The Modern Application of Natural Horn Technique in Solo Horn Performance

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THE MODERN APPLICATION OF NATURAL HORN TECHNIQUE

IN SOLO HORN PERFORMANCE

By

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This treatise is dedicated to my wife Bekah and my children: Gavin, Sophia, and Kaitlyn. You are my world and I love you with all my heart.

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ABSTRACT

The use of natural horn and its technique has greatly diminished since the invention of the valved horn in the 19th century. While there have been groups of composers and hornists who continue to advocate for the natural horn, it has become a specialty instrument whose study is often non-comprehensive or relegated to a short period of time. Since the beginning of the 20th century, there have been composers utilizing the natural horn and its technique, legitimizing its continued importance and providing new landscapes of creative expression that were, for a long while, exclusive to the valved horn. The pieces surveyed in this treatise, *Villanelle* by Paul Dukas, *Serenade* for tenor, horn, and strings by Benjamin Britten, *Prelude for Horn* by Randall Faust, *Elegia* by Hermann Baumann, *September Elegy* by Jeffrey Agrell, and "Ghost Circles" from *Supernatural* by Jay Batzner, were chosen because of their historical significance for the horn, their pedagogical value, and their exploration into different mediums of horn performance. This treatise will provide important historical and biographical information about these pieces and their composers, discuss important features about the pieces, and provide performance suggestions relating to the natural horn and its technique. Additionally, this treatise will cover the overtone series, how the valved horn eased the process of navigating the range and chromaticism of the horn, and how modern natural horn writing has become integrated into solo literature.

TERMINOLOGY

Horn- The term used by the International Horn Society to refer to the French Horn.

Natural horn- Referring to the instrument that preceded the valved horn.

Modern- Music composed as early as 1860 to date.

Stopped horn- The manner in which the horn is played by closing the right hand fully in the bell.

Half-stopped horn- The manner in which the horn is played by closing the right hand halfway between opened and stopped in the bell.

Vented- The manner in which the horn is played by opening the right hand further in the bell or removing it entirely.

Crooks- An early tuning slide for the horn that changed the pitch of the instrument when different crooks were used.

Helmholtz notation system- The standard notation system used by the International Horn Society; used in this treatise. (See Appendix B)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The advent of the natural horn is one of the most important milestones in the historical development of the horn. It became one of the most widely utilized instruments in chamber and solo settings because of its versatility due to crooks and hand-stopping. The progression of musical composition in the 19th century and its rapidly shifting tonalities necessitated a more versatile instrument. Various composers and conservatories resisted the change to valved horn (most notably Johannes Brahms and the Paris Conservatory, respectively), and preferred the use of the natural horn well after the invention of its valved counterpart. This insistence inspired others to follow, keeping the natural horn and its technique alive amidst 20th and 21st century composition, arguably the most experimental eras in music history. The valved horn was fully adopted by hornists early in the 20th century, roughly 50 years after its invention.

As such, hornists now have compositions that utilize the natural horn and its technique in the modern era, solidifying its continued relevance and promoting its continued use. This treatise will explore the use of the natural horn in modern compositions from 1906 to date, provide important background information on selected works, and discuss performance suggestions relating to natural horn technique, interpretation and musicality. The study of the modern application of the natural horn serves as a primer for students who are less informed about the subject as well as provides information relevant to all levels of hornists. Additionally, this treatise will briefly discuss the advancement of composition for the horn from 1906 to

date, specifically relating to how the natural horn is used in different types of solo or chamber settings.

A brief overview on the history of the horn

The history of the horn is broken down into four main eras: hunting horn, baroque horn, natural horn with crooks, and valved horn. The horn's role in society and music is what necessitated changes in design and function. In the Medieval and Renaissance eras, the horn slowly transformed from a rudimentary calling instrument to a more complex symphonic horn. Prior to that, the world knew the horn only as severed animal horns or an alteration of the Salpinx or natural trumpet. The earliest form of the valveless horn was the waldhorn, or 'hunting horn,' and was used primarily in game hunts. The technique of the instrument was difficult to control; therefore, many of the melodies consisted of simple rhythmic patterns to indicate various stages of the hunt. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the calls that signify 'A deer approaching' or 'A deer has been spotted.'

Figure 1: Drawing of early hunting horns[1]

Line 1

Line 2

Line 3

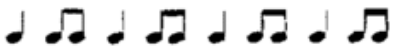


Figure 2: Early tablature of hunting calls[1]

1. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/1911_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica/Horn_(music), accessed 5/24/18.

As time progressed, the horn developed into a standard symphonic instrument. Early Baroque music necessitated a more controlled technique and, as music became more complex, the second era of the horn began. In the early part of the 18th century, additional valveless horns were added to the orchestra to cover the expanded harmonic needs. "It is believed that the first orchestral score to include two valveless horns is Reinhard Keiser's 1705 opera *Octavia*."[2] J.S. Bach utilized the valveless horn in several of his compositions, including *Mass in B minor* (~1724-48) and *Brandenburg* Concerto No. 1 (1713). Additionally, much like trumpet players of the time, specialists formed in high and low horn playing.

By the middle of the 18th century, crooks became commonplace for hornists. Different crooks were used for different purposes; "…Eventually the medium-ranged crooks (F, E, and E-flat) were agreed to be those that were ideal for solo playing."[3] Solo literature in the latter half of the century included Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's three completed concerti, his *Concert Rondo*, two completed movements from different concerti, and several fragments. Solo repertoire also included Franz Joseph Haydn's two concerti, Ludwig van Beethoven's *Sonata in F Major,* Franz Danzi's selected works, and several others by Johann Baptist Georg Neruda, Georg Philipp Telemann, and Leopold Mozart. All of these works used either the D, E-flat, or F crooks, with the first two being more common.

One of the first true virtuosic horn players was Johann Wenzel Stich, better known as Giovanni Punto. His relationship with Mozart is what led to the creation of his famed horn concerti, along with several other solo horn pieces of time. Stich studied with Anton Joseph

2. Austin, Paul. *A Modern Valve Horn Player's Guide to the Natural Horn*, pg 3.
3. Ibid, pg 4.

Hampel who, in the 1750s, developed the hand horn technique. Up to that point, horn writing, particularly in cadential figures, was limited to the performer's ability to play on open harmonics. Natural horn parts are always notated using the harmonic series in C as a reference to the overtones on the instrument, no matter the sounding key, e.g. a third space C is always

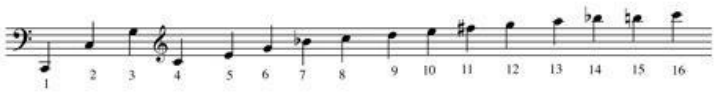


Figure 3: The overtone series[4]

the 8th harmonic (Figure 3). With the development of the hand horn technique, hornists could bend the pitches between the harmonics, allowing for more chromatic notes, which led to more-virtuosic solo literature and orchestral writing.

The use of crooks

The overtone series, being the fundamental sonic principle behind the creation of any brass instrument, was at one point the primary set of notes each instrument played. The difficulty with this system was that composers of the time were limited to either writing within the overtone series of the key of the piece or paying to hire another horn player with a horn in a different key. Due to the limitation of the open harmonics, the hornists playing melodic lines had to play in the upper register. Second horn players had to move between the wider, lower harmonics in order to harmonize with the first horn. Orchestral horn parts became segregated and specialists emerged. Crooks started to become common practice near the middle of the 18th century in both orchestral and solo literature.

4. https://aquila.usm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1848&context=dissertations, accessed 5/24/18.

The invention of the valved horn

In 1814, German hornist Heinrich Stölzel developed the first system of piston valves for many of the brass instruments. At that point in the history of music, composers such as Beethoven and Luigi Cherubini were at the height of their careers and creating masterworks which necessitated not only hornists with greater skill, but a more refined instrument. Not all composers, though, adopted the valved instruments immediately. Some, such as Beethoven, only used primitive versions of these new instruments. Figure 4 below illustrates the original design by Stölzel, giving hornists more chromatic options. Although many composers of the era were first taken aback by the valved horn, eventually composers such as Hector Berlioz and Richard Wagner embraced the change. Following a series of less-than-successful attempts at modifying the Stölzel valve, in 1838, French instrument maker François Périnet created the 'French horn' with improved piston valves (Figure 5). This design differs from the rotary-valve instruments that had become more popular in Germany at the time.

