

Performance Investigation

I have chosen to study Nicolai Rimsky-Korsakov's Concerto for Trombone, composed in 1878. The work is one that I have been studying as a performer and thus have opted to study it in-depth, looking into the differing interpretations of it by performers.

The two recordings that I chose are by Christian Lindberg, playing with the Kosei Wind Orchestra, and by Norman Law, with the Black Dyke Mills Band. The two recordings are quite dissimilar in many ways, including obviously the difference in accompaniment with the first being that of a wind orchestra, the format for which the work was originally composed, and the second that by a brass band as arranged by Gordon Langford – a very accomplished arranger and renowned composer.

The two performers have quite contrasting styles, which is evident when it comes to the interpretations of certain sections of the works, and especially the cadenzas. However, there are also lots of things that have remained unaltered from that of the original scoring, with the vast majority of notation and rhythm not being altered in any vast way.

Christian Lindberg is arguably the best trombonist of current times and thus any recording by him was a natural choice, especially when I found this edition with wind orchestra. To contrast with this I chose a brass band arrangement of the work. Having grown up as a musician within a brass band, this performance was a perfect choice for me upon which to study, especially being arranged by Langford and performed by the Black Dyke Mills Band – a fantastic combination.

The opening of the first recording (Lindberg) is at a tempo of approximately 140 b.p.m. When he makes his first entrance it appears that he is almost early with his entry of the first triplets, compared with if it was placed directly upon the beat. The next two bars are primarily as written, with Lindberg employing a crescendo in the fifth bar. Upon the climatic note of the phrase, the G, there is very little vibrato used, but he does crescendo through the note, then places the following note, the F, but increases the value closer to a crochet rather than what I expected which was a more staccato quaver value.

When comparing this opening to that of Law's in the second recording there are immediate obvious comparisons. The first of which is the tempo difference; Law takes the opening faster at approximately 145-148 b.p.m. This entrance by Law feels more secure in my opinion, when compared to that of Lindberg, seeming much more definite on the fourth beat of the bar. In the third bar of the movement, Law lengthens the second note of the bar to a crochet rather than a short quaver (as shown below). The accented Cs in the fifth bar are also a lot more prominent in this performance with more attack being placed upon the notes, concluding with a heavy vibrato G, compared to that of Lindberg, concluding on a lengthened F.

The image displays a side-by-side comparison of musical notation for the opening of Rimsky-Korsakov's Concerto for Trombone. The top staff, labeled 'Original scoring', shows the first two bars of the piece. The first bar contains a triplet of eighth notes. The second bar contains a quarter note, a half note, and a quarter note. The bottom staff, labeled 'Law', shows the same first two bars. In the second bar, the second note is a half note (crochet) instead of a quarter note. The notation includes a treble clef, a key signature of one flat (B-flat), and a 2/4 time signature.

I think that the different approach brought to this opening by Law is more impressive than that of Lindberg. The increased accents in the fifth bar also drive the piece on and capture the ear and the mind of the listener to a greater extent. Essentially this approach makes the opening a lot more exciting and sets-the-scene for what is a thrilling rendition of the movement.

When looking at the next entrance of Lindberg in the second bar of A, I believe that he enters slightly late, however, this may be intended and employed for effect. Lindberg also crescendos through the first triplet of A from a dynamic of approximately mezzo-forte to forte at the third bar of A. The next bar is primarily the same; however, into the fourth bar of A, Lindberg adds a stress / tenuto to the second crotchet beat. This, although seemingly small and insignificant, results in a much cleaner phrase, and which I think works extremely well. Into the next phrase Lindberg does not attach the accents at all, instead he uses a gentle vibrato through the phrase to add musical colour.

Law plays these two phrases much the same as the opening. His attack used on the accents in the fifth bar is greater than that of Lindberg, but instead of playing at the forte dynamic throughout, Law uses a gentle crescendo to the minim in the sixth bar, whereupon he comes off the note as soon as it has been projected. This use of vibrato is very stylistic and establishes the romantic mood for the next phrase, bringing the music 'alive', and adding to the original work.

