Brahms and the Orchestral Horn: A Study in Inauthentic Performance?

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Introduction

In a 1997 performance at London's Barbican Centre, four horn players—Roger Montgomery, Sue Dent, Gavin Edwards and Robert Maskell—performed the fiendish Schumann *Konzertstück*, op. 86, for four horns and orchestra. This concerto is regarded as one of the most treacherous in the repertoire and these four musicians performed what, in the late twentieth century, was the almost unheard-of feat of using a set of four single F rotary horns, the type of instruments that Schumann would have known, for this performance. This concert was part of a complete Schumann cycle that Sir John Eliot Gardiner and the Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique had embarked upon at this time. To many period horn players, this performance and the subsequent release of a recording were comparable to the breaking of the four-minute mile.

The *Konzertstück* is a highly challenging work for horn players. Widor wrote in his 1904 *Technique de l'orchestre moderne* that "*Virtuosi* are so much afraid of this concerto that although they are willing enough to rehearse it in the orchestra, they will never venture to play it in public: the danger is really too great! ... [T]here is not a page without a stumbling block."[1] This impression of the work has remained to this day and to hear it played on single F rotary horns, instruments often deemed more primitive and more risky than the modern horn, was awe-inspiring.

The Orchestra Révolutionnaire et Romantique (ORR) was formed in 1989 to perform on period instruments later repertoire than its sister ensemble, The English Baroque Soloists. This reflected a general move being made at this time by many period instrumentalists, out of the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth century and in some cases the early twentieth century. To many this move has been confrontational, suggestive of the "early music brigade" invading little by little the traditional preserve of "modern" instrumentalists. But in many cases it has seemed a logical next step, because the deep knowledge and understanding that the performers have of earlier repertoire often feeds into the later repertoire.

Sir John Eliot Gardiner originally formed the ORR "to explore nineteenth-century repertoire from its origins in the French Revolution (Mehul, Gossec, Cherubini et al.) forwards."[2] The two central figures, Beethoven and Berlioz, were seen by Gardiner as "the primary architects of 'revolutionary' and 'romantic' symphonic music." Brahms featured from the start, with Gardiner and the ORR recording *Ein deutsches Requiem* in 1989, followed by a Beethoven cycle from 1992 to 1994. Gardiner believed that after the Schumann cycle in 1997 a similar Brahms project would be the logical next step.

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Yet other projects, such as the year-long Bach Pilgrimage in 2000 and the monumental undertaking of Berlioz's *Les Troyens* at the Chatelet, Paris (which formed the climax of Gardiner's long-term project to record all the major Berlioz choral and symphonic works), meant that the Brahms cycle did not materialize until ten years after the Schumann cycle that had inspired it.

In preparation for this project there was much discussion between the horn players and Gardiner as to the choice of instrument. Typically for German repertoire of the 1860s, '70s and '80s, a rotary horn with a terminal crook (often F) would be the instrument chosen, but playing Brahms raises questions about such a straightforward approach.

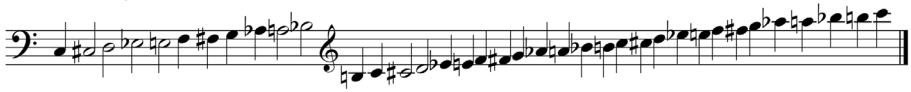
Brahms and the horn

Brahms's special relationship with the horn, and in particular the natural horn, is well documented and a favorite topic of horn players. His connection with the instrument would have started from birth, as his father was a horn player and is thought to have taught the instrument to the young Brahms.[3] It appears that Brahms received knowledge of the hand-horn in his childhood that was to engender in him not only a love of the instrument for the rest of his life,[4] but also a masterful understanding of how to write for the instrument in a bolder way than many of his contemporaries.

In Brahms's second public recital on 14 April 1849, he chose to include an arrangement of Schubert's *Ave Maria* for horn and piano.[5] In 1842 Jacques-François Gallay published his collection of *Six mélodies favorites*, based on Schubert themes, which included such an arrangement for horn and piano. It could be suggested that it was this work that was played on this occasion and that the horn player, Börs, would have been playing a hand-horn.

The best-documented link between Brahms and the hand-horn is the Trio in E♭, op. 40, written in 1865. It is acknowledged that Brahms specifically desired that the horn part should be played on a hand-horn.[6] This established example of Brahms writing specifically for the instrument has given grounds for speculation as to what Brahms would have been writing for in other works.

Many commentators on the Trio have struggled with the formal structure of the first movement, laboring under the impression that Brahms was restricted harmonically by the hand-horn and that this explains the unusual use of ternary rather than sonata form for the opening movement. This assertion would be understandable if Brahms had written the horn part of the trio in the style of the orchestral parts of Haydn[7] and Mozart—that is, restricting himself almost totally to the harmonic series, but this is not the case.



Example 1: Notes Brahms used (represented by quarter notes) and avoided (represented by half notes) in his Trio, op.40.