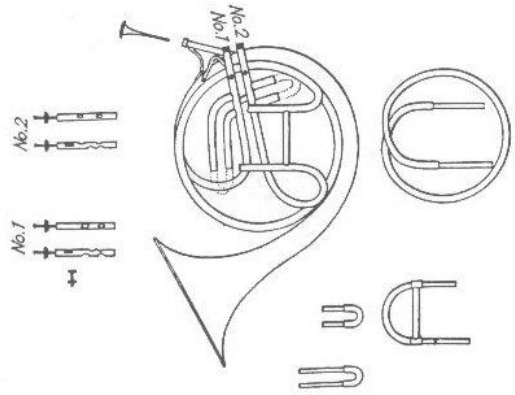


Figure 4: The original valved horn from *Revue Musical*[5]

5. http://www.public.asu.edu/~jqerics/earlval.htm, accessed 5/54/18.

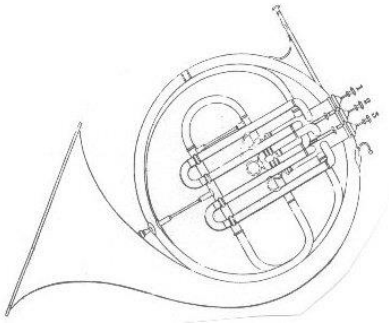


Figure 5: The Perinet Piston horn from *Revue Musical*[6]

How the valved horn eases the process of playing

The 'crook' system, while revolutionary for the art of horn playing, was at times cumbersome and unreliable. The process of transporting crooks was dangerous, as they were fragile, and methods of travel were not as smooth as they are today. Additionally, switching out various crooks during and between movements was potentially distracting to the hornist and those around him, and invited opportunities for dropped or incorrect crooks. The valved horn eased the process of changing between different overtone series considerably (See Appendix A). With the modern four-valved double horn, it became possible to play in 12 keys, eliminating the need for bulky crooks. More than anything, that is what drew composers to the new valved system when it was invented in the 19th century. Wagner understood that the tone of the horn could be wide-ranging and utilized in multiple symphonic genres, which is why he used various versions of the horn. Method books of the time, however, were advising valved horn players to continue learning 'hand/stopped horn' technique.

> It is extremely important for a beginner to become proficient in 'stopped horn' playing as soon as possible. Through its practice the player's ear is sharpened and the tone developed to an unusual extent. The player must endeavor to produce these "stopped notes" as clearly as possible, and the difference in tonal quality between these and the

6. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/1911_Encyclop%C3%A6dia_Britannica/Horn_(music), accessed 5/24/18.

> "natural tones" must be equalized as much as possible; the "stopped tones" must not sound as though a cloth had been introduced into the instrument. If a player has become proficient in "stopped horn" playing, it will be an easy matter for him to keep on playing, even in case of the accident one of the valves refuse to work; if he has only studied the valve horn an accident of this kind would render him helpless and compel him to discontinue.[7]

Another major advocate of the valved horn in the 19th century (and into the 20th) was Richard Strauss. Strauss, much like Wagner, explored much more chromatic harmonic shifts, thus necessitating the valved horn and its capabilities. The opening of *Till Eulenspiegel,* for example, blended the chromatic capabilities of the valved horn and the somewhat comedic aspects of the natural horn. Figure 6 illustrates how the opening of *Till Eulenspiegel* would be played natural horn, if Strauss had written it for the instrument. O indicates an 'open' note and + indicates a 'stopped' note.

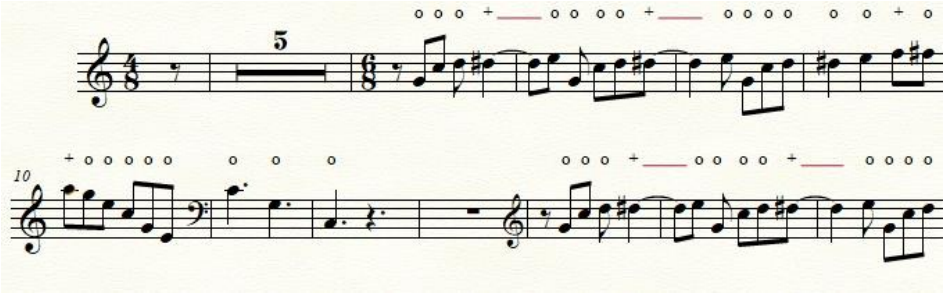


Figure 6: The opening of *Till Eulenspiegel* by Richard Strauss, Horn 1, mm. 1-16[8]

The natural horn in the 19th century

With the invention of the valved horn in the first half of the 19th century, composers and performers debated the natural horn's continued relevance in solo and symphonic literature. Flexibility and tone color were at the core of the debate. The valved horn offered increased

7. Oscar, Franz. *Complete Method for the French Horn*, New York: Carl Fischer, 1906, pg 35.
8. http://imslp.org/wiki/Till_Eulenspiegels_lustige_Streiche,_Op.28_(Strauss,_Richard), accessed 5/25/18.

versatility and chromaticism but a brighter tone, while the natural horn, except in higher keys, had a darker and somewhat muffled tone. As the horn's importance in the orchestra grew, players were expected to be competent with both natural and valved horn techniques, as some composers such as Johannes Brahms, Anton Weber, and even Wagner still utilized the natural horn. Famously, Wagner's opera *Lohengrin* is scored for two valved and two natural horns. Much of Wagner's compositions necessitated the use of the 'chromatic' or valved horn, but it was clear that the natural horn was still relevant as the 19th century progressed. Other composers such as Robert Schumann favored the valved instrument, as evidenced in his works *Adagio and Allegro* and *Konzerstück* for four horns and orchestra.

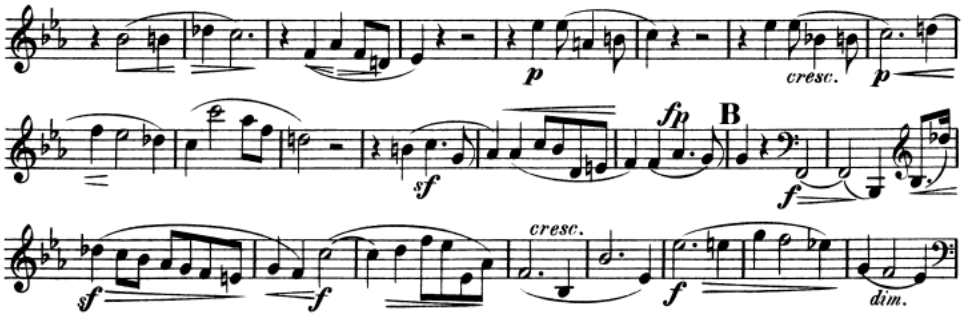


Figure 7: *Adagio and Allegro* by Robert Schumann*,* mm. 17-40 [9]

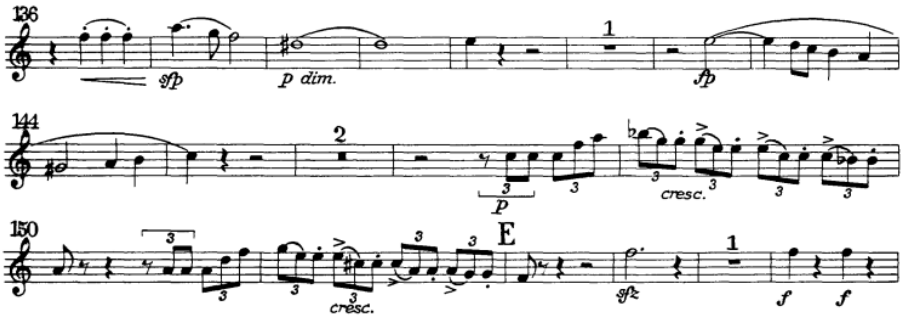


Figure 8: *Konzerstück for four horns* by Schumann*,* horn 1, mm. 136-155[10]

9. http://imslp.org/wiki/Adagio_and_Allegro,_Op.70_(Schumann,_Robert), accessed 5/23/18.
10.http://imslp.org/wiki/Concertpiece_for_Four_Horns_and_Orchestra%2C_Op.86_(Schumann%2C_Robert), accessed 5/23/18.

Brahms, on the other hand, was still highly in favor of the natural horn. Many of his orchestral works were written specifically with the natural horn in mind, including his symphonies, *Academic Festival Overture*, and *Variations on a Theme by Haydn*, which were written well after the invention of the valved horn.

