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The Brass Choir - Boston Symphony Orchestra

FEATURED:

THE BOSTON SYMPHONY LOW BRASS SECTION

1887 — 1986

by Douglas Yeo



The Brass Choir - Boston Symphony Orchestra

COVER PHOTO

Boston Symphony Orchestra Brass Section - 1921. Low Brass Players (Left to right) Standing: LeRoy Kenfield, A. Mäusebach. Seated: Eugene Adam (tuba), Carl Hampe (principal).

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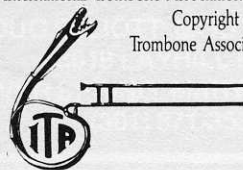
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A PICTORIAL HISTORY OF LOW BRASS PLAYERS IN THE BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, 1887-1986

by Douglas Yeo



OPPOSITE PAGE: *Boston Symphony Orchestra Trombone Section — 1887. (Left to right) George Stewart (bass), Carl Behr, Carl Hampe (principal).*

TOP: *Boston Symphony Orchestra Trombone Section — 1915. (Left to right) LeRoy Kenfield (bass), A. Mäusebach, M. Alloo (principal).*

BOTTOM LEFT: *LeRoy Kenfield as a young man in the early 1900s.*

BOTTOM RIGHT: *M. Alloo, asst. trombone. 1912-1913, principal trombone 1914-1917. Photo by Carl Homer.*



In its 105-year history, 28 trombonists have played as full-time members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. While doing some research on Joannes Rochut, who is perhaps the most famous BSO trombone alumnus, I stumbled onto the Boston Symphony Archives — a room filled from floor to ceiling with old programs, press clippings, photographs and files of various employees of the management of the BSO. Unfortunately, much of the archives are in disarray, with countless unmarked files and boxes. After many hours of digging,

I was able to come up with photographs of 21 trombonists and three tuba players. In several cases, the dates shown are the best approximation available; many photos did not have a date on them and identification was based on recognition of known players.

A special thank you must go to BSO Archivist Eleanor McGourty and Personnel Manager William Moyer for their help in getting me access to these valuable photographs.

George Stewart (1881-1891) was on stage when the Boston Symphony played its first

concert on October 22, 1881, although at the time he used a valve contrabass trombone. Carl Behr (1887-1897) played second trombone and Carl Hampe (1889-1891, 1892-1914, 1920-1925) enjoyed a long career as principal.

LeRoy Kenfield (1900-1934) had the longest tenure of any BSO trombonist (34 years), and A. Mäusebach (1898-1925) played second to him for 26 years. M. Alloo (1912-1918), shown here at his most formal and most casual, played assistant principal for two seasons before becoming principal in 1914. Robert King graciously





OPPOSITE PAGE

TOP: Boston Symphony Orchestra Brass Section — 1925. Low brass players (left to right in back row) LeRoy Kenfield, Eugene Adams (assistant), Lucien Hansotte (second), Joannes Rochut (principal), Paul Sidow (tuba).

BOTTOM: Boston Symphony Orchestra Trombone Section — 1928. (Left to right) Joannes Rochut, Lucien Hansotte, LeRoy Kenfield, Jacob Raichman, Eugene Adam.

THIS PAGE

TOP: Joannes Rochut, new first trombone of Boston Symphony Orchestra, and his daughter and son. This charming family snapshot was made before the war, but M. Rochut preferred it to more pretentious photos made afterwards.

BOTTOM: Boston Symphony Orchestra Trombone Section — 1927. Performance of Beethoven's Ninth. (Left to right) Joannes Rochut, Lucien Hansotte, LeRoy Kenfield.



lent this photo of LeRoy Kenfield for inclusion in this article. The photo of young Kenfield is hung in the bandroom of the A.C. Ames Band, where he taught the brass instruments.

