



Tribute to
Eugen Reiche
(1878-1946)

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One of the prominent brass musicians of the first half of the 20th century was Professor Eugen Adolfovich Reiche, a trombone virtuoso, composer and teacher. A series of jubilee events, dedicated to his memory, were held in St. Petersburg, Russia, in 1998.

Eugen Reiche's creative activity was shaped by the cultural traditions of two countries — Germany and Russia. Although German by origin, Reiche was an eminent figure in the musical life of Russia, and St. Petersburg in particular, for more than 40 years. Upholding the best traditions of both German and Russian trombone performance, he greatly influenced the formation of the St.

Petersburg school of trombone. His legacies include two concertos for trombone and piano and a collection of etudes and duets, as well as his *School for Trombone Playing*. They are well-known throughout Russia and continue to help train new generations of trombone players without losing their value in our time.

Reiche, a native of Dresden, Saxony, was born on March 26, 1878. His father was a musician, so young Reiche received his first musical lessons from his father. At the age of 8, Reiche began study of the violin, and influenced by his brother, took up the clarinet at the age of 12. In the pursuit of further professional musical skills, he entered the Dresden Conservatory (trombone class) in 1891.

We do not know who Reiche's teachers were at the Dresden Conservatory, but we can presume that he was intensely keen on studying music and received sufficient

professional training there, not only as a trombonist, but also as a composer and conductor.

After graduating from the Conservatory in 1896 at the age of 18, Reiche joined the Dortmund (Westfalen) Symphony Orchestra. In January 1897, he moved to Hal-lena Saale, where he performed with the Municipal Opera Theater Orchestra. One year later, in search of better opportunities for his multi-talented nature, Reiche left Germany for St. Petersburg, Russia, to further his career one year later. There were many foreign musicians in St. Petersburg (Czechs, Germans, French and Italians), mostly wind players, because the Russian wind and brass performers were quite rare at that time.

Reiche began playing with the Symphony Orchestra of the St. Petersburg Zoo, and was also featured as trombone soloist. In the following two years he performed with many orchestras of St. Petersburg, including the Italian Opera and Count Sheremetyev's Orchestra.

In August 1899, Reiche won the bass trombone position in the Orchestra of the Royal Mariinsky Opera and Ballet Theatre, performing his *Concerto No. 1* for trombone B-dur, composed in 1898. Simultaneously, the outstanding Russian musician, Petr Naumovich Volkov (1877–1938), became a member of the same orchestra. From that moment, a trombone group of the theatre orchestra was formed. The group left an indelible stamp in the memory of successive generations of musicians and conductors of the city that has never been lost. The trombone quartet played with a blend, balance, wonderful intonation, flawlessness and tonal purity that could not be exaggerated (the other members of the group were V.V. Kuznetsov and tubaist P.V. Petrov). The quartet's performances astounded such prominent conductors as F. Molt, E. Cooper, A. Kouts and V. Dranishnikov. The organ-like sound, even in fortissimo, was unique in its velvet colors.

Reiche's performance prompted B. Anisimov (Professor of St. Petersburg Conservatory) to recall, "It can be said that the sheer togetherness and rhythmic perfection were because of Reiche." His professional skills put him at the top of his field. Working in the theatre, Reiche often performed trombone solos with the great symphony orchestras. In his *School of Trombone Playing* (published in Russia in 1935), he named several noted concert performers of his time (in Europe and America), and noted that he also soloed on the trombone many times. During his summer vacations from the Mariinsky Theatre, Reiche soloed and conducted at Sestroretsky Kurort (the suburb of St. Petersburg), Riga and Cherepovets. "As a trombone soloist, playing in a strict academic style, Reiche was a virtuoso, producing a mellow-metallic timbre", recalls his ex-student, N.S. Korshunov (later professor of the St. Petersburg Conservatory).

Reiche led a diverse musical career as a trombone player, conductor and trombone instructor at various times during his tenure. His compositional legacy includes two concertos for trombone and orchestra (B-dur and A-dur), a collection of duets and 65 etudes for trombone.



