

2016

The Music of Nicola Ferro: A Description and Performance Guide to Tetralogy of the Sun Suite and Annotated Guide to Published Works

Bradley James Keesler
University of South Carolina

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/etd>



Part of the [Music Performance Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Keesler, B. J.(2016). *The Music of Nicola Ferro: A Description and Performance Guide to Tetralogy of the Sun Suite and Annotated Guide to Published Works*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/etd/3541>

This Open Access Dissertation is brought to you by Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact digres@mailbox.sc.edu.

THE MUSIC OF NICOLA FERRO:
A DESCRIPTION AND PERFORMANCE GUIDE TO TETRALOGY OF THE SUN SUITE
AND ANNOTATED GUIDE TO PUBLISHED WORKS

by

Bradley James Keesler

Bachelor of Music
University of Kentucky, 2009

Master of Arts
Middle Tennessee State University, 2012

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Musical Arts in

Music Performance

School of Music

University of South Carolina

2016

Accepted by:

Bradley Edwards, Major Professor

James Ackley, Committee Member

Ronald Davis, Committee Member

John Fitz Rogers, Committee Member

Lacy Ford, Senior Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies

© Copyright by Bradley James Keesler, 2016
All Rights Reserved.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all, I thank God for the many blessings He has given me, including the gift of music and the ability to pursue this degree. Thank you to my parents Dan and Cynthia for their unconditional love and support throughout my entire life. Thank you to Emily for being by my side all these years and for all the encouragement and grace you have given me. Thank you to Dale Warren, David Loucky, and Brad Edwards for instilling in me the best of your knowledge, and for helping to shape me into the musician and teacher I am today. And for the many other teachers, faculty members, mentors, colleagues, students, friends, and family who have helped me at any point along my journey, I owe all you of a great big “THANK YOU!”

Travel expenses to Italy in July 2015 were funded in part by a grant from the School of Music at the University of South Carolina. Thank you to Dean Tayloe Harding and the committee members for selecting my grant proposal and for your support in my research.

A special word of thanks to Joseph Alessi for his knowledge and insight of the music as well as for his assistance on behalf of Alessi Publications. And of course thank you to my friend Nicola Ferro for allowing me to play his beautiful music and for his help in creating this document. I am extremely honored and forever grateful. Grazie per tutti!

ABSTRACT

The subject of this research document is the music of Italian trombonist and composer Nicola Ferro (b. 1974). The main purpose of this document is an attempt to initiate scholarly research of Ferro and his compositions. While much of his music has been performed and recorded by some of the world's greatest musicians (most notably Joseph Alessi, New York Philharmonic Principal Trombonist), there is very little written research on the subject of Ferro or his music.

Part of this document will serve as a performance guide to one of his most important compositions, the *Tetralogy of the Sun* Suite for trombone and piano. A greater in-depth look at this particular composition should help to show the general style and compositional attributes of his music. This guide will provide insight and performance suggestions for musicians at any level, from student to amateur to professional. This can also be a resource for teachers and accompanists in aiding the preparation of this music for performance.

This document will also contain an annotated guide to the works currently published through 2016. This list includes music in a variety of styles and genres that have been composed for solo trombone (with and without accompaniment), brass chamber ensembles, wind band, and more. The annotations will include pertinent information regarding the compositions such as date of publication, approximate length, commission information, and a brief description of each piece.

PREFACE

My interest in Nicola Ferro's music began during my time as a Doctoral student at the University of South Carolina. I had heard some friends perform various movements of the *Tetralogy of the Sun* Suite, and I was also preparing to perform *Red Spain* on a studio recital. In the summer of 2013 the *Caliente* album was released, and when I downloaded it to my iPhone I could not stop listening to it because I enjoyed the writing and the music so much. I knew some obvious facts that Nicola Ferro was a trombonist and composer, and that he wrote some music, some of it very challenging. Many of his works were composed and dedicated to Joseph Alessi. Of course, every trombonist knows Mr. Alessi and his reputation, and I have enjoyed listening to many of his performances over the years. Some of his more recent recordings included Nicola Ferro's *Daybreak* and *Sunset*, two pieces that I knew to be part of the *Tetralogy of the Sun* suite. I felt a strong desire to learn and perform these pieces myself, so I programmed the suite on my final DMA recital. When I started writing program notes for the recital, I searched for more information on Nicola Ferro and the suite. His website (www.nicolaferro.it) provided some content including some biographical information, but otherwise I was able to find very little additional information on the Internet, except for some brief CD reviews and articles. Around the same time, I was searching for a doctoral research project topic. My general interests at the time included trombone literature and gaining direct insight from composers to performers. I combined those ideas with my curiosity

about Nicola Ferro and my upcoming performance of his music, and the idea of this project was born.

I contacted Nicola in 2014 to ask permission to write about him and his music, and I also expressed interest in meeting him in person. I believed that face-to-face interaction would be a wonderful cultural and learning experience for me, as well as add a great deal of validity to my project. From the beginning he was very excited about the project and very willing to help me in any way he could. It took almost a year of planning and correspondence before we could finally work out the arrangements. From July 8-15, 2015 I traveled to Italy and was able to spend several days with Nicola. During my visit I was able to play the individual movements of the *Tetralogy* Suite for him and directly receive some very valuable feedback. On the second day, he took me to meet the Mayor of the City of Campagna (Province of Salerno). I received a signed certificate from him, recognizing my visit to Campagna in the name of international collaboration in music as well as my research of Nicola Ferro.

Upon my return to the United States the final task was writing this document. Most of the content for the performance guide came from personal audio recordings of my sessions with Nicola in Italy. I combined his suggestions and insight with my experience performing and studying the works. I was also fortunate enough to have a chance to speak to Mr. Alessi about this music. Since the suite was written for and dedicated to him, I asked him some questions to gain his perspective on the music, as well as some additional performance suggestions.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
PREFACE	v
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
CHAPTER 1 TETRALOGY OF THE SUN SUITE.....	1
1.1 DAYBREAK.....	4
1.2 MIDDAY	7
1.3 SUNSET.....	11
1.4 MIDNIGHT	14
CHAPTER 2 PERFORMANCE GUIDELINES	19
2.1 DAYBREAK.....	19
2.2 MIDDAY	23
2.3 SUNSET.....	34
2.4 MIDNIGHT	39
CHAPTER 3 ANNOTATED GUIDE TO PUBLISHED WORKS	47
REFERENCES	57
APPENDIX A – BIOGRAPHY	58
APPENDIX B – DISCOGRAPHY	59
APPENDIX C – INTERVIEW NOTES.....	60
APPENDIX D – PERMISSION TO REPRINT	63

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 Movement titles	2
Figure 1.2 <i>Daybreak</i> , mm. 3-10.....	4
Figure 1.3 <i>Daybreak</i> , mm. 19-22.....	5
Figure 1.4 <i>Daybreak</i> , mm. 23-24.....	5
Figure 1.5 <i>Daybreak</i> , mm. 33-35.....	6
Figure 1.6 <i>Daybreak</i> , mm. 35-40.....	6
Figure 1.7 <i>Daybreak</i> , mm. 41-45.....	6
Figure 1.8 <i>Daybreak</i> , mm. 50-54.....	7
Figure 1.9 <i>Midday</i> , mm. 1-7	8
Figure 1.10 <i>Midday</i> , mm. 22-25	8
Figure 1.11 <i>Midday</i> , mm. 28-32	9
Figure 1.12 <i>Midday</i> , mm. 51-67	9
Figure 1.13 <i>Midday</i> , mm. 68-72	10
Figure 1.14 <i>Midday</i> , mm. 107-114	10
Figure 1.15 <i>Midday</i> , mm. 119-124	11
Figure 1.16 <i>Sunset</i> , mm. 10-16	12
Figure 1.17 <i>Sunset</i> , mm. 16-23	12
Figure 1.18 <i>Sunset</i> , mm. 26-44	13
Figure 1.19 <i>Sunset</i> , mm. 44-50	13
Figure 1.20 <i>Sunset</i> , m. 69; <i>Midnight</i> , mm. 14-15	14

Figure 1.21 <i>Midnight</i> , mm. 1-11	16
Figure 1.22 <i>Midnight</i> , mm. 27-29	17
Figure 1.23 <i>Midnight</i> , mm. 39-41	17
Figure 1.24 <i>Midnight</i> , mm. 57-59	17
Figure 1.25 <i>Midnight</i> , mm. 71-73	18
Figure 2.1 <i>Daybreak</i> , mm. 3-4	19
Figure 2.2 <i>Daybreak</i> , mm. 9-10	20
Figure 2.3 <i>Daybreak</i> , mm. 11-14	20
Figure 2.4 <i>Daybreak</i> , mm. 15-16	21
Figure 2.5 <i>Daybreak</i> , m. 26	21
Figure 2.6 <i>Daybreak</i> , mm. 41-50	22
Figure 2.7 <i>Daybreak</i> , mm. 50-54	23
Figure 2.8 <i>Midday</i> , mm. 1-7	24
Figure 2.9 <i>Midday</i> , mm. 22-25	24
Figure 2.10 <i>Midday</i> , mm. 31-32	25
Figure 2.11 <i>Midday</i> , mm. 33-40	26
Figure 2.12 <i>Midday</i> , mm. 43-44	27
Figure 2.13 <i>Midday</i> , mm. 46-49	28
Figure 2.14 <i>Midday</i> , mm. 51-67	30
Figure 2.15 <i>Midday</i> , mm. 68-72	30
Figure 2.16 <i>Midday</i> , mm. 75-79	31
Figure 2.17 <i>Midday</i> , m. 81	32
Figure 2.18 <i>Midday</i> , mm. 86-89	32

Figure 2.19 <i>Midday</i> , mm. 97-106	33
Figure 2.20 <i>Midday</i> , mm. 125-129	33
Figure 2.21 <i>Midday</i> , mm. 131-135	34
Figure 2.22 <i>Sunset</i> , mm. 10-14	35
Figure 2.23 <i>Sunset</i> , mm. 10-16	35
Figure 2.24 <i>Sunset</i> , mm. 16-20	35
Figure 2.25 <i>Sunset</i> , m. 23 [rhythmic figure]	36
Figure 2.26 <i>Sunset</i> , mm. 21-26	37
Figure 2.27 <i>Sunset</i> , mm. 35-44	38
Figure 2.28 <i>Sunset</i> , mm. 45-47	38
Figure 2.29 <i>Sunset</i> , mm. 51-57	39
Figure 2.30 <i>Sunset</i> , mm. 62-69	39
Figure 2.31 <i>Midnight</i> , alternate trombone positions	40
Figure 2.32 <i>Midnight</i> , mm. 11-16	40
Figure 2.33 <i>Midnight</i> , mm. 18-19	41
Figure 2.34 <i>Midnight</i> , mm. 23-26	41
Figure 2.35 <i>Midnight</i> , mm. 27-32	42
Figure 2.36 <i>Midnight</i> , mm. 35-39	43
Figure 2.37 <i>Midnight</i> , mm. 39-46	43
Figure 2.38 <i>Midnight</i> , mm. 48-57	44
Figure 2.39 <i>Midnight</i> , mm. 57-66	45
Figure 2.40 <i>Midnight</i> , mm. 70-76	46

CHAPTER 1

TETRALOGY OF THE SUN SUITE

Italian trombonist and composer Nicola Ferro (b. 1974) has created many compositions and recording projects over the years that cover a wide variety of styles and genres including classical, jazz, electronic, pop, film and dance. He is equally skilled as an arranger, producer and teacher. For many years Ferro has collaborated with New York Principal Trombonist Joseph Alessi. They first met in 2004 at the Alessi Seminar¹ in Fossano (Province of Cuneo) Italy. Ferro had recently composed a new work for solo trombone entitled *Daybreak*. Upon playing this piece for the first time Mr. Alessi said that “he fell in love with his music.”² Since then they have become great friends and have been a part of multiple composition and recording projects. He goes on to describe Ferro’s work as “popular music, simple writing, great music”³ and he adds that “he loves performing his music.”⁴ Ferro’s skill and success as a trombonist helps him to write music that is “very idiomatic and lies very well on the trombone,” according to Mr. Alessi.⁵

Daybreak is perhaps one the most simple of all Ferro’s music. Mr. Alessi describes this piece of music as “a beautiful, singing tune.”⁶ *Daybreak* was the first part

¹ www.alessiseminar.com

² Nicola Ferro, “Caliente; Soloist Joseph Alessi, Composer Nicola Ferro” YouTube video, www.youtube.com/watch?v=GpVsJxoAMZQ (accessed August 13, 2013).

³ Ibid.