Example 1 maps the notes used (quarter notes) and not used (half notes) by Brahms in the horn trio and shows the composer's excellent understanding of the instrument. He avoids the $c\sharp^1$ and d^1, which, though not impossible, are particularly muddy, indistinct notes. It is also worth noting that he uses a^2 sparingly, showing a sensitivity that classical composers also exhibited. In the bottom octave he avoids use of the $b\flat$ and a, notes similar to the $c\sharp^1$ and d^1 mentioned earlier. He makes great use of the notes adjacent to the open low g, a trick that Beethoven also used to great effect. The low $c\sharp$, d, $e\flat$, and e—awkward notes,[8] normally avoided by composers for the instrument—are left out entirely.

During the nineteenth century there were many who did not believe the hand-horn to be a harmonically limited instrument. Louis-François Dauprat's *Méthode pour cor alto et cor basse* (1824) successfully demonstrates the breadth of harmonic possibilities on the instrument initially with the six closest keys to the pitch of the horn—the tonic, subdominant, and dominant, plus the relative minors. In an extension of this he demonstrates writing for horn in the major keys of the supertonic, leading tone, submediant, median, plus their relative minors, thus offering fourteen possibilities.

It is beyond doubt that Brahms intended his Trio op.40 to be played on the hand-horn. However, the quandary facing horn players performing Brahms's orchestral works is whether we can take Brahms's clear directions for this one piece and extend it to his other works.

The repertoire chosen for the ORR/Gardiner project was large. The orchestral works selected comprised all four symphonies (1876–85), *Variations on a Theme of Haydn* (1873), *Tragic Overture* (1880), and the Violin Concerto (1878). Sadly neither the piano concertos (1859, 1881), the serenades (1858, 1860), the *Tragic,* nor the *Academic Festival Overture* (both 1880) were included on this occasion, but the ensemble returned to Brahms, performing the Double Concerto (1887) during 2010 as part of another project. The choral works were the *Begräbnisgesang* (1858)*, Ein deutsches Requiem* (1868)*, Alto Rhapsody* (1869)*, Schicksalsleid* (1871)*, Naïne* (1881), and the *Gesang der Parzen* (1882). The only large-scale choral work missing is the *Triumphlied* (1871).

Further insight into Brahms's writing for the horn was apparent from smaller works included in the project, such as two of the Four Songs for female voices, two horns, and harp (1860) and his arrangement of Schubert's *Jäger, Rühe von der Jagd* ("Ellens Gesang II," op. 52, no. 2) for female voices, four horns, and two bassoons. Brahms's larger orchestrations of Schubert works, *Gruppe aus dem Tartarus* and *An Schwager Kronos*, were also included. In order to provide context for the entire project (entitled "Brahms: Roots and Memory"), other composers were also included, such as Schumann (*Nachtlied,* op. 108), Beethoven (*Coriolan Overture*), and Bach (Cantata no. 60, *O Ewigkeit, du Donnerwort*)*,* plus a number of other works for which horns were not needed.

In deciding what instruments to use, there were two main approaches: 1) to analyze the works involved, ascertaining whether they were written for hand-horns or valve horns; and 2) to examine the evidence from that time concerning horn playing, the techniques involved, how to write for the instrument, the performers, and the performances. Other issues, such as instrument manufacturing of the time, were also explored.

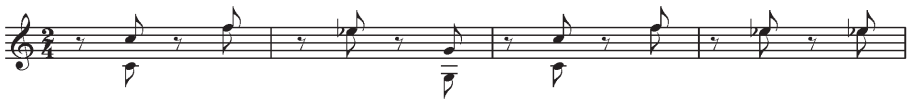
Did Brahms Write for Hand–horn in His Orchestral Works?

Looking at Brahms's horn-writing in works other than the Trio, one is struck by four things:

• **Use of the same notes as the Trio**
Brahms almost exclusively uses the same notes as in the Trio. The only exception in the symphonies is the single instance of *b♭* in the fourth horn part of Symphony no. 4 (second movement, m. 87). In the vocal works only one *d*^{1} can be found (*Begräbnisgesang*, first horn, m. 23). Comparing Brahms's writing for horn with earlier composers who wrote demanding hand-horn parts, such as Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn, and Weber, reveals that they followed the same pattern, writing for the instrument chromatically from *e♭*^{1} upwards, while in the lower range restricting notes to the open harmonics—i.e., *c, g, and c*^{1}—and treating chromatic notes a semitone to a fourth away from these open tones with great sensitivity.

These low notes all need to be treated with caution. Dauprat, in part three of his *Méthode,* explains how composers can write effectively from a low open note to a stopped note a semitone or tone away or vice versa. Long notes, or notes leading from or to an open tone, he says, are more successful than short, running passages, which would be indistinct in this range. Brahms treats such notes in this fashion.