> Of all the composers considered herein, Brahms carried the historic view of the horn to its greatest extreme. Long after every professional horn player in Germany and Austria used a chromatic instrument exclusively, all his horn parts were written for the natural horn, though as Richard Merewether writes "... there is little likelihood that Brahms's meticulous horn parts were in practice played on the `natural' instruments for which they are notated, nor would they have sounded more effective for being so. Brahms typically writes for two horns with one crook and two with another, though occasionally (Haydn variations) he has three different crooks in use simultaneously. He prescribes the C crook in 11 of his 16 symphonic movements and the E crook in 7. Since he prescribes nothing higher than the G crook and that in only one symphonic movement, we can be sure that his concept of horn tone was mellow rather than penetrating.[11]

These varying opinions led to opposing ideologies of the horn's progression into the 20th century and beyond, which is where this treatise will focus. This treatise will focus on solo works from 1900 onward that utilize natural-horn technique on the modern valved horn, and how natural-horn technique and the natural horn have remained relevant even after the invention of the valved horn. Surveyed works will include *Villanelle* by Paul Dukas, *Serenade* for tenor, horn, and strings by Benjamin Britten, *Prelude for Horn* by Randall Faust, *Elegia* by Hermann Baumann, *September Elegy* by Jeffrey Agrell, and "Ghost Circles" from *Supernatural* by Jay Batzner.

11. http://www.mooremusic.org.uk/nathorn/nathorn.htm#P7, accessed 5/23/18.

CHAPTER 2

VILLANELLE (1906) BY PAUL DUKAS

Biography and background information

During the course of study through the 19th century at the Paris Conservatory, horn students studied natural horn and its associated repertoire/technique. The addition of the valved horn became standard during the latter half of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th. At the beginning of 20th century, students studied natural horn for two years and valved horn for two years, which necessitated the writing of a series of pieces for the final exams that included both instruments. *Villanelle* by Paul Dukas is the only one of those pieces that is still performed with regularity.

Dukas was born in Paris in 1865; his father was a banker and his mother, who died when he was five, was a pianist. He began piano lessons at the age of 11 and composition a few years later. His compositional influences included Ludwig van Beethoven and Claude Debussy, who later became his contemporary at the Paris Conservatory. Dukas placed second in the *Prix de Rome* in 1889, which he saw as a failure. Subsequently, he withdrew from the Paris Conservatory.

Following his time at the Paris Conservatory, Dukas became successful with both his musical composition and his prowess as a music critic. He returned to the Paris Conservatory in 1927 and spent the final years of his life as a notable composition professor. His influence, though, was felt far earlier because of *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, which is what inspired

the faculty at the Paris Conservatory to have him write an examination piece that combined the elements of natural and valved horn. It was an immediate success, used several more times for the *Concours* at the Paris Conservatory, and was a popular choice for Paris orchestral auditions in the first half the 20th century.[12]

Valved versus natural horn sections

Villanelle, since its creation in 1906, has become a standard in the horn repertoire. Additionally, it is a standard teaching piece in colleges because of the different uses of mutes, hand techniques, range, dynamics, articulation, and other factors.

Dukas used the influences of French Impressionistic composers such as Claude Debussy and Maurice Ravel with respect to color in *Villanelle.* The piece requires the hornist to perform natural horn, valved horn, echo horn, and muted. The different colors that are asked of the horn during the performance demonstrate the instrument's versatility, which is made more impressive considering that the valved horn had only been implemented in the curriculum a few years earlier. Another important distinction between this and most other solo pieces composed at the time was the use of echo horn. This section typically is performed stopped, though, because of the tuning issues with echo horn. While the practice of echo horn is uncommon and its place in solo horn repertoire is sparse, should the need arise, such as in Dukas' *Sorcerer's Apprentice*, it is important to learn this technique.

Villanelle was not the first solo of its kind to employ the use of both natural and valved horn. In 1898, Victorin de Jonciéres wrote *Solo,* which incorporates several of the same

12. Humphries, John. "The Dukas Villanelle – First Performance." *The Horn Call*, May, 2019. pp 74-78.

characteristics as Dukas' *Villanelle*. The opening is to be played on 'cor simple' and, midway through the ninth line, the hornist is instructed to play 'cor-chromatique.' The Paris

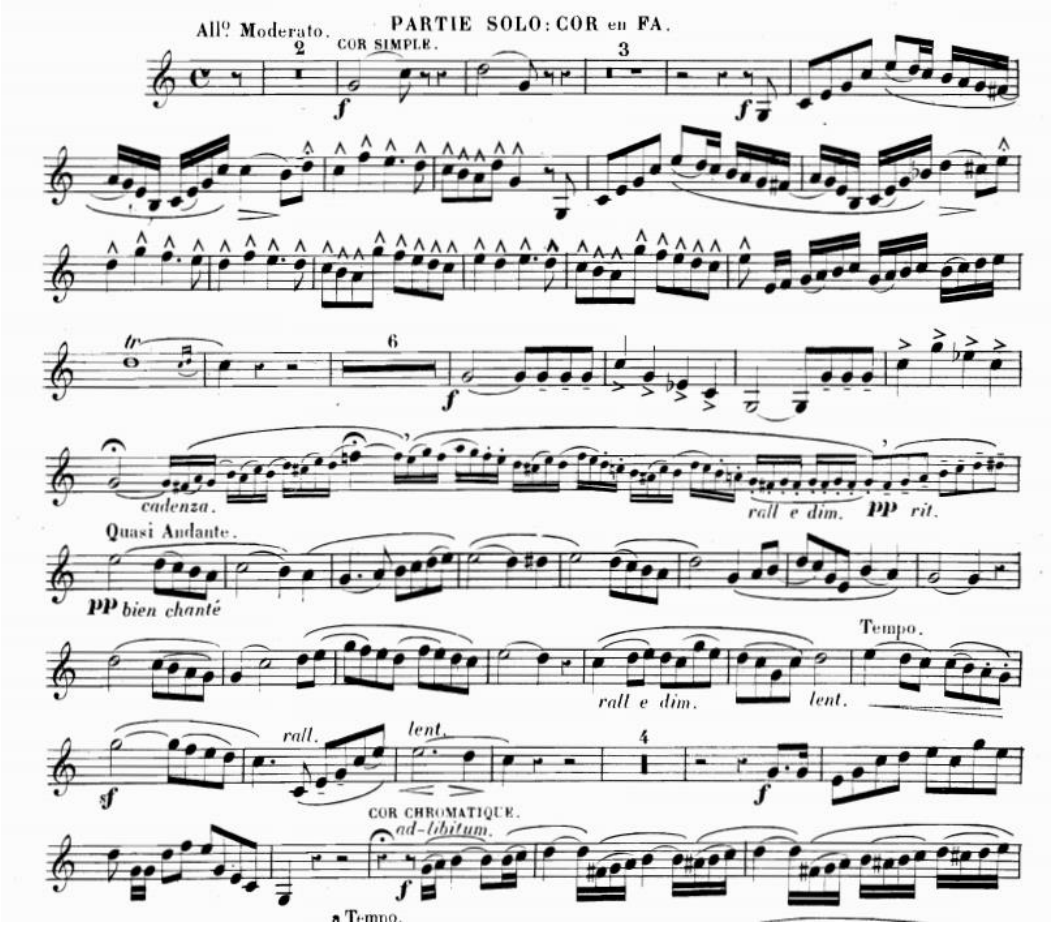


Figure 9: The opening section of *Solo* by Victorin de Jonciéres [13]

Conservatory had a radical shift to valved horn for a short time around the time of *Solo*'s composition; this was due in part because François Brémond reintroduced the valved horn in 1891. At the turn of the 20th century, valved horn was officially reintroduced by Brémond at the Conservatory, which meant, for at least one class of students, there was a division of natural (hand) horn and valved horn studies. It was not until after *Villanelle* was written that

13. https://imslp.simssa.ca/files/imglnks/usimg/4/4f/IMSLP79303-PMLP160689-Joncieres_-_Solo_HnPt.pdf, accessed 3/8/20.

students were taught exclusively on valved horn. The fact that *Villanelle* became popular while *Solo* has mostly fallen to obscurity can be attributed to Dukas' rise in popularity and the quality of his compositions. De Jonciéres wrote primarily for stage and performed with various orchestras around Paris. Initially, his interests were in painting and he entered Francois-Eduoard Picot's studio. His output, compositionally, was smaller and less widespread as that of Dukas, who toured around Europe and taught at the Conservatory during his later years.

The use of valved horn in solo repertoire gained prominence in the 19th century with such works as Franz Strauss's *Nocturno,* op. 7 and Richard Strauss's Horn Concerto No. 1, op. 11. These works established the valved horn as a legitimate solo instrument, while symphonic works such as *Lohengrin* by Wagner utilized valved horns in a larger ensemble. This is not to say that the natural horn immediately disappeared, as *Romance,* op. 36 by Camille Saint-Saens and even *Lohengrin* were written for—or included—the natural horn. *Villanelle* by Dukas was one of the first to incorporate both valved and natural horn techniques in one solo.

