1 Introduction

The twentieth century has seen an immense number of changes in performance practice. Listen, for example, to Elgar’s recordings of his own orchestral works with the London Symphony Orchestra and the Royal Albert Hall Orchestra in the 1920s and thirties. The woodwind play without vibrato, the narrow-bore trombones are incisive and penetrating but never over-assertive and the single F horns’ sound is reticent and pure-toned. These are authentic performances which reveal the substantial difference between the sounds which Elgar heard as he composed and conducted, and those which we hear in the same works today. Modern performances may be technically slicker, but they are often far removed from the style of the originals, and present the music in a way which Elgar cannot possibly have imagined.

They also reveal something of the difficulty of interpreting historic music, for while Mahler carefully marked all the strings’ portamenti in the score of his 4th symphony (1901; rev. 1906), none appears in Elgar’s orchestral writing. It would be easy to conclude from their absence that, by the 1920s, portamenti had fallen out of fashion, but it is clear from his recordings that by now they were so characteristic of string playing that they no longer needed to be notated. The lack of recordings from earlier periods makes it very much more difficult to capture the unnotated essence of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century music today, so players who wish to give well-informed and historically aware performances need to be familiar with the history of the instrument itself, the equipment which was available or preferred in different times and places, players’ techniques and musical style in general.

The history of the Early Music Movement

Although a few earlier musicians had shown an interest in the music of the past, the first seeds of interest in playing music on historically
appropriate instruments, and in a style which its composer would have recognised, germinated at the beginning of the twentieth century. These pioneers were concerned with music which far precedes the arrival of the horn in the concert hall, however, and works from later periods only began to attract the interest of their successors in the 1960s.

‘Early Music’ has been able to develop because, since the end of the first world war, audiences have, for the first time, taken more interest in the music of the past than the work of their contemporaries. Nevertheless, until the 1960s, most people seemed content for earlier music to be played on modern instruments, and it is only during the last forty years that musicians have begun to experiment with period instruments and the phrasing, articulation, balance, texture and tempi which are appropriate to the time when the work was composed. At first, the results were often disappointing: the art of making reproduction instruments was in its infancy, and with little experience of using them, players often gave pallid performances in their efforts to avoid any hint of Romantic excess. As such they posed little threat to the status quo, but during the 1970s and 80s a wave of performers began to prove that historical performances could be vibrant and personal as well as historically informed, and major record companies began to issue recordings using original instruments.

Today, standards of performance and scholarship are so well developed that resistance to authentic performances has all but crumbled, and with greater confidence has come a more enlightened approach to repertoire. While authentic performances once stopped at the middle of the eighteenth century, some period orchestras today include Brahms and Wagner on a regular basis, and Arnold Dolmetsch’s pioneering work on the performance of sixteenth-century music is now so far removed from current mores that it is considered worthy of historic study in its own right. He worked in interesting times, for while three pioneer revivalist viola da gamba players are listed in the 1910 edition of the Musical Directory, Annual and Almanack,¹ the same publication lists two players of the ophicleide, the nineteenth-century bass brass instrument which was then still part of a living tradition but, having been superseded by the tuba, is now studied as an authentic instrument.²
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Historical awareness

Oral tradition
The hand horn era is, likewise, remarkably close to our own time. The Paris Conservatoire stopped teaching the hand horn only in 1903 – just two years before Arnold Dolmetsch made his first recorder – and in 1910 Otto Langey commented that ‘Some old players are still opposed to the entire use of valves because, they argue, that the character of the original sound suffers in consequence.’ Indeed, it was not until the 1930s that the double horn was regarded as anything more than a curiosity in England, and, even today, right hand position is directly influenced by best hand horn practice. Many older players are happy to reminisce about the characteristics of F horns, for most will have used them, and even played them professionally, in their youth. Some may also have known others who studied the hand horn as part of a living tradition: players in the London area speak warmly of Handel Knott, who learned the hand horn from his father and played professionally before opting for a career in the insurance industry.

Recordings
As well as the orchestral recordings by Elgar and his contemporaries, there is also a small, but significant number of recordings which show how the horn was played as a solo instrument. The flexible, lyrical tone quality which is revealed by Edouard Vuillermoz’s 1929 performance of Emile Vuillermoz’s ‘Pièce Mélodique’, is quite different from the strident vibrato which is often associated with French playing from the 1930s to the 1960s. Other very different sounding recordings include the LSO playing Weber’s ‘Oberon’ and ‘Freischütz’ overtures under Nikisch in July 1914, when the first horn was probably Thomas Busby. Karl Stiegler took part in a recording of Mendelssohn’s ‘Hunter’s Farewell’ in an arrangement for four Vienna horns before 1910, and the technique and panache of today’s finest virtuosi are rivalled by the magnificent 1912 performance of the ‘Siegfried Horn Call’, by Friedrich Gumbert’s pupil, Anton Horner.

