

**A STUDY OF THREE WORKS PERFORMED ON
A GRADUATE HORN RECITAL**

by

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PREVIEW

A STUDY OF THREE COMPOSITIONS PERFORMED ON

A GRADUATE HORN RECITAL

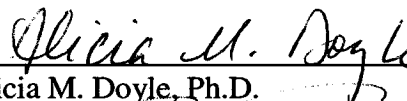
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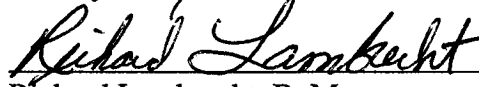
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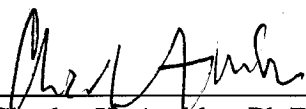
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Chapter I

Introduction

This thesis is intended as extended program notes accompanying a Graduate horn recital. Each piece is approached on its own terms, the discussion dealing with items specifically appropriate to that work. An attempt was made to present a varied program, involving deliberately contrasting works representing different aspects of horn playing.

The *Concerto for Horn in Eb and Orchestra K. 495* is representative of horn playing from a historical perspective, the piece lending itself nicely to a discussion of the horn's history as a valveless instrument and the music written for it in spite of its inherent limitations. The four concertos for horn by W. A. Mozart are a staple of the horn player's repertoire, and are often expected on horn recitals. Only with insight on the horn's history may a convincing performance of these works take place.

The four pieces for horn from Reinhold Glière's *Opus 35* are not played as often as his *Concerto in Bb for Horn and Orchestra*, the latter representative of bold, technical writing for the horn. These four short pieces display the horn's ability to play *cantabile* and are a wonderful vehicle for the horn's most important virtue: its tone. These four short, slow pieces were played as a set with their order altered to best present them as a unified work.

En Forêt by Eugene Bozza is a masterpiece of idiomatic technical writing for the horn. It was written with the intent to display the horn player's technique as well

as mastery of extended techniques not always heard in recital. The work presents the capabilities of the modern horn particularly well when contrasted with the Mozart concerto performed before it and shows what the horn has become capable of since the adoption of valves.

PREVIEW

Chapter II

W. A. Mozart and the Concerto in Eb for Horn and Orchestra K. 495

In preparing a piece of music for performance one must consider the piece in its proper historical context. In most instances, the actual performance practice is directly related to when the work was written. The more that is known about this time frame, the greater the chances the performer will come closer to what the composer intended. This extends beyond the basic knowledge of the several musical time periods. In many cases understanding a particular point during the evolution of the instrument is equally important in achieving a convincing performance.

There are three distinct periods in the history of horn performance. These are all marked by changes in the basic technique used in playing and in the actual instrument itself. The first period really cannot be given a beginning date, as it began when the first person picked up a conch shell or ram's horn and blew through it. This is a phase where the player was limited to the natural harmonics of the particular tube that was being blown through. Innovations in instrument design greatly improved the tone of the pitches that were available, but the same basic precept remained: players were limited to the notes of the naturally occurring harmonic series.

The second phase of horn playing opened a new world both for the performers and composers. With the advent of hand-stopping technique all of the pitches that

were not previously available became usable. Composers began to write differently for the horn, not limiting it to the pitches of the harmonic series but writing for it as a chromatic instrument (still not without its idiosyncrasies, however.). This phase lasted until the valve was invented, which is the third and present phase of horn playing.

When performing pieces written in the second phase (for valveless horn) on the modern instrument (with valves), an extra bit of sensitivity to historical context is required. It is both necessary and desirable to have a full understanding when performing the works of this second era of the technique used on the instrument for which it was written, even though the actual historical instrument may not necessarily be used. This knowledge will affect aspects of phrasing and sometimes can shift emphasis to notes that for no other reason would be emphasized.

This paper is intended to explore those issues involved in the performance of Mozart's *Concerto for Horn and Orchestra* in Eb, K. 495. Also critical to this study is an understanding of basic hand horn technique as well as history of the horn's development in the hand horn period. There will also be a brief discussion of the cataloging problems specific to the four concertos Mozart wrote for horn.