Performance suggestions

The introduction to *Villanelle* can be performed several ways. Originally intended to be performed on natural horn with valves, different modern schools of thought suggest one of three ways:

1. The hornist may perform the opening section all on valved horn. John Ericson of Arizona State University, in his article about the natural horn and *Villanelle*, says that "performing on the natural horn creates one of a few issues: that phrases disappear, explaining the 'weird sounds' [of the natural horn] to the audience, it would probably be

badly out of tune, natural horn does not work out well on a modern size horn bell, and that you cannot switch back and forth between the natural and modern horn and have it make any musical sense in this work."[14] Ericson brings up several good and valid points about performance practice on the natural horn. Not unlike the oboe d'amore or Wagner tuba, the natural horn is not a standard instrument that every student studies from day one, as it is a specialty instrument that takes additional years of study and practice to gain enough proficiency and confidence to make speak well. This piece can be used as a primer to help teach natural horn repertoire and, as such, performances using natural horn technique are often of lower quality; however, for the professional or avid natural horn specialist, this introduction is a standard that is quite stunning when performed well.

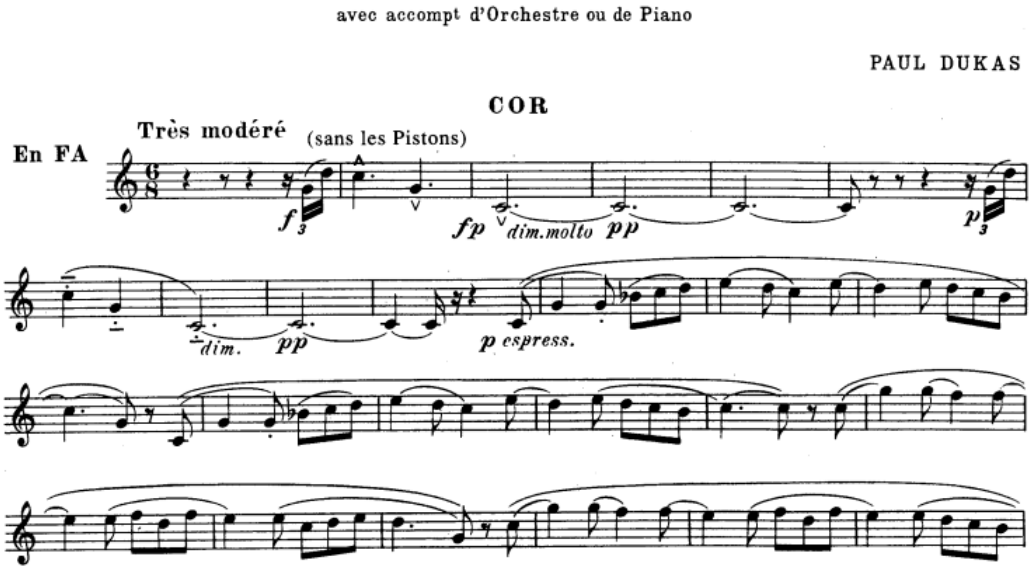


Figure 10: Measures 1-25 in *Villanelle* by Paul Dukas. sans les pistons clearly marked[15]

14. https://www.hornmatters.com/2008/05/dukas-villanelle-and-the-natural-horn, accessed 3/17/20.
15. http://ks4.imslp.info/files/imglnks/usimg/a/ac/IMSLP06116-Dukas-Villanelle_horn.pdf, accessed 3/8/20.

2. The hornist may perform the introduction with natural horn technique on the valved horn. The second most common way to perform the introduction requires the performer to learn the appropriate hand-stopping gestures on the valved horn. Tuning tendencies can be inconsistent for a performer of the valved horn and the timbre and volume have to be negotiated due to the difference in construction of the horns. The International Horn Competition of America required this method of performance in the professional division.
3. The hornist may perform the introduction on a natural horn, then switch to a valved horn for the remainder of the piece. This is far less likely of a performance practice, but still possible. Of course, one must have access to a natural horn and be ready to switch instruments during fifteen measures of rest following the introduction. This manner of performance will give each section an authentic feel, although it was probably not Dukas' intention for the piece to be performed this way. If so, he would have indicated in the beginning 'on natural horn' instead of 'without the pistons' (valves).

Villanelle is a challenging piece for any level of natural horn performer due to its technical complexity. Measures 27-28 (See Figure 11) require delicate adjustments. The notes e-flat', g-flat', and a-flat' alternate between fully stopped and half-stopped hand positions which, if the performer cannot adjust quickly enough, will cause serious intonation problems in the passage. The final section of the introduction (Figure 12) is the most difficult because of the complex hand-stopping gestures in the measures leading to the 'Tres Vif.' The quick chromaticism makes it difficult for the hornist to be accurate in the hand positions.

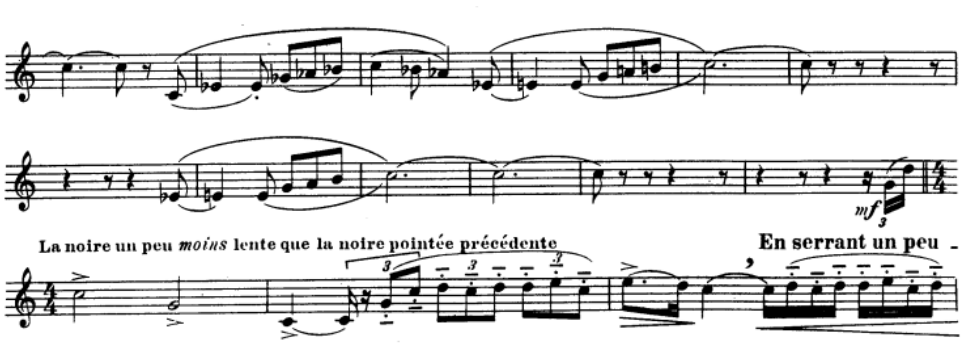


Figure 11: Measures 26-40 in *Villanelle* by Dukas[16]

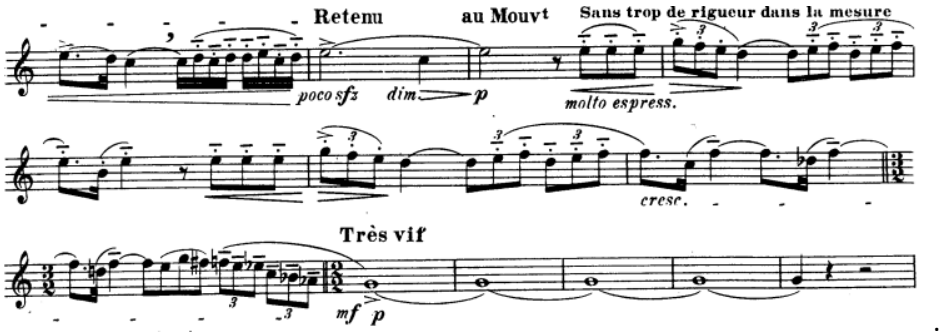


Figure 12: Measures 41-53 in *Villanelle* by Dukas[17]

In the closing of the final section of *Villanelle*, Dukas returns to the opening character of the piece with similar motivic figures and harmony. This section (Figure 13) can be played

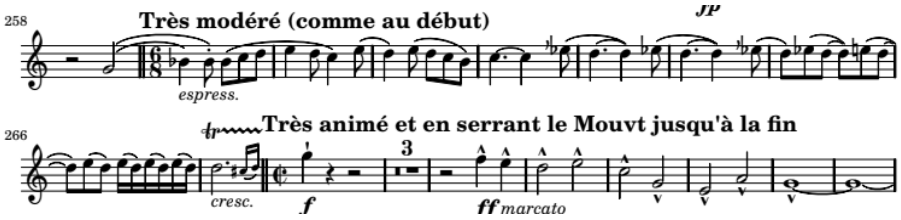


Figure 13: Measures 259-267 in *Villanelle* by Dukas mirror the introduction in character[18]

one of two ways: on valved horn with valves or on valved horn without valves. There is no time to pick up the natural horn before this section begins. One may perform it without valves to in order to mimic the character of the opening section. Some editions indicate to perform this section 'without valves.'

16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.

CHAPTER 3

SERENADE FOR TENOR, HORN, AND STRINGS (1943) BY BENJAMIN BRITTEN

Biography and background information

The repertoire involving horn and voice has grown significantly since the middle of the 20th century. Since 1980, prominent composers have contributed dozens of original works to the horn and voice repertoire. In his treatise on the exploration of selected works for horn and voice, John Mayhew Anderson lists nearly 80 works that include the horn and voice, offering musicians another chamber setting for the horn in performances.[19] Surprisingly, only one work listed was written prior to the premiere of Benjamin Britten's *Serenade* for tenor, horn, and strings*; Alphorn* op. 15, no. 3 for soprano, horn, and piano, by Richard Strauss.