⁴ Joseph Alessi, interview by author, October 12, 2015.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Nicola Ferro, “Caliente; Soloist Joseph Alessi, Composer Nicola Ferro” YouTube video, www.youtube.com/watch?v=GpVsJxoAMZQ (accessed August 13, 2013).

of a four-movement suite entitled *Tetralogy of the Sun* that was composed for and dedicated to Mr. Alessi. In this suite Ferro borrows from the musical heritage of his homeland Italy, particularly the operatic traditions. When describing his music and how to interpret it he often makes multiple references to the characteristics and style of Italian opera. He specifically mentions inspiration from classic Italian operas including Puccini's *Tosca* as well as the sound of master singers such as Luciano Pavarotti.⁷ He combines these musical foundations with his personal passion of life. Mr. Alessi says that much of the emotion in Ferro's compositions comes from his personality; "he is an emotional guy, very free-spirited."⁸

If there were one central or recurring theme in the music of Nicola Ferro, it would undoubtedly be the Sun. Many times Ferro has emphasized his feelings about its importance: "The Sun is the most important aspect to life on Earth, and that the Sun is beautiful and ever-present" (he referenced the importance of the popular Italian song '*O sole mio*, translated loosely as "My Sunshine").⁹ The four movements of the *Tetralogy* "portray the different times of the day perfectly; he wrote the exact kind of music that vividly captures beautiful, picturesque images"¹⁰ says Mr. Alessi.

- I. DAYBREAK: *Andante molto espressivo*
- II. MIDDAY: *Andante – Presto*
- III. SUNSET: *Andante molto espressivo*
- IV. MIDNIGHT: *Andante espressivo*

Figure 1.1 Movement Titles

⁷ Nicola Ferro, interview by author, Campagna (Province of Salerno), Italy, July 12-14, 2015.

⁸ Joseph Alessi, interview by author, October 12, 2015.

⁹ Nicola Ferro, interview by author, Campagna (Province of Salerno), Italy, July 12-14, 2015.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Unlike a typical sonata form or multi-movement work with symmetrically contrasting tempi (slow-fast-slow-fast, or vice versa), this particular four movement suite is arranged slow-fast-slow-slow. This movement structure is influenced more by the programmatic considerations of the music rather than adherence to conventional format. The relatively short durations of these pieces (four to six minutes) lend themselves to easy inclusion in recital programs. The movements may be performed individually to suit the needs of the performer.¹¹ When the suite is performed in its entirety, the progression of the movements creates a complete programmatic set of music. A full performance of all four movements lasts approximately eighteen minutes.

Regarding technical considerations such as dynamics, endurance and range, the *Tetralogy of the Sun* suite poses challenges equal to other advanced repertoire for the trombone. Mr. Alessi says that these pieces require “incredible dynamic control” that is necessary to portray imagery in the music, such as slow sunrises and sunsets, etc.¹² He adds that these are “lengthy pieces” and “taxing” for trombonists due to the sustained melodies in the upper register.¹³ A strong and secure high range is necessary for any movement, and the second movement in particular (*Midday*) has great technical demands for the performer such as extended low range, odd meter rhythms, and frequent use of double-tonguing. The majority of the music in all four movements is written in tenor clef. While this should be part of the standard training for professional and many college student trombonists, it could limit its performance from amateur or younger students who may not be as familiar with the clef.

¹¹ Currently the four movements are published separately, and the designation “suite” does not appear on any individual movement but is used by the composer on his website.

¹² Nicola Ferro, interview by author, Campagna (Province of Salerno), Italy, July 12-14, 2015.

¹³ Ibid.

1.1 DAYBREAK

From an initial performance standpoint, this is the most well-known and most accessible out of all the individual movements.¹⁴ It was recorded by Joseph Alessi on the *Return to Sorrento* album.¹⁵ *Daybreak* is a simple, beautiful melody that later takes on a rhapsodic character in both the solo and the accompaniment. In the beginning the Sun is just beginning to make its way above the horizon. As it slowly peeks over the mountain tops, life begins to stir. The picture at the beginning of the movement is still dark, with only the smallest hint of sunlight.¹⁶ There can be some slight *rubato* in the tempo towards the ends of these phrases, but generally it should be in straight tempo. The rise and fall of the dynamics also help to shape these phrases musically. Most of the harmonies in this movement revolve around the tonal center of F Major.

The image displays a musical score for the piece 'Daybreak', specifically measures 3 through 10. The score is written for two instruments: Trombone (Tbn.) and Piano (Pno.). The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or F minor), and the time signature is 4/4. The Trombone part begins in measure 3 with a melody starting on a B-flat, moving up stepwise to a D-flat in measure 6, then continuing in measure 7. The Piano accompaniment provides harmonic support with chords and moving lines in both hands. Dynamics are indicated by 'mp' (mezzo-piano) and 'p' (piano). The score is divided into two systems: measures 3-6 and measures 7-10. Measure numbers 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10 are clearly marked above the staff lines.

Figure 1.2 *Daybreak*, mm. 3-10

¹⁴ Joseph Alessi, interview by author, October 12, 2015.

¹⁵ *Return to Sorrento: Italian Songs arranged for Trombone*, Joseph Alessi, Naxos Records, 2007.

¹⁶ Nicola Ferro, interview by author, Campagna (Province of Salerno), Italy, July 12-14, 2015.

The melody builds slightly and leads to a sudden swell in mm. 19-20, where the accompaniment becomes more intense with running sixteenth notes in the left hand, foreshadowing the musical changes that are soon to come.



Figure 1.3 *Daybreak*, mm. 19-22

In m. 23 the music “changes color” as indicated by the instruction *cambia colore* to a lighter and more airy texture in both the solo and the accompaniment. The dynamic drops to *pianissimo*, the trombone melody is played in a slightly higher tessitura, and the accompaniment becomes sparse.

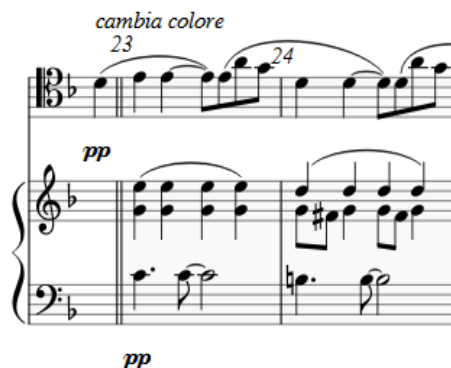


Figure 1.4 *Daybreak*, mm. 23-24

Starting in m. 27 the music intensifies slightly with more heavy and robust phrases in the trombone and more rhythmic activity in the accompaniment. This prepares another transition in m. 31 that briefly repeats back to the original melodic motive. Then seemingly out of nowhere the melody builds and soars up to the high C-sharp in m. 33.

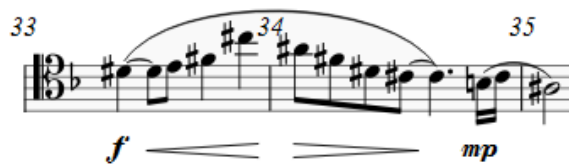


Figure 1.5 *Daybreak*, mm. 33-35

Mm. 36-39 serve as a brief transition marked *rubato* and sets up the entrance to the final section of this piece.



Figure 1.6 *Daybreak*, mm. 35-40

The indication *prepara l'alba* in m. 42 is translated from Italian as “prepare the ‘dawn’ or ‘sunrise.’” Alternatively historian Peter Burkholder identifies the term “alba” as a genre of French troubadour love song or poetry, also known as a “dawn song.”¹⁷ The rhapsodic character is taking over in this piece as the melodies begin to grow more passionate and the accompaniment becomes more animated. It is only a matter of moments until the Sun has fully risen.



Figure 1.7 *Daybreak*, mm 41-45

¹⁷ J. Peter Burkholder, Donald Jay Grout, and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 7th ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), 78.

At m. 51 the words “DAY BREAK NOW *energy*” indicate the visualization of the Sun finally coming up from beyond the horizon, and now its full power can reach to all the ends of the land.



Figure 1.8 *Daybreak*, mm. 50-54

1.2 MIDDAY

Midday is the only fast movement of the suite and by far the most difficult for rhythm, technique, and range. To date this is the only movement of the suite that has yet to be professionally recorded. In fact, at the time of writing this paper there is not even a YouTube video of this movement from any student or professional trombonist. This movement provides manageable challenges to both the soloist and accompanist including double tonguing, extremes in the upper and lower registers, irregular meters, and a variety of exotic harmonies and tonalities.

In the opening measures, the tempo starts out with a Maestoso two measure intro led by a brief melodic sequence in the left hand of the piano, then suddenly the tempo changes to Lento as the trombone solo enters. After the initial statement from the trombone, the tempo settles into Andante.

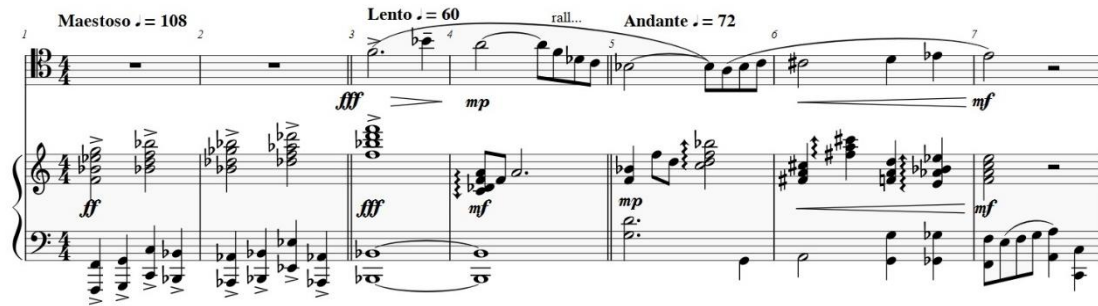


Figure 1.9 *Midday*, mm. 1-7

As the slow introduction continues, the composer draws a comparison of the tempo and mood to the jazz standard “Summertime”¹⁸ just like a slow, hot, and lazy day.¹⁹ After a slow introduction, the Presto at m. 22 suddenly takes on the character of a busy city atmosphere at midday. The 7/4 meter provides irregularity to the music; imagine a busy New York City street filled with hustle-and-bustle of pedestrians and automobile traffic. In the opening ostinato the trombone solo acts as both melody and accompaniment.



Figure 1.10 *Midday*, mm. 22-25

Beginning with the quarter note pick-up into m. 28 the trombone part is now comprised of flowing melodies that weave in and out of the continuing left hand piano

¹⁸ DuBose Heyward and George Gershwin, “Summertime” in *Broadway Repertoire for Soprano*, ed. Gregory Boals (New York: Chappell, 1979), 3.

¹⁹ Nicola Ferro, interview by author, Campagna (Province of Salerno), Italy, July 12-14, 2015.

ostinato rhythm. There is some irregularity between the trombone part and both the left and right hands of the piano. Rhythmically these two parts only synchronize on the downbeats of measures. The rhythms between the trombone and piano finally match up later on, starting in m. 34.

Figure 1.11 *Midday*, mm. 28-32

The next section from mm. 51-78 consists of new thematic material and new challenges with rhythm, articulation, and range. The meter changes to 3/4 and the solo part becomes much more pointed and articulate, with shorter notes and one-measure statements using only two pitches at a time. The piano accompaniment creates a rhythmic groove underneath the soloist, seemingly transitioning between a 3/4 and 6/8 feel.

Figure 1.12 *Midday*, mm. 51-67

The trombone melody in mm. 68-72 is based on the whole-tone scale. Each pitch in the trombone is also doubled in the right hand of the piano as the top note in a sequence of descending whole-step chords.

Figure 1.13 *Midday*, mm. 68-72

From mm. 79-90 the original rhythmic theme from the beginning of the Presto comes back in the trombone and the piano. The time signature returns to 7/4 and the accents should continue to be treated as before. The harmony goes back and forth between each measure from being consonant to dissonant and the harmonic tension continues to build through this phrase. Mm. 107-114 harmonically are the same as in the beginning at mm. 1-2, as well as in mm. 19-20. Once again, the trombone and the left hand of the piano must match pitch and style. Mm. 107-110 are comprised of the original melodic sequence, and then it is transposed up for mm. 111-114.

Figure 1.14 *Midday*, mm. 107-114

Mm. 117 begins the coda of this movement, where brief fragments of each previous section and theme of this movement are restated. The melodic pattern from the original left hand piano line is present, as well as a flash back to the opening statement from m. 3 in the trombone, except this time it takes on more of a whole-tone approach (the composer suggests a melodic/harmonic reference to the opening of “The Simpsons” television show).²⁰ In m. 123 the trombone plays that statement again, returning to its original notated form.



Figure 1.15 *Midday*, mm. 119-124

The movement ends with a strong finish in the upper register with a double high F serving as the exclamation point.