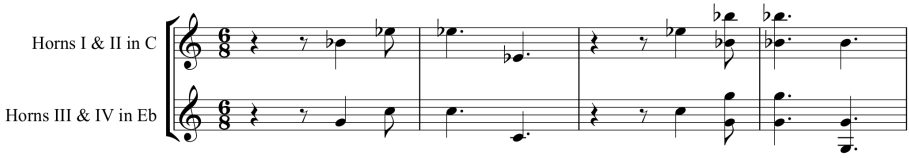
• **Low-horn leaps.**
In deciding whether a horn part is practical on the hand-horn, it is often more beneficial to focus on the low-horn parts. If we compare the second horn part from Brahms's *Tragic Overture* with the second *Ventilhorn* part from Schumann's *Manfred Overture,* op. 115 (1853), it is obvious that Brahms restricts the second horn to the second, third, and fourth harmonics (i.e., *c, g, c*^{1}). There is one low *f♯* (m. 209), which is approached from the *g* above. However, looking at the second *Ventilhorn* part in *Manfred,* it is immediately apparent that Schumann is more liberal in his choice of notes for this instrument. There are many instances of *b, b♭, a,* and *g♯*, often as isolated attacks. We also come across *c♯*^{1} and *d*^{1}. The use of these notes also indicates a typical feature of writing for valve instruments—the second horn and the first horn are frequently playing in octaves. For hand-horns this is atypical, as the second horn would often have to play indistinct notes. Composers often required the second horn to jump from an octave below the first horn to a unison in order



Example 2: Beethoven, Symphony no. 9, first movement, mm. 146–49.

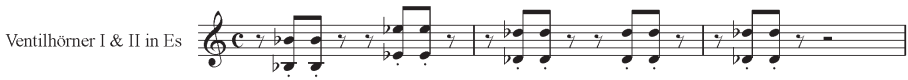
to avoid these notes. Example 2 shows how Beethoven wrote for the instrument, avoiding *f* and *e♭*[1] in the second horn part by writing unisons.

Example 3 shows a similar scenario, with Brahms avoiding *b♭* for the second horn (m. 180). This is a very easy note on a valve instrument but it can be somewhat intractable on the hand-horn. As mentioned above, Brahms writes this note just once in all of his horn parts.



Example 3: Brahms, Symphony No. 1, first movement, mm. 177–80.

Returning to *Manfred* (Example 4), it is evident that Schumann does not have the same qualms about these notes, writing regularly for the two valve horns in octaves, using many of the notes fastidiously avoided by Brahms and other composers writing for the hand-horn.



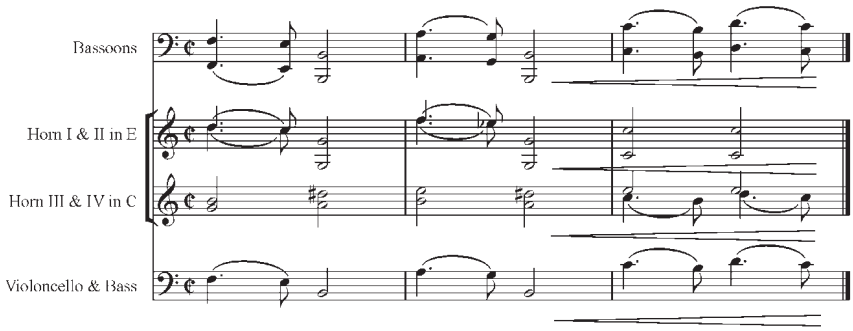
Example 4: Schumann, Manfred Overture, mm. 149–51.

• "Relay" writing for the horn section.

During much of the classical period the standard horn section comprised just two horns. Normally, the horns would be in the same key; however, the textbook example of writing for two horns in different keys is the Mozart Symphony no. 40 in G Minor, K. 550, in which Mozart scores the first horn in B♭ *alto* and the second in G—a brilliant combination for the tonality of the piece. One of Brahms's most treasured possessions was his original manuscript of both versions of this symphony.

When writing for a section of four horns it was typical to have the first and second pair crooked in one key, normally the tonic of the key of the composition, and the third and fourth in another key, thereby vastly increasing the harmonic possibilities of the horn section. Berlioz warned that "A composer who takes four horns in the same key almost always gives proof of egregious want of judgment. It is incomparably better to employ two horns in one key and two in another."[9] This leads to material being distributed among the four horns, as, for example, in the opening to the final movement of the "other" Mozart G-minor symphony, no. 25, K. 183. Example 5 shows Brahms using the two pairs of horns, the first two in E and the second pair in C *basso*, splitting material between them.

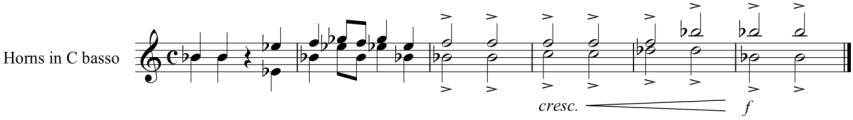
It is more effective for the second pair of horns (the fourth horn in this case) to take over the phrase from the first and second horns than for the first pair to continue it in unison with the bassoons, cellos, and basses.



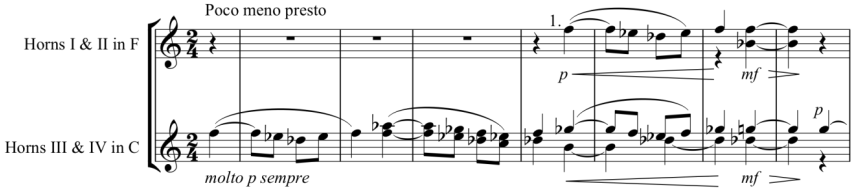
Example 5: Brahms, Symphony No. 4, first movement, mm. 431–33.