Sadly, there are no recordings of the hand horn being played as part of a living tradition. A tape survives of Dennis Brain playing Mozart’s D major Concerto K412/514 during the 1950s on a hand horn by L.J. Raoux, but while he was instinctively brilliant on the instrument, he would never have
claimed specialist knowledge of performance practice beyond what he had learned by playing a Raoux-Labbaye single F horn. Alan Civil and Hermann Baumann were the first serious modern exponents of the hand horn, giving a number of pioneering performances both in concert and on recordings, but today’s young British specialists owe a great deal to Anthony Halstead, the first modern top-class player in England to play almost exclusively on the hand horn.

Retrospective publications

One of the first to develop a serious academic interest in the horn was W.F.H. Blandford, a professional zoologist who published a number of very influential papers on the instrument, and whose voluminous correspondence with Reginald Morley-Pegge is preserved in Oxford University’s Bate Collection. Morley-Pegge’s book, The French Horn, added significantly to Blandford’s work and is vital reading for any horn player with aspirations to authenticity. Scholarship has moved on in some respects, but Morley-Pegge is hardly ever wrong, and the insight which he gained as a pupil of both Brémond and Vuillermoz, and as a musicologist, professional performer and amateur hand horn player in Paris, gave him an invaluable understanding of the French tutors. His account of developments in Germany and Austria is less complete, but he was also a philanthropist, and today the Bate Collection is home to his magnificent collections of horns and rare tutors. Birchard Coar’s Critical Study of the Nineteenth Century Horn Virtuosi in France contains a considerable amount of information from the French tutors but, like his other book, The French Horn, is out of print, and copies are difficult to find.

Hans Pizka’s Dictionary for Hornists covers the German-speaking countries in more detail, and in The Horn and Horn Playing and the Austro-Bohemian Tradition, 1680–1830, Horace Fitzpatrick covers some esoteric ground which is not included in other works. Two books by Bernhard Brüchle and Kurt Janetzky, A Pictorial History of the Horn and The Horn, are worth consulting, and Robin Gregory’s The Horn: A Comprehensive Guide to the Modern Instrument and its Music is particularly helpful for its repertoire lists. Barry Tuckwell’s volume in the series of Yehudi Menuhin Music Guides and Jeremy Montagu’s book, The French Horn, are also useful, while Anthony Baines’ Brass Instruments, and the Cambridge
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Companion to Brass Instruments, are essential reading for serious horn students. Among the most useful periodicals are back numbers of the Journal of the Historic Brass Society, the Galpin Society Journal, Brass Bulletin and Horn Call, the journal of the International Horn Society.

Instruments

Until the 1970s, most players used the term 'hand horn' indiscriminately to refer equally to Baroque and Classical instruments, and few attempted to understand the differences between their technique. We now know more about the distinction between the two, but the lack of good reproduction nineteenth-century instruments means that performance practice from the period is still under-researched. Horn-making is never big business even for those making contemporary instruments, and as the distinguished nineteenth-century London maker William Brown explained to Blandford, the work was so skilled that he did 'practically all of it himself, whereas he could give out jobs on other instruments'. Today's limited horn market is substantially smaller for those making reproduction instruments, and the incentive to set up the precision tools needed to build a copy of an early valved instrument is very slight indeed.

Contemporary writers

The relatively few eighteenth-century accounts of horn playing technique are examined in chapter 4, but their practical advice is limited, so it is fortunate that reasonably competent valve horn players can deduce by trial and error much of the basic technical set-up required to play the early horn. Those who want to play at a more advanced level have problems, however, and while the concertos by Mozart, Haydn, Rosetti and Punto, and the Sonata, op. 17 by Beethoven, were written for players who were familiar with hand stopping, they were composed before any detailed account of the technique appeared in print. The high point in horn literature – and one of the finest and most thorough instruction books written for any instrument – is the Méthode de Cor Alto et Cor Basse by Louis Dauprat. Written as part of a series of tutors which were published in connection with the work of the Paris Conservatoire, this is exclusively for hand horn players, and with the recent publication of an English translation it is now available to non-French speakers for the first time. Meifred's Méthode pour le Cor...
Chromatique,\textsuperscript{21} attempts to redress the balance in favour of the nineteenth-century valve horn, but was written as an adjunct to Dauprat’s \textit{Méthode}, not as a separate work.