Britten, the youngest of four children, was born in November of 1913. His mother was an actress and his father was a dental surgeon. Interested in music from a very early age, Britten said about his first attempts into musical composition that:

> …the result looked rather like the Forth Bridge, in other words hundreds of dots all over the page connected by long lines all joined together in beautiful curves. I am afraid it was the pattern on the paper which I was interested in and when I asked my mother to play it, her look of horror upset me considerably.[2]

In 1930, he won a scholarship to study at the Royal College of Music in London. One of the adjudicators for the scholarship was Ralph Vaughan Williams, who was influential on Britten. Additional influences at the time were Igor Stravinksy, Arnold Schoenberg, and Alban Berg, all

19. Anderson, Jon Mayhew. "An Exploration of Selected Works for Horn, Voice, and Piano: Performance Considerations for the Horn Player" (2014). Open Access Dissertations. 1210. https://scholarlyrepository.miami.edu/oa_dissertations/1210. Accessed 1/25/20.
20. *The composer and the Listener*, a broadcast talk by Benjamin Britten, November 7, 1946.

of whom had revolutionized the music world in their own ways. Britten's first published work was an a capella choral work, *A Boy was Born*, written in 1934. From 1934-37, Britten wrote close to 40 scores for various mediums including radio, cinema, and theater.[21]

Shortly after this period, Britten and his partner Peter Pears moved to America and began their prolific compositional partnership. Many of Britten's vocal works can be credited as being inspired by Pears' voice, and the two often toured extensively together. It was through this partnership and the request of famed hornist Dennis Brain that the *Serenade* emerged. Britten composed the majority of the *Serenade* in 1943 while he was hospitalized for the measles. Edward Sacksville, for whom the work is dedicated, had this to say about it in his book 'Music: Some Aspects of the Contemporary Problem:'

> The subject is Night and its prestigia: the lengthening shadow, the distant bugle at sunset, the Baroque panoply of the starry sky, the heavy angels of sleep: but also the cloak of evil-the worm in the heart of the rose, the sense of sin in the heart of man. The whole sequence forms an Elegy or Nocturnal…resuming the thoughts and images suitable to evening.[22]

Movements I and VIII: "Prologue" and "Epilogue"

The *Serenade* is an expansive and difficult work for every performer involved. The text in the second through seventh movements was drawn from various sources, all relating to the evening or some type of solemn event. The outer movements were written for unaccompanied natural horn with no vocal line. The "Prologue" and "Epilogue" are identical, with the exception of the latter to be performed offstage. The horn part, inspired by Brain's playing and his

21. White, Eric Walter. *"Britten in the Theatre: A Provisional Catalogue*," *Tempo*, New Series, No 107, December 1973, pp 2–10.
22. *Music: Some Aspects of the Contemporary Problem* by Edward Sackville-West. Horizon, June, July, and August, 1944.

relationship with Britten, is reminiscent of the hunting calls of antiquity. The use of open harmonics, particularly the 7th and 13th, gives the part a rustic and nature-like quality.

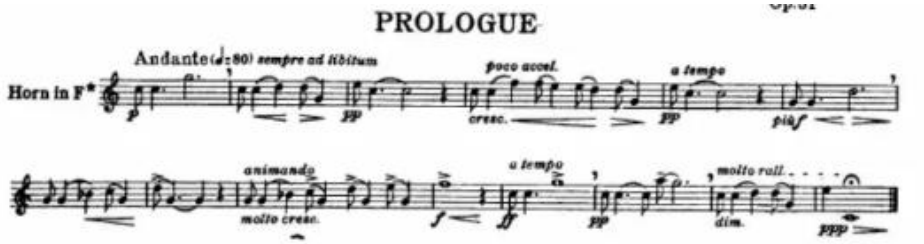


Figure 14: "Prologue" from *Serenade* for tenor, horn, and strings, by Benjamin Britten, horn part [23]

At this point in history, the use of the valved horn was common practice, something that Britten knew and utilized in earlier works, such as *Sinfonia Da Requiem* composed in 1940. Given Brain's versatility as a player and the subject matter of the text, the open harmonics complement the text.

Performance suggestions

Care must be taken in the execution of these movements, as the notes in the upper register are quite close together and can be problematic. When considering the placement of the 7th, 11th, and 13th harmonics, it may be beneficial to include program notes so that the audience is aware that these pitches are written purposefully, and that the hornist is playing the notes intentionally with the intonation of the open harmonics. The f'' in the fourth measure (Figure 15) is not a naturally in-tune harmonic for the horn. Performing it with no modification

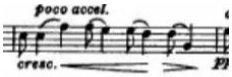


Figure 15: Measure four in "Prologue" from *Serenade* by Britten, horn part [24]

23. Britten, Benjamin. *Serenade for tenor, horn, and strings,* New York, NY: Boosey and Hawkes, 1943, pg 1.
24. Ibid.

of hand placement or embouchure adjustment results in a very flat f-sharp'' or a very sharp f''.

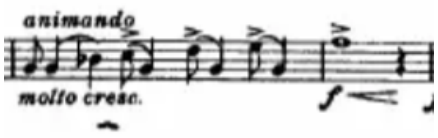


Figure 16: Measures 8-9 in "Prologue: from *Serenade* by Britten, horn part [25]

The eleventh-harmonic F returns later in the "Prologue," this time coming from a g' (Figure 16). After increasing leaps from different harmonics centering around the g', the movement utilizes the g' to f'' leap to signal the recapitulation of the opening motif and end of the movement. Of all the figures in this movement, the g' to f'' is possibly the most difficult. This is not fully comfortable for the hornist because of the tuning tendencies of the 11th harmonic. Neither quite an octave nor a minor seventh, this leap must be handled carefully. It is, however, made easier due in part to the ascending leaps to the b-flat', c'', d'', and e'' in the measure prior; this aids the hornist in placing the already out-of-tune 11th harmonic.

The other note of concern and a topic of debate is the written a'' in measure 12 of the "Prologue." There is concern that the printed note is not the actual note intended by the composer. Jonathan Penny, in the October 2012 issue of *The Horn Call*, writes a convincing argument against the a'' in lieu of the b-flat''.[26] He postulated that, because of the type of horn Brain was using at the time (a Raoux-Millereau model of F horn), the b-flat'' was closer to the a'' than most horns of the time. This, of course, is speculation, as it was never corrected in the manuscripts or printed editions. Based on the first recordings by Brain in which he plays a b-

25. Ibid.
26. Penny, Jonathan. "The Brain of Britten: Notational Aspects of the Serenade." *The Horn Call*, October 2012. pp 70-71.

Figure 17: Measures 12 showing the 13th harmonic in "Prologue" from *Serenade* by Britten, horn part [27]

flat" and subsequent recordings by artists such as Barry Tuckwell and Frank Lloyd, b-flat'' is seemingly the more 'correct' note to be played. This is negated by the composer who states in a letter to *Tempo* in the Winter 1954 edition:

> In the Prologue and Epilogue the horn is directed to play on the natural harmonics of the instrument; this causes the apparent 'out-of-tuneness' of which your reviewer complains, and which is, in fact, exactly the effect I intend. In the many brilliant performances on his part that Dennis Brain has given he has always I am sure, played it as I have marked it in the score. Anyone, therefore, who plays it 'in tune' is going directly against my wishes! If the critics do not like this effect, they should blame me and not Mr. Brain.[28]

In *The Horn Call*, Penny writes that Brain expressed dissatisfaction with suggesting the open harmonics to Britten in a correspondence to Stephen Pettitt.[29] He preferred, according to Penny, to perform the outer movements on valved horn, although he never communicated this to Britten, and the part was never modified.

With regards to dynamics, a few different factors must be observed. The horn that the performer is playing will affect the quality of the tone as the hornist gets louder and softer. A natural horn has less resistance, making it more comfortable to achieve a louder sound, but the performer should consider that it may achieve a brighter tone more easily than that of a valved

27. Britten, *Serenade.*
28. Tempo magazine, 1954 winter edition, pg 39.
29. Penny, Jonathan. "The Brain of Britten: Notational Aspects of the Serenade." *The Horn Call*, October 2012. pp 70-71.

horn. Playing softer may be easier on the natural horn because of the decreased resistance. Conversely, one can achieve a more robust tone on a valved horn, but the softer dynamics, particularly around the 10th and 11th harmonics in measures four and five and the 13th (14th) harmonics in measure 12, will be more difficult because of the added resistance. The decision to perform the outer movements on the natural horn or valved horn is to be left up to the discretion of the individual hornist, as Britten never specified the model of horn (unlike Hermann Baumann in his *Elegia* for natural horn). It is interesting to note that "Dennis Brain most likely used a B-flat crook to perform Britten's work, except in the "Prologue" and "Epilogue," where he used the instrument's normal F crook."[30]

Britten did not indicate in the score of the "Epilogue" when the hornist should exit the stage. Because the hornist does not play in the seventh movement, it would seem appropriate that the performer exit before it is performed. The performer must also consider that playing backstage can pose difficulties, as not everyone may be aware that the performance is not over. Frank Lloyd writes in an issue of *The Horn Call*:

> "I once had to try and keep my composure in the middle of the Epilogue as an orchestral colleague ran to prevent a cleaning lady (complete with bucket and mop) from entering the hall right in front of where I was playing! She obviously thought the concert was over, and seemed a bit bewildered when he tapped her on the shoulder, put his finger to his lips and pointed to me, halfway up a flight of stairs, trying not to let any of this hilarious scene put me off!"[31]

30. William lynch, unpublished draft material (personal correspondence) 11.IV.2012.
31. Lloyd, Frank. "Performing Britten's Serenade," *The Horn Call*, February 2013. pg 72.