• **Passages using stopped notes for particular effect.**

There are two ways in which Brahms uses stopped notes for particular effect. One is for emphasis of a particular note, such as the famous use of the *gestopft* (stopped) marking in Symphony no. 1, second movement, m. 3. Here there is a specific effect of the horns going from octave open Gs to stopped F♯s, which is typical of the hand-horn, an effect that Brahms obviously did not wish to lose if the horn players were using valve horns. Another effect is the color created by a long passage consisting only of stopped notes, such as mm. 206–11 in the fourth movement of Symphony no. 1 (Example 6) or mm. 181–88 in the third movement of Symphony no. 4 (Example 7).



Example 6: Brahms, Symphony No. 1, fourth movement, mm. 206–11.



Example 7: Brahms, Symphony No. 4, third movement, mm. 181–88.

The selection of these passages may cause some surprise, as the fashion today often is to play the $b\flat^1$ and $f\sharp^2/g\flat^2$ open, but many nineteenth-century methods suggest playing these notes stopped. The effect in Symphony No. 1 of the first and second horns going from stopped to open along with the gradual crescendo is particularly well conceived.[10]

The Hand-horn in Orchestration Treatises of the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

The expansion of the orchestra during the nineteenth century was accompanied by the rise of methods and treatises on instrumentation and orchestration. These provide a great deal of information as to the attitudes towards both the natural horn and the valve horn in the nineteenth century. Relevant works begin with Jean-Georges Kastner[11] in 1837 and Hector Berlioz[12] in 1843 and also include later works by Frederick Corder (1894),[13] Ebenezer Prout (1898),[14] Charles-Marie Widor (1904),[15] and Cecil Forsyth (1914).[16] It might be expected that as the century progressed, commentary on the natural horn would gradually disappear, and that if it were mentioned at all it would only be in a disparaging way. But this was not the case. The older instrument was explored in depth by the majority of writers, often to such an extent that material devoted to the hand-horn consumed more space than that for the valve horn. In some of these works a separate chapter on the hand-horn precedes one on the valve horn.

Six issues clearly emerge from a survey of these texts:

- **Hand-horns were viewed as having a superior tone and timbre.**

Writers believed that the hand-horn was superior in terms of beauty of sound. Hofmann complained in 1893 that the tone of the valve horn was "inferior" and at the best "tolerably similar" to that of the hand-horn.[17] While some writers (e.g., Riemann) felt that stopped notes led to some unevenness in tone, many considered them an important part of the beauty of the instrument. Henri Kling, a horn player as well as a composer, waxed lyrical about the instrument's "exceedingly peculiar tonal-character," deeming it "mysterious" in its middle register, with the forte stopped notes possessing a "dull, terror-awakening tone, well adapted to illustrate revenge, fear, distress, danger, horror, disaster, as well as fiendish, passionate, furious, and impulsive characters." Piano stopped notes "awaken feelings of a disagreeable, painful, and oppressing nature; in other words, they are well adapted to depict such situations in which the human soul finds itself overcome and at the mercy of the conspiring powers of fate."[18]

Brahms acknowledged these timbres as he elaborated on his reasons for writing for the hand-horn in the Trio op. 40. Explaining how the softness of this instrument would encourage a better ensemble tone, he wrote, "If the performer is not obliged by the stopped notes to play softly, the piano and the violin are not obliged to adapt themselves to him and the tone is rough from the beginning."[19]

• **Knowledge of the older instrument was necessary to prevent writing for the horn as a generic chromatic wind instrument.**
Writers went to great lengths to explain how to write for the older instrument, providing very useful information on the stopping of the notes and use of the different crooks. As the nineteenth century progressed, writers stressed the importance of including such information. As Prout writes, "unless the student clearly understands this, it will be quite impossible for him to write effectively for the modern brass instruments, all of which possess a complete chromatic scale."[20] The strong sentiment was that without this knowledge, composers risked writing for the horn like any other chromatic wind instrument. Ferdinand Gleich warns that in these cases, "through the valves, the horn loses much of its noble character, its voice close to that of the bassoon."[21]

• **The older instrument was rarely seen as a historical curiosity.**
Writers report that it was becoming more difficult to find hand-horn players, but imply that it was not impossible, nor rare. Of the later commentators, Riemann (1888) says that natural horn players were disappearing,[22] while Prout (1904) says that occasionally a player may be found, but that the instrument had been "almost entirely superseded by the valve horn."[23] Notably, both of these comments were made after Brahms had completed his final work including the horn.

• **The valve horn could be used as a natural horn.**
Riemann advises composers writing for the valve horn that, "when seeking effects proper to the natural horn, there is nothing to hinder [the composer] from forbidding the alternate use of valves, and natural notes, by expressly requiring that a certain valve be used for the continuance of a passage of any length."[24] Most writers were deeply upset that this practice was often ignored, as players tended to use just the F crook and transpose.

