We almost decided not to ourselves, on account of being invited to a tea party. However, once we learned the Queen of Hearts would be hosting we declined her invitation and came back after all. We sincerely hope she isn't offended. We bring you another piece by Paul Dukas: The Sorcerer's Apprentice.

The introduction accomplishes several things. Firstly, it names the pieces and composers of the surrounding pieces. Secondly, it introduces a coming event by giving a reason for the irritated Queen of Hearts to enact vengeance. Finally, the second and third lines attempt to make the audience laugh through failures to assume the occurrence of predictable events, specifically, the audience and ensemble returning for the second half of the show.

Another instance of direct audience interaction occurs later in the second half. As four members of the ensemble play a water-related piece of music, one lumbers onstage

costumed as a deep-sea diver. After producing a cell phone (another of the unexpected situations humor generally builds on—cell phones do not belong underwater), he takes a picture of the ensemble. With the idea of picture taking introduced, he walks slowly into the seating area and motion that he would like to take pictures with various audience members.



Figure 5. Photo with Audience Member.

The action pictured in Figure 5 serves both as a source of humor through its unexpectedness, and as a way to make the audience literally more involved with the performance. Afterwards, the performer returns to the stage to stand in front of the ensemble and play the melody of a final ocean-themed piece, “Under the Sea” from Disney’s *The Little Mermaid*.

5.4.7 Technical Exhibitions

Technical exhibitions show off an ensemble or ensemble member's unique capabilities, allowing professional ensembles to differentiate themselves from one another. Beyond adding variety to the musical performance, technical exhibitions often aim to amaze rather than simply entertain. Consequently, they figure in especially memorable acts by the Canadian Brass and the Mnozil Brass. When brainstorming for novelty acts, good categories to consider include extended brass technique, like the sliding parallel intervals demonstrated by the Mnozil Brass trombone players. Performing normal music in difficult and unusual circumstances can also impress; both the Canadian Brass and the Mnozil Brass include novelty acts with one player producing sound through an instrument and another player coordinating the valves or slide.

In the example show, one skit includes multiphonics, an extended technique whereby an instrumentalist plays one pitch and sings another simultaneously. Certain modern pieces of music use multiphonics to create harmony using only a single performer, but after some experimentation it was discovered that playing in the pedal range of the trumpet and singing the same note slightly out of tune produces a grinding noise reminiscent of a chainsaw. A narrative was created around the unusual sound, in which Tweedledee and Tweedledum, two characters from *Alice's Adventures Through the Looking Glass*, find a Cheshire cat in a tree and decide to rescue it.

After announcing the story up to finding and deciding to rescue the cat, the scene begins. The horn, trombone, and tuba begin to play a trio arrangement of Grieg's "Morning Mood," and the trumpet players sit back in their chairs. The trumpeters mime seeing a cat in a tree and wanting to rescue it. One motions to chop down the tree, and

the two move to center stage. One trumpeter kneels with his trumpet, while the other stands behind him. The standing trumpeter mimes pulling the cord on a chainsaw three times, while the kneeling trumpeter imitates a chainsaw failing to start twice, and makes the sound of a running chainsaw the third time. The Grieg trio, thus interrupted, ceases to play. The trumpet produces a sound like a chainsaw cutting a tree (by holding the pitch of the trumpet steady and raising the voice to a perfect fifth above the trumpet), and the two trumpeters saw through the tree. A prerecorded track of a tree falling combined with a cat yowl plays over the speakers.

5.4.8 Small Instances of Acting

Sometimes the Mnozil Brass engages in smaller instances of acting as a way to keep the audience “on their toes” in between larger instances of non-musical entertainment. Usually these begin with an ensemble member making a deliberate and audible mistake in the music, or playing something unusual, and the acting happens when the player or his neighbors react to the musical occurrence. During the recorder scene in *Magic Moments*, the recorder player fumbles a passage on the recorder and then mimes an exaggerated “oops” face to the audience. Another example occurs at the very end of the Mnozil Brass’s arrangement of the “William Tell Overture,” when a trombone player keeps playing loudly and obnoxiously after the other musicians stop playing. A trumpeter glares at him.⁷⁸ The same trumpeter in the same recording acts startled at 1:07 when the other two trumpet players begin to play, as if he realizes he missed an entrance. Soloists can also add a little overdone arrogance during or after their performances, as

⁷⁸ Mnozil Brass, “Mnozil Brass William Tell Overture,” YouTube, last modified April 22, 2012, accessed December 31, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uzpUaUIrabc>.

