

The History of the Horn and How it Applies to the Modern Hornist

Joseph Meinweiser  
UNHO 498: Honors Thesis Project  
March 18, 2016

## **Horn: A History**

There have been numerous debates and understandings of where the horn began, how it evolved, the "exact" dates for each era, and the names associated with each new development. In many ways, these disagreements perpetuate semantics; however, a thorough understanding of the history of the horn is of great value to horn players today. Knowing the particular limitations and qualities of the horn that a majority of the repertoire played today was written for is very helpful in determining style, phrasing, and the general approach one should take when performing.

Detailed in this section is the most likely birthplace of the helical horn, the tracing of its history through Europe, the mechanical development and improvements leading to the Baroque era, the technical development and systematic approach to hand horn technique, the invention of the valve, and the evolution of exactly how we play the horn today.

### **The Roman *Cornu***

While animal horns, sections of metal, wood, and seashell "piping," and many other blown instruments have been in existence since prehistoric times, the first picture of a helical horn comes to us from the Roman Empire dating back to at least 113 A.D. During this year, Trajan's Column was unveiled. On this column, there are 155 scenes that narrate the Dacian wars fought by Emperor Trajan. In scene 103, three helical horns are depicted played by men atop horseback in battle. Through historical writings and other sources, we see that these horns - the

*cornu* - are kept distinct in that they are curved brass instruments - unlike the *buccina* and *tuba* - and are curved in the shape of *G* where the *lituus* is curved in more of a *J* shape.<sup>1</sup>

These instruments were very primitive and served not a musical function, but a practical one. In the conquest battles of the Roman Empire, the horn would signal the movement of troops, battle fanfares, and a variety of other things that would be difficult to communicate through voice or message. The instrument itself produced a very loud tone and required skill to play, especially on horseback.

In regards to craftsmanship, the art had the endorsement of a quasi-brass-players-guild that was mentioned in illustrations and inscriptions on an altar stone in the Catacombs as well as in texts dating through the Fourth Century. As Rome declined, much of the culture and techniques faded from memory as well as fashion, including the art of curving brass through smelting. This would only be accomplished again through trial and error in the early Middle Ages.<sup>1</sup>

### **France and the Hunting Horn**

As we approach the first generally confirmed country of origin, it must be noted that there are many illustrations dotting the early to middle Sixteenth Century of a helical horn. In the Strasbourg edition of "Virigil" (1502) and the "Triumphal Procession of the Emperor Maximilian" (1517), there are helical horn players clearly pictured. The horn, though, seems to have been much more popular in France.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Horace Fitzpatrick, *The Horn and Horn Playing* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Fitzpatrick, 2.

The first purely musical use happens in 1545 in a collection of "Battles, Hunts, and Birdsongs" by Tylman Susato. In this, there are many transcriptions of madrigals and other works that were meant to be played on various instruments. It is clear in the writing that the tenor and bass parts could easily be played on the horn known in France at the time as the "trompe" which is distinguished from trumpet in Susato's writings.<sup>3</sup>

While the trompe seems to have existed as a horn for musical taste, the field version of the horn was a singly wound cylindrical instrument known as the "cornet de chasse". This instrument came out of the need for a longer projection than the Oliphant - an unwound animal horn - as mounted hunt became more and more common. While the stags would move further ahead of the un-mounted party, they would be able to send signaling calls that were lower, more resonant, and more stable as the fundamental was lowered due to the lengthening of the horn. Eventually, the conical nature of the Oliphant and the longer tube of the "cornet de chasse" combined to create the first true predecessor of our instrument: the French hunting horn.

This hunting horn was originally played as an instrument of effect to mimic scenes of nature, hunting, and the like. Mostly this consisted of fanfares and, specifically in France, the ballet troupes would use horns for their performances. The first surviving horn fanfare, however, is actually seen in the Italian Opera *Le Nozza di Teti e di Peleo* by Francesco Cavalli. The horn itself was most likely taken up in Italy due to the traveling French ballet troupes that would perform during the intermissions of the larger operas. In these performances, the horns would only play very simple tonic triads. This simple music reflected both the ability of the hornists, the knowledge of the composers, and the desires of the audience when it came to the sound of the horn.