Moving into the next four bar phrase up to B there are quite a few glaring differences between the two performances, despite the close comparity until now. These are as follows.

Lindberg employs a flowing slide action, which can account for the smear between the G and the A. The staccatos in the fourth and second bars before B are minimal, I agree with this as it adds to the flowing nature of the phrase.

Law, as well as not playing the staccatos, actually rearranges the phrasing as shown below.

The image shows a side-by-side comparison of musical notation for four bars. The top staff is labeled 'Original scoring' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Law'. Both staves are in bass clef with a key signature of one flat. The original scoring shows a sequence of notes with slurs and accents. The 'Law' version shows a different phrasing, with a triplet of notes in the fourth bar that is not present in the original. The notation is presented in a clear, black-and-white format.

Personally I feel it improves the flow of musical ideas and thus brings a passion through to the listener, adding more fervently to the work. Although the approach of the two performers differ at this phrase, both are equally successful and both interpretations are appropriate as musically the two renditions are correct and within the style of the work.

The contrast in interpretations continues into B from the two performers.

Lindberg opens at B with a dynamic of mezzo-piano, increasing the volume throughout the following six bars, reaching a fortissimo climax on the F at seventh bar of B. This is very impressive and works well as it builds-up the phrase, increasing the suspense and power of the climax in the section to come. However, Lindberg cuts the phrasing in the fifth and sixth bars of B on the Ds. In my opinion this damages the mood and leaves a disappointing air to the phrase, although this feeling soon passes when one moves into the proceeding section.

From the climatic point of the F, Lindberg diminuendos down in the proceeding bar, which helps to improve the tone through the following phrase.

Into the last four bars of B, Lindberg plays in a very staccato manner, and alters the articulation as shown below. This effect works, and it is certainly easier to perform in this manner due to the immense amount of air required to get through the section, but I am unsure as to whether the severity of the staccatos is required, especially as the articulation noted is very clear and does not state the requirement of the additional staccatos.



The image shows a side-by-side comparison of musical notation for a section. The top staff is labeled 'Original scoring' and the bottom staff is labeled 'Lindberg'. Both staves are in bass clef with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature. The notation consists of six measures. The 'Original scoring' staff shows a melodic line with slurs and accents, ending with a dotted minim. The 'Lindberg' staff shows the same melodic line but with significantly more staccato articulation, particularly in the final four measures, where notes are clearly separated and lack the slurs seen in the original scoring.

Law enters at B with a forte dynamic, which is an immediate contrast. This dynamic is then, terraced down in the third bar of B to a level of mezzo-forte, he then decrescendos from this into the fourth bar. This helps prepare the suspense, and increases and dramatises the huge two bar crescendo up to the climatic fortissimo dotted minim F in the seventh bar of B. From this point the phrasing is very clear, and I believe more effective than Lindberg's. Law does not alter the articulation of the section, he phrases the section with his breathing instead. At two bars before C the solo line is harder to hear than that of Lindberg's, but this is primarily due to the accompaniment being much more powerful in the brass and covering the soloist.

The image displays a musical score comparison for three parts: Original scoring, Lindberg, and Law. The score is written in bass clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). It features a 3/4 time signature and consists of two systems of three staves each. The first system shows the original scoring with a dynamic of *f* and a triplet of eighth notes. The Lindberg version starts with a dynamic of *mp* and a *cresc.* marking, while the Law version starts with a dynamic of *f*. The second system shows the Lindberg version with a dynamic of *mf* and a *cresc.* marking, and the Law version with a dynamic of *mf*. The third system shows the Lindberg version with a dynamic of *ff* and a *cresc.* marking, and the Law version with a dynamic of *fff*. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

Into C Lindberg performs in a charming lyrical and legato style; he extends the phrasing over much larger sections than is written. This works well and adds more to the piece, adding to the expressive and passionate poetic section of the movement. However, I do not agree with the altered phrasing present from the sixth bar of C. Lindberg breaks the phrases very haphazardly in my opinion, and results in the second half of C in completely different articulation and phrasing than previous. I believe that whichever of the two phrasings he chose he should have remained constant throughout.