happens frequently in the Mnozil Brass's "Hungarian Schnapsodie."⁷⁹ One more possibility from *Blofeld*: during extended rests in one of the scenes, ensemble members feign boredom. One produces a newspaper and another a cell phone; when the phone rings he pretends to answer a call and walks offstage.⁸⁰

Some of these mini-acts may develop spontaneously when the Mnozil Brass tours, as they are largely independent of other action. Premeditated or not, they add a little extra-musical spice to a piece without adding too much expectation of later entertainment in the same piece. Small instances of acting in the example show include the dance of the diver-suited performer in "Under the Sea," and his motioning for extra applause at the end of the piece. Other instances of acting appeared in improvised moments throughout the show without the need to plan them. For instance, when one performer tries to play a few notes on the recorder as planned, before "Lassus Trombone," something went wrong and he could not hit the right notes. He pretended the recorder was broken, and two other performers played along, miming suggestions for fixing it. In conclusion, full-time chamber ensembles may plan some of these moments and other times develop them organically or even accidentally. Whatever the origin, independent instances of acting usually add a bit more fun to a scene and can sometimes smooth out glitches.

⁷⁹ Mnozil Brass, "Mnozil Brass Hungarian Schnapsodie," last modified December 26, 2011, accessed December 31 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aE1Cz_dAPJQ.

⁸⁰ *Blofeld*.

5.5. Choosing and Arranging Music

Besides planning skits, a show organizer must also consider where to procure music. The Mnozil Brass arranges and composes most of its own music, while the Canadian Brass arranges some of its own music and pays professional arrangers or composers to write the rest. Both strategies result in musically original shows, a situation highly preferable to playing familiar compositions and arrangements. Based on the standards for originality among career chamber ensembles, the example show uses as many original arrangements as possible. As concerns about show length arose after removing several overly taxing or otherwise questionable pieces, two other arrangements were also added.

In procuring an entire show's worth of music, two obstacles challenge ensembles new to show writing: the sheer amount of effort required, and copyright law. First, arranging a minute of music takes most musicians an hour or two. In other words, one unseasoned arranger might spend the equivalent of three 40-hour work weeks to create music for a sixty-minute show, and that assumes the arranger has precise instructions for what music to arrange. Arrangements for the example show took longer than that because arrangements often needed to be reworked once or twice in order to match a skit. Ensembles that share the workload among ensemble members should be able to produce shows much more quickly than in the case of the *Alice in Wonderland* show.

5.5.1 Copyright

Copyright laws present another obstacle to arrangers, in that they can prevent access to the last century's worth of musical variety. If an arranger does not have the

tools to legally arrange copyrighted music, he or she must rely on music in the public domain, which was music written before 1923 at the time this document was written. Les Trompettes de Lyon demonstrates one good strategy for achieving variety with music in public domain in the first half of *Canard Laqué*: they use many genres of classical music, and arrange music from many different parts of the world. However, while this policy achieves variety, it still fails to give the audience music written in their lifetimes; Les Trompettes de Lyon departs from the public domain in their second half in favor of more popularly relevant music.

While professional chamber ensembles pay arranging, performance, and recording royalties to copyright holders, the expense and uncertainty of this option probably dissuades many part-time ensembles from doing the same. Arrangers must obtain permission to arrange or adapt copyrighted music before starting their arrangements, by requesting permission from a print publisher.⁸¹ Performance rights for adaptive arrangements, meaning that an arrangement is simply for different instruments or is in a different style than the original, are often covered by blanket performance licenses at performance venues. Ensembles should check with the performance venue about this, but as long as a blanket license is in place nothing more needs to be done. Contributive arrangements, or arrangements that change lyrics, add melodic content, or mix different works of music, are not covered under blanket agreements with regards to performance. The arranger of a contributive arrangement with intent to perform the piece

⁸¹ “Request Permission to Arrange / Adapt,” Music for All, last modified 2010, accessed December 31, 2016, <http://www.musicforall.org/resources/copyright/request-permission-to-arrange-/-adapt>.

live must contact the copyright owner and ask for permission, which the owner is not obligated to grant.⁸²

Other options exist, including Sheetmusicplus.com's SMP Press, which allows independent arrangers to sell music on their website in exchange for about 50% of sales. SMP Press additionally offers a list of over a thousand copyrighted pieces that members can arrange and sell for 20% of sales, with Sheetmusicplus.com, Hal Leonard, and the copyright holders splitting the rest of the money. The program is not terribly profitable for amateur arrangers, but opens the door to legally arranging certain copyrighted pieces, including many recent hits, under a well-established fee structure. Several pieces in the *Alice in Wonderland* show were arranged legally through Sheetmusicplus.com, including Randy Newman's "You've Got a Friend in Me" and "I Dreamed a Dream" from the hit musical *Les Miserables*.