1.3 SUNSET

In the third movement pictures of the most beautiful sunsets are depicted through expressive and flowing melodies. In a total contrast of style and tempo from the previous movement *Midday*, *Sunset* is more similar to *Daybreak* in its simplistic qualities. But unlike *Daybreak*, the melodies in *Sunset* are at times quicker and more rhythmic, yet still graceful and lyrical. The words that the composer uses to describe the mood of this movement are “sensuality” and the color orange.²¹ *Sunset* was also recorded by Joseph Alessi on the *Return to Sorrento* album along with *Daybreak*. The opening statement

²⁰ Nicola Ferro, interview by author, Campagna (Province of Salerno), Italy, July 12-14, 2015.

²¹ Ibid.

from the trombone is a flowing melodic line that effortlessly grows in dynamic and range.

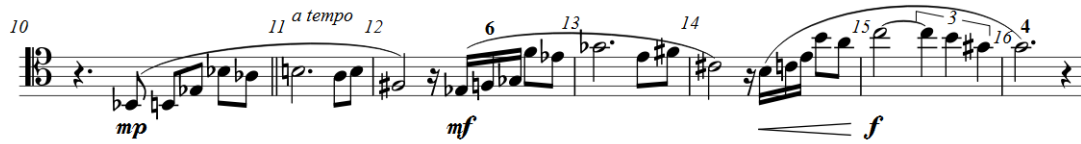


Figure 1.16 *Sunset*, mm. 10-16

Starting with the pick-ups to m. 17, the melody line is comprised of longer lines of sixteenth notes. The dynamics rise and fall through this phrase as the melody moves towards the *rallentando* at m. 22, resolving to *a tempo* and *forte* at m. 23.

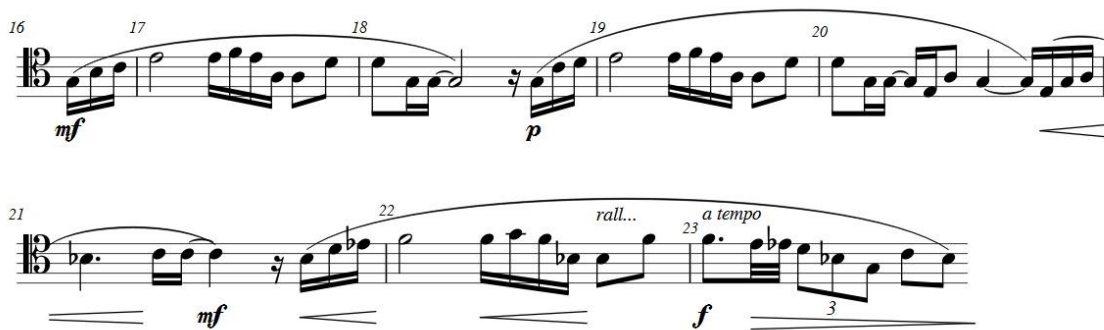


Figure 1.17 *Sunset*, mm. 16-23

This next section from mm. 27-44 integrates fragments of previously heard melodies with additional interplay between both the trombone and the piano parts. Mm. 27-30 imitate the melody from the trombone in mm. 17-20, except now it is in a much higher register of the piano, again creating a lighter and almost atmospheric quality to the sound. Starting with the pick-ups to m. 31 the trombone quotes the melodic figure from the piano at the very beginning of the movement.



Figure 1.18 *Sunset*, mm. 26-44

In the recapitulation much of the original melody remains the same, but the difference is in the piano accompaniment. In the original statement the harmonic rhythm contained mainly quarter notes, but here the rhythm is syncopated and with more motion.

Figure 1.19 *Sunset*, mm. 44-50

Up until this point in the suite, there have been very few, if any clear melodic or thematic motives used between movements. Here in the last measure of *Sunset* the top

line in the piano introduces a fragment of a melodic line that is to come in the suite's final movement, *Midnight*.

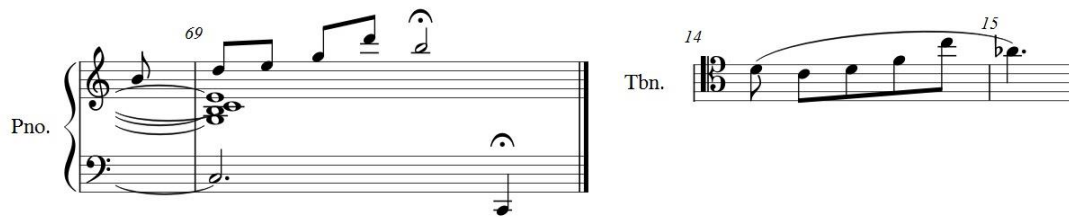


Figure 1.20 *Sunset*, m. 69; *Midnight*, mm. 14-15

1.4 MIDNIGHT

One of the challenges with the overall movement structure of the suite is creating enough contrast in style and character between three slow movements, and especially between the final two slow movements. *Midnight* is as flowing and lyrical as *Daybreak* and *Sunset*, however it has its own unique characteristics. While all three slow movements have similar tempo and style markings, *Midnight* is labeled with the color description of “blue” (specifically dark blue, as indicated by the composer) and should have the character and feel of a ballad.²² Burkholder defines the characteristics of a ballad as having “greater length and wider palette of moods and events... (and uses) more varied themes and textures.”²³ These characteristics show themselves through the course of the movement in both the trombone solo and the piano accompaniment in contrast to anything previously heard in the other movements. Another point of comparison that can help to differentiate this movement from the others is the astronomical relationship between all four movements. The first three movements represent phases of the Sun,

²² Ibid.

²³ J. Peter Burkholder, Donald Jay Grout, and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 7th ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), 607.

however *Midnight* implies a musical depiction of the Moon. This movement was recorded by Ko-ichiro Yamamoto on the album *Tomasi: Trombone Concerto*.²⁴

In this movement the composer suggests for the trombonist to think in a very vocal style, like a Puccini opera. According to the composer the initial thought process behind this movement came from a previous experience playing in the orchestra for a performance of Puccini's *Tosca*.²⁵ One of the more popular arias in *Tosca* is *E lucevan le stelle*, translated as "And the stars were shining." This aria suggests a connection to the night and is described as having a somber beginning, very similar to this movement.²⁶

Like the other movements, *Midnight* begins with a piano introduction. In contrast, this one is longer and more sustained than the other movements. In his description of a ballad Burkholder states that "the piano rose from accompaniment to equal partner with the voice in illustrating and intensifying the meaning of the poetry."²⁷ The chords at the beginning are soft in dynamic, but heavy in character to set the mood. In the beginning the piano may take liberty with the tempo, not rushing the sustained chords or the fermatas.

²⁴ *Tomasi: Trombone Concerto*, Ko-ichiro Yamamoto, Octavia Records, 2007.

²⁵ Nicola Ferro, interview by author, Campagna (Province of Salerno), Italy, July 12-14, 2015.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ J. Peter Burkholder, Donald Jay Grout, and Claude V. Palisca, *A History of Western Music*, 7th ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), 607.

MIDNIGHT

Dedicated to *Joseph Alessi*
for Trombone and Pianoforte

composer
NICOLA FERRO 2005

1 Andante espressivo $\text{♩} = 60$ 2 3 4

Trombone

Piano

Color Blue

pppp

pp

5 6 7 8

Tbn.

Pno.

p

9 10 11

Tbn.

Pno.

mp

p

Figure 1.21 *Midnight*, mm. 1-11

Throughout this movement the trombone solo remains very lyrical and sustained. The composer uses several sets of descriptive words to assist in the portrayal of the Moon's activity. At mm. 27-28 the text "*YOU SEE THE MOON*" suggests the first

sighting of the Moon, perhaps from behind a dark cloud or above a hill. The crescendo in this measure helps with this portrayal.

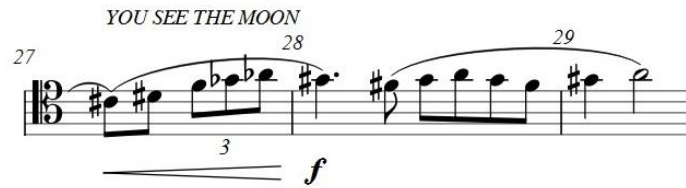


Figure 1.22 *Midnight*, mm. 27-29

Similarly in the pick-up to m. 40, the text “*THE MOON HIDDEN*” suggests the Moon falling out of sight behind a large, dark cloud, temporarily covering the moonlight. The change of character in this section is achieved with both a softer dynamic and the use of the cup mute.



Figure 1.23 *Midnight*, mm. 39-41

Later in the movement, the climactic arrival to m. 58 is marked with the words “*OUT THE MOON*” (or, “the moon comes out”), now suggesting the full moon appearing in the night sky. The dynamics remain full throughout and the melodic line continues to rise all the way to its climax in m. 66.



Figure 1.24 *Midnight*, mm. 57-59

The final phrase at m. 70 once again uses the words “*THE MOON HIDDEN*,” setting up a subtle and calm ending to the movement. The dynamics drop back to *pianissimo* and the trombonist returns to using the cup mute, creating a soft and reflective mood to end the suite.



Figure 1.25 *Midnight*, mm. 71-73

CHAPTER 2

PERFORMANCE GUIDELINES

During my visit with Nicola Ferro in Italy I had the opportunity to perform the music of the *Tetralogy of the Sun* suite for him and receive valuable one-on-one coaching and feedback. The comments he gave include many of his own suggestions regarding aspects of the structure and form of the music, technical considerations specific to the trombone, and how to stylize and interpret certain passages. The notes from these interviews have been transcribed and turned into performance guidelines. I have also included some personal tips from my experience learning and performing this music.

2.1 DAYBREAK

The opening melodic motive starts out quiet and simple. M. 4 should be played as an echo to m. 3, as indicated by the change in dynamics.



Figure 2.1 *Daybreak*, mm. 3-4

In m. 9 the F on the downbeat can be played in sixth position to help keep the half steps together for the approaching G-flat. The F on beat 3 may return to first position due to the approaching E-flat in nearby third position.

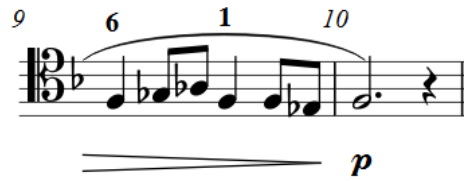


Figure 2.2 *Daybreak*, mm. 9-10

Within the first fourteen measures the dynamics remain subtle – between *piano* and *mezzo piano* – with a brief phrase where the trombone plays *pianissississimo* (*pppp*) underneath a four measure piano interlude. During this four measure phrase, the composer notes that the sustained F in the melody can be slightly altered with the use of vibrato to ensure proper intonation against the changing harmonies in the accompaniment.²⁸



Figure 2.3 *Daybreak*, mm. 11-14

The phrase between mm. 15-22 is similar to the beginning in melodic shape and harmonic motion. Between mm. 15-16, the same echo effect found in the opening statement in mm. 3-4 can be played to match the dynamic shaping; m. 16 can be played *piano* and m. 17 can start at *mezzo piano* before the crescendo. The trombonist may

²⁸ Nicola Ferro, interview by author, Campagna (Province of Salerno), Italy, July 12-14, 2015.

choose to play the Fs in mm. 15-16 either in first or sixth position, depending on personal preference.²⁹



Figure 2.4 *Daybreak*, mm. 15-16

In Joseph Alessi’s recording on the *Return to Sorrento* album, the B-flat eighth note on beat three of m. 26 is approached with a slight scoop of the slide. The composer said he also supports this stylistic interpretation.³⁰



Figure 2.5 *Daybreak*, m. 26

The words *prepara l'alba* (m. 42) are translated from Italian as “prepare the ‘dawn’ or ‘sunrise.’” The composer indicates that every two-measure melodic statement between mm. 41-50 should grow with intensity and be more energized than the previous statement.³¹ The dotted quarter notes in mm. 42, 44, and 46 should grow through each measure. The first two quarter notes in mm. 43, 45, and 47 can be approached with a

²⁹ The downbeat of m. 15 is tied over from the previous measure and would most likely remain in first position.

³⁰ Nicola Ferro, interview by author, Campagna (Province of Salerno), Italy, July 12-14, 2015.

³¹ Ibid.

slight crescendo and treated as a broad tenuto-style suspension/resolution. In m. 47, the eighth notes starting in beat 3 can start softer and grow towards *forte* in the following measure. Also in the same measure, the Ds on beat 2 and beat 4 can be played in fourth position to keep the half-steps together and assist in smoother slide position changes. The same can be said for the Fs in mm. 48-49.