---

<sup>3</sup> Fitzpatrick, 3.

## **Spörk and Bohemian Influence**

Count Antonin von Spörk was an Austrian nobleman who was intimately involved in the establishment of the powerful Danube Empire that made way for Bohemia to become the "Conservatory of Europe." Spörk also had a deep love for both music and the hunt and represented all that was courtly and noble in Bohemia. After his father, a wealthy general under the Emperor of Austria, died, he took a grand tour of Europe - not uncommon for young aristocrats in that time period - in order to both expose himself to new cultures and to exert control and maintain upkeep on the massive fortune of investments and lands that his father left behind. It was in the court of Louis XIV that Spörk first heard the hunting horn of France.<sup>4</sup>

Immediately upon hearing the horn, he was so deeply moved that he decided to import the art of mounted hunting and the hunting horn to his Bohemian home. Two of his brass players were immediately ordered to learn the horn while he was still in the French court. At this time, the horn had developed into a single hoop large enough to place around one's shoulders, which made it an ideal candidate for mounted performances.

Almost seamlessly, the horn found itself at home in the countryside and court life of Bohemia. The weather in this part of the globe is perfect for hunting as the summers are mild and the fall and spring seasons compose a good portion of the year. As the mounted hunt and hunting horn tradition became increasingly more common throughout Bohemia, including the Habsburg court, the instruments themselves became very expensive. It is recorded that a hunting horn in Bohemia would cost an average man a year's wage to purchase.<sup>5</sup> In many ways, the horn came to represent a new the idea of chivalry that occupied the minds of the aristocracy. This, in turn, led

---

<sup>4</sup> Fitzpatrick, 11.

<sup>5</sup> Fitzpatrick, 18.

the horn to find its idiomatic sound in evoking the outdoor atmosphere and also an aura of royalty.

In the 1680's, Spörk first used the horn in his orchestral performances. The first evidential piece was a collection of poems, song lyrics, and libretti by Johann von Besser. In one of the works, groups of actors representing different groups of people were led on stage by a group of instrumentalists. Specifically, in the work entitled *Schriften*, six Persian heroes were led on by a group of Bohemian horn players.<sup>6</sup> Later, Spörk used the horns in accompaniment with violin and viola and in the end, was an incredible sponsor of the horn being played in doors and, luckily, many of his colleagues followed suit. It is rumored that Spörk's influence on the horn's acceptance in the orchestra led Bach to write the Sanctus from B Minor Mass and its inclusion of the horn to his legacy.

### **Leichnambschneider and the Waldhorn**

After the final banishment of the Turkish hordes in 1683, Vienna became somewhat of a cultural center in Europe especially to the surrounding provinces of the Habsburg court. Johannes and Michael Leichnambschneider were brothers born in Osterburg, Vienna in 1676 and 1679 respectively. These brothers were born into a family of instrument-makers and opened their own shop around the beginning of the 18th century. Their biggest achievement was to transform the out-of-doors hunting horn into the full-throated waldhorn that was played during the Baroque era of Austria.

It is said that the composer, the player, the listener, and the instrument maker determine the style of an era. In regards to the horn, the Leichnambschneider brothers developed a new

---

<sup>6</sup> Fitzpatrick, 22.

instrument that could blend better with the orchestra and had a darker and broader tone, unlike the hunting horn, which was abrasive and penetrating. The waldhorn's character was very different from its immediate predecessor. The lower range of the horn was grainy and bassoon-like. The middle range was smooth and of generally high quality. The high range, though bright, was very round. These qualities are in stark contrast to the non-existent low range, the bright and penetrating middle range, and the absolutely piercing high range of the hunting horn.<sup>7</sup>

The Leichnambschneider's other large accomplishment was the invention of orchestral crooks. These crooks were sections of tubing of varying length that would fit into the lead pipe. Each length of piping corresponded to a different key and, as this system became more defined and well-known, professional hornists would be expected to carry at least six crooks; these were generally pitched in F, E, Eb, C, Bb Alto, and Bb Basso. While this was generally the standard, some players carried more as, much later, composers demanded new keys.