The only native Englishman to write a tutor in the nineteenth century was Charles Tully\textsuperscript{22} but a small number of other works were available in translation, and such works are invaluable to modern players’ study of period performance. There will always be an audience for a soloist of sensitive artistry and brilliant technique on the modern horn, regardless of whether he plays Bach, Mozart, Brahms or Ligeti, but, as global uniformity of sound becomes the norm, we should cherish the diverse palette of tone colours which are characteristic of historic instruments.
2 Historical Background

In his autobiography, *Those Twentieth Century Blues,* Sir Michael Tippett recalls writing for electric guitar in the 1960s and 1970s in his operas, ‘The Knot Garden’ and ‘The Ice Break’. ‘Finding a player who could cope with the part was almost impossible. You either used an acoustic guitarist who could read accurately but had limited knowledge of the special sonorities of the electric instrument, or you engaged a rock musician, whose variable reading and inexperience at playing to a conductor’s beat placed the security of the ensemble at risk.’

The introduction of the horn to the concert hall must have posed a similar chicken-and-egg problem. While the instrument’s main rôle was on the hunting field, players had no need to read music, and so composers had few opportunities to discover its potential. With little music available for them to play, horn players could not make a living as professionals, there was no incentive to extend their technique, and composers remained ill-at-ease with the instrument as part of the orchestra. Tradition has it that the horn’s first appearance in notated music is the little fanfare in Cavalli’s ‘Le Nozze de Teti e di Peleo’ (1639), but after this there were no further significant developments until Count Franz Anton Sporck heard the newly invented cor de chasse at Versailles during his Grand Tour in the 1680s.

1700–1750

Sporck, a wealthy nobleman from Lissa in Bohemia (now Leszno, Poland), was so taken with the horn that he sent two of his retainers, Wenzel Sweda and Peter Röllig, to learn to play it in Paris. As the retainer of one of the greatest hunting establishments of the period, Sporck’s main interest was in the outdoor potential of the horn, but he was also a dedicated musician who ran the first opera troupe in Bohemia and an orchestra which played at Prague and Kuks, north of Hradec Králové, as well as Lissa. It is
said that horns began to appear in his ensemble music at a very early stage, but none of the court’s surviving repertoire features the instrument, and his real legacy lies in the rôle he played in bringing the art of horn playing to Central Europe and possibly in inspiring Nuremberg’s brass makers to begin to build horns in the 1680s. It is not clear whether he had any direct connection with the first recorded use of horns as an integral part of the orchestra, a performance of Carlo Agostino Badia’s opera, ‘Diana rappacificata con Venere e con Amore’, which was staged in Vienna in 1700,5 but by now others were also thinking of including horns in their scores: they reappear only five years later in Reinhard Keiser’s opera, ‘Octavia’, and from 1712 were used regularly by Christoph Graupner6 in Darmstadt.

**J.S. Bach**

The most celebrated of the Saxon composers who first used the horn on a regular basis was J.S. Bach, who in 1713 included the instrument in his Weimar cantata ‘Was mir behagt’ (BWV 208). He then used it again in Brandenburg Concerto no. 1 (BWV 1046), a work based on movements which he had written in Weimar but which he put together in Cöthen and probably intended for particular visiting performers. With his move to Leipzig, however, he began to write for horns on a more regular basis, suggesting that local players were available in the city. These were probably primarily trumpeters, and would therefore have been quite at home with the high tessitura which composers had to use if they were to write melodically for the Baroque horn.

