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Timbre of the historical horn and it's interpretation in
the field of contemporary performing art

Thesis

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Background to the research

During my music studies, I had the opportunity to learn about the unique characteristics of Hungarian and Austrian music education. As a professional musician and member of orchestras at home and abroad, I apply the knowledge I have acquired in learning to play the modern valve horn, Viennese horn and natural horn. The different characteristics and sounds of the different types of instruments still fascinate me today, especially in the case of the natural horn. My personal enthusiasm for the natural horn has therefore played a major role in my choice of topic for this thesis. Hungarian education has been at the forefront of training the world's elite in the field of horn education, and nothing is better proof of this, than the fact that Europe's leading orchestras occupy many Hungarian musicians as soloists and section principals.

In terms of domestic education, I have found that we have very little literature and equally little experience in learning historical interpretation techniques. Most of the available, well-structured works are available in French, English and German. And the experience of contemporary performers shows that there is a demand for these bodies of knowledge, and therefore a need to address the subject in a meaningful way.

The thesis of my research is to investigate the artistic expressive aspects of historical horn sound in contemporary performance practice. I hypothesize that there has been a trend in the development of horn sound that has led to a narrowing of the diverse sound of the instrument. The historical sound has such a powerful means of expression that it could be used in the context of modern performance art because of its unique sound. The sound and performance habits of earlier periods may have been very different from contemporary sound, and for a long time we could only hear it performed by historical ensembles. Nowadays, many modern symphony orchestras, both at home and abroad, have shown an openness to enriching their own sound by authentically evoking Baroque, Classical and Romantic music.

Methods and results of the research

The scientific literature was supported by Herbert and Wallace (1997): *Brass Instruments* and Baines (1993): *Brass Instruments Their History and Development*. The interpretative conventions which, as a practice of the 17th and 18th centuries, determined the basic rules of natural horn playing and, indirectly, the sound of later modern instruments, so therefore became the starting point of my research. The content of these works made it clear to me that it was necessary to clarify the most basic terminological issues and to explore the development of the instruments relevant to my subject. In the first part of my thesis, I will deal with the development of the instrument and the changes in the sound world associated with its performance practice.

In order to gain a complete understanding of performance techniques, I examined the art of the respective art historical periods. Music, musical instruments and the musicians who played them were a popular topic in the Baroque and Classical periods, so the analysis of these works of art is an essential component of the research. By analysing the surviving methods, I was able to find answers to questions about the performing habits and sound of the time. The descriptions of Raoulx, Roeser, Hampl and Punto, Domnich, Duvernoy, Vandembrock and Strauss can be considered as a basic work on the authentic sounding of the natural instrument. Diderot and d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie* (1751), on the other hand, have been helpful in the analysis of old hunting tunes in my thesis. The practice of the hunts has given rise to a way of playing music, methods and visual art that can create a surprising soundscape even in the performance practice of historical movements. An extensive study of natural sound systems and a masterly interpretation of their use may become necessary for the modern performer. In the light of my research, it is also worth considering the use of overtones that have been rejected by the practice of the last century and among the mainstream dominance of classical harmony.

An inescapable and extensive part of the research was the discussion of Hampl's hand technique and the related problem of sound production. By presenting certain musical excerpts, various characters, timbres and problems encountered in classical natural horn playing are discussed. In the light of the research findings, I will

discuss classical, early romantic and 20th century music for which a master's interpretation of tradition and routine interpretation may be justified.

Over the last two centuries, there have been significant changes in the construction and use of the horn, which have affected performing habits and, over time, have shown increasing permissiveness towards the already established tonal demands. This process is not only reflected in the contemporary descriptions of musicians, some composers combined the sound of the natural horn with the chromatic qualities of the valve horn by a simultaneous, mixed use of old and new horn sounds. Richard Wagner played an important role in the demand for a special sound through his use of the Wagner tuba. While the Vienna Philharmonic adhered to the traditional sound of the horn, the world was moving towards a new, more balanced sound through the use of modern Kruspe valve horns. Music literature and contemporary descriptions show that the profession was consistently concerned with overcoming the performance difficulties arising from the limited possibilities of early versions of the horn. The preservation of the old sound qualities seemed to be less and less important. The research points to the contrasting possibilities of the 'sterile' horn sound that has developed over the last century and a half and the use of archaic sound patterns that are different from the usual.

The nuanced colouration of the different fundamental voicings of the French horn has been experimentally confirmed with informative data by spectral analysis of the natural horn sound. The imitative application of the horn's timbre was also informed by Audsley (1925).

As a surprising result of my research, I found that, in parallel with the historical movements of the 20th century, several performers and composers took an active role in promoting the playing of the natural horn, placing the practice of historical music in the context of 20th century music: whether it was the promotion of historical instruments or the playing of modern instruments with historical performance techniques. I have examined the interpretation methods and natural horn specific musical effects of nearly 40 works using historical techniques unknown to contemporary musical practice.