5.5.2 Traditional Musical Interludes

The Canadian Brass and the Mnozil Brass often intersperse more traditional scenes throughout their performances, and illuminate several possibilities for furthering the potential of a show using purely musical means. Both groups often feature soloists, while the rest of the ensemble plays accompaniment. The Mnozil Brass frequently performs popular music that seems better received than either classical selections or original compositions. A final option effectively used by the Mnozil Brass: an organizer

⁸² Serona Elton, Esq, "Musical Arrangements and Copyright Law," Texas Music Educators Association, last modified January 2011, accessed December 31, 2016, https://www.tmea.org/assets/pdf/southwestern_musician/MusicalArrangementsCopyrightLaw_Jan2011.pdf.

may choose music that relates to the theme of the show to get more “mileage” from purely musical interludes.

5.5.3 Non-Traditional Arrangements of Music

Non-traditional arrangements add humor to a show without any extra-musical activities. By mixing two recognizable but disparate pieces together, an arranger can create humor in the transitions by foiling an audience’s expectations. All three ensembles experiment with humor in arrangements, and the video recordings of said arrangements often reveal evidence of success as the audience laughs during clever transitions. Arrangements such as these offer an additional advantage in that they require no more effort to perform than an ordinary arrangement.

The key lies in foiling expectations gracefully, with a common element or chord progression between disparate pieces. For instance, the “Imperial March” from *Star Wars* begins with three repeated notes. Giuseppe Verdi’s overture to *The Force of Destiny* also begins with three notes, meaning that those notes could be used as a smooth but unexpected transition between the two. The theme from *The Addams Family* and the prologue from *West Side Story* both include finger snapping, a common element that could also be used to transition.

Arranging a familiar melody in a variety of styles may work as well. Both approaches are attempted in the example show’s arrangement, “The Balkan Bumblebee.” A mashup of Rimsky-Korsakov’s “Flight of the Bumblebee” and Fanfare Ciocarlia’s “Banatzeana,” this arrangement relies on the highly chromatic nature of the two pieces to transition back and forth. Towards the end of the arrangement, “Flight of the Bumblebee”

acquires Balkan harmony, a quirk some audience members might recognize as representative of the modern Balkan brass band tradition. Listeners can still recognize “Flight of the Bumblebee” during this section, but the style defies expectation, as it does when groups like Fanfare Ciocarlia perform familiar Western tunes like the “James Bond Theme.”⁸³

The structure of “The Balkan Bumblebee” is ABA¹, with a big chunk of “Banatzeana” in the middle sandwiched between two pieces of “Flight of the Bumblebee.” Each of these three sections is in turn a miniature ABA, with the style or a motive from the other piece briefly invading the B section. The first 28 bars (about 20 seconds) of the arrangement follow Rimsky-Korsakov’s composition exactly, to make sure that the audience recognizes the piece and develops clear expectations for the rest of the arrangement. In measure 30 and 32 a very small amount of Balkan style appears, and in measures 38 and 40 a little more. The arrangement returns to “Flight of the Bumblebee” for another 20 measures. At measure 60, the similarity of Rimsky-Korsakov’s main melody to one from “Banatzeana” allows for a transition to the Balkan B section of the arrangement. While mainly a transcription of the Balkan music, this B section also includes a recognizable motive from “Flight of the Bumblebee.” The middle section of “Banatzeana” cadences in a very chromatic way, allowing for an easy transition to one of Rimsky-Korsakov’s long, upwardly chromatic scales. This begins the A¹ section, which contains the attempt to “Balkanize” “Flight of the Bumblebee.” A scale related to harmonic minor replaces originally chromatic motion, with unaltered accompaniment. In

⁸³ Boban & Marko Markovic Orchestra and Fanfare Ciocarlia, “James Bond theme – BudapestFolkFest – 2011.05.16.” YouTube, last modified May 15, 2011, accessed December 31, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=chvJGhpVMm0>.

many instances a harmony line is added to the melody, further infusing “Flight of the Bumblebee” with an Eastern, Balkan feel. Finally, the piece comes to its unaltered, last chromatic run and ends almost as Rimsky-Korsakov wrote, with the addition of a little Balkan harmony and rhythm to the last three beats.