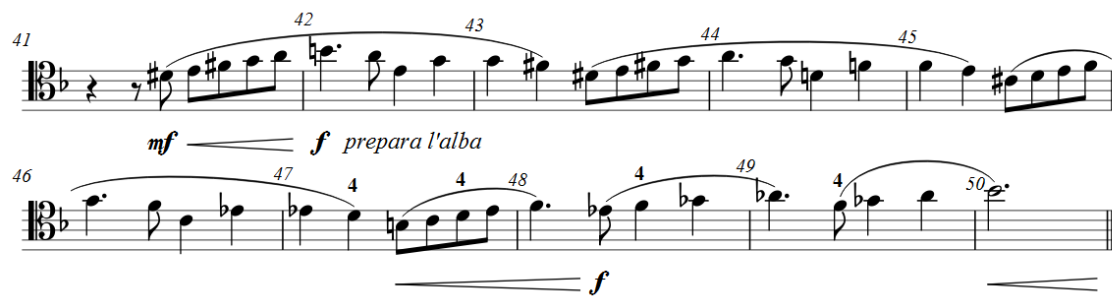


Figure 2.6 *Daybreak*, mm. 41-50

In m. 50 the *molto rallentando* should stretch out across the entire measure and the dotted half note should also crescendo through beat four into the next downbeat. The rhythm in the left hand of the piano creates a 3/16 cross-rhythm through the first three full beats. This may be difficult for the trombonist to hear against the high tessitura of the octaves in the right hand of the piano. Listen closely to the rhythm in the left hand of the piano in this spot, and wait for beat four in the piano to accurately line up the solo part. The composer encourages the performer to not think timidly, but rather utilize proper air flow and play the last four measures with a relaxed, full sound.³² While the final whole note F could be played in sixth position coming from the previous G-flat in neighboring fifth, it is recommended to play it in first position to achieve the best sound and

³² Ibid.

intonation. A quick breath can be taken before the last whole note to help sustain the sound, but do not hold the note longer than the piano sustain can be heard.

The musical score for measures 50-54 of *Daybreak* features two staves: Tbn. (Tuba) and Pno. (Piano). The Tbn. part begins in measure 50 with a whole note chord, followed by a melodic line starting in measure 51. The Pno. part consists of dense harmonic textures, primarily chords, with some moving lines in the bass. Performance markings include *molto rall.* (much more ad libitum) and *sempre f* (always fortissimo) for the piano part. Measure numbers 50, 51, 52, 53, and 54 are indicated above the Tbn. staff.

Figure 2.7 *Daybreak*, mm. 50-54

2.2 MIDDAY

The harmonic motive first heard in the bass line of the introduction to *Midday* reoccurs throughout the movement, so be sure to listen for those connections. Starting in m. 5, the Andante does not have to be in strict tempo, but the eighth notes should remain straight (not swung, as the “Summertime” reference might suggest).³³ The performers

³³ Refer to Chapter 1.

may allow for some push and pull during this section in conjunction with the dynamic contrasts.

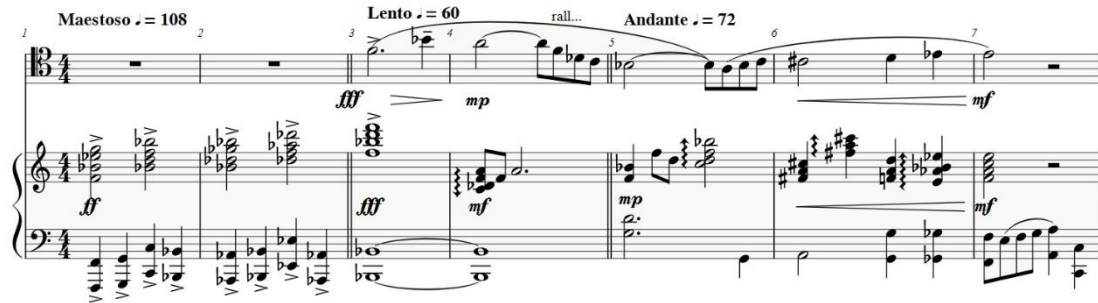


Figure 2.8 *Midday*, mm. 1-7

The majority of the Presto section is in an irregular 7/4 time signature. While the beginning of this section may seem and feel like just a rhythmic ostinato, the composer suggests that both the pianist and trombonist treat this opening like a melody, with shaping and musicality.³⁴ He also notes that the accents in the trombone part should always match the length and weight of the left hand of the piano. The composer recommends isolating these two parts in rehearsals to assure that they sound in unison rhythmically and tonally.³⁵



Figure 2.9 *Midday*, mm. 22-25

³⁴ Nicola Ferro, interview by author, Campagna (Province of Salerno), Italy, July 12-14, 2015.

³⁵ Ibid.

There is one notable difference in the placement of the accents in the beginning of the Presto. The accents in m. 22-23 should be different than the accents beginning in m. 24 and onward. Mm. 22-23 are in unison with the left hand of the piano, and beginning in m. 24 the right hand of the piano begins a separate harmonic figure, therefore the change of adding the accent on all three quarter notes in the middle of the measure can juxtapose the rhythm in the right hand of the piano. The composer recommends using sixth position to play the repetitive Cs and Fs in this opening ostinato section rather than trying to use the F-attachment valve. While there is more compression in the valve, ultimately the sound will be better and this figure will be easier to play without the additional switching in and out of the valve.³⁶

The composer makes special mention of the tenuto markings on the last quarter note beat of m. 31 and the first dotted quarter note beat of m. 32. He says that there should be a change of character to accompany the change of harmony for the interlude in mm. 32-33. In addition to the change between accented and tenuto notes, there should be a *subito* change towards a softer dynamic to match what the piano will have.³⁷



Figure 2.10 *Midday*, mm. 31-32

In mm. 34-35, the composer mentions to bring out the accents on the first eighth note on beat six.³⁸ While there is a crescendo printed at the end of m. 35, the same

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

gesture can be made in m. 34 to provide rhythmic motion and intensity in this line. A slight accent can also be placed on the upbeat of beat five in m. 36 (B-flat) to spring that eighth note line towards the downbeat of m. 37. Mm. 36-39 should be accurate and pointed, specifically on the marcato-staccato eighth notes. In mm. 36 and 39 the music takes on a 3/8 cross-rhythm feel in the first half of those measures. In this instance, the rhythms in the right hand of piano accompaniment will not exactly match the trombone melody, but the left hand will loosely line up with the soloist. This is another part where the trombonist and only the left hand of the piano should rehearse to isolate and line up the implied rhythm.



Figure 2.11 *Midday*, mm. 33-40

The glissandi in m. 43 should be played as marked, with the second quarter note of each pair noticeably shorter on the release point (with the exception of the final glissando between E and B). Allow the marcato note in the trombone to match the length and decay of the accented notes in the piano. There can also be a slight crescendo on each glissando.³⁹

³⁹ Ibid.

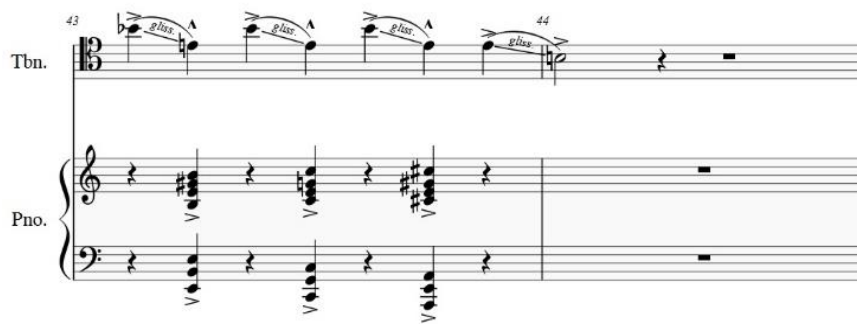


Figure 2.12 *Midday*, mm. 43-44

From mm. 46-49, this brief section is to be performed with a straight mute. The composer recommends a heavy metal straight mute (typical brands include Tom Crown, Denis Wick, or Jo-Ral) and is specifically looking for a strong metallic quality to the sound.⁴⁰ Given the brief time allowed for a mute change, some thought must be given to the location of the mute before it is placed in the bell during a performance. On the glissando from F to B-flat, allow the sound to be full and present through all the pitches in between; it should be a longer, even glissando rather than a quick ‘scoop’ effect (all within one beat, of course).⁴¹ Be sure to clearly accent the beginning of the B-flat after the glissando.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

Figure 2.13 *Midday*, mm. 46-49

These next three measures provide several tricky aspects for the performer all at once. It is helpful to know the construction of the melodic sequence as well as the placement of the articulations. All of this must be done while maintaining control of the sound and intonation with the mute. The eighth notes are written as a chromatically descending minor third sequence in unison with the piano at first, then later breaking off into stacked minor thirds. Special attention should be given in regards to the articulations; the off-beats should be more emphasized with staccato-accents while the strong beats are less emphasized and remain only staccato. The composer suggests to memorize these three measures and not solely rely on visual recall. This would greatly help to avoid any mental slips or loss of focus in the middle of a performance.⁴²

There are several decisions to be made in this passage with regards to using different alternate positions. Ultimately, it should be up to the performer's individual

⁴² Ibid.

preference and skill level. The most important aspect to focus on is the sound quality. Since the F to B-flat glissando arrives in first position B-flat on the fourth partial, the sequence should continue for the first few notes alternating between fourth and fifth partials while utilizing all primary positions. In m. 46 the second group in the sequence is printed as A to B-sharp, but it should be treated as an enharmonic C-natural to fit in the sequence. The same is true for the fourth group in the sequence, printed as G to A-sharp but treated enharmonically as B-flat.

The A-sharp eighth note in m. 46 should probably be played in fifth position for two reasons: one, it continues the slide motion pattern from the rest of the measure and two, it helps to approach the F-sharp in the next measure, also in fifth position. The following A-natural could either be played in primary position second or alternate position sixth. This note could determine what positions are used on the following F-natural to A-flat sequence, either primary positions first and third or alternate positions sixth and seventh. Using primary positions on the ensuing A, F and A-flat (2-1-3) would keep a similar slide motion pattern on those notes. The same positions can be used in mm 47-48 as the pattern repeats itself.⁴³ The second statement of the sequence continues past E-natural and includes E-flat to G-flat and D to F, finishing on the lowest note D-flat. These notes can all be played in primary positions (3-5-4-6-5), supporting the choice to also use primary positions on the F and A-flat in m. 48 (1-3).

The glissando between mm. 51-52 should be played in a similar manner to the glissando from m. 46, with a strong accent on the downbeat after the glissando. In these measures the staccato-accented notes should be heavily marked while the staccato notes

⁴³ It should be mentioned that the enharmonic pitches in question from m. 46 are now correctly printed in m. 47 to continue the pattern of chromatically descending minor thirds.

are very light, almost “ghosted” as the composer says.⁴⁴ Each measure also contains a crescendo to help the marcato-staccato note at the end be the strongest point every time. In m. 64, the composer suggests using fourth position D (sixth partial) and fifth position E (seventh partial) to aid in executing that particular melodic passage more fluidly while avoiding multiple changing partials at a fast tempo.⁴⁵

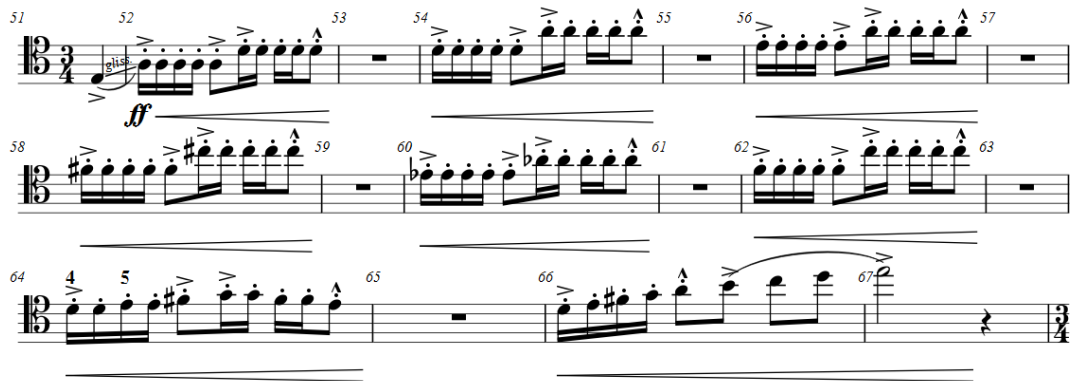


Figure 2.14 *Midday*, mm. 51-67

The notes in mm. 68-72 should all be treated as bell-tones, and it should feel like an implied 6/8 time signature in both the trombone and the piano.⁴⁶

This musical score shows measures 68 through 72 of 'Midday' for Trombone (Tbn.) and Piano (Pno.). The time signature is 3/4. The Trombone part is written in a single line with a key signature of one flat. The Piano part is written in a grand staff (treble and bass clef) with a key signature of one flat. Both parts feature a series of bell-tones (half notes) with accents. The score is divided into two systems. The first system contains measures 68-71, and the second system contains measure 72. A 'f' (forte) marking is present in measure 68.

Figure 2.15 *Midday*, mm. 68-72

⁴⁴ Nicola Ferro, interview by author, Campagna (Province of Salerno), Italy, July 12-14, 2015.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

With regards to the extreme high range of these notes, remember to take a good breath and use proper technique. Strive for an equal sound quality and volume on all the notes as they descend.⁴⁷ If the high notes cannot securely be performed, one possible alternative is to take part of the phrase down an octave, from the B-natural in m. 66 to the F-sharp in m. 73.

