HOLIER THAN THOU

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There are various ways in which modern early-instrument performers make compromises. A study of the instruments used by 'early' ensembles to play this year's big anniversary work, Monteverdi's Vespers*, could be revealing! We are grateful for Mike Diprose's fourth article for us on playing the 'real trumpet', and congratulate him on his success in the 'real' world of the professional performer.* CB

Hello again. So much has happened since the last instalment (2007) that it s difficult to know where to start. To catch up: I renounced the *strainer* in 2007, my studies at the Schola Cantorum Basiliensis finished two years ago, and I ve been lucky enough to live almost solely from playing the *real* trumpet. Almost solely, because the other duty has been directing *Barokensemble de Swaen* (Amsterdam) for the last two seasons. This has been an eye-opener in many respects. For me, the main reason to play the real trumpet is simple: honesty to do what you say you do (how else?) and not what, after the *End of Early Music*, might be referred to as HIPocrisy . *De Swaen s* approach shares the same attitude of honesty with their carefully-researched choice of instruments, set-ups, tuning aesthetics, rhetorical delivery and so on. To play with them is a natural pleasure. [1]

Moving on, the term I previously used, holeless nat , will be replaced by real trumpet . This article does not include the *tromba/corno da tirarsi*. Historically Informed/ Inspired Performance is referred to as HIP . A sobriquet coined by Jeremy Montagu will be applied to the *Knabenopheclide,* or mid-20th century Baroque trumpet with nodal vent holes: the strainer . [2]

To compare the real trumpet to the strainer is to confuse wool with nylon or a hobby horse with a motorcycle. It s not as simple as drilling three or four holes into a real trumpet. Acoustically, the introduction of nodal vent holes, which need to be positioned relative to the total length of tubing, necessitates tuning slides (usually made from machine-drawn tubing), separate back bows, yards and mouth-pipes for different keys; meaning thicker walls, bows and variations in bore and conicity in the wrong places; needing compensation with a conical lead-pipe, which changes bell acoustics, and so on in short, a spiral of compromise, in an attempt to make it blow more like a modern instrument less than a third of its length.

The temptation to use it under pressure aside, such compromises remove the option of playing with the holes all closed, negating the possibility of playing many of the articulations indicated by composers or using a wooden transposing mute. A closed posture, with the chest restricted by using two hands, means that, rather than being held up in a symbolically-triumphant manner (and above the heads of our long-suffering colleagues), the strainer must to be pointed down in defeat , collecting water, partially closing the player s throat and disturbing the musicians in front. However, the short three-hole system does allow the elbows to be stuck out. Pre-20th century composers tended to write what was possible to play on the available equipment. Rather then adapt or invent instruments, isn t our collective mission to make the music work in the same way?

To play the real trumpet simply needs a reassessment of technique, from which one's playing on modern instruments benefits. This boils down to re-focussing awareness of balance points and resonance. It s also an advantage, throughout those long winter months in cold churches, that one can perform wearing thick, warm gloves a luxury normally only enjoyed by singers, trombonists and, it would seem, some organists.

Because all things are interconnected, the context of HIP in general could take a look inwards too. With *De Swaen*, we have taken the time to explore just intonation with great success it is natural to singers, simple to apply for players of those instruments that can play in tune and enhances resonance, definition and rhetorical *Affekts*. Although pure tuning is detailed and cited as an ideal in most sources (even by its arch enemy , *Sorge*) it is, to my knowledge, not yet part of the general curriculum in any conservatoire that specialises in Early Music. There are other aesthetics of historical playing that could generally be better understood and applied; such as spontaneous ornamentation.

The modern trumpet (and strainer, to an extent) is designed as an acoustic funnel (small, pear-shaped mouthpiece cup, long conical sections), so that each note is played in the centre and tuning adjusted with slides. This reduces the chances of cracking a note, as does the use of ever-shorter tubing lengths, which move the partials further apart within the required range. The greater distance between partials means that those cracks that do happen are quite dramatic. Progress has made the now-standard orchestral trumpet in Germany, the *Schagerl* rotary, conical throughout therefore technically no longer a trumpet (defined as at least partly-cylindrical) but a *cornet* (small horn).

