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Giovanni Punto (1746-1803) Cor basse célèbre

Zwart, T. van der

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Conclusions

In conclusion, this research has delved into the life, techniques and influence of renowned horn virtuoso Giovanni Punto, with the aim of understanding his sound and playing style, exploring how his decisive contributions may motivate a more diverse treatment of the horn in our time. Punto was not the only itinerant 18th century horn virtuoso, but he was notable for his ability to capture the imagination of his contemporaries and leave a lasting impression on later horn players and music lovers alike. Significant components of Punto's heritage seem to have faded from the collective consciousness of horn players and their audiences over the past two centuries. The chapters of this thesis all explore that lost legacy. While it remains impossible to fully replicate Punto's sound due to the obvious lack of recordings and the differences in historical context and circumstances, the concept of Historically Informed Performance Practice (HIPPP) has provided a framework for studying and understanding the performance style of musicians of the past.

The study commenced with an examination of Punto's biography, chapter 1, providing insights into the context of a traveling virtuoso in the late 18th century. While limited verifiable information exists about Punto's life, careful consideration of available resources establishes him as a pivotal figure in the dissemination of new playing techniques across Europe during a transformative period for the instrument. Crucial was his time as a student in Dresden, where he became acquainted with a revolutionary way of playing the horn at the time, in which the role of the more independent low horn is particularly striking, including the technique of hand stopping developed or at least codified by Punto's teacher Hampel. Important were his encounters with Mozart and Beethoven, who both wrote music for him.

Through a combination of historical investigation, musical analysis, and empirical research involving practical experimentation and performance, this research has shed light on the rich and diverse world of the period natural horn and its possibilities for expressive performance. Through years of dedicated practice, using my skills and tacit knowledge as a specialist horn

player, I have tested Punto's written and musical information, ultimately bringing it to life on stage. This hands-on approach has provided valuable insights into aspects of Punto's legacy.

Several key elements of Punto's playing have been explored in this research. Central to this thesis were his published works, particularly his *Method* and *Daily Exercises* from the 1790s, which have been thoroughly analyzed in chapter 2.

These texts have revealed forgotten aspects of period horn playing. One notable aspect is the revival of the cor basse, the low horn, which served as a counterpart to the more prevalent cor alto, the high horn. Punto's expertise as a low horn player and his specialized use of a larger mouthpiece have revealed the potential for producing a darker, more velvety sound on the horn. Furthermore, the adoption of cor basse mouthpieces has facilitated the performance of challenging arpeggios, often encountered in soloistic low horn parts of the classical period repertoire.

Both the *Méthode* and the *Daily Exercises* demonstrate a particular emphasis on a rich variety of articulation. Through the exploration of this technique, it became evident that the period horn, in the skillful hands of a virtuoso like Punto, was capable of expressive and rhetorical playing, enriching the musical experience. The practice of embellishment and improvisation, a common performance strategy in the classical period, has been rekindled through the exploration of Punto's *Method* as a catalogue of adornments for the horn, leading to more spontaneous and engaging performances.

Chapter 3 focused on a unique form of musical adornment for the horn known today as multiphonics. By examining the laws of nature that govern this extended technique and investigating rare examples of written multiphonics from Punto's era, this study has shed light on the distinctive and captivating possibilities offered by this approach.

Chapter 4 explored Punto's influence on Ludwig van Beethoven. By closely examining solos for low horn in selected orchestral works by Beethoven, I have sought to uncover evidence suggesting that the composer envisioned a distinct sound for the second horn, potentially drawing inspiration from his musical encounters with Punto.

Chapter 5 delved further into the cor basse, Punto's specialty, and its performance technique and characteristics. Through an analysis of the horn parts in Punto's horn concerto no. 1 and sonatas by Beethoven, Danzi, and Ries, I have highlighted the virtuosic use of the low horn during the late 18th and early 19th centuries, showcasing the unique qualities and expressive potential of the low horn.

This research has sought to challenge the prevailing notion that the natural horn is an unruly and unpredictable instrument. By studying Punto's techniques, this research has demonstrated the potential for a looser and more spontaneous approach to written music of the classical period. In addition, it has emphasized the importance of heterogeneity in concert halls, resisting the threat of standardization that creeps into the field of early music.

Ultimately, the culmination of this research is the CD recording, "Music for Cor Basse and Fortepiano," in collaboration with pianist Alexander Melnikov. The recording serves as a resounding testament to the artistic exploration and dedication undertaken throughout this study, with the cor basse resonating in its intended colorful manner.

In conclusion, this thesis has provided valuable insights into the sound, techniques, and legacy of Giovanni Punto, offering a more nuanced understanding of his contributions to horn playing and the broader realm of musical performance. By embracing historical investigation, practical experimentation, and musical analysis, this research has illuminated new paths for contemporary musicians to explore, fostering a deeper appreciation for the rich diversity of the natural horn and its potential for expressive and captivating performances. The revival of the cor basse and the reintroduction of diverse playing techniques showcased in this research hold great promise for the future of period horn playing. By encouraging students to specialize in low horn playing and utilize appropriate mouthpieces, a resurgence of the almost forgotten dark horn sound can be anticipated, accompanied by the facility to tackle the most demanding repertoire of the period. Overall, without this research I would not have discovered the rich palette of the low horn sound, the excitement of extempore improvisation, and the enormous variety in articulation as described in historical tutors. To take full advantage of those discoveries, I should have started this research decades ago. Now I can only hope that the next generations of period

horn players will carry on the work and bring back to the stages the full experience of diverse horn playing as it was demonstrated by Punto and his contemporaries.