### **The Development of the Horn in the Orchestra**

The first orchestral horn players were most likely tutees of Spörk's players after he brought the horn to Bohemia. These men were the sons of huntsmen and foresters of the Austrian nobles and were Bohemian, Austrian, or German blood. As horn playing developed, Prague became a center for its players as both teachers and professional players began to reside there. The first major teacher of the horn was Hermoläus Smeykal, the man who most likely tutored Anton Joseph Hampl.<sup>8</sup> Because of the surge of teachers, we have record of traveling German-Bohemian horn players to many different places including London as early as 1704.

---

<sup>7</sup> Fitzpatrick, 29.

<sup>8</sup> Fitzpatrick, 51.

As players and the horn itself developed, composers began to feel comfortable enough with the instrument's capability to write for it. This first happened in the late 1710's and included composers such as Bach, Handel, and Telemann. Specifically, Bach opened up the idea of the horn as a feature instrument in his Brandenburg Concertos, the first of which was composed in 1719. This piece reflects the idiomatic nature of the horn due to the hunting calls, the range (2nd and 3rd octave), and the fact that it never goes above a high "C," clearly distinguishing it from the trumpet.

When Bach was composing, we know that he had no wind players on his staff and had to borrow them from other music ensembles. His horn players most likely doubled on trumpet, which would explain their capacity for the range in much of Bach's repertoire. Specifically, the Quoniam in the B minor mass was most likely written for Andreas Schindler, a high brass specialist of the Dresden Court.<sup>9</sup>

In Handel's compositions we realize that Handel was not composing for the French hunting horn, as many may speculate, but the horn that Leichnambschneider brothers developed. This is made obvious through the keys that he writes in such as G and Bb. In the texts that mention the French instrument it refers specifically to hunting purposes. This also leads us to believe that most of Handel's horn players were imports as the English horn players would most likely not have been able to accomplish the virtuosic playing required for Handel's operas.

### **Hand-stopping, Hampl, and the Transition to the Classical Era**

The most important thing to realize is that there are no clearly dated changes from one style of horn playing to the next but more of an evolution as better techniques are adopted

---

<sup>9</sup> Fitzpatrick, 67.

overtime. This is seen most clearly in the development of hand-stopping and its general attribution to Anton Joseph Hampl. While this technique does find its realization and documentation in Hampl, it is generally accepted that this practice is a culmination of techniques from many different performers and teachers.

Hand-stopping can best be explained as a way to play melodies and bring better intonation throughout the full range of the horn. Its biggest contribution was giving the horn a full chromatic scale in the first three octaves. Out of this new idea came the cor-basso technique, as horn players could never have played a melody in the 2nd horn range without the use of the right hand. Another unintentional consequence of hand stopping is the permanent placement of the right hand inside of the bell, which dampens the upper overtones. By the end of the 1770's hand-horn playing had almost completely replaced clarino horn.

Hampl, who first presented the technique of hand-stopping in a systematic form, was a pupil of Smeykal, the first major horn teacher discussed earlier. He came out of the Dresden Court and was a virtuosic player in his own right. His hand-stopping technique came along side of the general transition from the Baroque era to the Classical era. Through his and many other's hard work, by the time of Hampl's death, he had seen the horn established as an "...accepted solo instrument in every court in Europe."<sup>10</sup>

As hand-stopping technique became more and more prominent, the need for change in instrument manufacture became more and more apparent. As the desire of the public ear slowly changed, it was more necessary for the horn to exist in homophonic textures in contrast to the

---

<sup>10</sup> Fitzpatrick, 89.

polyphonic textures of the Baroque style. Due to this change, instruments began to sound more alike overall and the horn became more about blend than distinction.