CHAPTER 4

PRELUDE FOR HORN (1974) BY RANDALL FAUST

Biography and background information

The few pieces that existed in the unaccompanied horn repertoire before 1974 included works such as *Horn-Lokk* (1973) by Sigurd Berge, *Fantasy for Horn* (1966) by Malcolm Arnold, *Laudatio* (1966) by Bernhard Krol, and *Parable VIII* (1973) by Vincent Persichetti. These pieces were all important, primarily because they gave the horn a new avenue to explore: unaccompanied solo pieces. These works, however, did not utilize the natural horn or natural horn technique. Moments in *Parable VIII* and *Horn-Lokk* hint at the open harmonics and natural horn techniques (the opening three lines in *Parable* can easily be played on the natural horn), but natural horn segments did not appear in accompanied repertoire until Randall Faust's *Prelude for Horn* (1974).

Born in 1947, Randall Faust's exposure to music began at an early age, as his father was a band director and his mother was a choir director and pianist. He spent his early years in Iowa, attended high school in Minnesota and received degrees at Eastern Michigan University (Bachelor of Science in Music, 1972), Mankato State University (Master of Music in Composition, 1973), and the University of Iowa (Doctor of Musical Arts in Performance and Pedagogy, 1980).[32] Faust held positions at the University of Iowa as Visiting Assistant Professor of Horn, the Shenandoah Conservatory as Professor of Music, Auburn University as Professor of Music teaching horn and composition lessons as well as conducting the Auburn Brass Ensemble,

32. Mattingly, Alan Franklin. *"A Performance Guide to the Solo Horn Works of Randall Edward Faust,"* DMA Thesis. Florida State University, 1998. pg 13.

and Western Illinois University as Professor of Horn. He retired from WIU in 2018. Faust has also taught at the Interlochen Center for the Arts National Music Camp in Michigan and served as the President of the International Horn Society and the National Association of College Wind and Percussion Instructors.

Faust's compositions have been performed all over the world at a variety of festivals and conferences, including the International Horn Symposium, the National Association of College Wind and Percussion Instructors Conference, the International Trumpet Guild Symposium, and many others. His primary composition instructors were Rolf Scheurer, Warren Benson, Anthony Iannaccone, Peter Tod Lewis, and Donald Jenni.[33] Faust also draws inspiration from composers such as Paul Hindemith and Wagner.

Several of Faust's compositions have been featured in the International Horn Competition of America (formerly the American Horn Competition), including *Prelude for Horn* and *Call and Response* for solo horn. In addition to his works being on the list for this competition, Faust customarily gifts several of the participants copies of his other solo works. Recently, he has had several premieres at International Horn Symposia including his works *Golden Calls* for horn ensemble (2018), and *Golden Fantasy* for Wagner tuba and piano (2019). *Sights and Sounds of the Symposium* for two horns and piano was to be premiered in 2020 but was postponed due to COVID-19.

Prelude for Horn was written for Marvin Howe in honor of Howe's treatise on stopped horn in the 1973 Autumn edition of *The Horn Call*.[34] In it, Howe stated that, when stopping the

33. www.faustmusic.com/about-us, accessed 1/26/20.
34. Howe, Marvin C. "Stopped Horn," *The Horn Call*. 1973, Autumn, pp 19-24.

horn, “The closure of the to a half step above the next lowest hand gradually lowers the pitch tone in the harmonic series.”[35] This note is included on the second page of Faust’s score, along with notes pertaining to specific pitches and fingerings on the first page. Faust’s notation is very thorough, as almost no note or passage is without dynamic or phrase marks, fermati, or tempo alteration. The initial indicated tempo is “Lento (quarter note=60-84).“[36] Faust indicates that large sections of the work can be performed on the open harmonics of the horn, which is why this work can be used to introduce the natural horn and hand-stopping techniques. Faust uses several of the motivic ideas in *Prelude for Horn* in other compositions, most similarly the opening of his *Horn Call* for horn and electronic media (1976).[37] The opening perfect fifth and the descending triplet pattern in *Horn Call* (Figure 18) are nearly identical to the passage in the second line of *Prelude for Horn* (See Figure 19 below). The rhythmic and harmonic content of several of Faust’s other compositions mimic the complexity here. Often, he uses quartal harmony or outlines of the circle of fourths or fifths to drive his musical passages forward.

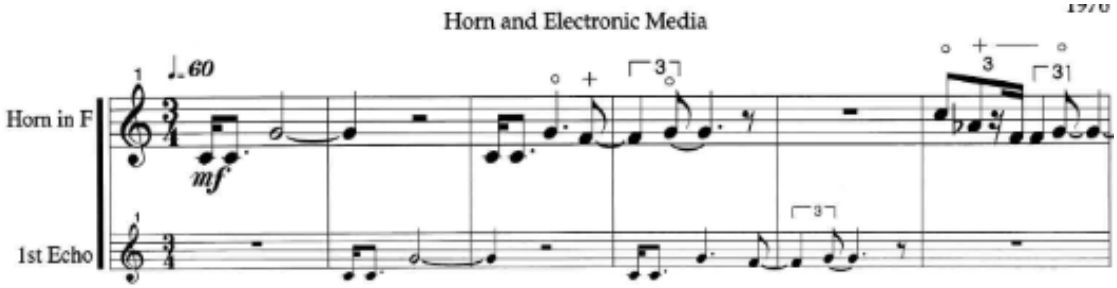


Figure 18: Opening line from *Horn Call* by Randall Faust mimics passages in *Prelude for Horn*[38]

35. Faust, Randall. *Prelude for Horn*, Macomb, IL. Faust Music, 1974.
36. Ibid.
37. Faust, Randall. *Horn Call*, Macomb, IL. Faust Music, 1978.
38. Ibid.

The use of natural/hand horn technique versus valved horn

Faust indicates that large sections of the work can be performed on the open harmonics of the horn, which is why this work may be used as a pedagogical tool to introduce the natural horn and hand techniques. As shown in Figure 19, much of the first three lines can be performed without valves on the natural harmonics. Faust indicates with the use of glissandi and the '+' symbol where to close the hand. This was not by coincidence, as Faust studied natural horn and composition with Howe.

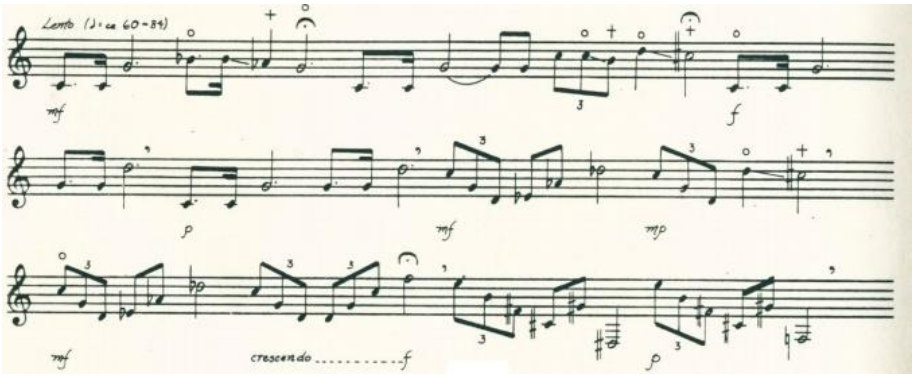


Figure 19: The first three lines of *Prelude for Horn* by Faust can be performed on natural harmonics [39]

Performance suggestions

The hornist must consider, first and foremost, the wide tempo allowance, as it is marked quarter-note = 60-84. Twenty-four beats per minute can have an impact on timing and character of the piece; phrasing is not affected much by the metronome marking, as Faust clearly indicates where the hornist should phrase either with fermati or breath marks. Also, most of the piece is fragmentary in nature, allowing for easier completion of the phrases (unlike in *Elegia* by Hermann Baumann, where phrases can last much longer). The advantage of a

39. Ibid.

slower tempo (60-68 bpm) is the ability to take more time moving into the stopped notes, as indicated by the glissandi. A spritelier tempo— closer to 84bpm—makes the shorter-note durations (16^{ths}, triplets, and 16th-note quintuplets (Figure 20)) more exciting, and the alternating open-to-stopped 16th-note motive at the end of the sixth line on the first page even more impressive (Figure 21).