• **Concern was expressed as to the efficacy of the new technology.**
Hofmann worried about leaking valves and the changing air pressure, as "Every easily depressed valve cannot close hermetically, wherefore the air pressure becomes slightly less as soon as it streams through the valve."[25] Jadassohn felt that "unfortunately the resonance and sweetness of the tone of the horn is lessened in accordance with the number of valves simultaneously employed."[26]

• **Continued "period" use of the older instrument was seen as good practice.**
Well into the twentieth century, writers were not only suggesting that it would be good orchestral practice to continue to play works written for the hand-horn on that instrument, but also specifying establishments that did this as beacons of good practice. In 1853 Gleich wrote that playing Beethoven and Weber on the valve horn was vandalism.[27] Forsyth wrote approvingly of the practice of the Berlin Opera House, which as late as 1914 were using valve horns for "modern" works but kept a set of hand-horns for Gluck, Mozart, and Beethoven.[28]

Seen in this context, Corder's unremittingly negative view of the hand-horn appears anomalous.[29] Corder refuses to "overwhelm the student with a mass of perplexing details regarding the Hand-horn," doubting "the use of describing a quantity of frightful difficulties with which he has no need to be troubled."[30] In his opinion, the horn music of Bach had been played "at the risk … of splitting the audience's ears and the performer's cheeks, for these high notes require a frightful pressure of air" and contemporary horn players were roundly berated for being ungrateful for the "benefits conferred" by the invention of the valve.[31] One cannot but wonder whether Corder had been bitten by a horn player at a young age, as his final warning is that "[t]he student should be chary in accepting the opinions of orchestral players on the subject of their horn-writing. I never knew these gentlemen to admit that any new composer understood their instrument. In that they are like singers. The simple fact is, that no new or unusual passage can be otherwise than difficult at first."[32]

The Hand-horn in Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-century Horn Methods

Traditionally, we view nineteenth-century Austro-Germanic horn players as having embraced the valve horn while the French strove to preserve the existence of the hand-horn. However there is evidence, such as a number of methods published in bilingual editions (for example, Heinrich Domnich,[33] Adam Wirth,[34] Henri Kling,[35] and Oscar Franz[36]), suggesting that the two opposed camps of horn playing were more aware and appreciative of each other's stance than has often been thought. The various editions of Whistling and Hofmeister's *Handbuch der musikalischen Literatur* include many publications by eminent French horn players, such as Duvernoy, Domnich, Dauprat, and Gallay, with some works available through Austro-Germanic publishing houses, such as Schott and Breitkopf & Härtel, rather than Parisian publishers.

The tutors frequently start with the hand-horn, the beginner progressing to valve horn only after a full training in the hand-horn. The titles of these works indicate that many writers, such as Jean-Baptiste Mengal,[37] J.R. Lewy,[38] J. Blanc,[39] Carl Klotz,[40] Josef Fahrbach,[41] Wirth, Kling, and Otto Langey,[42] set out to cover both hand-horn and valve horn. Joseph Schantl, founder of the Wiener Waldhornverein and principal horn of the Vienna Opera, wrote a four-volume method for horn,[43] the first volume of which is solely for natural horn. Despite the absence of any suggestion in their titles, Gumbert,[44] Franz, and the anonymous English editor of the *Grand Method for the French Horn*[45] also include instruction on the hand-horn in their methods.

The evidence of these tutors suggests that generations of horn players were being educated primarily as hand-horn players, graduating to valve horn once a certain level of competence was reached, and that in many places this practice continued into the early years of the twentieth century. Fundamentally, the initial training on the hand-horn was intended to serve four main purposes:

• To instill beauty of tone in horn players

In 1863, around the time Brahms is thought to have started working on his First Symphony, Carl Klotz insists in his *Praktische Schule für das einfache u. chromatische Horn* that students should start on the hand-horn, as this was the only way to "acquire the beautiful and mellow tone so peculiar to the natural horn." He warns that students who do not do this will "always retain a noisy, quavering, and rough tone, so often found in performers on the valve horn."[46]

Henri Kling writes in his *Horn-Schule*, "To know well how to play the horn, it is of great importance to know how first to play the natural horn, so to capture the sound quality of this instrument, which very few horn players possess because they play a horn in the style of a Cornet or Trombone and thus deprive the instrument of its true character."[47]

Gumbert's inclusion of an explanation of hand-horn technique and several pages of exercises for the instrument is especially interesting in light of his refusal to play the hand-horn for his performance of the Brahms Trio, op. 40, with Clara Schumann in 1866. In his opening "General Rules," Gumbert insists that students should start on the hand-horn first before proceeding to the valve horn. If one does this, then the "beautiful, soft Waldhorn tone" is achieved rather than a "noisy, crashing … boorish tone." Like Klotz, Gumbert believes that the beautiful tone of the Waldhorn, once learned on the hand-horn, can then be transferred to the valve horn. This implies that starting on the valve horn would lead to an inferior tone. Tellingly, Gumbert explains that failing to begin on the hand-horn gives the "enemies of the valve horn" more justification for their point of view. Developing a good stopping technique is considered essential for developing a beautiful tone.[48] Gumbert's beliefs are echoed in Richard Hoffmann's book of horn studies dedicated to Gumbert, which includes many exercises for natural horn.[49]