A couple techniques came to light that help arrangements transition more smoothly from style to style. One strategy loops an ambiguous piece of melody in order to transition into a similar piece of melody from the other style. A figure in “Flight of the Bumblebee” repeats a chromatic melody that ascends one note, down two, and up to the original note. By repeating this figure several times the transition is kept rooted in “Flight of the Bumblebee” but escapes the expectation of the original chord progression, allowing a smooth and almost unnoticeable transition to the melody of “Banatzeana.” Another trick adapts the accompaniment pattern of one style to the chord progression of the other, thus allowing an incremental, more subtle change from one style to the next.

5.5.4 Music for Mixed-Entertainment Scenes

For scenes including acting, novelty acts, or advanced choreography, arranging music allows the creator to adapt the music to the scene instead of always vice versa. Arrangers may even wish to further edit their arrangements during the rehearsal phase as other ensemble members suggest acting or choreography revisions. A possible process is as follows: 1) Pick a scene and identify its goal, 2) Outline the progression of non-musical events, 3) Choose music to accompany the mood and action of the scene, 4) Determine how the music needs to change in order to fit the progression of events, and finally, 5) Write the arrangement.

The first step, the goal of a scene, can involve a general narrative, an intention to impress with a particular skill, or simply a wish to add a visual aspect to the music. For a narrative, the second step requires a list of every action essential for communicating the story, attributed to specific ensemble members; an arranger should take note of when specific members act in a way that prevents them from playing in the arrangement. For novelty acts and advanced choreography, step two entails ordering the planned actions into an increasingly impressive series of events.

Approaching step three, the process of finding suitable music, involves brainstorming a list of pieces that convey an appropriate mood for the non-musical events. After that, the list can be narrowed by considering which pieces have a series of sections that best accompany the individual actions of the scene. If nothing fits, an arranger might consider a medley of related music, or even picking different music for each general event within the scene as the composer does in the Canadian Brass's "Hornsmoke."

Step four, editing music to match a scene, has two goals: ensuring that actions match with the best music for them, and avoiding dead time. Inner chunks of larger pieces of music like overtures or tone poems often rearrange well, so an arranger can reorder them to better fit a narrative or even add in little excerpts of other music that help communicate a particular plot point. Secondly, narratives need to move forward at a certain pace. Beginning a narrative sets certain expectations in the audience, and too much time spent playing music in between non-musical action disappoints those expectations. Large amounts of dead time necessitate cuts in the arrangement; the version of Dukas's "Sorcerer's Apprentice" in the *Alice in Wonderland* show contains two large cuts for this reason.

After assembling the first four steps' worth of information, an arranger can produce an arrangement without needing to rework it too much later. Requests and advice from ensemble members regarding the narrative or arrangement may require further changes, but getting this input requires a viable arrangement. Ensemble members may balk at particular pieces of acting assigned to them, recognize pieces of narrative or choreography that do not work as intended, or notice mistakes in the arrangement itself, all of which can require revisions to the arrangement.

5.6. Defining Extra-Musical Activity

An arrangement provides musical instructions to an ensemble, but adding other varieties of entertainment require new sets of directions. A list of measure numbers corresponding with stage directions sufficed for the acting and simple choreography in the example show. Here is an excerpt of the acting directions for the "Sorcerer's Apprentice" skit:

Measure 18-22 Queen of Hearts moves down stage, shows audience a deck of playing cards.

Measure 23-31 Queen of Hearts circles ensemble menacingly

Measure 32-39 Queen of Hearts moves between individual ensemble members from stage right to left, concealing each individual member with her cape. When concealed, musicians place modified playing cards between their lips and mouthpiece.

Measure 41 – long pause. Queen of Hearts laughs in a villainous way at the silenced ensemble and leaves the stage. For about 15 seconds after that, ensemble members act individually victimized, attempt to pull away the card, look at each other woefully, or just sit awkwardly. The Mad Hatter enters the stage leisurely, as if just passing through. He tips his hat to the audience, then tips it to the ensemble, and freezes, realizing their plight. He examines the cards, then moves to face the ensemble as conductor. The Mad Hatter removes the hatter's hat, sets it down, and produces the sorcerer's hat. Hatter puts on the new hat.

Measure 42-47 The Hatter conducts the first note, played by the tuba. All the other ensemble members act surprised and turn to look at the tubist. He gives them a thumbs-up.