Figure 20: 16-Note quintuplet in *Prelude for Horn* by Faust[41]

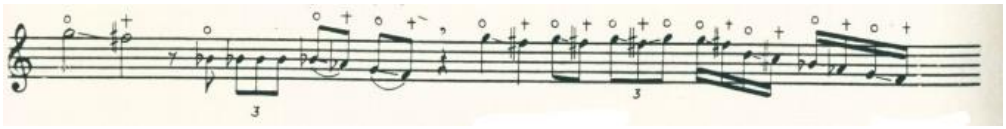


Figure 21: Alternating stopped and open passage in *Prelude for Horn* by Faust[41]

A key element to the successful performance of *Prelude for Horn* is correct right-hand placement, as it affects the whole piece. Faust, in the 1993 April edition of *The Horn Call*, suggests removing the bell of the horn to see how far the right hand needs to be inserted.[42] Natural hornists know that, to maneuver adequately among all of the open and closed notes, they must position their right hand slightly further in the bell than on a modern horn. This provides an easier resting placement to shift among the various levels of closure required as well as aid in tuning stopped notes. For Faust's *Prelude for Horn*, however, the two options of hand placement are open or fully stopped (and the slow closure in between). It is recommended that the performer adhere to the natural horn technique and insert the right

40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. Faust, Randall E. "…and now a final word on stopped horn…," *The Horn Call*, April 1993. pg 19.

hand slightly further in to aid in shifting between the two positions during the glissandi, especially at the end of line six (see Figure 21). Doing this also reinforces natural horn, which is another reason why this work is of great pedagogical value to younger students. Alan Mattingly, in his treatise on Faust's music, suggests that this passage is best prepared by "practicing the open notes first, then later adding the stopped notes."[43] This can be further expanded upon by playing the entire piece on the valved horn first. This method ensures that the hornist hear the correct in-tune pitches first and then add the stopped passages and glissandi.

The intonation of stopped notes ties directly to hand position. For the stopped passages, the performer must use not only a correct closed hand position, but also a good ear to tune the

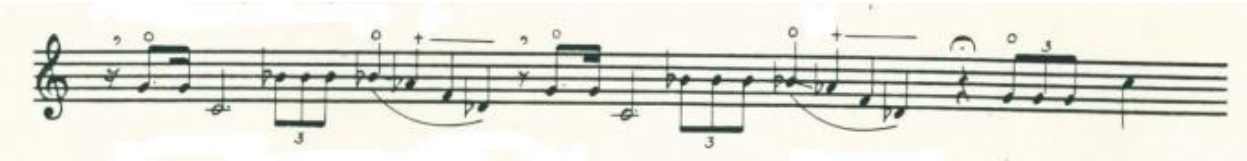


Figure 22: Page two, line two of *Prelude for Horn* by Faust[44]

outlined D-flat major chord. The performer needs to raise the a-flat' and lower both the f' and d-flat'' as this will ensure correct intonation (Figure 22).

The effect of the glissando from the open note to its stopped companion cannot be overstated. In the first line of the piece, the open d'' to the c-sharp'' is quite poignant (Figure 20); the earlier b-flat' to a-flat' is not as evocative because of the muffled harmonic. The brightness of the d'' to c-sharp'' glissando is emulated by the glissando from g'' to f-sharp'' in the fourth and fifth lines. This effect is enhanced by the dramatic shifts in range and timbre of the preceding and succeeding figures. It is helpful to practice the wide leaps out of context first

43. Mattingly, Alan Franklin. *"A Performance Guide to the Solo Horn Works of Randall Edward Faust,"* DMA Thesis. Florida State University, 1998. pg 13.
44. Faust, *Prelude for Horn.*

in order to secure the aural skills and accuracy needed to play the passage. Practicing the intervals without octave-displacement helps the hornist to hear and play the wide intervals correctly before moving back to the printed octaves (Figure 23).

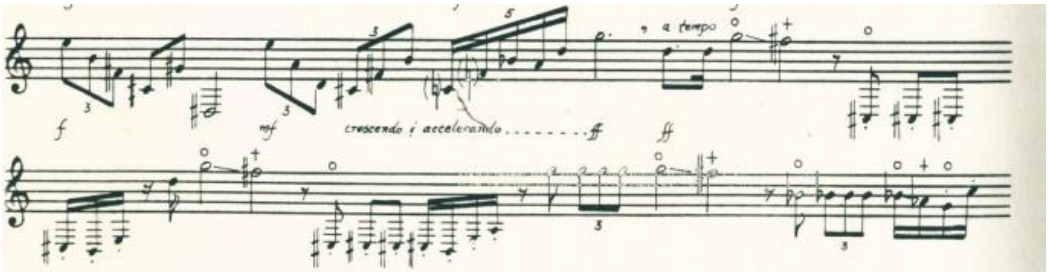


Figure 23: Lines four and five of *Prelude for Horn* by Faust [45]

Range is another consideration when choosing this piece. With a tessitura of just under three octaves, it provides an adequate challenge to students expanding control in the outer ranges. The difficulties of this section are articulating the lowest notes clearly and achieving proper intonation (Figure 24). The octave-displacement method should also be used when connecting the larger interval leaps, such as a-g'' in the second line of Figure 24.

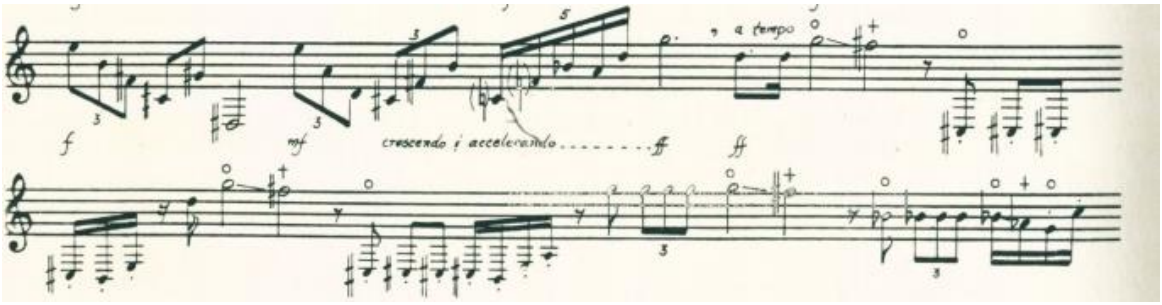


Figure 24: The b and Lowest point of *Prelude for Horn* by Faust [46]

The hornist should also practice long tones and pitch bends in the lower register to aid in the stability of these pitches. To play the low notes both loudly and lightly, the hornist should practice articulated scales and other passages in the low register while 'blasting' or playing

45. Ibid.
46. Ibid.

stopped. The final note in *Prelude* (Figure 25) should be approached with care. This can be practiced at first loudly, and then gradually reducing the volume.

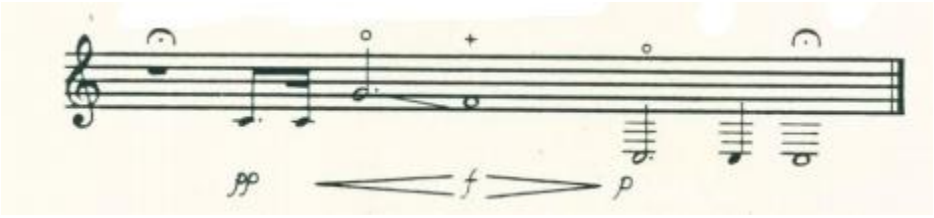


Figure 25: Ending of *Prelude for Horn* by Faust[47]

Prelude for Horn is not the only piece written for natural horn by Faust. Other works, such as *Dances* for natural horn and percussion and *Dreams of Casbah* for solo natural horn, make Faust an important figure in the continued use of natural horn and its technique. He continues to be an advocate for its continued relevance in the solo horn repertoire.

It is at this point in the modern application of natural horn and its technique that composers start to embrace all of the capabilities of the instrument. A shift can be seen in compositional trends for the unaccompanied and chamber settings of the natural horn, as is demonstrated by the composition of more such pieces since the end of the 1970s. Through the use of natural horn in pieces like *Villanelle* by Dukas, *Serenade* by Britten, and *Prelude* by Faust, these composers inspired others to venture farther into the modern application of natural horn in solo repertoire. Pieces such as *Elegia* by Baumann, *September Elegy* by Agrell, and "Ghost Circles" from *Supernatural* by Batzner, as surveyed in the remainder of this treatise, serve as important pillars after which other pieces have been—and should—be modeled.

