

CHAPTER THREE

FANTASIA BY LAUREN BERNOFSKY

Year of Composition: 2008

Duration: ~4 minutes

Movements: Single Movement

Range: G3 or A3 - Bb5 or C6 (without ossia part upper pitch is D6 or E6)

Instrumentation: Unaccompanied Trumpet in Bb or C

Composer Biographical Background:

Lauren Bernofsky says of her compositional philosophy, “music should be a joy, both to play and to hear.”³⁵ Her works range from solo instrument compositions, to chamber and choral music, orchestral works, film music, operas, musicals, and ballets. Bernofsky’s *Concerto for Trumpet and Orchestra* (1997) is one of the most widely known concertos for trumpet by a woman. It has gained recognition in recent years, most recently being one of the required works for the Trumpet Category 2 Division (ages 24+) of the Susan Slaughter Solo Competition at the 2022 International Women’s Brass Conference.³⁶ She has contributed to the trumpet repertoire with several other compositions for solo trumpet, including *Spirit Song* (2012), *Saltarello* (1994), and *Capriccio* (2020). Her chamber compositions for trumpet include brass ensemble and quintet works, brass trios, and a trumpet duet.³⁷

Bernofsky grew up listening to her parents play folk music— her father strummed chords on the guitar and her mother played the concertina. In addition to playing folk music, her parents had an appreciation for classical music and frequently listened to recordings. Bernofsky’s

³⁵“Lauren Bernofsky, Composer,” Lauren Bernofsky, 2022, <http://www.laurenbernofsky.com/>

³⁶International Women’s Brass Conference, “Competition Repertoire and Requirements,” International Women’s Brass Conference, 2021, <https://myiwbc.org/competition-repertoire-requirements/>

³⁷“Lauren Bernofsky, Composer,” Lauren Bernofsky, 2022, <http://www.laurenbernofsky.com/>

primary instrument is the violin, and she attended the New Orleans Center for the Creative Arts as a high school student, specializing in composition while continuing her applied study.³⁸ She studied both violin and composition at the Hartt School of Music, graduating with bachelor's degrees in both disciplines. Bernofsky earned her master's degree in composition from the New England Conservatory of Music and her doctorate from Boston University. During her master's degree, Bernofsky studied traditional styles of composition and klezmer music.³⁹

Bernofsky credits several of her mentors as being inspirational for her work, including Robert Carl from the Hartt School of Music, Lukas Foss, who supervised her writing of *Concerto for Trumpet and Orchestra*, and Eric Rosenblith, her violin teacher of five years.⁴⁰ Though inspired by her mentors, Bernofsky does not characterize her compositions as reflective of the styles of her mentors, describing her own music as less avant garde and more conservative.⁴¹ Bernofsky writes each work keeping the unique capabilities and strengths of the instrument she is writing for in mind.⁴² She prefers to write in a mostly tonal style, and emphasizes variety in her works. As a performer herself, she considers the technical challenges of a work and takes care to alternate faster passages with less technically demanding sections, maintaining that an audience will appreciate the variety just as much as the performer.⁴³

³⁸Mary Leita Thornton, "Concerto for trumpet and orchestra by Lauren Bernofsky: Conversation and Analysis," Ph.D. diss., (The University of Wisconsin - Madison, 2002), 5-8.

³⁹Stephen James Whimple, "Music for Solo Trombone by Diverse Composers," Ph.D. diss., (The University of Alabama, 2022), 30.

⁴⁰Thornton, "Concerto for trumpet and orchestra by Lauren Bernofsky: Conversation and Analysis," 12-13.

⁴¹Ibid, 17-18.

⁴² Whimple, "Music for Solo Trombone by Diverse Composers," 30.

⁴³Thornton, "Concerto for trumpet and orchestra by Lauren Bernofsky: Conversation and Analysis," 17-18.

Overview of Work and Pedagogical Notes:

Written for John Cain, *Fantasia* for unaccompanied trumpet was composed with variety in mind. Cain's requests for the piece included lyrical and tongued passages, scalar passages, extension into the upper and lower register, and the occurrence of a high E6 somewhere in the piece⁴⁴. Cain, a psychologist, commissioned the piece as part of his research into Bernofsky's approach to composition and how music comes to her.⁴⁵ Though just under four minutes in duration, the inclusion of a wide variety of compositional elements makes for a dynamic piece that addresses many different aspects of trumpet technique. While the high E in measure 69 might prevent some students from performing this piece, an optional alternate ending brings *Fantasia* into a more approachable range for many trumpeters.

Finger dexterity is a top consideration when preparing Bernofsky's *Fantasia*. There are numerous sixteenth and thirty-second note runs, as well as many leaps and flexibility demands. An advanced student will benefit from the combined dexterity requirements and simultaneous need for musical expression. Measures 30 through 48 cover a range of over two octaves with dynamic levels spanning from piano to forte, requiring the performer to be playing efficiently. Diligent practice in all registers of both the "Technical Studies" and "Finger Flexibilities" in Allen Vizzutti's *The Allen Vizzutti Trumpet Method Book 1* will be of great benefit to the performer as they work through the combined range and dexterity demands of this work. The "Finger Flexibilities," in particular, will serve as an effective practice supplement to *Fantasia* when they are practiced at both slower and quicker tempos, as they emphasize challenging finger combinations and prepare the performer for any accidental they may encounter.

⁴⁴Lauren Bernofsky, "Fantasia for Solo Trumpet," *International Trumpet Guild Journal* 36, no. 3 (2012): 31.

⁴⁵Lauren Bernofsky, email message to author, August 28, 2022.

The function of this work in a pedagogical setting can be compared to the use of Otto Ketting's *Intrada* or John Cheetham's *Concoctions for Trumpet*, which are often presented to students looking to prepare and perform unaccompanied solo trumpet repertoire. The energy of *Fantasia* makes it an exciting recital opener or closer. The numerous rapidly articulated passages, interval leaps, quick scalar lines, and accidentals create a technical challenge for the performer. This piece is ideal for students looking to practice finger dexterity and articulation. While these elements can present challenges, Bernofsky's inclusion of optional slurs makes the work accessible to a wider range of performers, including those who are less comfortable with rapid multiple articulation. Like many unaccompanied solos, endurance can also be a factor, and planning out resting points that make sense in the context of the music is a challenge requiring premeditated and convincing phrasing. An added benefit is the option to perform the piece on Bb or C Trumpet, allowing the performer to play it in C for an added range and endurance challenge or in Bb to make it more approachable. Once the runs have been practiced slowly and brought up to tempo, the performer will ultimately be challenged to make a musical statement while executing these challenging passages.