

REVIEWS

Six trios pour trois trombones extraits de 50 leçons pour la trombone basse, alto & tenor (ca. 1795), by François René Gebauer. Edited by Howard Weiner. Paris: Editions Musicales Européennes, 2001.

Gebauer's book of études and trios for trombone is a work of tremendous historical significance. As editor Howard Weiner has pointed out elsewhere,¹ it is the first book of études ever published for trombone. It was issued as a companion to the first complete method book for trombone, that of André Braun.²

In order to understand these trios in their historical context, it is instructive to compare Braun's method with the comments of Othon Vandenbroek, which appeared at about the same time.³ Braun acknowledged a range of $f\text{-}eb^2$ for the alto trombone, $Bb\text{-}g^1$ for the tenor trombone, and $E\text{-}g^1$ for the bass trombone. Vandenbroek's ranges are somewhat different: $g\text{-}c^2$ for the alto trombone, $G\text{-}g^1$ for tenor trombone, and $F\text{-}g^1$ for bass trombone. Vandenbroek adds that the top two notes for the alto and tenor ranges (b^1 and c^2 , and $f\sharp^1$, and g^1 respectively) must be approached by step; otherwise they are far too difficult to play.

The fact that in both Braun and Vandenbroek the bass trombone has the same upper limit as the tenor trombone indicates that both are instruments in Bb . That Vandenbroek does not include a warning that the top notes of the bass trombone are too difficult to play unless approached by step may indicate that he expected the bass trombonist to be a stronger player than the tenor trombonist. (It may also indicate only that the engraver came to the bottom of the page and neglected to finish the discussion of the bass trombone at the top of the next.) It is less clear whether either author considered the alto trombone to be the same as the others with just a different mouthpiece, as Joseph Fröhlich and Andreas Nemetz did later,⁴ or if it was a smaller instrument in Eb .

It seems significant that Vandenbroek's intended audience was composers, and Braun's was trombone teachers and their students. It is clear from both Vandenbroek's recommendations and from trombone parts in literally dozens of band pieces, operas, and orchestral works that the proficiency of Parisian professional trombonists in the mid-1790s compares unfavorably with that of many trombonists in American high school bands of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Braun, as an educator, sought to encourage improvement.

Turning at last to Gebauer's trios, we find the following ranges: $f\text{-}c^2$ in the alto trombone (none of the c^2 s is approached by step), B (not Bb)- g^1 in the tenor trombone (the only g^1 is approached by step), and $F\text{-}e^1$ with optional f^1 in the bass trombone. Although Gebauer designates his trombones alto, tenor, and bass and uses those clefs, all of the parts are easily playable on what we would now call "straight tenors." Alto and bass trombones in the

modern sense are unnecessary and unhistorical. In fact, there are some brief passages where the “bass” trombone part offers a choice of two octaves, and the upper octave makes more sense musically. The slower trios include sixteenth notes. While American high school students who can read the clefs will find nothing outrageously difficult, some passages may have presented formidable problems for their first players.

Historical significance alone would hardly justify a modern edition. Is it music that only a scholar can love? Do these trios have any pedagogical value today? More to the point, are they exercises for three trombones, or pieces of music actually worth performing? I am pleased to say that they are delightful music. The first trombone ensemble music since Daniel Speer’s various trios and quartets, published a century earlier simply, takes up where the earlier pedagogue left off.

The first trio is a transcription of François-Joseph Gossec’s motet *O salutaris hostia*. Although Gossec’s music is little known today, he was one of the leading French composers of his generation. As Weiner points out, the piece was performed publicly on three horns by musicians of the National Institute of Music in 1793, a performance that may have provided the idea for including trios in the etude book—and that certainly inspired the choice of the piece to open the collection.

The fourth trio, after a brief introduction, turns out to be Haydn’s *Emperor Hymn*, although probably for political reasons, it is not acknowledged as such. The other pieces may be transcriptions of music that I do not recognize or they may be original compositions by Gebauer. In either case, they are fun to play and worth listening to. Every trombone quartet should have a selection of trios in order to have something to play if one of the members does not show up, and it is good to be able to recommend a set that, like the Speer trios, is worthy of preparing for public performance.

At this point in a review, it is customary to point out all of the typos and mistakes. I cannot find any, except that in the middle of the third trio, a simple double bar appears where one would expect to find a repeat. The original has a heavy double bar without the dots that would make it definitively a repeat. This is, after all, an urtext edition. As in the original, slurs are carefully marked, but there are insufficient dynamic and tempo indications. It should not be difficult, however, for performers to supply them. Weiner has done a fine job with this attractively printed edition.

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¹ Howard Weiner, “François René Gebauer’s *50 Leçons pour la Trombonne Basse, Alto & Tenor*: The Earliest Book of Etudes for the Trombone,” *Historic Brass Society Journal* 11 (1999): pp. 107-12.