The image displays a musical score comparison between 'Original scoring' and 'Lindberg'. It consists of three systems of two staves each, representing different parts of the piece. The first system is labeled 'Original scoring' and 'Lindberg'. The second system is labeled '6' and the third is labeled '10'. The notation includes bass clefs, a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and various musical notations such as notes, rests, and slurs. The 'Original scoring' version shows a continuous melodic line across the first system, while the 'Lindberg' version shows a similar line but with a clear break in the phrasing at the end of the first system, indicated by a fermata and a breath mark.

Law also employs a lyrical style into this section, although not to the grace of Lindberg. Breathing is a critical part of this section, and Law has chosen clear breathing points, and one can quite clearly hear him breathe, and he does not break the phrases, also, Law does not alter the phrasing half-way through unlike Lindberg, and remains constant in his approach. This I feel is successful and commendable.

Moving into D both performers open exactly the way they did for the opening of the piece. Into E, there are slight differences in articulation and style appearing, as analysed below.

The first being the contrasting articulation in the fifth bar of E. Lindberg plays the section much as he had the same phrase earlier on in the work, whereas Law breaks the first and third beat triplets, cutting the marked phrase. This is quite noticeable as it is generally expected be the same as previously heard. Due to it not being is questionably incorrect. The phrasing comparison is shown clearly overleaf.

The image displays a musical score for two performers, Lindberg and Law, in bass clef with a key signature of two flats. The score is divided into three systems. The first system shows Lindberg and Law performing the same piece. The second system shows Lindberg's interpretation with more phrasing and dynamics. The third system shows Lindberg's interpretation with more phrasing and dynamics.

The next obvious difference in approach from the two performers is seen in F.

From the third bar of F onwards to the conclusion of the movement, Lindberg slows the tempo down; by contrast Law drives the phrase forward. Both interpretations are successful and effective, however, both performers break the fifth and sixth bars down four mini-phrases, this does not pose a negative issue to the work; by breaking the phrases the performers can keep a consistent style throughout the section, despite the fact that by this section of the work, I have often found myself in need of a few moments respite. Altering the phrasing actually incurs a lesser effect than could be found. By breaking the phrasing it adds to the power and dramatism of the conclusion.

Moving into the second movement there is an immediate contrast, that being the tempo at which each rendition is performed, with Law choosing a slighter quicker tempo, which helps carry the piece through and helps make the phrases more flowing. Lindberg's style is also more expressive, with more vibrato and rubato employed, in this movement than that of Law.

The two performers approaches to the phrasing of this movement, especially the opening section, are quite startling. Lindberg has changed the phrasing and his breathing points in the primary phrase of this movement, which I do not necessarily agree with. Law, however, keeps quite strictly to the written phrasing and breath marks, which I believe is the way the approach should be.

These contrasts in articulation continue through into the forte section at the eleventh bar of H, with Lindberg again breaking-up the flowing phrases more where by contrast Law is keeping to the original script.

Moving into the cadenza the comparisons between the performers becomes more evident.

Approaching the cadenza, Lindberg slows to a greater extent while crescendoing through adding to the suspense; he always continues this change of tempo into the Db in the eighth bar of I by suspending the note on an extensive pause. In the ascending figure a bar before the stringendo, Lindberg accelerandoes and crescendos to great effect, contrasting greatly in the stringendo and the proceeding bar, performing with virtuoso expression. Into the cadenza the use of rubato is continued. Lindberg actually cuts a descending pattern from the Cb down to the Db, compared to the original scripted cadenza.



At the conclusion of the cadenza moving into the third movement, Lindberg's approach is a lot quicker on the acciacaturas, which works to great effect.

Law shows a very contrasting approach to this section of the work. In his approach to the cadenza, Law rits. to a far lesser extent than Lindberg into the eighth bar of I, and does not pause for as long on the Db. The ascending run is also slower and far more staccato than Lindberg's, but is also effect. There is again a contrast in dynamic with Law's dynamic at the stringendo at a lesser strength than the forte marked. However, Law employs a far lesser attack on the proceeding bar from the stringendo than Lindberg, of which I prefer.