Johann Werner is known as the father of the modern German horn and he was the maker that assisted Hampl in redesigning the waldhorn in order to better accommodate hand-stopping and create a horn that had a better chance of blending with the rest of the orchestra. Werner widened the bell throat and bore in order to darken the sound and accommodate the right hand. Another major change was replacing the terminal crook with a crook that fit into the body of the horn. Eventually, a tuning slide was put in as well and this horn came to be known as the *Inventionshorn*. Werner was to horn-making as Hampl was to hand-stopping and through them, as well as many others, the horn transitioned from the Baroque to Classical area.<sup>11</sup>

Another instrument-maker of note was Anton Kerner. He adapted Werner's design and created a horn that allowed for hand-stopping and also kept the same basic design, which included maintaining the terminal crook system. These improvements did not alter the general nature of the horn as Werner's did which pleased the players in Vienna, Berlin, and Dresden. It is on this horn that the Mozart and Haydn Concertos were performed. In essence, Kerner's instrument was a twice-wound corpus waldhorn.<sup>12</sup>

While these two makers defined the horns played during the hand-stopping period, it would be irresponsible not to understand that there were many other active horn makers at this point making changes on both styles of the horn to fit the taste of their specific region's horn players. These makers had varying degrees of success of which none reached the acclaim of the Werner or Kerner horns. One such horn that did reach a significant place in history is the

---

<sup>11</sup> Fitzpatrick, 128.

<sup>12</sup> Fitzpatrick, 132.

Orchesterhorn. This horn, though having no clear patent date or maker, still finds favor in Austria today as it grew into the church orchestras throughout the centuries. The style of this horn is almost an exact copy of Werner and Kerner models as it has a tuning slide while still maintaining a terminal crook.

### **The Valve**

The horn we play today relies heavily on the valve system for pitch accuracy, intonation, and many other factors of our playing. We must realize that the horn we play today is the result of 100 years or more of developments and changes throughout the 19th and early 20th century. Again, we must also understand that the common public did not readily accept the valve systems, partly due to their faulty nature and partly due to the effect they had on the horn's sound.

The hand-horn was known for its out-of-doors quality and its very quaint sound. The stopped notes' sounds, though nearly indistinguishable by the greatest players, became the idiomatic "cuteness" that defined the true nature of the horn. The valves, in more ways than one, deprived the listener of this sound, which led to it being rejected by composers and audiences alike for many years.

The first attempt at a chromatic-by-mechanical horn was by Köbel as early as 1760. This horn had two valves - pistons - that raised the pitch a half step and a whole step respectively.<sup>13</sup> This idea, though not the specific design, caught the attention of many others who sought to solve a major issue of horn players: the heavy and awkward cases. With as many as 8 or 9 orchestral crooks and the horn itself without modern carrying cases, it was very cumbersome to

---

<sup>13</sup> Reginald Morley-Pegge, *The French Horn: Some Notes on the Evolution of the Instrument and Its Technique* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1960), 26.

carry a horn to different locations in order to perform as well as a performer's daily commute from home to rehearsal. The main idea of the valves was not to be rid of hand-stopping, but to be rid of the crooks or at least limit the number that would need to be carried.

Charles Clagget was the first to use a valve system based on the principle we use today. His horn consisted of two separate horns a half-step apart brought together at the mouthpiece pipe with a small mechanism that switched the mouthpiece to the opposite horn. However, the intonation and sound did not hold up and his particular design did gather much acclaim.

The valves from Köbel and another maker, Stözel, had a general fault that was eventually corrected by Meifred and Labbave: the lack of additional tubing. Meifred and Labbave were the first makers to add additional tubing that the air would run through with the valve depressed and not run through if the valve was not depressed.<sup>14</sup> They also created tubular valves instead of square valves and a screw that guided the valve as it went down to eliminate some of the tendency for the valves to get stuck. At this point in time, the horn used a combination of valves, crooks, hand-stopping, and a main tuning slide to adjust for intonation, clarity, and the playability of particular pitches.

While the Meifred and Labbave horn became somewhat of the standard at that time for those who accepted the valve, there were many other types of valves invented during this time period. This included twin-pistons, ascending pistons, and swivel valves. All of these types of valves appeared and were generally successful for a short while before shortcomings were seen in all of them.