² Howard Weiner, “André Braun’s *Gamme et Méthode pour les Trombones*: The Earliest Modern Trombone Method Rediscovered,” *Historic Brass Society Journal* 5 (1993): pp. 288-308.

³ Othon Vandebroek, *Traité général de tous les instrumens à vent à l’usage des compositeurs* (Paris: Louis Marchand, 1794?), pp. 54-55; cited with English translation in David M. Guion *The Trombone: Its*

History and Music, 1697-1811 (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1988), pp. 76-78.

⁴ Joseph Fröhlich, *Vollständige theoretisch-practische Musikschule* 4 vols. (Bonn: Simrock, ca. 1811), vol. 3, p. 33; cited with English translation in Guion, *Trombone*, p. 112; Howard Weiner, "Andreas Nemetz's *Neuste Posaun-Schule*: An Early Viennese Trombone Method," *Historic Brass Society Journal* 7 (1995): p. 18. Fröhlich contradicted himself a few paragraphs later by acknowledging an alto trombone in *eb*.

Zur Geschichte von Cornetto und Clarine: Symposium im Rahmen der 25. Tage Alter Musik in Herne 2000. Edited by Christian Ahrens and Gregor Klinke. Munich and Salzburg: Musikverlag Katzbichler, 2001. ISBN 3-87397-581-5. 160 pp., price unknown.

The renowned early music festival in Herne, Westphalia, celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary on 8-9 November 2000 with appropriate pomp—by mounting a symposium on cornetti and trumpets. It is only the second such symposium to be presented in Herne; the first, in 1999, was devoted to harpsichords. The present volume contains eleven papers, ten of which were read during the symposium and one added later. Nine are in German, two in English. All are on a high level and present welcome new information.

Three contributions deal with acoustical matters, generally speaking. In "Acoustical Factors Affecting the Intonation of Cornetti" (pp. 9-23), D. Murray Campbell deals with the natural modes or resonances of the air column. He shows in detail why the cornetto's bore shape, a sort of truncated cone, makes this instrument's mode frequencies deviate enough from an exact harmonic series that it generally overblows a ninth instead of an octave (a point raised in the next article by Roland Wilson, discussed below). The cup volume of its mouthpiece, in collaboration with the instrument's bore, prevents the higher harmonics from growing progressively still higher. Its complicated fingerings in the high register have to do with the so-called tone-hole cutoff frequency: sound waves of a frequency above ca. 1000 Hz "are not reflected back up the pipe by an open hole, as are lower frequencies, ... almost as though the hole [were] not opened." The effect of the mouthpiece volume on intonation becomes more and more significant as tone holes are progressively opened. For this and other reasons it is crucial that the mouthpiece be matched to the instrument. Campbell concludes his very interesting article with remarks on some unanswered questions. Since, for example, his data was gathered using artificial lips generating a sine-wave signal sweeping through the frequency spectrum from 50 to 2000 Hz in steps of 1 Hz, and tones generated in this way are much softer than those produced by actual players, further studies should concentrate on the role played by the player's lips in sound production.

Roland Wilson, in "Der Klang des Zinken im 16. bis 18. und im 20. Jahrhundert" ("The Sound of the Cornetto in the Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries and in the Twentieth," pp. 24-34), cautiously differentiates cornetti made in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries from one another. Since museum catalogues are notoriously unreliable as to such instruments' provenance (and of course, as a result, my own "Katalog

erhaltener Zinken" from 1981¹), one must be very prudent when attempting to assign a date to any given museum instrument. In my opinion, Wilson with appropriate caution has identified three basic types of cornetto: those before 1570, the "classical cornetto" from ca. 1570-1630, and later models from ca. 1700. It should be obvious, for instance, that different types of instruments were used in the music of, say, Gabrieli and Pezel. Wilson is able to show that cornetti from the earliest group differed in some significant respects from later ones: they had a round (instead of octagonal) outside profile, their bore was larger, and their walls were generally thinner. With time, bores became smaller and walls thicker. He notes a tendency in modern performances of historical instruments in general (including oboes and violins) to reduce the overtone component of their sound, thus making them more acceptable for the modern concert hall and for close miking during recordings; our notions about the sound of early music are thus falsified. Some other observations in Wilson's valuable study: certain surviving instruments that demonstrate a pitch of $a' = 440$ Hz (such as the two wonderfully preserved ones in Christ Church College, Oxford) were probably alto cornetti in G at $a' = 490$ Hz; the wall thickness of most modern reproductions increases towards the bell end, whereas with surviving "classical" Italian cornetti, the walls were thin throughout, thus favoring a bright sound rich in overtones; high Baroque cornetti with their thick walls and their loud, penetrating sound are (unfortunately) disliked by modern performers and conductors alike; and he also claims that most present-day performers use mouthpieces which are merely smaller versions of trumpet or flugelhorn mouthpieces, although Graham Nicholson's technical drawings of six original mouthpieces in the "Katalog erhaltener Zinken" (shown together in Wilson's article on p. 31) have subsequently served as the model for the mouthpieces of several players known to me, including Bruce Dickey. Many present-day players of Baroque trumpets are known to use modern mouthpieces; is this true of cornettists as well? When will players of historical instruments stop compromising on mouthpieces and instruments? Mouthpiece configuration is so crucial to timbre that one fervently hopes that early music practitioners, some day, will use historical models as an indispensable point of departure.

