Repertoire for Recital Programmes

By Brett Baker

I am often asked to recommend pieces for recitals that incorporate relatively unknown or different pieces to that of the standard recital program so here it goes.

Normally, a 45 minute program with an encore is sufficient. I will give a variety of suitable pieces, followed by two example programmes at the end of this article. I hope that many of the pieces are unknown to you as opposed to giving a list of the standard repertoire used in end of year recitals.

Balance and interest is important in a recital and playing the standard repertoire, although you may see as a safe option, will not interest the general public, trombone fanatics or those that review such performances. Contrasting pieces should not be just be fast or slow, pieces should be taken from classical, baroque and romantic periods as well as contemporary, and also taken from different genres such as jazz and orchestral, and for me, wind or brass band pieces as well. Many recitals tend to be dry in nature so I always try to put some light-hearted pieces in with the more serious repertoire especially if this is a commercial recital. In terms of practising the pieces I find I need to run a program through twice without rests during any piano refrains to ensure I have the stamina to get through a recital programme on the day of the performance easily.

The Opener: It is important to make an impact on the first piece and play something that shows off your strengths. I prefer playing something unaccompanied to start, such as John Kenny’s “Fanfare” which you play across an open lid of a piano, or an early piece of music, such as Lindberg’s arrangement of “Dance la Cleve” for alto trombone. Other suitable openers include Giovanni Martino Cesare’s “La Hieronyma” composed in 1621, “St. Thomas Sonata” composed c.1665-1699, or something like Folke Rabe’s “Basta”, which although well-known is rarely played other than in the bravest of end of year college recitals.

Second piece: Normally I try to play a substantial piece with piano. Recently I have selected Sigismond Stojowski’s (1869-1946) “Fantasie”, or an arrangement of an overture, such as my arrangement of Rossini’s “Barber of Seville”.

The third piece usually provides a bit of light relief. Typical pieces at this point in the recital include “Salsa Panadero” by Philip Harper, though this is only really effective with a drum kit; Philip Wilby’s “Cool Shades” or an arrangement of his Be Bop number “Jackie” by Hampton Hawes. Alternatively, a Jazz ballad will work well; such as “Stardust”, “Londonderry Air” arranged by Bill Geldard or something like Bill Broughton’s “Sarah”.

At present, I have been researching forgotten solos of the 1820s to 1890s, so at this point in the program I would normally showcase one of these works. A good choice that is the rarely performed Meyer “Concertino”, which is extremely high for a bass trombone solo and therefore perfect range for a tenor trombone, or Josef Novakovsky’s “Concertino”. Both are a delight and virtuosic to say the least.

Predictably perhaps, the fifth solo is usually a classical slow melody solo piece. One of my favourites is “Meditation from Thais” (there are several good arrangements available) or Rachmanov’s “Elegie in Eb Minor Opus 3 no. 1” or Alexander Boradin’s “Nocturne”.

After playing a serious piece I like to throw in another up-beat number, in the form of Pryor’s “Fantastic Polka”, or “Phenomenal Polka” by Frederick Innes, or a newly discovered solo by Gardell Simons called “La Valse Moderne”.

The seventh solo, as a contrast, is normally one of my favourite slow melody solos from the Salvation Army repertoire, such as “Someone Cares” arranged Ray Steadman-Allen or Dorothy Gates’ arrangement of “His Provision” this I have used most recently.

The eighth solo is normally something again classical in nature. Recently, the Wagenseil or Albechtsberger concertos on tenor trombone have worked well, as has Rodney Newton’s “Dick Turpin’s Ride to York”. Monti’s “Czardas” provides further contrast, as does “Atlantic Zephyrs” by Gardell Simons but this I find is better as an encore.

The ninth, and final solo would be a movement from a concerto, or sometimes the eighth and ninth pieces become the complete performance of a concerto. Currently Rob Wiffin’s Concerto, Martin Ellerby’s Concerto or Dan Jenkins’ Concerto are fresh pieces that work well in recitals.

As an encore I would normally do a slow piece such as “Demelza” by Hugh Nash or “Abide with me” by Ken Downie. If I need something up tempo then “Trombonology” by Tommy Dorsey or Cook’s “Bolivar” work well in this part of the recital.

I hope these suggestions are useful to you and good luck with your preparation.

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|  | **Recital one** | **Publisher** | **Recital two** | **Publisher** |
| Opener | Fanfare John Kenny | Warwick Music | Giovanni Martino Cesare’s -La Hieronyma | Robert King |
| 2nd Piece | Sigismond Stojowski’s | Leduc | Barber of Seville arr B Baker | Studio Music |
| 3rd Piece | Jackie by Hampton Hawes arr. Philip Wilby or Cool Shades | Kirklees Music | Sarah by Bill Broughton | Broughton Music |
| 4th Piece | Meyer Concertino | Edition Peters | Novokovsky Concertino | International Music |
| 5th Piece | Meditation from Thais arr. B Baker | Studio Music | Nocturne by Alexander Boradin | W Paxton |
| 6th Piece | Fantastic Polka by Arthur Pryor | Carl Fischer | La Valse Moderne by Gardell Simons | Dillon Music |
| 7th Piece | Someone Cares John Larrson arr. Ray Steadmann-Allen | SP&S | His Provision Ivor Bosanko arr. Dorothy Gates | Kirklees Music |
| 8th piece | Wagenseil Concerto or Rob Wiffin Concerto | Boosey & Hawkes / Studio Music | Dick Turpin’s Ride to York by Rodney Newton | Wright & Round |
| 9th Piece | As above |  | Dan Jenkins Concerto | Warwick |
| Encore | Abide with me by Kenneth Downie | Kantara Music | Bolivar by Eric Cook | Boosey & Hawkes |