The actual cadenza Law plays very much as written. The phrases employed are very much as I had perceived they should be, and the overall performance of the cadenza is much as I had interpreted it myself. The approach although not virtuosic does keep with the traditional scoring of the cadenza and thus I believe is both adequate and appropriate.

Into the third movement of the work there are once again immediate comparisons between the two performances, the first of which is the differing tempo the two performers take it at. At K Lindberg takes a tempo of 76b.p.m. and into L with a tempo of 92b.p.m; Law takes K at a tempo of 70b.p.m and into L at a tempo of 86b.p.m. Law also rits. to a greater extent into L than Lindberg does, which works well as it draws the suspense out and increases the effect into the main section. The difference in the tempo of Law, i.e. being slower, does not cause a problem as it allows him to concentrate further upon the phrasing through the majority of the movement.

Into M both performances are very similar, except obviously for the continued speed difference, both moving in two bar phrases, breathing between and both lengthening and stressing the final beat of the eighth bar. I like this as it firmly closes the idea before moving onto the next subject.

The next section, the mezzo-forte staccato section sees one big contrast between the two interpretations. Lindberg's interpretation is very staccato and attacked, whereby Law's is only slightly separated, instead preferring a more flowing phrase. Moving into N both performers crescendo, Lindberg also accelerando driving through into N. This works well as the material had been similar through the section. To drive it through removes the fatigue and carries the audiences attention through into the next idea. Law's version would be my preferred at this point; I believe his phrasing is more flowing and attentive to the style. Lindberg's conclusion of the section does work better though as it drives through the sections.

Both Lindberg and Law treat the material at O much the same as they opened at M with the same style and two bar phrases. Lindberg, however, in his apparent haste through the movement makes a couple of noticeable differences.

At the third bar of O Lindberg glisses up to the G, almost giving the impression that he was about to start in the incorrect position; for me, this and the snatched two quavers in the end of the preceding bar spoil the sections of Lindberg's performance. Law however, shows no such 'errors' and the section is almost an exact repeat of M, which I believe is what it should be due to the written material being the same.

Continuing into P, Law approaches the section at a more secure mp dynamic, where Lindberg actually plays at dynamic closer to piano, as is marked. Both performers again approach the section with the same idea, as is shown through the expressive playing from both.

The image displays a musical score comparison for two performers, Lindberg and Law, across two systems of music. The first system shows Lindberg's performance on the top staff and Law's on the bottom staff. Lindberg's part is marked with a piano (*p*) dynamic, while Law's is marked with mezzo-piano (*mp*). Both parts feature a series of eighth notes with slurs, and Lindberg's performance shows a noticeable glissando in the third bar. The second system continues the comparison, showing Lindberg's part on the top staff and Law's on the bottom staff, with Lindberg's performance appearing more staccato and Law's more flowing.

Progressing into Q, the staccatissimo section, Lindberg's playing although more attacked than that of Law actually flows considerably better due to his effortless employment of double-tonguing driving the section through. Into the second half of the ninth bar, the articulation differences again are apparent.

Lindberg increases the staccatos through this section, compared to Law who makes a lot more of the accents, increasing his attack compared with earlier in the movement.

The image shows the first five measures of a musical score for Lindberg and Law. Both parts are in bass clef with a key signature of two flats and a 2/4 time signature. Lindberg's part features a series of eighth notes with accents, showing a dynamic range from *mf* to *p*. Law's part is more rhythmic, consisting of eighth notes and quarter notes with accents, maintaining a consistent dynamic level.

Into R there is a colossal comparison between the two performances in the opening four bars of the soloist's entrance. Lindberg greatly ralls. through the fourth and fifth bars of R, then accelerates through the descending patterns in the proceeding two bars, before landing at a tempo slightly faster than what he had previously played, driving through to add romantic passion and feeling to the music. Law however keeps the tempo primarily static, which compared with Lindberg's rendition is rather dry and lacking personal expression. Law's tempo through the section is slower than that of Lindberg, however, in-keeping with the tempo difference shown from the start of the third movement.