Other techniques may require more elaborate directions. Dancing and advanced choreography directions call for blocking, or diagrams of ensemble members' positions and movements onstage. Commercial directing software simplifies this tremendously, but runs on the expensive side. Graph paper was used for a rough draft blocking of the chess skit, but the skit idea was abandoned before detailed directions were completed.

5.7. Scene Order

Once the scenes are complete, an organizer can consider the most effective order of acts with regard to theme, variety, and pace of extra-musical involvement. Themed shows typically introduce the theme early on, and if themed narratives connect to form a larger story, an organizer should space these scenes across the entire show to keep the theme present in the mind of the audience. After spacing out themed acts, an organizer may next prioritize variety of music and non-traditional entertainment. The organizer may also wish to ensure the second half of a show contains more non-traditional entertainment than the first half so as not to disappoint the audience after intermission.

5.8. Advertising

Good advertising promotes unique aspects of a performance without overexplaining or spoiling too many surprises. The studied ensembles tend to avoid any detailed descriptions of non-traditional elements of their shows. Instead, they often use visuals to promote themselves, either photos of the ensemble performing in some unique

manner, or an image related to the theme of a performance. This document's accompanying *Alice in Wonderland* show relied on the latter, as shown in Figure 6.



Figure 6: Author's Recital Poster.

5.9. Performing

A couple of additional considerations can improve a show during the performance. The first involves pause in speech and action. Inexperienced public speakers tend to rush through a script, thinking that otherwise the audience might become impatient. Analysis of the Canadian Brass's pace of speech reveals that even lengthy pauses do not interrupt the flow of their performance; their speech contains many comfortable, conversational pauses. As the Mnozil Brass demonstrates in "Lonely Boy," the same principle applies to acting. Leonhard Paul makes an art form out of long pauses in the action, leaving the audience to deeply consider the situation before moving on to the next phase of the scene.

Secondly, unpredictable parts of a complex endeavor can be expected to go wrong in front of an audience. Particularly in the first performance of a show, nervousness or unexpected problems may interfere with key actions. Unexpected applause may cover up important plot points. Sometimes performers can improvise solutions to deviations from the plan, but otherwise ensemble members should recall that audiences rarely hold grudges. Several things went wrong in the performance of the *Alice in Wonderland* show, and when talking to the audience members afterward it was clear they enjoyed the successful parts of scenes more than they disliked blunders. Many of them were not even aware there had been mistakes.

6. CONCLUSION

Non-traditional content adds a tremendous amount of value to chamber music, allowing greater profitability and even career options to small ensembles. By developing a unique set of skills, groups like the Canadian Brass, the Mnozil Brass, and Les Trompettes de Lyon attract a loyal following and the fame necessary to tour with financial success. The prospect of writing an entire show is an intimidating one, but by breaking the process into manageable pieces, a single determined musician can produce a blueprint for a show in a few months. Ensemble members willing to invest some effort could hasten the process considerably. Mastery of extra-musical technique takes time and practice, but is not necessarily limited to professional ensembles.

In fact, universities with thriving chamber ensemble programs could introduce the ideas discussed here, and allow students to expand their employment potential beyond the oversupplied set of traditional music careers. Instrumental music departments could collaborate with vocal, acting, and dancing departments to develop directing, acting, and choreography skills in students in addition to musical technique. In this environment, student ensembles can also experiment with individual scenes on student recitals before attempting to put together entire shows worth of material. Even musicians choosing to focus on pedagogy or orchestral performance often perform in chamber ensemble settings; the ability to write humorous scripts and dabble in acting and choreography may often prove valuable, particularly in outreach projects.

Further research could improve understanding of the method whereby an ensemble combines music, novelty, and humor into a career. Beyond the ability to create an original show, musicians considering a full-time commitment to chamber music need

to understand marketing and management. Also, the research presented here ignores part-time touring ensembles that incorporate novelty, like the Dallas Brass, which notably performs side-by-side concerts with young ensembles. Furthermore, this document focuses on brass ensembles, but attention to other ensembles such as the King's Singers and the Blue Man Group could add valuable perspective for other instrument groups.

Despite incomplete scholarship on the subject, mixed-entertainment chamber ensembles offer a valuable alternative to the overcrowded fields of music pedagogy and large ensemble performance. In addition to a glut of graduating performance majors, classical music also suffers from a declining audience as musicians face increasing competition from other areas of entertainment. What better way to regain audience interest than to blend some of those other amusements into musical performances?

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