Eugene Adam (1918-1947) had one of the most varied careers of any trombonist. He began his BSO career as principal trombone in 1918, but was demoted to assistant after he took part in an ill-fated strike in 1919 that resulted in the firing of half the orchestra (long before unions!). He began playing tuba in 1920, and played both tuba and assistant trombone for some

11 years until moving permanently to tuba in 1934.

This photograph was taken during the first seasons of Joannes Rochut (1925-1930) and Lucien Hansotte (1925-1952). Both were hired by Koussevitzky, although Hansotte (a Swiss) outlasted his French section leader by 24 years. Paul Sidow (1923-1933) played tuba for 10 seasons, sharing the duties with Adam for his last five years.

Jacob Raichman (1926-1955) briefly played percussion in the BSO and began sharing the principal trombone duties in

1927. It is not widely known that while Koussevitzky was a double bass major at the Moscow Conservatory, he also was offered a scholarship as a trombone major. Raichman, also a Russian, became principal in 1930 after Rochut left to return to France.

On October 11, 1925, the *Boston Sunday Post* ran a full-page article accompanied by photographs concerning four new principal players who were making their debuts with the BSO - Joannes Rochut, Edmond Allegra (clarinet), Ferdinand Gillet (oboe), and Jean LeFranc (viola). The selection about Rochut is as follows:

The war service of Joannes Rochut, remarkable new first trombonist under Koussevitzky's baton, began in France, spread itself the length and breadth of the United States, and returned to France to lengthen itself further.

Mr. Rochut first treated Boston to his magnificent trombone playing while on that wartime tour of the States, as a member of the forever famous Garde Republicaine military band.

If you will remember, while this country was just making up her mind about the war, France seemed very far and foreign to most Yankees, and Frenchmen were hazy pictures in the mind's eye. Then big, amiable Marshal Joffre, the hero of the Marne, came over, toured the country, told us how important it was to speed up sending Yankee troops over to French soil, and incidentally showed us what a real French generalissimo was like. And the Garde Republicaine Band came over, set our blood racing with the spectacular dash of its playing, and with that and the personality of its members, successfully stimulated the idea among Yankees that Frenchmen would no doubt be congenial allies.

"We played in 208 cities of the United States, scattered among 37 states, and also played in 42 war camps," said Mr. Rochut. And having just emerged from being posed by a photographer, he seemed almost as done up as if he had just toured 43 war camps all over again.

"The wonderful friendliness with which you Americans received us, everywhere, stirred our hearts in a way that no member of that band will ever forget," he said with deep sincerity imprinted on his close-shaven face.

"Monsieur," protested the *Sunday Post* man, "the extraordinary thing was not

really our welcome, but the playing of your band. When you played the way you did, it was impossible for us not to want to make you feel that the nation was yours. I know, because I heard that band.

"But something about it puzzles me."

"Eh, bien —"

"I remember a remarkable trombone player with a magnificent beard extending fully as far as my third vest button here, and —"

"And — pardon, monsieur — you do not remember my face, you wish to say? Do not astonish yourself. That was my beard. It was — it is not.

"When I brought it here with the band, it was flourishing in its 18th year. It was justly admired. It did well in the new climate. But I began to feel worried about it.

"It had no companions — the awful authority of the American safety razor was everywhere in evidence.

"The band arrived in Camp Lee. I made an important decision. America had been most kind to me. As a thank-you offering, I would make a sacrifice to America.

"My friends gathered about me. I was going to submit to having my chin Americanized.

"My friends slowly circled around me as I seated myself on the fateful chair. As they circled, they sang a dirge.

"The barber removed IT.

"I retained the mustache as a matter of principle at that time, but eventually let that also go, as you can see."

Mr. Rochut has a delightful sense of humor, as one can easily judge from his having placed on his first photo after the Camp Lee ceremony the inscription: "En souvenir de mon premier sacrifice a l'Amerique. (In memory of my first sacrifice to America.)"

But he is also a very serious musician. It was Joannes Rochut who organized the first of the famous Concerts Koussevitzky in Paris, which threw Koussevitzky into prominence as a possibility for leader of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. He has done much to promote the full possibilities of the trombone, having arranged duets, trios and quartets from Bach to feature that instrument.