The next contrasts appear into the 12th and 15th bars of R. In the twelfth bar Lindberg slurs the two quavers, which breaks the mood from the heavily staccato section preceding; where Law continues in a detached staccato approach, which I believe is not as effective at changing through the sections as that of Lindberg. Lindberg, however, plays the 15th bar in a much more staccato attack than Law.

The image shows measures 6 through 15 of the musical score. Lindberg's part includes performance markings: *mf rall.* in measure 6, *molto rall. p* in measure 7, and *cresc. accel.* in measure 8. Law's part includes markings: *mf* in measure 6, *p* in measure 7, and *cresc.* in measure 8. The score continues with measures 9-15, showing Lindberg's more staccato and Law's more sustained playing styles.

Into S the two performers characteristics are displayed once again with Law preferring to play in a more sustained way, playing each of the notes for its full value in contrast Lindberg plays the whole section in a very staccato manner. Again, I believe that Lindberg's approach does not bring the true feeling of the music through to the listener; I believe that Law's rendition is better here, as I feel that Lindberg's playing is far too detached.

Through the close of S moving into T, Lindberg drives the music forward by accelerating and crescendoing through, where Law does not. This contrast is continued through into T with Lindberg arriving at a much more driving tempo than Law.

The cadenza, is the biggest contrast of the work. Law plays the traditional written cadenza, with only minor changes, where the cadenza by Lindberg is significantly more virtuosic.

Lindberg opens his cadenza with a rising scale of 3rds, which is primarily the opening melody of the first subject in the first movement. The extreme range of the instrument is shown here also as Lindberg descends down to an extensive pedal note, seemingly a Bb. This is then moved forward with a rising scale figure, climbing using sequences to the extremities of the instrument concluding at an impressive trill.

Continuing, Lindberg then includes material from the first movement again, this time using the 2nd theme of the first subject. This section is much more sustained than what we have just heard and very legato in nature, with a typically-romantic use of chromatic notes. This lures the listener into a 'false sense of security', as Lindberg then drives past this moment into an accelerando staccato section, climbing with double tongued triplets – possibly taking inspiration from 3rd movement triplets at Q and developing the idea.

Lindberg then descends in leaps of 7^{ths}, which adds great colour to the section, also employing the use of minor passing notes.

The next section is very extreme. Lindberg employs a technique of singing and playing at the same time, within the lower ranges of the instrument. This is actually very clever as he includes ideas from the third movement in the section, especially when he moves into the chromatic scale, which is seen in the work in several ideas. The range again is incredible and adds a truly modern 20th Century edge to a classical piece of music.

Law by complete contrast plays the standard cadenza, which employs no main themes from the work and is wholly in the typical classical format and based upon scale and arpeggio passage work.

The cadenza by Law follows that which is written but for minor changes in tempo, and slight notation alterations.

The two cadenzas are both successful at drawing the work to a close; however, Lindberg's cadenza is considerably more virtuosic.

It is the tradition that cadenzas used to be improvised and decided upon purely by the performer at the time of performance, thus Lindberg is wholly in his rights to have chosen the cadenza that he has, which almost adds more to the work than the original, adding a personal touch.

Into U, Lindberg crescendoes through the pedal Bb in the third bar, showing greater control over pedals than Law. In the sixth bar of U, at the rising tenuto semi-quavers Lindberg takes them at a faster tempo than Law. Into the vivace Lindberg crescendoes through reaching the Bb at a dynamic at fortissimo, whereby contrast Law reaches the vivace after diminuendoing to a mezzo-forte. The final concluding note also sees a contrast in dynamic with Lindberg's Bb being much more prominent than that of Law, however, this could also be wholly to do with the differences in the amount of brass in the accompaniment.

The two performances are very different in approach as outlined within this investigation, however both are successful and impressive. I have taken many different ideas from both performers and will now incorporate those into my own ideas to improve my performance and understanding of the work.

WORD COUNT: 3,606 ouch!