• To prevent the horn from losing its identity and becoming a hybrid

Securing a beautiful "Waldhorn" tone was essential in preventing the heritage of the horn from being lost and the instrument becoming no different from any other valved brass instrument. An abundance of new types of brass instruments were developed during the nineteenth century and a number of horn methods share composers' fears mentioned earlier, articulating a horror at the prospect of the horn losing its beautiful, identifiable sound. They feared that instead the instrument would become a bastardization of the noble hand-horn and the common cornet or saxhorn. This was not a fanciful prospect. George Bernard Shaw complained of German musicians performing at Covent Garden in 1892 crying, "I felt that some ancestor of the trombones had been guilty of a mésalliance with a bombardon and that the mother of the horns must have run away with a whole military band."[50]

• For essential intonation training

Oscar Franz insists that "it is extremely important for a beginner to become proficient in 'stopped-horn' playing as soon as possible," advocating it as essential for training the ear and tone production.[51] Sharing composers' fears of unreliable technology, Franz also

raises a very practical advantage to learning the hand-horn, in that knowing how to play the hand-horn is helpful in cases of valve failure—a real risk with early valves.

• An understanding of the older instrument that could then be translated to the new instrument

Many of the horn methods echoed the authors of the above-mentioned works on orchestration in explaining how the valve horn can be seen as a hand-horn in disguise, using the valves to lower the overall pitch of the instrument as much as an augmented fourth. Meifred's technique of combining valves and hand technique is frequently held up as an example of best practice. In 1840 Kastner praised "our gifted teacher Meifred" in his *Méthode*, predating Meifred's own. Support for this mixed technique continues throughout the century, with Gumbert also supporting the view that a mixed technique creates more possibilities of expression for horn players.

In surveying many nineteenth-century horn treatises, one gets the impression that it would be normal for many valve horn players to have started on the natural horn, that their experience of that instrument would be extensive, and that it was only once they had obtained sufficient proficiency that they would have graduated to the valve horn. While it may not be surprising that French and British methods of this period promoted the hand-horn,[52] it is notable that many methods that include instruction in the earlier instrument were published in Germanic countries during the time Brahms was writing his large orchestral works.[53]

Conclusion—ORR / Sir John Eliot Gardiner's Performances of Brahms's Orchestral Works

Brahms's writing for horn is a favorite subject for musicologists and horn players alike. It is a subject that can raise great passions. Richard Merewether in the introduction to his edition of Brahms's *Complete Horn Parts* warned, "It is remarkable how intriguing is this quirk of Brahm's [*sic*] writing, how it can become the jealously-guarded preserve of the symphonic hornplayer who hotly resents any interference or addition to it."[54] The ORR / Gardiner project presented the opportunity to reconsider many of these issues, with the performances and associated recordings providing the opportunity for theory to be put into practice. Should we use hand-horns, as we would for the Horn Trio? Valve horns (rotary or Vienna) as Norrington and the London Classical Players choose to do and as would be normal for a German composition of a similar date? Or a mixture of the two, as can be heard to great effect on the Mackerreas / Scottish Chamber Orchestra recordings of the Brahms Serenades?

It is clear that Brahms was writing for the hand-horn in all of his compositions including the horn. We can also see that, contrary to received opinion, there is abundant evidence of the hand-horn's use in the late nineteenth and even early twentieth century and that composers and horn players understood the instrument's technique, subtleties, and potential.

The question remains as to whether Brahms would ever have heard his works played on the instrument. Critics of the idea of playing Brahms on hand-horns point to a fight Brahms had with a horn player in 1879.[55] The unfortunate horn player was unable to play the required low C on the B♭ *basso* crook and had defended himself, saying that he did not have the right crook "today" but turned up fully equipped the following day. There are a handful of occasions where Brahms writes this C for horn in B♭ *basso*, once in *Ein deutsches Requiem* (movement 3, m. 39) and in the *Haydn Variations* (mm. 56–58 and 446). This note is tricky on a single F horn but can be played using a technique similar to that required by Beethoven in his Sonata op.17 and the famous fourth horn solo in Symphony no.9, i.e., "lipping down" the first harmonic. The crescendo and sforzando in this passage, however, make this way of approaching the note more problematic and somewhat less effective than playing it with a B♭ *basso* crook. It has been suggested that it was unlikely that the horn player would have been playing a hand-horn in B♭ *basso* and that the problem was more likely to be that he did not have an E♭ crook for a valve horn, which would make this low note feasible.[56] However, using an E♭ crook would still require the same "lipping down" technique. Whether the forgotten crook was for a hand-horn or a valve horn is unclear from Brahms's account of the incident. But rather sadly, Brahms also wrote, "I write for the most beautiful Waldhorns and D♭ trumpets, but I don't expect to hear them."[57] Evidence of Brahms's orchestral works being performed by sections of hand-horn players is scant, but the evidence from the methods / treatises outlined above suggests that performing them in this way would have been possible by many players of that time.

