

# **Evaluating and Redefining Technical Assessment in Classical Trumpet Literature**

By Flint Angeroth Franks

This research focuses on how technical difficulty in trumpet solo literature is evaluated by music publishers, distributors and state music associations. It also examines how various difficulty levels can be more effectively evaluated in the future. Based on analysis of assessment tools used by music organizations, publishers and distributors, I have created a rubric that can transparently define differences in the various levels of technical difficulty in trumpet solo repertoire called DARTS (Difficulty Assessment Rubric of Trumpet Solos). DARTS evaluates solo works in 14 different categories: range, rhythm, meter, key signature, length, dynamics, articulation, tempo, accompaniment scoring, melodic contour, endurance, flexibility, equipment, and extended techniques (e.g., multiple and flutter tonguing).

DARTS was created by compiling numerous grading assessments throughout music publishing and distributing companies. Once compiled, DARTS was compared with suggested repertoire lists from both state music associations and university professors, along with trumpet method books. By cross examining these repertoire lists, method books and standards for difficulty, DARTS can more consistently evaluate the technical difficulty of a piece of trumpet literature.

I examined three areas to develop the rubric: publisher and distributor assessment tools, method books, and repertoire lists from both state music associations and university professors. Sources included Hal Leonard, Hickey's Music Center, Carl Fischer, University Interscholastic League, Florida Bandmasters' Association, the Arkansas Schools Band and Orchestra Association, Professors Rob Frear, Ryan Darke, and Rob Schear at California State University at Long Beach, Dr. Aaron Hogson of Western University in Canada, Dr. Christopher Moore of Florida State University, the *Rubank Method*, *Essential Elements*, and *Standard of Excellence*.

Our current system of evaluating technical difficulty in pieces is not unified and does not effectively disclose the specifics of why a piece receives its rating by either the publisher, distributor, or music associations. DARTS is designed as an assessment tool that can be used by any performer or educator to effectively evaluate the technical difficulty of a solo work while offering detailed insight on the piece.

Understanding the technical difficulty required of repertoire is essential for both educators, and professional and student performers. With the current inconsistency of repertoire assessment tools and a lack of transparency on those tools' results, finding new music that is appropriate for a performance becomes more challenging. DARTS allows educators and performers to make more informed decisions regarding the appropriateness of unfamiliar works for themselves or their students.

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