On the real trumpet (larger, apple-shaped mouthpiece cup, 2/3rds cylindrical), with some repertoire ascending to the 24th partial and the need to place some notes off-centre, occasional spontaneous ornamentation is almost inevitable but, when tastefully executed, would explain contemporary reports of chirruping . This effect remains today

1. http://www.barokensembledeswaen.nl/index_e.html
2. A history of the "unnatural trumpet" by Graham Nicholson, was published in *Early Music*, May 2010.

in the unbroken tradition of the hunting horn: *tayautØ* as quoted in the finale of Mozart s Horn Concerto no 2. Similar effects are written in the trumpet parts of Telemann, Bach and others. It could be argued since trumpeters were revered as part-musician, part-magician , and that these effects, namely *acciaccaturas, mordents, trills* etc. draw the ear so strongly that other players imitated what happens naturally on the trumpet. It is puzzling that nowadays, when such ornaments are played by a musician, they are expressive and artistic but a trumpeter doing the same can be frowned at.

Remember, *clarino* means clear, not loud. Although strong in the low *principale* range, the natural tendency is to become quieter, whilst remaining present, in the overtone-rich upper register. We know this through written sources and from first-hand experience of playing original instruments. Of all extant trumpets from the 17th and 18th centuries, by far the most copied, if only in name, are those produced by J. L Ehe, dated 1746, three of which are at the Germanisches Nationalmuseum (GNM) in N remburg (catalogue numbers: M217, M218 and M219). Heinrich Sauer and I were privileged to test these hallowed *labrosones* in May 2008, after their curator, Markus Raquet, had very kindly given us a guided tour. Without going into too much detail, all three were a dream to play, and all a little different from each other. My favourite was M217, which had a very meaty *principale* and a *clarino* register so clear, light and effortless that it almost played itself. In fact, the harder one tried, the worse it got.

This visit was part of an ongoing study, comparing replicas with their originals. There are different interpretations of the word replica by different makers. There is a tendency to know better and alter measurements particularly at the sensitive bell end. Some makers produce what might be described as a student bell, which looks more like a megaphone than any example from the 18th century. Yes, the a (13th partial) can be easily raised when playing in D but at what cost? Tuning in the other key (C) is compromised, the sound is less direct than originals and a lot of effort is required to make it work, rather than sing . Also, rather than copy one good instrument, some makers take an average measurement from a few. This is a bit like playing the same tennis shot every time, or blocking out your car windows and driving only with the *sat-nav.* We may all have done so but does that make it right? Ten years ago, it might have been useful to technique pioneers learning about the 11th & 13th partials but now, original instruments can be played well, so why not just play accurate replicas?

My solution was to join an accurately-copied Ehe III bell by Frank Tomes to bespoke tubing, crafted by Graham Nicholson. Predictably, this trumpet has characteristics most similar to its exemplar and can be played beautifully in D & C at a = 415 and a =440 . Unfortunately, Frank has now retired from construction but, last I heard, David Staff is taking over the mandrel.[3]

This instrument was in service before the chance to reassess Matthew Parker s fantastic replica of the Ehe II (1700) trumpet. In, for instance, 1723, there were no 1746 trumpets, so this model is perhaps even more appropriate for playing most European high-Baroque repertoire. It certainly works! Coloratura *clarino* passages flutter out with the greatest of ease, *principale* is solid, tuning is very good in C and D at a =415 and its sound is noble, resonant and golden.[4]

GNM curator Markus Raquet also makes brass instruments to a very high standard, concerned with building techniques that are as historical as possible in his careful reproductions. Trumpet replicas include Haas, Ehe III (C18); Hanlein, Droschel (C17) and are well worth your hard-earned Euros.[5]

More recordings of real trumpets are emerging, thanks mainly to the persistence of Sigiswald Kuijken. Another must-hear is HAOTAT (Heroic Art of Trumpets and Timpani), recorded in 2003 but released in 2009. Although an hour of fanfares in D major (or high-pitch C) could drain all but the most compulsive enthusiast, this CD contains some virtuosic duets (*sonatae a due*) by Biber, stunningly executed by Igino Conforzi and JF Madeuf.[6]

Many youngsters are showing an interest in the real trumpet but J F Madeuf is still the only conservatoire professor prepared (or able?) to do in public what he or she claims to teach. I m happy to report that his department at the SCB continues to thrive with a steady stream of well-motivated internal and visiting students. Lead on Madeuf!

It is difficult to accept that before the 19th century, many more people, representing a much higher percentage of the population, were able to play the real trumpet than the handful that can do so today. At each concert played and recording made with strainers, I lament the ever-deepening chasm of wasted effort and opportunity missed. For all the ability and musicianship of many straineers, it is a little tragic that their achievements mean nothing in real terms, other than making a fast buck and compounding the deception of their customers. Perhaps the strainer can be revived in 250 years. In the mean time, the most progress could be made if these gifted souls applied themselves and showed us all how it should be done. Come, ye faint of heart, get your gloves on!

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6.Tibicines *Heroic Art of Trumpets and Timpani.* Check the availability of downloads at: www.iginoconforzi.net .