Trombone Quartet under the direction of Reiche (students A. Kozlov, N. Korshanov, I. Polyachkin and others)

The teaching pieces for trombone by Reiche are still a basic material that no trombonist can do without. *Concerto No. 1*, composed in 1899, contains a number of valuable features, simple and laconic in form, and is a remarkable piece for obtaining comprehensive technical skills and for developing a bright and beautiful sonority. By 1902 Reiche dedicated his well-known *Concerto No. 2 in A Major* for trombone to the renowned German trombonist, Paul Weschke (1867–1940), which challenges the performer with high artistic tasks, making it a true concert-competition piece.

The other aspect of Reiche's creative activity in St. Petersburg is connected with the teaching profession. He began his teaching career at the Military Cadet Brass Corps in 1906, and with the establishment of the military brass classes, was appointed teacher there. For a long time Reiche worked at two musical colleges, thus training musicians to enter the Conservatory.

In 1933 Reiche became professor of the Leningrad Rimsky-Korsakov State Conservatory. In the same year, he was unanimously nominated to succeed P.N. Volkov, professor of the wind and brass faculty, as head of the trombone class. Reiche's ex-students A.A. Kozlov and N.S. Korshunov (later professors at the Conservatory), described their tutor's work as follows: "Reiche's class was distinguished by its creative atmosphere and by serious attitude to the teaching process. He was always self-disciplined, punctual and laconic. His lessons were confined to the academic hour. The well-thought-out teaching technique, the lucidity of aims, methodical materials — all this, in full measure, greatly contributed to every hour of the teaching process. Beyond this, he did not restrict a student's individual interpretation of a piece and understanding of its contents."

Not content with just the study of etudes and concert pieces, he encouraged his students to take part in ensemble performances. Reiche truly understood the key to the creative development process for future orchestral players. He seemed to have a never-ending store of knowledge. Recalling his performance of musical classics under the famed con-

ductors, Reiche passionately demonstrated the most interesting excerpts from musical pieces. He was very open and had a high regard for his students. In general, he enjoyed playing for his class, and very often accompanied his students on piano. His marvelous capacity and scrupulousness for work, and his ability to maintain good relationships with others were surprising. Professor Reiche was highly reputed by professors, teachers and students as a remarkably versatile musician and educator. His many successful students made that evident.

Eugen Reiche taught a number of outstanding musicians and teachers. Among them are A.A. Kozlov, the principal trombonist of the Leningrad Academic Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra, V.P. Utkin, the principal trombonist of the St. Petersburg Maly Orchestra and Ballet Theatre, I.M. Polyatskin, the principal trombonist of the Mariinsky (formerly Kirov) Opera and Ballet Theatre and N.S. Korshunov, the bass trombonist of the St. Petersburg Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra. All of them were also successful in training the new generation of trombonists, using Reiche's and Volkov's methods. We, who have



Session of the wind and brass faculty (Leningrad Conservatoire, 1938)

inherited this legacy, are destined to carry it on and to develop these traditions by adding modern tendencies to the musical performance.

The hardest trial for Russia, its culture and spiritual life was the Great Patriotic War of 1941–45 (World War II). Like many foreigners, especially Germans, Reiche was exiled from Leningrad in 1942 to the remote village of Uzbek, far from Tashkent, where he suffered from hunger and other sorts of deprivation.

Shortly afterwards, the Navy Wind and Brass faculty of Leningrad Conservatory was evacuated to Tashkent. Thanks to the efforts of the faculty's board and students who knew Reiche in Leningrad, they somehow managed to find and return him to his professional activity, thus prolonging this brilliant musician's life.

He taught trombone and trumpet playing, as well as German, to the faculty. Despite his hard life at that period, Reiche remained a dedicated and exacting professional teacher. He did not tolerate a student's work undone, and constantly demanded correct embouchure and good breath control, and sufficient instrument playing practice from his students.

All the people he dealt with respected his human qualities: wealth of knowledge, cultured nature, superb pedagogical and musician's ability, dedication and thoroughness. They were proud of him.

In 1944 the faculty returned from Tashkent, but Stalin's Soviet government did not allow Reiche to come back to Leningrad after the end of the War. He continued to work at the Tashkent Conservatory. However, physical and morale hardships of wartime seriously deteriorated his health. Without any strength left, Eugen A. Reiche died from a heart attack in 1946, and was buried in Tashkent.

All of Reiche's versatile musical life is the best possible example of service for art and music. His contribution to the St. Petersburg school of trombone is great.