---

<sup>14</sup> Morley-Pegge, 39.

In 1832, Joseph Riedl revealed an invention that would have the biggest impact on the development of the horn we play today: the rotary valve. This consisted of a brass or silver rotor with two channels inside of the casing. When the rotor is not pressed the air goes straight through the horn. When the rotor is pressed, the air is diverted through the slide attached to the rotor and then back through the rest of the horn.<sup>15</sup> This idea caught on almost immediately everywhere except England, France, and Belgium as the rotor created a very smooth change and was much less likely to malfunction or become stuck as the piston was. Through many other developments and tastes, this horn eventually led to the double horn (F/Bb) that we play on today.

One very interesting idea that came just after the rotor that did not share in the rotary valve's prolonged success was the omnitonic horn. As previously mentioned, horn players were seeking a solution to the awkward heaviness of the horn. In Germany, this was solved through the invention and continuous improvement to the valve system. As the valves were invented, they mostly consisted of two valve systems that could put their horns in F, E, Eb, and D. The players would then, through a combination of hand stopping and transposition skills, be able to play every note on the horn. In France, however, this was solved through the omnitonic horn. This horn contained all 9 tonalities that the horn player was used to playing in. To change the tonality, you would move the slide to the appropriate position and fix it in place with the spring catch. This invention, especially in France, predominated valve systems in order to prevent the loss of the hand-horn, as many feared that the instrument would fade away completely. Instead of hearing the stopped note as "strange," they saw it as a peculiar quality possessed by no other instrument.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>15</sup> Morley-Pegge, 40.

<sup>16</sup> Morley-Pegge, 58-59.

## **A Summary of Evolution**

It is a fact that no other instrument has a more varied existence than the horn. From the late Seventeenth Century to 1750, the horn was in a simple form. Throughout this time, it changed only through the increase of its length. It found its idiomatic nature in the hunting calls of the court of Louis XIV and through the trumpet-like quality of the orchestral horn realized through Bach and his contemporaries.

Over the next century (1750-1850), hand horn technique began, grew, and faded. The low range became possible and appreciated due to the added pitches available through hand-stopping. The horn also found itself in the spotlight as an accepted solo instrument in courts across the whole of Europe. Due to improvements in design, the horn also gained an ability to blend in an orchestra as it never had before.

In the early Nineteenth Century, a new invention came to the horn: the valve. These changes came very slowly and unsuccessfully at first. This was due in part to players' infatuation with hand-stopping and in part to the faulty nature of the first valve systems. While today, we use the valves to find over three octaves of chromatic pitches, the first valves were simply seen as a way to change crooks in an easier fashion; they did not necessarily replace hand-stopping. As the years went by, the horn developed into the Bb/F horn that we play today due to a variety of factors. Even France, the longest holdout, eventually incorporated valves into their horns as it became the dominant horn of the modern era.

In the end, it comes down to artistry. There are many problems with the French horn throughout the course of history and even today, but it is these "problems" that create the horns

idiomatic sound and it is up to artists to overcome the difficulties and bathe in the joy of the sound of the horn.

## **How the Hand-Horn Impacts Today's Performance**

The horn we play today (Double F/Bb) is very established in the tradition of orchestral, band, solo, chamber, and even jazz traditions. However, even today, with triple horn becoming more popular among professional orchestras, the horn is constantly evolving. From its humble beginnings, the horn has grown to be a major foundation in some of the most fundamental ensembles in the history of Western music. In so many ways, the horn has evolved; however, there are many things to learn from the past. Though we no longer have the need for hand-horn technique, learning to play the hand-horn and understanding its technique can be an invaluable asset in navigating the difficulties of the modern horn as well as comprehending the nature of the pieces in our repertoire originally written for hand-horn.