With the sudden low notes in mm. 75 and 78, keep the sound full and accented, but do not allow the sound to get too pushy or edgy. Ferro says to “think like a bass trombonist here” and relax the air to achieve a broad sound in the low range.⁴⁸ The notes should feel like low bell-tones with some decay and not a lot of length. The composer makes this point to help keep the tempo up and not allow those low notes to drag the tempo down.⁴⁹

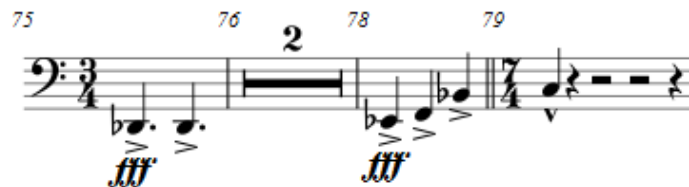


Figure 2.16 *Midday*, mm. 75-79

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

In m. 81 the trombone is alone in playing a tritone interval between F-sharp and the printed B-sharp.⁵⁰



Figure 2.17 *Middy*, m. 81

In mm. 86, 88 and 89, the composer wants the low notes to have the same style of accents as previously used in m. 78.⁵¹ The composer suggests that the slurred eighth notes in the second half of m. 87 can be divided into two-note groups and played as a quasi-glissando for a more fluid approach.⁵² In that case, also bring out the accents on the first of each note group. Once again, make sure that these figures line up stylistically with the rhythms in the piano.



Figure 2.18 *Middy*, m. 86-89

Upon approaching m. 98, the tenuto markings should be treated the same way from mm. 31-32, only this time the tenuto line continues for another four measures with a melodic cross-rhythm sequence in harmony with the piano. Continue with the same change of character as before in mm. 31-32, and allow the harmonic progression to

⁵⁰ The B-sharp is correct; it can also be treated as an enharmonic C-natural.

⁵¹ Nicola Ferro, interview by author, Campagna (Province of Salerno), Italy, July 12-14, 2015.

⁵² Ibid.

naturally crescendo towards the downbeat of m. 102 (marked accented *sforzando*). The X-note head on the downbeat of m. 106 is meant to be a quick, tongue-stop release.⁵³



Figure 2.19 *Midday*, mm. 97-106

Mm. 125-128 contain fragments of a 3/8 cross-rhythm feel that was present in other parts of the movement, such as the rhythmic content from mm. 36 and 39 and also the cross-rhythms from mm. 98-101. The glissandi in m. 129 should be in the same style as those in m. 43.



Figure 2.20 *Midday*, mm. 125-129

Mm. 131-134 contain similar material as mm. 107-114. Once again, make sure the trombone line matches the length and style of the left hand of the piano. Be sure not to let the notes become too heavy and lose tempo. The last two eighth notes in mm. 131, 132 and 133 can have the same feel as the slurred eighth notes in m. 87 with a quasi-glissando approach.⁵⁴

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.



Figure 2.21 *Midday*, mm. 131-135

The end of this movement can be difficult because of the sustained high notes, capped off by the high F at the end. One possible alternative would be to play the ending down an octave starting from beat 5 in m. 134 (including the ascending B-natural scale) all the way to the end. The composer has not written in ossia notes for this designation, however it is a viable option if performers find it a necessity.

2.3 SUNSET

The movement starts with a calm piano introduction that ends with a *rallentando*, awaiting the opening statement from the trombone. In m. 10 before the *a tempo*, the composer wants the pick-up notes to be more *rubato* and deliberate.⁵⁵ He specifically organizes the notes in m. 10 into two groups: the B-flat to B-natural, followed by the E-flat to B-flat to A-flat. There should be more of a tenuto-like stress on the first note of each of these groups (the first B-flat and the E-flat, respectively).⁵⁶ From mm. 11-25 the quarter note pulse in the piano stays steady underneath the lyrical trombone melody. Aside from a few clearly marked *rallentandos*, the tempo should remain straight throughout, especially in the sixteenth notes.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.



Figure 2.22 *Sunset*, mm. 10-14

Although the dynamics have a clearly labeled progression from *mezzo piano* to *mezzo forte* to *forte*, the phrases should still rise and fall, and the long notes should grow slightly.⁵⁷ The composer says that the sixteenth note figures in mm. 12 and 14 should be fluid and tenuto, as a cello would play them.⁵⁸ The F-natural in m. 12 can be played in sixth position and the G-natural on the downbeat of m. 16 can be played in a raised fourth position to help keep the half steps together in these places.



Figure 2.23 *Sunset*, mm. 10-16

As the phrase continues, mm. 19-20 should be played as an echo effect of mm. 17-18, as indicated by the *piano* dynamic.



Figure 2.24 *Sunset*, mm. 16-20

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

The sound in the next phrase from mm. 21-26 should be very rich and in an Italian singing style (think Pavarotti, says Ferro).⁵⁹ In Mr. Alessi's recording, he puts a slight scoop on the downbeat of m. 23, coming out of the *rallentando* in the previous measure. The composer mentions that the contrasting rhythms in mm. 23, 25, and 26 should be precisely subdivided (example a).⁶⁰ A common tendency in a rhythmic figure like this is for the subdivision of beat 1 to be loosely played like a triplet subdivision found in beat 2 (example b). Even though the entire figure is slurred, a slight articulation to the thirty-second notes would help with the clarity.

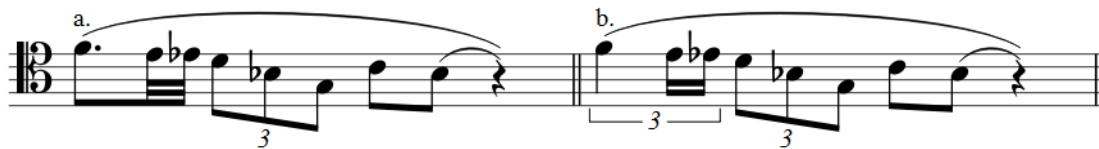


Figure 2.25 *Sunset*, m. 23 [rhythmic figure]

The composer makes special mention of the dynamic shaping in mm. 23-24. After the sudden decrescendo from *forte* to *mezzo piano* in m. 23, the line suddenly crescendos back up to *forte* by the end of m. 24.⁶¹ The D-flat in m. 24 is especially important; the composer calls for a change in color and shaping on that note, allowing the sound to blossom and grow into the remainder of the crescendo.⁶² M. 26 begins at *mezzo piano* and should be treated again like an echo effect of the previous measure. Since the piano only has a held fermata chord, the trombone can take a little bit of extra time in this

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

measure. As the decrescendo finally rests on the last note of m. 26, allow the fermata to linger and fade with the piano chord before going on.⁶³

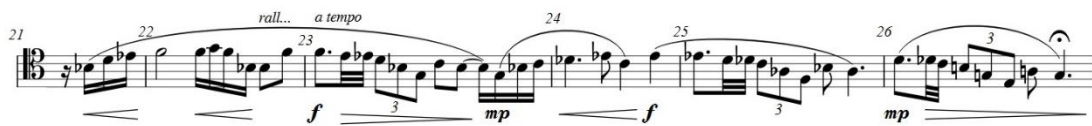


Figure 2.26 *Sunset*, mm. 21-26

In the next section, the trombone enters at *forte* in the pick-ups to m. 31. In m. 32, beat 3 should be treated as a *subito mezzo piano* with the decrescendo to *piano* in the following measure. In m. 34 the quarter notes in the trombone should crescendo equally with those in the accompaniment. Mm. 35-40 borrow the rhythmic motive found in the piano at the beginning of this movement. The trombone sound should be very rich and lush in the melody, and the tempo should remain straight underneath the movement in the piano. The composer calls for more tenuto-like stress on each dotted quarter note on beat 3 every time it occurs (mm. 35, 37, 39, and 41).⁶⁴ In m. 42 with the *rallentando*, the trombone can take some time on beat 4, but be sure to cue the pianist on the downbeat of the next measure. Also, be sure to sneak a good breath before this measure so the F-sharp in the trombone can be sustained into the fermata. In the interviews with the composer, he offers a friendly reminder at this point for the trombonist to empty the water key because there will not be another good time to do so for the rest of this movement.⁶⁵

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

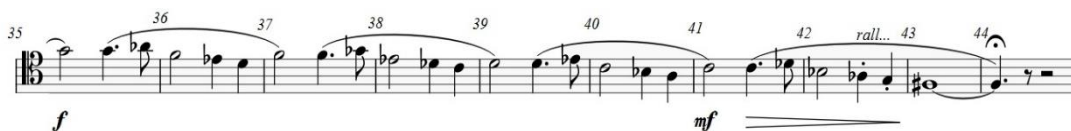


Figure 2.27 *Sunset*, mm. 35-44

The trombone begins a recapitulation of the original melody starting in m. 45. The composer mentions that while the entrance of the initial statement in m. 10 was *rubato* and stretched, in contrast the notes leading into m. 46 should start and remain in tempo.⁶⁶



Figure 2.28 *Sunset*, mm. 45-47

The *più vivo* in m. 51 should significantly move forward in tempo, and then pull back in the *rallentando* in the following measure.⁶⁷ Mm. 53-56 are marked in both parts *a tempo swing*, and here the composer draws a comparison to a blues ballad. The eighth notes in the trombone melody should definitely be laid back in a “bluesy” swing style underneath the mostly static accompaniment.⁶⁸ Mm. 55-56 should again be a dynamic echo of the previous two measures. In m. 56 between beats 2 and 3, the composer says that the trombonist can wait and take a longer, out-of-time breath here. This will set up a brief pause before continuing in m. 57 with even eighth notes.⁶⁹ Be sure to subdivide accurately and line up the sixteenth notes with the left hand of the piano.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.



Figure 2.29 *Sunset*, mm. 51-57

As the high G is sustained over mm. 63-66, the composer says to slightly adjust the tuning so the note will fit into the harmonies of each measure. He also suggests a slight bit of lip vibrato to help keep the intonation in check.⁷⁰ At the downbeat of m. 67, the start of the E is the indicator that the Sun closes, according to the description by the composer.⁷¹ There can be a defined articulation on this downbeat, despite the slur marking over the notes. In the last three measures, be sure to adjust the intonation of the E slightly downward as the major third of the C Major harmony.⁷²

Figure 2.30 *Sunset*, mm. 62-69

2.4 MIDNIGHT

The harmonies throughout sections of this movement revolve around the related tonal centers G-flat major and D-flat major. For the trombone, specific alternate slide positions in these keys can facilitate smoother slide direction changes and half-step proximity. These include middle F in sixth, middle B-flat in a raised fifth, the occasional

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

D-natural in flat fourth (usually as a half step passing tone to E-flat), and high F in a raised fourth.⁷³



Figure 2.31 *Midnight*, alternate trombone positions

When the trombone enters, the dynamic is marked *piano*, but do not attempt to play too soft here because there are some softer dynamics coming later in the piece. Allow the long notes to carry the crescendo through the first couple measures. The F in m. 14 can be played in a raised fourth position to help set up a bluesy, portamento⁷⁴ effect from the F up to the C.⁷⁵



Figure 2.32 *Midnight*, mm. 11-16

In m. 18 in the Yamamoto album, there is a discrepancy between the recording and the printed score. The note in question is on the upbeat of beat 3 where Yamamoto plays an A-flat. The composer has pointed this out and reminds us that the correct pitch is the printed A-natural, matching the corresponding passing tone in the right hand of the piano.⁷⁶

⁷³ Buddy Baker, *Tenor Trombone Method* (Miami: Warner Bros. Publications, 1983), 26, 42.

⁷⁴ *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Music* (Oxford University Press, 2004), s.v. “portamento.”

⁷⁵ Nicola Ferro, interview by author, Campagna (Province of Salerno), Italy, July 12-14, 2015.

⁷⁶ The printed half note A-flat in the left hand of the piano is also correct.



Figure 2.33 *Midnight*, mm. 18-19

The interplay between the two performers continues into mm. 20-23 with the trombone starting at *pianississimo* (*ppp*), then with a crescendo up to *mezzo forte*. In m. 23 the F on the downbeat is the major third of the D-flat harmony, and in m. 24 the B-flat on the downbeat is the major third of the G-flat harmony, so be sure to adjust the intonation accordingly (-14 cents). Also in mm. 24 and 26, the composer mentions to play the rhythms with accurate subdivision, making a distinct difference between the double dotted quarter-sixteenth note and the dotted quarter-eighth note rhythms in those measures.