TOP: Boston Symphony Orchestra Low Brass Section — 1938. (Left to right) Jacob Raichman, Lucien Hansotte, Waldemar Lillebach (bass), Kilton Vinal Smith (assistant and euphonium), Eugene Adam (tuba).

MIDDLE: Jacob Raichman. Photo by David W. Nilsson.

BOTTOM: Kilton Vinal Smith.





TOP: Composer Roy Harris backstage at Symphony Hall on the occasion of the premiere of his Symphony #5, 1943, surrounded by members of the Boston Symphony Orchestra (left to right) Lucien Hansotte (second trombone), George Mager (first trumpet), Jacob Raichman (principal trombone), John Coffey (bass trombone). Photo by Elizabeth Timberman.

BOTTOM LEFT: John Coffey.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Boston Symphony Orchestra Trombone Section — 1948. (Left to right) John Coffey (bass), Josef Orosz (assistant), Lucien Hansotte, Jacob Raichman.



Besides his service with the Guard Republicaine Band, Mr. Rochut put in military service with the French commissary department, volunteering for this work, although his "class" in the reserves had not been called to the colors.

He closed the interview with an experience in the States.

"In a dining room in Macon, Georgia, I thought I would try my luck with the English language. I said to the waiter:

"Will you bring me some bread?"

"He smiled, and did not move. I asked two or three more times, and in each case he simply smiled and remained rooted to his tracks.

"I gave up in disgust. Then the man moved away.

"The first thing I knew, he was back, and placed on the table — a cruet of oil and a cruet of vinegar!"

Raichman, a mere five feet tall, exhibits here his fingertip method of reaching seventh position. He also was well known for a "knee vibrato," whereby he would rest his elbow on his knee and shake his leg while playing!

Hans Waldemar Durek Lillebach (1934-1941), of Danish descent, played trombone in orchestras in Germany and Chile before coming to Boston as bass trombonist. On leaving the BSO, he went to the Cleveland Orchestra where he played bass trombone from 1941 until 1948.

Kilton Vinal Smith (1935-1966) had a long and colorful career in the BSO



ABOVE: Eugene Adam. Photo by David Nilsson.

beginning as assistant trombone until in 1947 he succeeded Eugene Adam on tuba. He played his entire tuba career on an "F" tuba. He lives today on Vinal Haven Island, Maine, his ancestral home.

John Coffey (1941-1952) came to the BSO by way of the Cleveland Orchestra (he and Lillebach swapped orchestras in 1941). A prolific teacher, he left the orchestra and managed his own music store for many years. He is a recipient of the ITA Award; he passed away in 1981.

Josef Orosz (1944-1970) was born in Toledo of Hungarian extraction and joined the BSO while Kilton Vinal Smith was in the service. When Smith returned in 1947, Orosz remained as assistant trombone, playing not only trombone but euphonium and tuba as well. In 1966 he became second trombone, a position he held until his retirement.

Eugene Adam, always the dignified Frenchman, is shown here with his tuba near the time of his retirement in 1947.