In his sleeve notes to the London Classical Players recordings, Roger Norrington comments perceptively that "Brahms' music can be played in many ways. He did not write, as eighteenth-century composers did, for a specific place and occasion, but for the whole of greater Germany at least. There is no one way to play his music, let alone one 'authentic' way." Norrington's comments recognize the quandary that horn players find themselves in when faced with Brahms's music. This project was approached with a sense of experimentation and discovery. In the end, for the performances with Gardiner / ORR, we made the decision to use hand-horns for the project. Faced with the evidence above, there was a coherent argument that playing these works on hand-horns would be valid. In addition to this evidence, there was a strong feeling that the opportunity to perform almost the entire Brahms horn repertoire on these instruments was simply too good to miss. Not to investigate through performance the possibility of playing these works on hand-horn, something so many horn players have mooted, could be seen as a dereliction of duty. There are many commentators who state that apart from the Horn Trio, Brahms's horn parts are not playable on these instruments. Some have even resorted to statistical analysis to try to establish whether or not they are playable on the hand-horn and have come up with rather confused conclusions.[58] Ultimately, the only way to show whether a horn part is categorically playable on the hand-horn is to play it.

The horn section for this project consisted of Joseph Walters, Gavin Edwards, Martin Lawrence, Jorge Renteria-Campos, and myself. We were joined, on occasion, by Mark

Paine, Beth Randall, and David Bentley. It is a tribute to the skill and determination of this experienced horn team that we were able to take on this challenge and, we hope, lay to rest once and for all the myth that these works are unplayable on the hand-horn.

It is our understanding that we were the first horn section to perform such a large proportion of Brahms's output on natural horns; this gave us a unique viewpoint on the practicalities and feasibility of doing so. I believe strongly that in performing these works in this way we may not have performed them as Brahms's audiences would have heard them in the original performances in the 1860s, '70s, or '80s, but that we did something much more interesting than just plausibly recreating a late nineteenth-century performance of Brahms in that, possibly for the first time ever, we performed these works as Brahms conceived them, on the instruments he certainly had in mind when composing them.

Anneke Scott's work covers a number of aspects of period horn playing, ranging from the early eighteenth century right up to the present day. She is principal horn of Sir John Eliot Gardiner's Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique and the English Baroque Soloists as well as a number of other leading period instrument ensembles in Europe. Further information on her work can be found at www.annekescott.com

NOTES

[1] Charles-Marie Widor, *Technique de l'orchestre moderne* (1904); idem, *Modern Orchestration,* transl. Edward Suddard (London: Joseph Williams, 1906), 62.

[2] John Eliot Gardiner, personal communication, 14 July 2011.

[3] Walter Niemann, *Brahms,* transl. Catherine Alison Philips (New York: Tudor, 1937), 12.

[4] This lifelong love of the instrument led Brahms to become one of the founding members of the Wiener Waldhornverein, formed by Josef Schantl in 1883 "for the purpose of companionship and care of the horn." This organization, which still exists today, is proud of the fact that Brahms was a founding member, stating that Brahms was "himself a hornist and uncompromising advocate of the natural horn." They point with pride to a photo of the members of the Waldhornverein that includes a heavily bearded gentleman as proof. However, closer inspection of the photo suggests that this is not in fact Brahms.

It is worth clarifying the term *Waldhorn*. Often translated into English as "forest horn," this term is frequently thought to be synonymous with "natural horn." Many composers and writers during the nineteenth century treated the term in this way: for example, in orchestration methods the term *Waldhorn* typically heads the section on the hand-horn, while for the section on the valve horn, it is *Ventilhorn*. However there are several instances of the term being used for a part that is evidently intended for valve horn.

[5] Florence May, *The Life of Johannes Brahms* (London: E. Arnold, 1905), 1:84.

[6] See John Humphries, *The Early Horn* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 99–103; Joshua Garrett, "Brahms' Horn Trio: Background and Analysis for Performers" (DMA diss., The Juilliard School, 1998); Stephen Lyons Seiffert, "Johannes Brahms and the French Horn" (DMA diss., University of Rochester, 1969); David G. Elliot, "The Brahms Horn Trio and Hand Horn

Idiom," *The Horn Call* 10, no. 1 (October 1979): 61–73.

[7] J. Drew Stephen, "Haydn: the Horn, the Hunt, and Hand-stopping," *Historic Brass Society Journal* 22 (2010): 55–74.

[8] Louis-François Dauprat describes these four notes in part three of his *Méthode pour cor alto et cor basse* (Paris, 1824) as "impracticable."

[9] Hector Berlioz, *Grand Traité d'Instrumentation et Orchestration Modernes* (Paris, 1843); idem, *Grand Treatise on Instrumentation and Modern Orchestration,* transl. Mary Cowden Clarke (London & New York: Novello, Ewer & Co, 1882), 139.

[10] For a further exploration of evidence showing Brahms's writing for the hand-horn, see Claude Maury, "Le cor dans les symphonies de Brahms," www.cor.naturel.free/f/francais/menu/index_francais.htm (accessed 28 February 2011).

[11] Jean-Georges Kastner, *Traité général d'Instrumentation* (Paris, 1836).

[12] Berlioz, *Grand Traité d'Instrumentation.*

[13] Frederick Corder, *The Orchestra and How to Write for It—A Practical Guide* (London, New York: R. Cocks, 1894).

[14] Ebenezer Prout, *The Orchestra* (London: Augener, 1898).

[15] Widor, *Technique de l'orchestre moderne*.

[16] Cecil Forsyth, *Orchestration* (London: Macmillan, 1914).