### **Ideas from Experience**

During the past three months, I have been studying hand-horn technique in order to present my findings and develop my own playing on the modern horn. While our modern horn and hand-horn have different challenges, many of the difficulties of our horn are amplified on the hand-horn. This may seem counter-productive in improving your own playing, but the amplification can serve to point out the shortcomings on your modern horn in a way that allows you to specifically target them. These shortcomings include pitch, tone, and phrasing.

## Pitch

Pitch is the bane of instrumentalists from the first day they pick up their horn. This is very true for brass players and dangerously true for hornists in particular. Due to where the range of the horn fits in the harmonic series, as you play higher on the horn the partials get much closer together than do the partials on the cylindrical brass instruments such as the trumpet or trombone. This issue, in addition to the small mouthpiece and the more than three octave range required in more modern music, makes the horn unreliable at its best and dastardly evasive at its worst. One way to practice this pitch issue is to learn to play the hand-horn.

There are no valves on the hand-horn; therefore, it is only possible to play notes available on the harmonic series unless you manipulate your hand in the bell in order to change pitch. Though it may seem simple to play notes without having to remember the modern horn valve combinations, it requires the one thing that can ensure improvement of pitch: a good ear. On the modern horn, many players believe that the valve combination is the key to sounding the correct pitch. This could not be further from the truth. While the valve combination is important, to play the correct pitch in tune, you must be able to hear the pitch inside your head.

The issue for inexperienced players is that the modern horn allows you to get close to the note without having to hear it. This is why many young horn players are very inaccurate and play very out of tune. Through playing the natural horn, a student is forced to develop an ear in order to play any kind of passage, as you must be able to hear a note in order to play it. Even without employing hand-stopping, you have to be able to hear a major triad in order to find the fundamental pitch. As you employ hand-stopping, this becomes even more difficult.

The basic notes that one will be required to play on the open natural horn without bending or hand-stopping are C in the first octave, G and C in the second octave, E, G, Bb, and C in the third octave, D, E, G, and every note above an A in the upper range. Just being able to hear and play these notes can prove to be difficult, as some of them lie flat or sharp on the horn such as the Bb in the third octave and the E in the third octave. Attempting to play these pitches without being able to hear them can prove to be very frustrating. Often, you will most likely end up playing the wrong pitch, especially as you play higher in the range. One way to work on this is to focus on the basic triad (C-E-G for F Horn). If you embed these three pitches in your head, it will be much easier to hear the major and perfect intervals that span the rest of the horn.

As you add in hand-stopping, it becomes even trickier to play with correct pitch. The most difficult thing about learning this technique is that there is no one-size-fits-all method. Because of the difference in horn size, bore size, and hand size, it will require different positions for different players to play correct pitches in the correct style. For instance, the F sharp at the top of the treble clef staff sounds best completely stopped for some players and with the hand completely out of the bell for other players. By really delving into this technique, the student will improve their ear through the use of tuners, drones, or a piano. As they become accustomed to using their ear to develop their technique, they can transfer this process to playing with better pitch centeredness on their modern horn instead of completely relying on the valve.

### **Tone**

As discussed in the historical section, tone is the cornerstone of the horn's existence. Its idiomatic sound is what drew Spörk to it, its wonderful richness is what brought it into the orchestra, and its quaint beauty is what delayed the implementation of the valve system for so

long. The natural horn, when approached correctly, can give you a picturesque tone that can be carried over to the modern horn.

The goal sound on horn - and any brass instrument - is to play a perfectly centered tone avoiding grit and air. On the modern horn, this is very simple to do when playing *forte* or louder as the quantity and speed of air required to play loudly will usually produce a much higher quality tone. However, the issue comes when trying to play a medium or soft level. At this volume, it is incredibly important to mimic the air speed and quantity in technique but not in reality. While using a decibel meter or other advanced tools may assist you, learning to play the natural horn can help you as well.

The hand-horn in general is a much smaller instrument, as there is less tubing for your air to move through. This creates a unique environment for tone. The natural horn, due to its size, is not built to play at the same loud volume that the modern horn can sustain; if this is attempted, the tone will pass the point of edge and "break." Therefore, it is necessary to play at a lower volume at all times when playing the hand-horn. This one factor is enough to make you work at producing a consistent air stream in the middle-volume levels in the same way that you would at the louder volume levels on the modern horn.