Figure 2.34 *Midnight*, mm. 23-26

The change of character and sound in the next phrase also brings a change in dynamic with the first *forte* of the movement, as well as a transition to the upper range of the trombone. Between mm. 27-28 the A-flat is held over to its enharmonic counterpart of G-sharp. The composer mentions to slightly adjust the intonation between these two

notes so they fit in to their respective piano harmonies.⁷⁷ Between the B-flat in m. 29 and the following C-flat in m. 30, the composer suggests playing a slight portamento between these notes.⁷⁸ To achieve this, the B-flat would have to be played in third position. After the B-flat in m. 29 the trombonist is left with a choice to continue playing the additional B-flats either in first or third position. Based on this decision, these notes can either be played with the use natural slurs exclusively or a mix of natural slurs and legato tongue, Ferro's suggestions of portamento are consistent with the standard performance practice as demonstrated by the trombone solo found in Ravel's *Bolero* as well as much of the music of jazz trombonist Tommy Dorsey.⁷⁹ Furthermore, the term portamento (*portamento della voce* or "carrying of the voice") finds its roots in Italian vocal music as a technique often duplicated on a wind instrument such as the trombone.

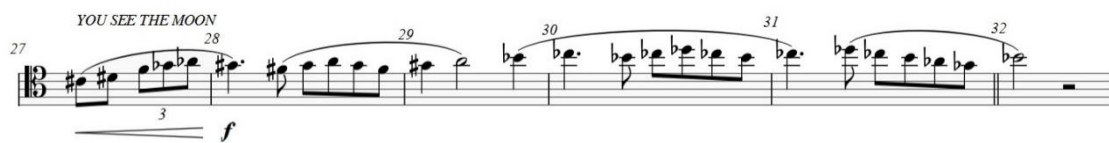


Figure 2.35 *Midnight*, mm. 27-32

From mm. 35-46 the trombone is instructed to use cup mute. The composer says he prefers the sound quality and style of the classic red and white Humes & Berg Stonelined cup mute.⁸⁰ This style of mute is traditionally used in jazz settings, and here the composer is looking for a lighter, softer, and more subtle sound rather than a heavier and more metallic sound from a symphonic cup mute such as a Tom Crown or Denis

⁷⁷ The published piano part is printed with two consecutive A-flats in this place, but either way it is intended to be the same enharmonic pitch.

⁷⁸ Nicola Ferro, interview by author, Campagna (Province of Salerno), Italy, July 12-14, 2015.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

Wick. In this section the composer suggests playing with slightly more volume to compensate for being in the mute.⁸¹

Throughout most of this section the piano is only playing sustained chords, so the trombonist can take some slight liberties with tempo and phrasing. In the two quarter note pick-ups in m. 37 leading to m. 38, these notes should grow into the downbeat, but then pull back slightly and sneak into the downbeat, almost like a *subito piano*.⁸² In m. 39 the trombonist should wait for the ascending line in the piano to reach its fermata before breathing and rearticulating on the beat four F-sharp. This all has to be done before the fermata in the piano decays too quickly. The same quasi-*subito piano* effect can be used on the downbeat of m. 40.



Figure 2.36 *Midnight*, mm. 35-39

The phrase from mm. 40-46 can be treated as an echo of mm. 35-39 (from *mezzo piano* to *piano*). The triplet eighth notes in m. 44 can be treated with a *rallentando* and played slightly behind the tempo. In m. 46 the quarter note fermata notes in the trombone should be tongued slightly to create some clarity and separation.



Figure 2.37 *Midnight*, mm. 39-46

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

The next phrase begins with the pick-ups to m. 47 in the piano and then is imitated by the trombone. Both parts should perform this phrase in a more tenuto and lyrical style and not allow the notes to become too pointed, especially the sixteenth notes. The composer says “When in doubt, always play lyrical.”⁸³ In mm. 51-52 the composer suggests for the trombonist to imitate a master singer such as Pavarotti in emphasizing the lower notes (the last two eighth notes of each measure). The fermata notes in m. 53 should be treated the same way as the two quarter notes in m. 46, and the following downbeat in m. 54 should be articulated somewhat. The *sforzando* in m. 57 should be very pronounced and dramatic, followed by a broad crescendo.

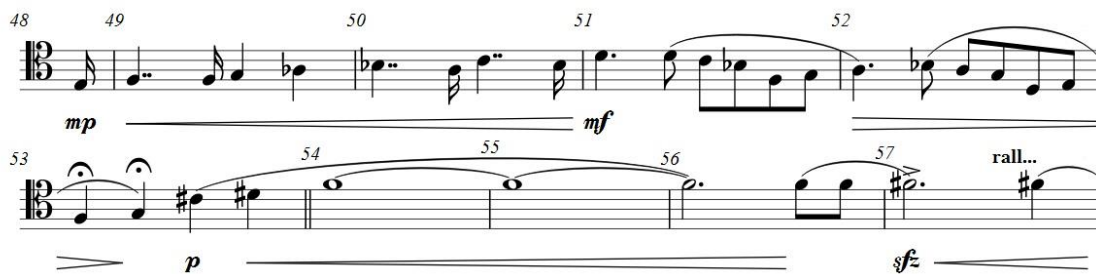


Figure 2.38 *Midnight*, mm. 48-57

The next phrase is where the music reaches its climax, and it should be more broad and articulate, especially in the downbeats, according to the composer.⁸⁴ As the piano accompaniment becomes much more animated and active, the trombone melody should continue to sing out. Given its placement at the end of the movement (or possibly the suite), the high tessitura of this phrase will present significant endurance challenges.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.



Figure 2.39 *Midnight*, mm. 57-66

The final section of this movement returns to cup mute and is played all the way to the end. Although the dynamic is printed *pianissimo*, the composer again suggests not to play too soft in the mute, for fear that the sound would be lost or the intonation would suffer.⁸⁵ The trombonist should still think at least *mezzo piano* in these last few measures to counteract the resistance and volume of the mute. The composer makes the comparison to Bozza's *Ballade* for trombone in its soft, lyrical opening.⁸⁶ This phrase is also marked *rubato*, and the trombonist should definitely take that into consideration. In m. 74 the F-natural can be played in a raised fourth position, just as it was in m. 14.⁸⁷ Upon the final *rallentando* of the movement, the eighth notes can be played very deliberately and drawn out. The final A-flat should be clearly articulated, as many of the other long, sustained notes have been in this movement. The composer says there should be no vibrato on the last note; the tone should be straight while the piano accompaniment carries the moving line in the final measures.⁸⁸ The trombonist should be sure to take an adequate breath before the *rallentando* so the long A-flat can be held out full value, with a slight diminuendo to match the natural sound of the fading piano.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Eugène Bozza, *Ballade, pour trombone tenor et orchestre* (Paris: Alphonse Leduc, 1944).

⁸⁷ See previous example in Figure 2.32.

⁸⁸ Nicola Ferro, interview by author, Campagna (Province of Salerno), Italy, July 12-14, 2015.



Figure 2.40 *Midnight*, mm. 70-76

CHAPTER 3

ANNOTATED GUIDE TO PUBLISHED WORKS

As of 2016 there are over thirty-five of Nicola Ferro's works published by Alessi Publications (New York, USA). Many of his works are for solo trombone or trombone ensemble, and because he is a very skilled trombonist, he is able to write idiomatically for the instrument. He has also written music for other brass instruments and ensembles, including trumpet ensemble, horn ensemble, brass quintet, and more. He has only recently begun writing works for large ensembles, however they have been published by different publishing companies in Italy.

Many of the themes in Ferro's music deal with things in nature, predominantly the Sun, the Moon, and Earth. As stated in Chapter 1, Ferro's inspiration is often times the Sun and its importance to life on Earth. Each piece certainly tells a unique story, and the music comes from Ferro's strong feelings and emotions. His works cover a wide variety of musical styles, creating a diverse portfolio of published compositions.

Many of the tracks from the 2013 album *Caliente* have also been published. These works provide trombonists opportunities to add salsa music to their performance repertoire. These pieces can add great variety to any solo recital program as well as world music showcases or collaborations with Latin rhythm sections.

The annotations will include the following information: title, publisher information and date of publication, instrumentation, available recordings, and a brief description of each piece.

Abreu, Zequinha de, and Nicola Ferro. *Tico tico*. Upper Nyack, NY: Alessi Publications, 2005.

Solo trombone and Latin rhythm section (accordion, guitar, double bass).

Caliente, Joseph Alessi and Nicola Ferro, Summit Records, CD, 2013.

Ferro takes this fun and popular tune and arranges it very well for trombone. A great piece to end a recital with, this tune uses the full range of the trombone and is arranged in key centers that lay very well on the instrument.

Ferro, Nicola. *1st Suite from Earth Games 2012*. Upper Nyack, NY: Alessi Publications, 2005.

Trumpet, two tenor trombones, bass trombone, tuba, drums.

Earth Games 2012, Nicola Ferro, Summit Records, CD, 2010.

From the publisher: “This *1st Suite* was composed for a recording project of original music by Nicola Ferro for Summit Records called *Earth Games 2012* that was performed by world-famous soloists such as Joseph Alessi, Andrea Tofanelli and Justin Clark. The project was inspired by the prophecy of the Mayan calendar. *1st Suite* articulates various musical genres of funk, pop, dance and classical.”

———. *Air of Manhattan*. Upper Nyack, NY: Alessi Publications, 2007.

Brass quintet (two trumpets, horn, trombone, tuba).

From the composer: “I wrote this piece for the New York Philharmonic Brass Quintet for their tour to Japan in 2007. I tried to draw a picture of music in Manhattan from early morning, the sunrise, at midday and late in the evening when the city returned to calm.”

———. *Airka*. Upper Nyack, NY: Alessi Publications, 2015.

Solo trombone and harp (optional solo cello, bassoon, or horn).

Nicola Ferro, “Airka Original Composition by Nicola Ferro,” SoundCloud audio file, 4:12. Posted May 2015.

From the composer: “A gentle, lyrical piece for trombone and harp accompaniment. The melody can also be performed by cello, bassoon or horn for a different effect.” A simple melody that can be played with plenty of emotion, this short piece can be a great addition to any recital program.

———. *Black White*. Upper Nyack, NY: Alessi Publications, 2004.

Solo flugelhorn and piano.

From the composer: “Combination of beautiful melodies and fire.” Features many fast rhythmic passages and calls for plenty of double tonguing. There are flashes of jazz style and harmony positioned throughout this work as well. Written for the Italian trumpeter Andrea Giuffredi.

- . *Buonasera Trombone*. Upper Nyack, NY: Alessi Publications, 2008.
Twelve trombones.
SliderAsia Music Festival, “Buonasera Trombone by Nicola Ferro – SliderAsia 2011,” YouTube video, 5:58. Posted February 13, 2014.
From the composer: “*Buonasera Trombone* is a piece written especially for the Alessi Seminar with the first performance in Fossano in 2008. It is a particular piece to give a sort of salute to the audience. In Italian, the title means ‘good evening trombone.’ It is a very attractive piece for the audience and a great opener.”
- . *Carasaidos*. Upper Nyack, NY: Alessi Publications, 2011.
Two trombones, Latin rhythm section (piano, cowbell, timbales, congas, bass drums).
Caliente, Joseph Alessi and Nicola Ferro, Summit Records, CD, 2013.
From the publisher: “A great trombone duet with full salsa accompaniment and voice! Truly a treasure to play.” This salsa tune is in a moderate feel with a prominent 3/2 clave beat and tightly harmonized trombone lines.
- . *Chonda Music*. Upper Nyack, NY: Alessi Publications, 2005.
Low brass quartet (three tenor trombones and bass trombone or tuba), drums.
The publisher calls this “a fun piece” with a touch of Latin American ballad influence to it. A versatile piece for trombone quartet or low brass quartet, it can fit well into any chamber music program. The addition of the drums is a nice touch to give this piece some added rhythmic material.
- . *Con Amigos En Tierra*. Upper Nyack, NY: Alessi Publications, 2011.
Solo trombone and Latin rhythm section (accordion, guitar, bass, drums).
Caliente, Joseph Alessi and Nicola Ferro, Summit Records, CD, 2013.
This easy-feeling bossa nova style tune settles into a nice, relaxing groove for the soloist to freely play over. There is a section in the middle where the trombonist has an opportunity to improvise, if desired.
- . *Contrasto*. Upper Nyack, NY: Alessi Publications, 2004.
Solo trumpet, 8 trumpets, 2 flugelhorn, bass, drums.
L’anacoreta. Andrea Giuffredi, Summit Records, CD, 2005.
From the publisher: “Innovative new work for trumpet ensemble. This is dedicated to the fantastic Italian Trumpeter, Andrea Giuffredi.” At times this piece displays jazz styles, at other times it embodies rock and funk grooves. In the recorded version of this song, it is actually Giuffredi playing each track himself individually and overdubbing them for the recording.