[17] Richard Hofmann, *Praktische Instrumentationslehre* (Leipzig, Dörffling & Franke, 1893) Part IV, 2.

[18] Henri Kling, *Populäre Instrumentationslehre* (Hanover, 1885), 122.

[19] Supplement to *Allgemeine Musikzeitung*, no. 260 (1899).

[20] Prout, *The Orchestra*, 373.

[21] Ferdinand Gleich, *Handbuch der modernen Instrumentirung für Orchester und Militairmusikcorps* (Leipzig, 1853), 38.

[22] Hugo Riemann, *Katechismus der Musikinstrumente (Instrumentationslehre)* (Leipzig, 1888), 67.

[23] Prout, *The Orchestra,* 373.

[24] Riemann, *Katechismus*, 67.

[25] Hofmann, *Praktische Instrumentationslehre*, Part IV, 2.

[26] Salomon Jadassohn, *Lehrbuch der Instrumentation* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1889); transl. Harry B. Wilkins as *A Course of Instruction in Instrumentation* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1899), 271.

[27] Gleich, *Handbuch der modernen Instrumentirung,* 31.

[28] Forsyth, *Orchestration*, 118.

[29] Corder, *The Orchestra*, 51–52.

[30] Ibid., 51.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Ibid., 52.

[33] Heinrich Domnich, *Méthode* (Mainz: Schott, 1832).

[34] Adam Wirth, *Méthode pratique de Cor, avec les explications nécessaires pour apprendre à jouer du Cor simple et du Cor à pistons. Praktische, systematisch-geordnete Horn-Schule* (Offenbach am Main: André, 1877).

[35] Henri Kling, *Horn-Schule. Méthode pour le cor (simple ou chromatique)* (Leipzig, 1879).

[36] Oscar Franz, *Grosse theoretisch-praktische Waldhorn-Schule* (Dresden, ca. 1880).

[37] Jean-Baptiste Mengal, *Méthode pour le Cor et Cor à pistons* (Paris, 1835).

[38] J.R. Lewy, *Douze Etudes pour le Cor chromatique et le Cor simple* (Leipzig, 1850).

[39] J. Blanc, *Grande Méthode de Cor, suivie d'un traité complète de Cor à pistons* (Paris, 1855).

[40] Carl Klotz, *Praktische Schule für das einfache u. chromatische Horn* (Offenbach, 1863).
[41] Josef Fahrbach, *Vollständige Horn-Schule für das einfache u. Maschin-Horn* (Vienna: C.A. Spina, 1869).
[42] Otto Langey, *Practical Tutor for the French Horn (with and without valves)* (London, 1910).
[43] Josef Schantl, *Grosse theoretisch-praktische Horn-Schule,* 4 vols. (Heilbronn, 1903).
[44] Friedrich Gumbert, *Praktische Horn-Schule* (Leipzig, 1879).
[45] *Grande Method for the French Horn, by Meifred, Gallay and Dauprat* (London, 1880).
[46] Klotz, *Praktische Schule*, 4.
[47] Kling *Horn-Schule,* 1.
[48] For further information on Gumpert and his insistence that new students, regardless of previous experience, should focus for a period of six months solely on hand-horn playing, see John Ericson, "Friedrich Gumpert (1841–1906) and the Performing Technique of the Valved Horn in Late-nineteenth-century Germany," in *Brass Scholarship in Review: Proceedings of the Historic Brass Conference, Cité de la Musique, Paris 1999,* ed. Stewart Carter (Bucina: the Historic Brass Society series; no. 6), 223–35.
[49] Richard Hofmann, *Horn Studien/Horn Studies Op. 28,* 2 vols. (Leipzig: C.F.W. Siegel, 1879).
[50] George Bernard Shaw, *Music in London, 1890–94* (London: Constable and Company, 1949), 1:127.
[51] Franz, *Grosse theoretisch-praktische Waldhorn-Schule*, 35.
[52] See, for example, *Grande Method for the French Horn;* and François Brémond / Dauprat, *Méthode de Cor adaptée aux deux genres de cor* (Paris, n.d. [1891–1922?]).
[53] See, for example, Wirth, *Méthode pratique de Cor*; Kling, *Horn-Schule*; Hofmann, *Horn Studien / Horn Studies*; Gumbert, *Praktische Horn-Schule*; Franz, *Grosse theoretisch-praktische Waldhorn-Schule*; and the posthumously published Franz Strauss, *Übungen für Naturhorn zum täglichen Studium* (Leipzig: Ernst Eulenburg, 1909).
[54] Johannes Brahms, *Complete Horn Parts: The Four Symphonies,* compiled and prefaced by Richard Merewether (London: Paxman, 1972).
[55] Letter of Brahms to Robert Keller, 6 July 1879, in George Bozarth, *The Brahms-Keller Correspondence* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 23–24.
[56] Richard Seraphinoff, as quoted in footnotes in *Performing Brahms: Early Evidence of Performing Style* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 38–39.
[57] Letter of Brahms to Ferdinand Hiller, February 1869, in Styra Avins, *Johannes Brahms: Life and Letters* (Oxford / London: Oxford University Press, 1997), 379.
[58] Seiffert, "Johannes Brahms and the French Horn," passim.