Bach’s Leipzig works for horn range in scale from the two tiny obligatos in the ‘Peasant’ Cantata (BWV 212, 1742), to extended cantata movements for pairs of horns in F, such as the opening choruses of ‘Wie schön leuchtet der Morgenstern’ (BWV 1, 1725) and part four of the *Christmas Oratorio* (BWV 248, 1735). In ‘Wär Gott nicht mit uns diese Zeit’ (BWV 14, 1735), the extraordinarily difficult obligato for horn in B♭ alto ascends to the eighteenth harmonic, but Bach’s best known obligato for the instrument is the Quoniam from the Mass in B minor (BWV 232). All of these parts limit themselves almost entirely to the notes of the harmonic series, but Bach also wrote a number of other works where the solo ‘horn’ line is written at concert pitch and includes many chromatic notes which are not possible on the Baroque horn as we know it. His players may have had some rudimentary
knowledge of hand stopping, but it is possible that in writing for 'corno', Bach envisaged an instrument which is not like the horn we know. The first movement of the cantata, 'Also hat Gott die Welt geliebt' (BWV 68, 1725), for example, includes an extended obbligato in D minor for 'corno'. Here, this may be an abbreviation for 'cornetto', an instrument which he uses in the finale chorale of the cantata, but the term also appears elsewhere: 'Halt im Gedächtnis Jesum Christ' (BWV 67, 1724) includes a 'Corno da tirarsi' ('slide horn') which is also at times abbreviated to 'corno' and was apparently capable of playing notes which are quite impossible on a natural horn unless it is hand stopped. No such instrument survives, but some trumpets seem to have had slides as early as the fifteenth century, and the 'Tromba da tirarsi' ('slide trumpet') also appears in Bach's scores. Other instruments which he specifies include 'Corne par force', 'Corno da caccia', 'Corne de chasse' and 'Lituus', but while these may have described different designs of horn, particularly at a time when it was developing rapidly, they may also have been used to distinguish different ways of holding it. As Morley-Pegge wrote in 1960, 'Until fresh evidence is available we can only hazard a guess.'

Dresden

The situation in Bach’s Leipzig was quite different from that in Dresden, where the Trumpeters’ Guild forbade its members to double on the horn. As a result a separate school of horn players developed, bringing with it opportunities for low horn players to experiment with rudimentary hand stopping by as early as 1717. Evidence that the city’s players boasted a virtuoso technique contemporary with and after Bach can be seen in the work of composers such as Johann Heinichen, Jan Zelenka and Johann Hasse, and in an extraordinary collection of concertos and chamber works for horn solo which survives in Lund University, Sweden. Written by composers who seem to have worked in the Dresden area in the first half of the eighteenth century, this collection includes two very attractive pieces for a high horn player by J.J. Quantz, and others by Christoph Förster, one of the Graun brothers, and a composer named Reinhardt whose work calls for a very athletic technique. There are also works by some of the Dresden horn players themselves, including a concerto by Johann Knechtel, who replaced Johann Schindler in the court orchestra in 1734, and an anonymous piece which may be the work of Anton Hampel.
Hampel and Haudek

Hampel, who specialised in playing low horn lines, joined the Dresden court orchestra in 1737, when he replaced Andreas Schindler. Both he and his younger colleague, the high horn player Karl Haudek, were born in Bohemia – Hampel in Prague and Haudek in Dobriš – and both moved to Dresden when they were about twenty-seven years old, staying there for the rest of their lives and earning distinguished reputations both as duettists and teachers. They both also taught Giovanni Punto, and the appointment of Punto’s own pupil, Heinrich Domnich, to the post of horn professor at the Paris Conservatoire in 1795 ensured that the Saxon/Bohemian tradition of playing would have a major effect on horn playing in France in the nineteenth century.

Hampel also probably played an important part in the development of the Inventionshorn and the non-transposing mute, and although he was probably not alone in experimenting with the use of the hand in the bell in the mid-eighteenth century, his immortality was assured when Domnich credited him as its sole inventor in 1807. The first time Hampel tried imitating oboists’ habit of quietening their instruments by stuffing a cloth in the bell, Domnich writes, ‘he was surprised to find that the pitch of his instrument rose by a semitone. In a flash of inspiration he realised that by alternately inserting and withdrawing the cotton plug he could cover without a break every diatonic and chromatic scale. He thereupon composed some new music for the horn that included notes hitherto foreign to the instrument. Soon afterwards, finding that the plug could be replaced advantageously by his hand alone, he discarded the plug altogether.’ While this is clearly an oversimplified version of the process, and particularly of the way in which the pitch is changed, the passages which Morley-Pegge quotes from Hampel’s compositions leave no doubt that he knew how to hand stop. The anonymous piece which is attributed to Hampel in the Lund University Collection also demands the technique – it includes, for example, a two-octave descending scale written in G major – and some of its figuration is said to recall the content of his manuscript book of exercises, ‘Lection pro Cornui’, which was lost in the second world war. Another example of early hand stopping can be found in a volume of Haudek’s duets which recently reappeared in West London, suggesting that, if Hampel ever regarded