Throughout my time on the hand-horn, I have experienced this tonal dilemma and only towards the latter days of my study did I gain access to this full sound. The air stream is the key to this tone and through the practice of the hand-horn, one can develop a full tonal stream through intensive listening and experimentation. By no means does the natural horn create this rich sound, but it gives the student obvious signs when this sound is not being achieved, whether it be through breakage of the inability to play a pitch in tune.

## **Phrasing**

The last performance function that improved during my study of natural horn was phrasing, and specifically phrasing in works written for the natural horn. In many ways, we approach works by Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, and many the others of that era in a very erroneous way when it comes the phrasing. While the beauty of the idiomatic sound of the horn is obvious and desirable, during this time period, that sound came with a major limitation: hand-stopping.

While hand-stopping can produce, in many ways, a very desirable sound, the transition between stopped and open is a relatively difficult technique to master. If this is done poorly, a smear is created and the quaint sound is replaced by an almost comical effect. The ultimate goal of a hand-horn player is to produce both stopped and open sounds in a way that they are indistinguishable from each other. While this does have a lot to do with the placement, speed, and shape of the right hand, success in this area comes from a lengthy and focused practice of trial and error.

The idea of phrasing in this manner comes from the fact that the horn player must interpret phrase marking specifically with this hand-horn technique in mind. The reason for this is that you must articulate, however softly, every time you change from open to closed and vice-versa. This can be seen very clearly in Mozart's horn concertos. Specifically, in his Fourth Concerto (K. 495), Mozart writes very few articulations into the music, which leaves it to the performer to interpret the phrases. One small section of the concerto looks like this:

51

Tutti 1 Solo

57

17

In this section, starting at the "solo" marking in measure 56, there are two notes that must be at least stopped and these specific notes require you to lean on them in order to create correct phrasing. These two notes are the C# in measure 58 and the D# in measure 62. It is important to lean on these notes when playing them on the modern horn as the stopped quality of these notes made them very distinct in context with the other notes around them. Mozart wrote these notes in places with the specific knowledge that they would stick out and so now that we have surpassed the need for a stopped sound, we must lean on these notes in order to create the intended phrasing.

While this is only one example, through a study of the natural horn and its music, one can understand the music in the way that the composer intended while not detracting from the musical value of the work. In many ways, a total understanding of the hand-horn is essential to many works in order to serve the composer's wishes whether or not you ever perform the work on its originally-intended instrument.

## Conclusion

---

<sup>17</sup> Wolfgang A. Mozart, *Konzert in Es für Horn und Orchester* (Basel: Bärenreiter Kassel: 2003), 2.

The horn has a rich history that spans over two centuries of rapid change and improvement that continues on a smaller scale even today. While the horn itself has evolved far past its earlier days of harmonic limitation and hand-stopping, understanding these ideas both historically and practically can be beneficial to the modern horn player. The history of the instrument leads us to honor composer's intentions and the technique itself helps us to create accurate phrasing, develop a better sense of intonation, and improve our distinct "horn" sound. Through our study of the natural horn, not only are we becoming more aware of the past and thus creating more authentic and accurate performances, but also we become more attuned to our modern instrument and develop our art in surprising and beautiful ways.

## Bibliography

- Reynolds, Verne. *The Horn Handbook*. Portland: Amadeus Press, 1997.
- Fitzpatrick, Horace. *The Horn and Horn Playing 1680-1830*. London: Oxford University Press, 1970.
- Morley-Pegge, Reginald. *The French Horn: Some Notes on the Evolution of the Instrument and of its Technique*. New York: Philosophical Library, 1960.
- Janetzky, Kurt, and Bernhard Brüchle. *The Horn*. Translated by James Chater. Portland: Amadeus Press, 1988.
- Humphries, John. *The Early Horn A Practical Guide*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus. *Konzert in Es für Horn und Orchester*. Basel: Bärenreiter Kassel, 2003.