- . *Daybreak*. Upper Nyack, NY: Alessi Publications, 2005.
Solo trombone and piano.
Return to Sorrento, Joseph Alessi. Naxos Records, CD, 2007.
First movement of *Tetralogy of the Sun Suite*. From the publisher: “Mr. Ferro successfully portrays certain periods of the day. He vividly captures dawn (*Daybreak*) and sets the music so that we can picture the sun just starting to come up in the morning. Picture birds chirping, and very little sound. The piece progresses towards the sun gaining strength and height for the *corona* and finally the *alba*.” According to the composer, this is one of his most popular compositions, and is a wonderful addition to any recital program. Dedicated to Joseph Alessi.
- . *Engraved Stone*. Upper Nyack, NY: Alessi Publications, 2015.
Trumpet, trombone, and piano.
From the publisher: “A dramatic, dynamic piece for trumpet, trombone and piano. Strong melodies and intense technical passages make this a great selection for brass players.” Written for Daniele Morandini, trombone and Yigal Meltzer, trumpet (Israel Philharmonic Orchestra).
- . *Enry Blue*. Upper Nyack, NY: Alessi Publications, 2003.
Solo trombone and Latin rhythm section (accordion, guitar, bass, percussion, drums).
Caliente, Joseph Alessi and Nicola Ferro, Summit Records, CD, 2013.
This tune starts with a slow, *rubato* introduction and then takes off into a light bossa nova style. Most of the melody stays in the upper tessitura of the trombone, and contrasts between sustained and rhythmic melodies.
- . *Era Tera*. Upper Nyack, NY: Alessi Publications, 2014.
Eight trombones.
Nicola Ferro, “Bonportibones – ‘Era Tera’ Composer Nicola Ferro Conductor M^o Domenico Zicari.” YouTube video, 3:39. Posted September 18, 2015.
From the publisher: “Dedicated to the city of Matera, Italy, this piece for trombone ensemble is heroic and emotional. An intense work.” The opening of this piece is triumphant and pronounced. After the introduction, the melody flows over top of a soft, yet driving rhythm. Towards the end of the piece, the music becomes more somber and remains reflective all the way to the end.
- . *Fuego Del Sol*. Upper Nyack, NY: Alessi Publications, 2011.
Two trombones and Latin rhythm section (piano, guitar, guiro, bass, drums).
Caliente, Joseph Alessi and Nicola Ferro, Summit Records, CD, 2013.
From the publisher: “A grooving trombone duet with Latin band accompaniment! Wonderfully performed on Joseph Alessi's album, *Caliente*.” In this medium groove Latin tune, the choruses are primarily voiced in octaves between the two trombones, weaving in and out of the solo sections.

- . *HOR-IZO-N*. Upper Nyack, NY: Alessi Publications, 2013.
Horn ensemble and electronic accompaniment.
Nicola Ferro, “HOR-IZO-N Composer Nicola Ferro – Alessi Publications NY,” YouTube video, 5:32. Posted March 29, 2013.
From the publisher: “This work displays the French horn in somewhat of a new light with an electronic accompaniment. The composer states that it works well for solo horn or horn ensemble.” This piece is full of triumphant, flowing horn melodies supported by driving percussion rhythms in the accompaniment. Written for Vladimiro Cainero and premiered at the International Horn Society’s Mid South Workshop, West Texas A&M University, 2013.
- . *HOT WIND*. Upper Nyack, NY: Alessi Publications, 2004.
5 trumpets, 1 flugelhorn, bass, drums.
L’anacoreta. Andrea Giuffredi, Summit Records, CD, 2005.
From the publisher: “This is cool! For 5 trumpets, 1 Flugel, bass, and drums. Written and dedicated for Italian trumpeter Andrea Giuffredi.” This piece is in a prominent jazz/funk groove, and uses many instances of jazz harmony supported by the rhythm of the bass and drums.
- . *Koimbry*. Upper Nyack, NY: Alessi Publications, 2013.
Solo trombone (unaccompanied).
The unaccompanied trombone part in this piece primarily uses large, long blocks of sound that jump across different registers. Each register seems to have a slightly different personality to it. A great vehicle to show off range, dynamics, and style.
- . *La Luna Sobre El Mar*. Upper Nyack, NY: Alessi Publications, 2011.
Solo trombone and Latin rhythm section (piano, guitar, bass, drums).
Caliente, Joseph Alessi and Nicola Ferro, Summit Records, CD, 2013.
In this short Latin ballad, the trombone melody is written with a beautiful, lyrical quality. It allows the trombone to show its ability to play smoothly and effortlessly between the middle and upper registers.
- . *La Mia Terra*. Upper Nyack, NY: Alessi Publications, 2013.
Solo trombone and eight part trombone ensemble.
Nicola Ferro, “Bonportibones ‘La Mia Terra’ Composer Nicola Ferro Conductor & Soloist M° Domenico Zicari.” YouTube video, 4:44. Posted September 19, 2015.
From the publisher: “Features a dramatic melody and lush harmonies.” Lyrical throughout, this short piece is full of many beautiful moments and allows the soloist to display musicality and range.

- . *Midday*. Upper Nyack, NY: Alessi Publications, 2005.
Solo trombone and piano.
Second movement of *Tetralogy of the Sun Suite*. In *Midday* the music suggests a portrayal of the hustle and bustle of big city life. The introduction to this movement begins with a slow, *rubato* melody in the trombone, then transitions into a fast section. Much of this movement contains rapidly articulated passages while weaving in and out of an irregular 7/4 meter, and it explores the upper reaches of the trombone range. The music is exciting and intense all the way to the big finish at the end. Dedicated to Joseph Alessi.
- . *Midnight*. Upper Nyack, NY: Alessi Publications, 2005.
Solo trombone and piano.
Tomasi: Trombone Concerto, Ko-ichiro Yamamoto, Octavia Records, CD, 2007.
Fourth movement of *Tetralogy of the Sun Suite*. In *Midnight* the piano begins with a very slow, somber opening. The trombone melody enters in a ballad style with a dark, lyrical melody. There are several indications in this movement that make references to the Moon hiding behind and coming out from behind the night clouds. The music continues to build in intensity and emotion, leading to a dramatic climax. Dedicated to Joseph Alessi.
- . *Niry Fide Xemy*. Upper Nyack, NY: Alessi Publications, 2013.
Solo trombone and eight part trombone ensemble.
I. Niry (Music), II. Fide (Faith), and III. Xemy (Land of Origin)
From the publisher: “An exciting, massive new work for trombone solo and trombone choir! This three movement piece is replete with challenging time signatures, rhythmic complexity and engaging interplay between parts. A perfect piece for the ambitious trombone choir!” Composed for Massimo La Rosa and The Bone Society (Europe).
- . *Notes of Love*. Upper Nyack, NY: Alessi Publications, 2009.
Solo trombone and piano. Dedicated to Joseph Alessi.
Nicola Ferro, “Notes of Love Composer Nicola Ferro Soloist Joseph Alessi,” YouTube video, 6:18. Posted October 7, 2009.
A beautiful, lyrical ballad written for Joseph Alessi. The melodies are sonorous and full, and the piano accompaniment supports the trombone very well. The beginning is calm and serene, and the music builds to a passionate climax, and ends with a broad final statement. A wonderful addition to any recital program. Premiered at the 2009 Slide Factory European Trombone Festival (The Netherlands).

- . *Parandero: for trumpet, trombone, and symphonic band*. Torino: Scomegna Edizioni Musicali, 2015.
Solo tpt, solo tbn,
Picc, 2 fl, 2 ob, 2bsn, cbsn, Ebcl, 3 Bbcl, bcl, ssax, asax, tsax, bsax
4 tpt, 4 hn, 4 trbn, 2 euph, 2 tuba, cb
timp, sd, tgl, cym, bd, sus. cym, tam-t, tom-toms, guiro, drum set, claves, tamb,
maracas, shaker, congas, timbales, mambo bell, hp, pno
Composed and dedicated to Joseph Alessi (trombone) and Allen Vizzutti (trumpet).
- . *Red Spain*. Upper Nyack, NY: Alessi Publications, 2007.
Two trombones and electronic accompaniment.
Trombone 998, “Christian Lindberg and Joe Alessi Together!! Nicola Ferro’s Spain,” YouTube video, 1:00. Posted July 10, 2009.
This is a unique and interesting piece for two trombones and electronic accompaniment. The opening melody contains a brief quote from Ferdinand David’s *Concertino*, Op. 4. The two parts continue to build suspense, then they take off in a blaze of sixteenth-note passages. Both parts use the full range of the instrument and alternate taking the lead voice. Composed for Joseph Alessi and Christian Lindberg.
- . *Remember the Life*. Upper Nyack, NY: Alessi Publications, 2009.
Eight trombones.
This work was commissioned by Jonathan Whitaker, Professor of Trombone at the University of Alabama. It was premiered at the 2007 Alessi Seminar in Albuquerque, New Mexico.
- . *Sam-ba'one*. Upper Nyack, NY: Alessi Publications, 2011.
Two trombones and Latin rhythm section (also arranged for eight trombones) *Caliente*, Joseph Alessi and Nicola Ferro, Summit Records, CD, 2013.
In this samba-style piece, the trombones play a driving, rhythmic melody supported by the energy of the rhythm section. *Sam-ba'one* was originally recorded with two tenor trombone and bass trombone, but here has been arranged for eight-part trombone ensemble – a great addition to any trombone choir program.
- . *Sol Luna Sol*. Upper Nyack, NY: Alessi Publications, 2011.
8 trombones and Latin rhythm section.
Caliente, Joseph Alessi and Nicola Ferro, Summit Records, CD, 2013.
In this fast, energetic Latin tune, the trombones begin with a brief acapella-style intro, then take off into a grooving samba style. There are plenty of opportunities for players to take a chorus or two of an improvised solo. *Sol Luna Sol* was originally recorded with two tenor trombone and bass trombone, but here has been arranged for eight-part trombone ensemble – a great addition to any trombone choir program.

- . *Solar Arena*. Upper Nyack, NY: Alessi Publications, 2011.
Solo trombone and Latin rhythm section (guitar, bass, percussion, drums).
Caliente, Joseph Alessi and Nicola Ferro, Summit Records, CD, 2013.
This slow, lyrical Latin ballad features a flowing trombone melody complete with long, *rubato* lines and a smooth approach to the upper register. The end of this tune transitions into more of a rhythmic Latin groove for the soloist and the rhythm section to play more freely.
- . *Solarius*. Upper Nyack, NY: Alessi Publications, 2006.
Trumpet, trombone, and Latin rhythm section (accordion, guitar, bass, drums).
From the composer: “Solarius is a special piece written for Joseph Alessi and Andrea Giuffredi and was premiered in Italy in 2006. I wanted to create this piece to represent the energy and music in this song with a funky groove.”
- . *Song For My Children*. Upper Nyack, NY: Alessi Publications, 2015.
Eight trombones.
Nicola Ferro, “HEM-Geneve Switzerland – Masterclass di trombone del M° Nicola Ferro,” YouTube video, 7:53. Posted March 19, 2015.
From the publisher: “A wonderful song Nicola Ferro intended for to be played for children. The trombone ensemble is gentle and beautiful in this peaceful work.” Lots of beautiful melodies and harmonies in a broad, lyrical style, yet always full of energy and passion. A great addition to any trombone choir program.
- . *Sunset*. Upper Nyack, NY: Alessi Publications, 2005.
Solo trombone and piano. Dedicated to Joseph Alessi.
Third movement of *Tetralogy of the Sun Suite*.
Return to Sorrento, Joseph Alessi. Naxos Records, CD, 2007.
- . *The Bean*. Upper Nyack, NY: Alessi Publications, 2014.
Brass quintet (two trumpets, horn, trombone, tuba).
From the composer: “A powerful new piece for brass quintet, with engaging rhythms and intense dynamics. A beautiful and tender lyrical section wraps up this outstanding work!” Written for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra Brass Quintet. A musical tribute to the bean-shaped Cloud Gate sculpture in Chicago’s Millennium Park.

