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"Repertoire for a Swedish bassoon virtuoso: Approaching early nineteenth-century works composed for Frans Preumayr with an original Grenser & Wiesner bassoon"

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Summary

In 1985, I had the good fortune to acquire a rare, early nineteenth-century bassoon in playable condition and complete with all of its parts, constructed by the renowned Grenser & Wiesner workshop in Dresden. Details on the address label of its case indicated it had been sent to Stockholm, and I wondered if a connection existed with the bassoon virtuoso Frans Preumayr, who was employed by the Royal Orchestra there at the same time. Excerpts chosen from Preumayr's travel journal, written during a European tour undertaken in 1829–30 and now preserved in the Music and Theatre Library of Sweden in Stockholm, offer pertinent information about musical issues and confirm his use of a Grenser instrument similar to mine. Franz Berwald, Bernhard Crusell, and Édouard Du Puy were among the composers who wrote solo and chamber compositions for Preumayr and which are noteworthy on several levels; the most obvious and problematic issue for historical bassoonists is the unusual range of three-and-half octaves required by most of these works. In searching for the highest register on the Grenser & Wiesner bassoon, trials using reed and bocal replicas were carried out, and various physical and mental strategies were also taken into consideration.

This study demonstrates how I and my students eventually learned to extend our ranges, making performance of Preumayr's repertoire feasible on historical instruments, and thereby expanding the relatively modest collection of pieces available for performance from this period. An audio recording on period instruments including chamber works by Du Puy and Berwald for winds, strings and piano, all of which were performed by Preumayr in the first part of the nineteenth century, is included with this thesis.