Rainer Egger's "Die Problematik des Naturtrompetenspiels aus akustischer und instrumentenbaulicher Sicht" ("Problematic Aspects of Natural Trumpet Playing Seen from the Acoustical and Instrument-Making Point of View," pp. 83-90) shows how a thoughtful instrument maker can facilitate the player's job of performing on authentic natural trumpets; we mean the renunciation of the use of anachronistic (but useful!) vent holes and a recourse to the technique of "lipping," particularly of the eleventh and thirteenth partials of the harmonic series. Egger uses the BIAS system to optimize intonation via bore corrections, a process that his ancestors also carried out, but only through trial and error. He differentiates clearly between the construction principles and behavior patterns of modern vs. Baroque trumpets; acoustically, the former are weakly dampened (with individual notes locking in strongly at pitch and a comfortable feeling for the player, as long as he remains within the instrument's dictates), the latter strongly dampened (so that "lipping" is more feasible but more strength is also required for ongoing sound production). It is a real eye-opener to see his graph no. 3, on which the impedance curves of Baroque and piccolo

trumpets are plotted together: a high sounding d^3 (at $a^1 = 415$ Hz) is the sixteenth partial of a Baroque trumpet in D (with a weak amplitude of 10 units on Egger's graph), but only the fifth partial of a piccolo trumpet in B \flat (with a very strong amplitude of 70 units). No wonder it is possible to bang out a high d^3 on a piccolo trumpet, whereas three hundred years ago such high notes were gentle! Using vent holes allows a modern player to approach modern playing technique, with the resulting falsification of volume and balance within an ensemble. This is why it is important for all Baroque trumpet players to be completely conversant with the way their instruments behave with all vent holes closed, before they start to use the holes for security's sake. (On one point I would like to correct a statement of Egger's. It is a common misconception that players of historical instruments try to conform to the equal-tempered scale. It is my experience with Baroque music, but even in the performance of dodecaphonic music, that expert players try to perform intervals and sound chords with "pure" or "just" intonation.)

Five contributions (including Wilson's, see above) deal with cornetts and serpens.

Sabine Klaus, in "Zwei Elfenbein-Zinken aus Süddeutschland?" ("Two Ivory Cornetts from South Germany?," pp. 35-50), describes two ivory cornetts acquired in 1999 by the Shrine to Music Museum of the University of South Dakota. One had been on loan for decades to the Vienna musical instrument collection by the Rothschild family,² together with many other valuable instruments, all of which were sold three years ago in a spectacular and controversial auction, whereas the other, a cornettino, was discovered in a Constance antique store by a private party in 1971. (The former instrument displays rich ornamentation that Herbert Heyde has shown to have been inspired by designs by Heinrich Aldegrever [1502–after 1555].³) Both instruments are curved to the right. The way ivory cornetts received their interior bore has long been a matter for speculation. X-ray photos of four of them can be found in the "Katalog erhaltener Zinken,"⁴ and one particular method was recently discussed by Eszter Fontana.⁵ Through the analysis of X-ray photographs, Klaus shows that the (only slightly curved) cornettino was bored out using straight tools inserted at both ends, whereas a combination of this and another method must have been used on the cornetto. On the basis of various evidence including pitch, she comes to the conclusion that this cornettino (with e^1 as the lowest note, not d^1) may have been made during the sixteenth century, perhaps in Nuremberg, whereas the cornetto—which originally belonged to the Dukes of Württemberg with residence in Stuttgart—was made in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century, perhaps even in Stuttgart.

Wolfgang Köhler's contribution, entitled "Zur Verwendung von Tenor- und Baßzinken" ("On the Use of Tenor and Bass Cornetts," pp. 51-64), deals in particular with the use of the tenor cornett. In his opinion and that of Lorenz Welker,⁶ a complete cornett family sounding in consort like recorders or crumhorns never existed, although the individual members, from sopranino to bass, were all made at one time or another and were employed in so-called broken consorts or ensembles of mixed instrumentation. Since a relatively large number of tenor cornetts survive—about fifty out of a total of approximately 300 surviving cornetts of all sizes—they must have been used rather frequently, mainly in the sixteenth century. Most of them seem to have been made in Italy. At least thirty-one of them were built