Development of Hand Stopping

Overtone series

Brass instruments as a family produce tones according to the harmonic overtone series. This series of tones are innate to the instrument and are present, at least partially, in any aerophone. The notes of the harmonic series, up to the 16th harmonic, are:

Harmonic Series



Not all of these notes are “perfect” according to our equal-tempered method of tuning, however. The seventh, eleventh, and fourteenth harmonics are naturally quite flat and the thirteenth is sharp. In addition to these intonation problems, there are many notes not naturally present in this series, particularly in the lower and middle range of the series.

Baroque era trumpet and horn players coped with this by developing a *clarino* style of playing. Trumpeters and hornists (sometimes one and the same) developed their playing abilities in the upper register of the harmonic series, sometimes all the way up to the 24th harmonic. The higher registers make many more notes available, making the florid, chromatic melodic lines of the *clarino* style possible.

The late Baroque and mid-eighteenth century periods saw the rise of horns being used in pairs. Players would specialize either in *Cor alto* or *Cor Basse*. The *Cor alto* specialized in the *clarino* style of playing, while the *Cor Basse* specialized in the middle and lower ranges of the instrument.

Hampel

Anton Joseph Hampel, (1710-1771) a Bohemian horn-player and pedagogue, is most often cited for “inventing” what is known to day as hand-horn technique. In addition to this, he is also credited with the invention of the non-transposing horn mute as

well as the *Inventionshorn*, which is to be discussed later. Hampel occupied the position of second horn in the Dresden Hofkapelle from 1737-1764. His son, Joseph, played horn in the Hofkapelle, joining in 1768. Hampel had many distinguished students, most important of these was the soloist Giovanni Punto (also known as Stich.)

The earliest reference to Hampel's use of hand stopping is in Heinrich Domich's (1767-1844) text *Methode de Premier et de Second Cor* (1807.)¹ In this text the account of Hampel's discovery/invention describes his interest in the custom of placing cotton in the bells of oboes to soften their sharp, penetrating sound. Hampel had previously invented the non-transposing mute, and wanted to see what the effects of a wad of cotton used as a mute would be. This cotton stopper raised the pitch of the horn a semitone, and through experiments he found that by pulling the stopper in and out he could play diatonic and chromatic scales. After realizing that the job of the stopper could just as easily be done with the hand, the stopper was disposed of and, according to Heibert, hand-stopping was born.² The date cited for this invention of hand-stopping is around 1770, but this is probably much too late. Hampel's death in 1771 would have significantly reduced the spread of the technique, as it would have only been taught for one year. It is more likely that Hampel was the first to present the technique systematically and, perhaps most importantly, on paper.³

¹ Thomas Heibert, *The Horn in Early Eighteenth Century Dresden: The Players and their Repertory* (DMA Thesis, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1989), 193.

² Heibert, 194.

³ Horace Fitzpatrick, *The Horn and Horn-Playing and the Austro-Bohemian Tradition from 1680-1830* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 84.

Practical Use of the Technique

Initially the use of hand stopping was probably a novelty, even to Hampel himself. However, he quickly began to realize the practical benefits of the technique. There are accounts that Hampel tried to imitate the left-hand figuration of the harpsichord in his *Cor Basse* parts. Unfortunately, physics left the horn without the subdominant note in the bass; for a horn pitched in C, there is no naturally occurring F in the bass register. The discovery was made that the subdominant could be played by lowering the pitch of the third harmonic a full step by cupping the hand in the bell. For example, for horn in C, the subdominant F is attained by bending down the pitch of the third harmonic G. This technique became common practice and the subdominant was included in compositions, with the expectation that the hornist would accommodate using the new stopping technique. Gradually it was discovered that other “missing notes” could be produced by this method, allowing the second horn player to play more and more complex figurations.⁴

With the advent of hand-horn technique, the pitches in between harmonic tones were filled in, creating the ability for the hornists to play chromatic notes that were not usable before. As far as technique is concerned, the normal position of the hand in the bell is with the outside of the fingers touching the far wall of the bell, the thumb is on top of them in the same horizontal plane, and the ball of the thumb is slightly cupped toward the inner wall of the bell (as when swimming.) The notes of the harmonic series were

⁴ Anthony Baines, *Brass Instruments: Their History and Development* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1993), 159.