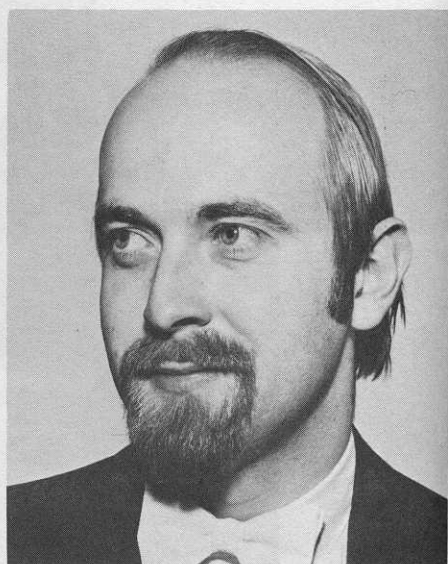
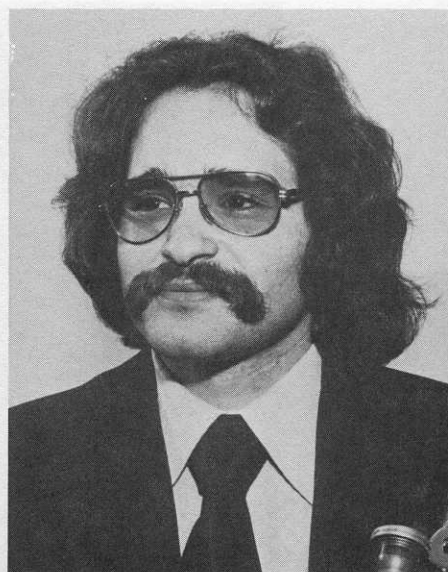
TOP: Music Director Charles Munch and William Moyer — 1956.

MIDDLE LEFT: William Moyer. Photo by John Brook.

MIDDLE RIGHT: Kauko Emil Kahila holding his silver Schmidt trombone that formerly belonged to his teacher, Waldemar Lillebach. Photo by John Brook.

BOTTOM: Boston Symphony Orchestra Brass Players — (standing) Paul Keaney, Harold Meek, Kilton Vinal Smith, Kauko Kahila, William Moyer, (seated) Roger Voisin, Armando Ghitalla.





TOP LEFT: *Boston Symphony Orchestra Trombone Section* — 1968. (Left to right) William Gibson, Josef Orosz, Kauko Kahila.

TOP RIGHT: Norman Bolter — 1975.

MIDDLE RIGHT: Ronald Barron — 1972.

BOTTOM LEFT: Gordon Hallberg.



TOP LEFT: Chester Schmitz, tuba — 1967.

TOP RIGHT: Boston Symphony Orchestra Low Brass Section — 1984. (Left to right) Ronald Barron (principal), Norman Bolter (second), LaMar Jones (extra), Douglas Yeo (bass), Chester Schmitz (tuba).

BOTTOM: Douglas Yeo.



William Moyer (1952-1966) joined the Boston Symphony right out of college at Oberlin where he pursued composition as well as the trombone. In 1966 he became personnel manager of the BSO, a position he still holds today.

Kauko Emil Kahila (1952-1971), of Finnish descent, joined the BSO at the same time as Moyer and was instrumental in the development and production of the first commercially available double valve (dependent) bass trombone, made by Reynolds. After leaving the BSO, he explored other interests, in particular antique glass, and was for many years curator of the Sandwich Glass museum on Cape Cod. Kahila came to the Boston Symphony after a decade of playing in the Houston and St. Louis symphonies.

William Gibson (1955-1975) played principal trombone under four music directors: Munch, Leinsdorf, Steinberg and Ozawa. He is still actively playing the trombone as a member of the Boston Opera Orchestra and various ensembles in Boston.

Ronald Barron (1970-present) joined the BSO as second trombone after two years in the same position in the Montreal Symphony, and he won the principal trombone position in 1975 upon Gibson's retirement. He is on the faculty of Boston University.

Norman Bolter (1975-present) joined the BSO as second trombone at age 20, becoming one of the youngest members of the orchestra. He is formerly a member of the Empire Brass Quintet which

won the 1976 Naumberg Award for Chamber Music. He is on the faculty of New England Conservatory and Boston University.

Gordon Hallberg (1971-1985) received his music training at the University of Iowa. An avid photographer, he now lives in San Antonio, Texas where he pursues an active teaching career.

Douglas Yeo (1985-present) joined the BSO after four years as bass trombonist with the Baltimore Symphony. He is on the faculty of New England Conservatory.

Chester Schmitz (1966-present) came to the BSO directly from the U.S. Army Band in Washington, D.C. He also plays tenor tuba and cimballo and is on the faculty of Boston Conservatory.