- . *The Cat Of Highmount*. Upper Nyack, NY: Alessi Publications, 2006.
3 trombones, euphonium, tuba, percussion.
From the composer: “This original composition has been my inspiration during the time I was at Joe's home on Highmount Ave in Nyack, NY. I met his beautiful cat, I noticed all the details, when he walked, when he jumped and when he purred. Every part of the piece is the representation of the cat. At the end, I included a quotation from the cat of the fable Music Peter and the Wolf by Sergei Prokofiev.” Written for low brass ensemble and percussion, it contains rock-inspired rhythms and harmonies. A great composition for an uncommon chamber music instrumentation.
- . *The Father Sun: for wind ensemble*. Torino: Scomegna Edizioni Musicali, 2012.
Picc, 2 fl, 2 ob, EH, Ebcl, 3 Bbcl, bcl, cbcl, 2bsn, cbsn, 2 asax, tsax, bsax
4 hn, 3 Tpt (Bb), 3 trbn, euph, 2 tuba, cb
cel, pno, timp, t. bells, glock, xyl, mar, sd, tom-toms, congas, shaker, tgl, whip,
cym, bd, sus. cym, tam-t.
Nicola Ferro, “The Father Sun by Nicola Ferro Alabama Wind Ensemble USA,”
YouTube video, 15:18. Posted May 12, 2012.
From the publisher: “The work was composed in memory of Frank Ozzello, a World War II veteran and father of Kenneth Ozzello, the current Director of the (University of) Alabama Wind Ensemble. Nicola Ferro imagined this man who lived tragic and intense moments during the Second World War. The composition begins with a solo trumpet that represents a sort of ode to the fatherland. It then develops into a solemn and majestic orchestral work, which portrays the importance of the soldiers’ bond to their family and their will to sacrifice as much as their lives to honor their country.” The piece was premiered during the ensemble’s concert tour to Italy in 2012.
- . *Viajando Al Sur*. Upper Nyack, NY: Alessi Publications, 2011.
Instrumentation: two trombones and Latin rhythm section (marimba, guitar, congas, bass, drums).
Caliente, Joseph Alessi and Nicola Ferro, Summit Records, CD, 2013.
This Latin tune has a moderate tempo and a nice, easy groove. The first part of this tune only uses one trombone, while the second enters later on in harmony. Stylistically the trombone parts are lighter, but still rhythmic and flowing.
- . *Visytolus*. Upper Nyack, NY: Alessi Publications, 2013.
Solo trombone (unaccompanied).
The publisher calls this “an intense work.” The piece is full of challenges including the wide use of high and low range, fast articulations, and rapid changes in dynamics and rhythmic complexity.

———. *Wind's Dance*. Upper Nyack, NY: Alessi Publications, 2009.

Solo trombone and eight part trombone ensemble.

Nicola Ferro, "Wind's Dance Composer Nicola Ferro Soloist Joseph Alessi & New Trombone Collective," YouTube video (excerpts), 2:54. Posted November 25, 2009.

Written for Joseph Alessi and the Trombone Collective (The Netherlands).

An exciting and challenging work full of difficult rhythmic passages. Every player from top to bottom is pushed to the limits with range and articulations, and the solo part in particular is quite flashy and requires an incredible high range.

REFERENCES

- Alessi, Joseph. "Alessi Publications Website." www.alessipublications.com (accessed December 13, 2012).
- . "Slide Area." www.slidearea.com (accessed April 16, 2013).
- Baker, Buddy. *Tenor Trombone Method*. Miami, FL: Warner Bros. Publications, 1983.
- Boals, Gregory, ed. *Broadway Repertoire for Soprano*. New York: Chappell & Co, 1979.
- Burkholder, J. Peter, Donald Jay Grout, and Claude V. Palisca. *A History of Western Music*, 7th ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006.
- Contemporary Composers Index Online, cci.musicaneo.com
- Ferro, Nicola. "Caliente; Soloist Joseph Alessi, Composer Nicola Ferro." YouTube video. www.youtube.com/watch?v=GpVsJxoAMZQ (accessed August 13, 2013).
- . *Daybreak: for trombone and piano*. Upper Nyack, NY: Alessi Publications, 2005.
- . *Exercises with Mouthpiece on Italian Melody*. Salerno: Edizioni Setticlavio, n.d.
- . *Midday: for trombone and piano*. Upper Nyack, NY: Alessi Publications, 2005.
- . *Midnight: for trombone and piano*. Upper Nyack, NY: Alessi Publications, 2005.
- . "Nicola Ferro Official Website." www.nicolaferro.it (accessed April 16, 2013).
- . *Sunset: for trombone and piano*. Upper Nyack, NY: Alessi Publications, 2005.
- Kennedy, Michael. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Music*, 4th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Kernfeld, Barry Dean. *New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, 2nd ed. New York: Oxford, 2002.
- Scomegna Edizioni Musicali. "Scomegna Edizioni Musicali Website." www.scomegna.com/en/ (accessed January 28, 2016).

APPENDIX A – BIOGRAPHY

Ferro, Nicola (Italian trombonist and composer, b. 1974; Salerno, Italy) received his musical training from Conservatorio “G. Martucci” in Salerno and Conservatorio di Musica “San Pietro a Majella” in Naples. He has been most influenced by Joseph Alessi,⁸⁹ Andrea Bandini,⁹⁰ and Antonello Mazzucco⁹¹ in trombone and Roberto Altieri⁹² and Bruno Tommaso⁹³ in composition. As a composer he is skilled in many genres including classical, jazz, salsa and electronic. He draws inspiration from a number of sources, ranging from Italian operatic traditions (most notably Puccini) to notable figures of twentieth-century music (including Wagner, Stravinsky, Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff, Bernstein), and even popular American music, especially Earth, Wind & Fire.

Ferro has performed as a soloist and in orchestras throughout Europe and the United States. He has held teaching positions at conservatories in Salerno, Matera, Cosenza, and Vibo Valentia. He is a Composer and Arranger for Alessi Publications (New York, USA) and a Producer for Naxos Records (Arizona, USA). Ferro has composed works for solo trombone, trombone ensembles, brass ensembles, and wind ensemble, and he is also the author of a method book titled *Exercises with Mouthpiece on Italian Melody* published by Edizioni Setticlavio (Salerno, Italy).

⁸⁹ Joseph Alessi, www.slidearea.com.

⁹⁰ Andrea Bandini, www.hesge.ch/hem/en/directory/andrea-bandini.

⁹¹ Antonello Mazzucco, www.imbaravalle.it/baravalle/docenti?d+00046041.

⁹² *Contemporary Composers Index Online*, s.v. “Altieri, Roberto,” http://cci.musicaneo.com/228_roberto_altieri.html (accessed April 10, 2014).

⁹³ *The New Grove Dictionary of Jazz*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Tommaso, Bruno.”

APPENDIX B – DISCOGRAPHY

Alessi, Joseph. *Return to Sorrento*. Naxos Records, 2007. CD.

Alessi, Joseph and Nicola Ferro. *Caliente*. Summit Records, 2013. CD.

Ferro, Nicola. *Create*. Summit Records, 2007. CD.

———. *Down Around Town*. Italian Way Music, 2011. CD.

———. *Earth Games 2012*. Summit Records, 2010. CD.

———. *Elektrika Jazz Project*. Italian Way Music, 2010. CD.

———. *I Signori Chonda*. Nicola Ferro, 2003. CD.

———. *People in the Middle*. Italian Way Music, 2011. CD.

Giuffredi, Andrea. *L'anacoreta*. Summit Records, 2005. CD.

New Trombone Collective. *21 Trombones in the 21st Century*. New Trombone Collective, 2010. CD.

Yamamoto, Ko-ichiro. *Tomasi: Trombone Concerto*. Octavia Records, 2007. CD.

APPENDIX C – INTERVIEW NOTES

Nicola Ferro, interview by author, Campagna (Province of Salerno) Italy, July 12-14, 2015.

Daybreak

- Dark at beginning; Sun coming up over mountains
- M. 15: F becomes scale degree 7
- The melody is heavy, but do not get tired
- More air from mm. 50-51, do not think timid
- Rubato is okay
- From m. 41 to end, each phrase should be different

Midday

- He also mentions his composition *Air of Manhattan* for brass quintet, which depicts a lot of the same characteristics and moods
- Think jazz standard *Summertime*: hot, slow, lazy, not strict tempo
- Mm. 17-18: quote from *Laura* (his wife)
- At Presto, play more of the figures in 6th position (more compression vs. sound)
- Treat Presto like a melody
- Accents should match left hand of piano (a la Bernstein)
 - *To rehearse, only play the solo with left hand of piano*
- Mm. 31-32: allow the last note to be tenuto (change of harmony, character)
- Mm. 34-35: bring out accent on eighth notes, lead in to next measure
- Allow for strong metal sound of straight mute
- Mm. 46-48: memorize to avoid panic, loss of focus
 - *Pay attention to the accents on offbeats*
- M. 57: strong accent on downbeat after gliss; ghost the other notes
- M. 68: should feel in 6/8, also in piano
- Mm. 81, 83: last note short, tongue stop
- M. 86: low notes not long; shorter
- M. 87: quasi glissando (looser approach)
- Mm. 98-101: more tenuto, with drop in dynamic and crescendo, like bass trombone
- Think Stravinsky (Firebird) in 115-116
- M. 119: think Simpson's (harmonically; whole-tone)

Sunset

- M. 16: G in 4th position, continue slide direction
Sixteenth notes fluid, like cello
- Mm. 23 and 25: precise rhythm (dotted eighth with two thirty-seconds)
- M. 24: change the color of the D-flat: grow
- Pick-up to m. 31: forte, more emphasis on beat 3; also mm. 35, 37, 39, 41
- Pick-up to m. 32: more like subito piano
- M. 44: the composer notes to empty water key at this space; this phrase should be more strictly in tempo (in contrast to the first statement of this theme)
- M. 53: “blue,” jazz (with slide vibrato, etc.)
[5th position E in m. 56]
Should swing, but not with piano
“the mood is swing” (ballad)
- Pick-up to m. 57: wait longer, out of time in breath
- M. 63: change the tuning of the G with the harmony (lip vibrato)
- M. 67: “the sun closes” on E (major 3rd of C chord) with tongue

Midnight

- “Sun” is most important; beautiful sun; speak about the sun; Naples is the country of the Sun (“O Sole Mio”)
- Midnight: think Puccini (vocal); Tosca (2005)
Sensation of Puccini in piano chord (*E lucevan le stele*)
- All blue, dark, mellow (somber)
- Raised 4th position in mm. 14 and 74
- M. 16: F is major 3rd of chord (D-flat)
- Mistake in Yamamoto recording, m. 18 (A-natural)
- M. 24: B-flat is major 3rd of chord (G-flat)
- The A-flat to G-sharp between mm. 27-28: adjust pitch to fit the harmony
- M. 29: play B-flat in 3rd (quasi-portamento to C-flat)
- M. 30: natural slurs? “use Bolero and Tommy Dorsey as models”
- Pick-up to m. 36: more ambient, but slightly more volume
- Pick-up to m. 38: grow into downbeat, but then pull back slightly and sneak/blossom in
- M. 44: *rallentando* on triplet, not in time
- M. 46: tongue on the fermata notes (also in m. 53)
- M. 48: more tenuto, lyrical; “when indecisive, think lyrical,” especially on sixteenth notes
- M. 51-52: Pavarotti would emphasize the lower notes (push and pull, natural portamento)
- M. 54: articulate the downbeat

- Mm. 58-66: more articulate and pronounced
- M. 57: more on *sfz*
- Articulate downbeats of mm. 59, 61, 62, 64, 65
- Ferro suggests high D in 2nd position with valve = more pressure, compression
- M. 70: with cup mute, do not play too soft (think mp)
Think about Bozza *Ballade* opening
- No vibrato on last note

Joseph Alessi, interview by author, October 21, 2015.

- *Tetralogy of the Sun* Suite portrays the different times of day perfectly; he wrote the exact kind of music; picturesque
- Nicola Ferro's writing is very emotional, he is an emotional guy; free-spirited
- Idiomatic writing, lays very well on trombone
- *These pieces require incredible dynamic control; portraying slow sun up, etc.
- It's popular music; simple writing, great music; (he) loves performing his music
- Metronome piece is bizarre (referring to Ferro's composition *What Time Is It?*)
- He is not recognized enough in Italy, he deserves more recognition
- Many of his pieces are lengthy, taxing
- The ITA article is a great idea

APPENDIX D – PERMISSION TO REPRINT

From: Joseph Alessi
Sent: Thursday, January 28, 2016 7:55 AM
To: Brad Keesler
Subject: Re: Alessi Publications

Ok. Thanks for asking. Good to go. You have permission

Sent from my iPad

On Jan 27, 2016, at 2:41 PM, Brad Keesler <brad.keesler@gmail.com> wrote:

I have a long list of 60+ short excerpts from the four movements of the Suite (Daybreak, Midday, Sunset, and Midnight). I actually copied the examples into music notation software so I could get a more precise format for each example (including clef at the start of each line, measure numbers on each measure, and some alternate slide position choices). I can give you the exact list of examples that I have used, but would it be okay to just say I used examples from those four pieces? I am not using examples from any other published works.

Brad Keesler
[864-221-3013](tel:864-221-3013)
brad.keesler@gmail.com
www.bradkeesler.com

Sent from my iPhone

On Jan 27, 2016, at 12:25 PM, Joseph Alessi <janyp@verizon.net> wrote:

Please forward the examples to me so I know what you are using. Thanks

Sent from my iPhone

On Jan 27, 2016, at 11:52 AM, <brad.keesler@gmail.com> <brad.keesler@gmail.com> wrote:

Hello Mr. Alessi,

I am nearing the completion of my research document on Nicola Ferro. My professors at school have said that I need a letter from the publisher to give me permission to use musical examples in my document. Could you please help me with this? Thank you.

Brad Keesler