

# Bluebells of scotland



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Bluebells of Scotland “ Bluebells of Scotland” is a piece written and composed in the late romantic era around 1899 by Arthur Pryor. The piece was composed from a traditional Scottish folk song for the trombone and orchestral accompaniment. In the late 1800s the trombone was not viewed as an instrument that could perform particularly difficult pieces. Compelled by society’s negative opinion of the trombone, Pryor composed “ Bluebells of Scotland” in order to display the capabilities of the trombone and to emphasize that it could play very difficult pieces.

This piece is a little more upbeat and physical than other pieces of the same time period, but what makes this piece particularly unique is that it is the only piece with a high level of difficulty for trombone that was composed in the time of its conception. The piece is intended to be accompanied by an orchestra but can be played with piano accompaniment as well. The characteristics of this piece are very dynamic and free. The expressivity of the piece is left up to the interpretation of the performer which allows for a large amount of freedom and creativity.

There are quite a few cadences that allow the performer to take control of tempo and dynamics. “ Bluebells of Scotland” includes both very slow and lyrical passages as well as many very quick and difficult runs, double-tonguing, octave jumps, lips slurs, and a vast amount of high register notes. The introduction of the piece begins with a triumphant cadence peaking at a high register C, which slowly decays into a very lyrical melodic sequence that takes the shape of the original lyrics, which read: “ Oh where, tell me where, is your highland laddie gone?

Oh where, tell me where, is your highland laddie gone? He's gone with streaming banners where noble deeds are done. And it's oh! in my heart I wish him safe at home. ” The piece then moves into a much more difficult technical variation of the original melody and progressively builds in speed until the also very triumphant ending. Around the time the then eighteen or nineteen year old Arthur Pryor composed “ Blue Bells of Scotland”, he had only been playing the slide trombone for three to four years.

Pryor was given the slide trombone as a payment to a debt and taught himself to play it fairly quickly. Amazingly, Pryor wrote the piece with the knowledge of only a few slide positions and would use false tones and alternate positions for notes in the fifth, sixth, and seventh positions. Despite this, “ Blue Bells of Scotland” is still one of Pryor’s most memorable pieces and is still widely known today. A few years after composing “ Bluebells of Scotland” he arrived in New York by invitation of John Philip Sousa.

After arriving to be in Sousa’s new concert band, Pryor was offered by Frank Holton the position of principle chair trombonist. When Holton left the position, Pryor became the featured soloist of over 10, 000 solos as principle trombonist for Sousa’s band. “ Blue Bells of Scotland” serves as a constant reminder of the trombone’s capabilities as a very lyrical instrument and its ability for technical prowess as well. Arthur Pryor inspired interest in the trombone with his virtuoso playing, and “ Bluebells of Scotland” in particular has been a standard of trombone literature for decades and a favorite challenge for advanced players”(Kleiner). The piece will always have a special place in the hearts of all trombonists, both past and future. Works Cited [http://www.celticscores.com/sheet-music/628\\_Blue\\_Bells\\_of\\_Scotland](http://www.celticscores.com/sheet-music/628_Blue_Bells_of_Scotland)

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