47. Ibid.

CHAPTER 5

ELEGIA FOR NATURAL HORN (1984) BY HERMANN BAUMANN

Biography and background information

Since the adoption of the valved horn into mainstream academic and professional venues, very few pieces have been written solely for the natural horn. Johannes Brahms wrote only for natural horn even during the time when use of the valved horn had become widespread. Richard Wagner specified natural horns in his opera *Der fliegende Höllande* (the score calls for two valved horns and two natural horns). Gyorgy Ligeti wrote a trio for all natural horns in 1981 and later, in 1998/99, wrote the *Hamburg Concerto* which includes four natural horns.

It was not until 1983 and the composition of *Kaleidoskop* by Hans Georg Pfluger that the modern horn repertoire included an unaccompanied work written specifically for the natural horn. Until this time, solo repertoire included only *Villanelle* (1906) by Paul Dukas and *Danse La Montagne* (1907) by Alfred Bachelet. Hermann Baumann's *Elegia* (1984) is one of the first written for the unaccompanied natural horn.

Baumann was born in 1934 near Hamburg, Germany. His earliest exposure to music came from his mother, who was a pianist. Having sung in choirs during his early childhood, he began his horn studies at the age of 17, studying with Fritz Huth. He then went on to perform with the Dortmund Orchestra and Stuttgart Radio Symphony Orchestra. After winning the 1964 ADR Radio and Television Competition, he chose to leave orchestral playing in lieu of a solo

career. Conductors and colleagues valued Baumann's talents for interpreting musical ideas, with many of them discouraging him from abandoning his orchestral playing career. At the time, there were very few horn concerti that were well received by audiences, making the transition to becoming a solo player difficult. The International Horn Society made him an Honorary Member in 1992 and, later, devoted the August 1998 issue of *The Horn Call* to him.

Baumann's love of the natural horn, though, has remained with him through all of his successes on the valved horn. He is noted as of one of the revivalists of the natural horn in the orchestra and is credited to several dozen recordings on the instrument. He founded the Bad Harzburg Natural Horn Competition in the early 1980s as well as the 1993 International Natural Horn Festival in Essen, Germany. It was his love of the instrument and desire to be an advocate that prompted these festivals. His influence on natural horn performance continues to inspire composers and professional horn players alike.

Elegia was written in 1984 as one of the competition pieces for the Bad Harzburg Natural Horn Competition. It is roughly four minutes long, has a two-and-a-half octave range, and, as stated, is one of the earliest examples of a solo work for natural horn. Jeffrey Snedeker, in an article for *Composition Today* writes that the "unaccompanied natural horn moves through the various stages of grief: sadness, increasing frustration, anger, resignation, and acceptance of loss…The mix of colors give the piece a vocal, wordless quality, that has made it one of the more popular natural horn pieces on recitals."[48] Technical demands of this piece aside, *Elegia* requires an enormous amount of mental concentration and emotional investment,

48. http://www.compositiontoday.com/articles/natural_horn.asp, accessed 1/28/20.

as it often changes character in the span of one measure.

The natural horn used in modern context

One of the advantages of playing the natural horn in pieces such as Brahms' third symphony is not needing to transpose. The valved horn is a superior instrument in many aspects, but the process of transposing can be difficult to learn. With the natural horn, however, one needs simply to change crooks to accommodate the key. This has drawbacks, as crooks can be damaged or lost easily and, at times, keys can change more rapidly than one might expect, making crook changes more difficult. *Elegia* is a prime example of how a crook change can affect the tone of the piece, but not elevate its difficulty. Heinrich Domnich's *Méthode de premier et de second cor* was an important historical document for the horn at the beginning of the 19th century. In it, he described the sound of each of the crooks as the following:

Table 1: Tone observations of various crooks

Crook	Tone observation
High C	piercing
B-flat, A	penetrating and harsh
G	bright
F, E, E-flat	suitable for simple melodies
C	cumbersome
Low B-flat	melancholy and religious[49]

Snedeker, in his online article for Composition Today, also states that the "…performer is allowed to choose the crook that suits them for the piece, and I find that E-flat makes the best compromise between darkness of tone and stuffiness of longer tubing."[50] The range in *Elegia*

49. Domnich, Heinrich. *Méthode de premier et de second cor*. (Paris, 1808). pp 11-14.
50. http://www.compositiontoday.com/articles/natural_horn.asp, accessed 1/28/20.

should be considered when choosing the appropriate crook. While Baumann may have intended the piece to be played in F (as written), choosing a crook that puts the piece in a higher key, such as G, A, or B-flat, should be done with caution. Almost the entire extent of

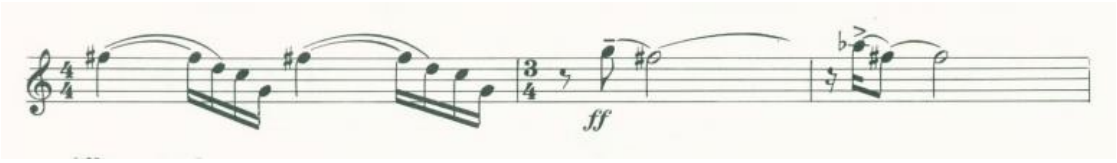


Figure 26 Line seven of *Elegia* by Hermann Baumann [51]

range is covered in the first page, with the highest notes being notated in line seven (Figure 26). Should the hornist choose to use a B-flat alto crook, the high point at the end of the line would end on a d-flat''' to b''. Conversely, if the hornist uses a much lower crook, such as D-flat, C, or B-flat basso, the lowest notes in line eight (Figure 27) would be A-Flat, G, or F.

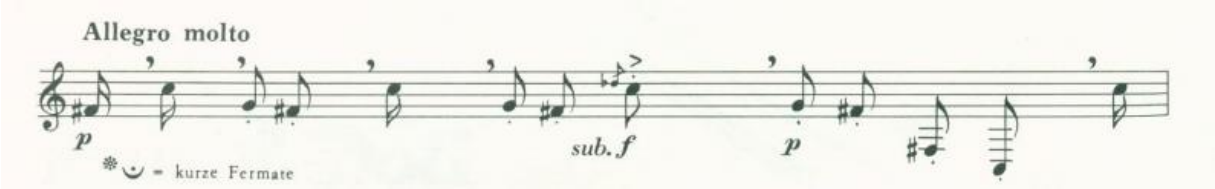


Figure 27: Line eight of *Elegia* by Baumann [52]

Range in this work is another point of interest for a modern natural-horn composition. Typically, a natural hornist played in a relatively conservative range spanning no more than one-and-a-half to two octaves, as they were specialists in either low or high playing in the 17th and 18th centuries. With *Elegia*, the range is expanded beyond that standard to almost three octaves, making this piece truly virtuosic. This dramatic use of range on the natural horn is emulated in more recent compositions such as Jeffrey Agrell's *September Elegy for Natural Horn and Piano* (2001) and *New Wine in Old Bottles* (2001) for two natural horns and

51. Bauman, Hermann. *Elegia* for natural horn, New York, NY. Boosey and Hawkes, 1984.
52. Ibid.

percussion, as well as Thomas Hundemer's *Gently Weep* (2004) for natural horn and digital media.

Elegia is one of the early compositions for natural horn—solo or otherwise—that used the hand-stopping glissando as an effect. Randall Faust's *Prelude for Horn* (1974) utilized this effect multiple times. With natural horn technique in a standard orchestral work or concerto, the performer tries to minimize the effect of a glissando between an open and stopped note by moving the hand quickly or adding a very light articulation on a slurred note that does not cross an overtone. The glissandi are a modern application of the natural horn technique.

Performance suggestions

The first thing the performer must consider when playing *Elegia* is equipment. It is preferable to play this on the natural horn for two main reasons: first, it is the instrument for which Baumann wrote and, second, the light weight of the natural horn is crucial to the piece's performance. Unlike Faust's *Prelude for Horn*, this specifies in the title 'for natural horn.' *Kaleidoskop, September Elegy,* and "Ghost Circles" are all similar because they are written specifically for this instrument. While it can be performed on the valved horn, the piece loses its effect if played on a larger-bored instrument and with valves. It is preferable to perform this piece on the natural horn, because the vented hand positions require the player to support the instrument completely by the left hand. These changes are easier on the natural horn which typically weighs only two or three pounds, as opposed to on the double horn, which weighs twice as much. Especially for the younger player, to play it on a valved horn first with valves

aids in acquiring the sound of the piece, and then without valves. This method also helps establish a sound model.

Baumann is very liberal with his dynamic and tempo markings. In the first two lines of the piece, there are ten dynamic or tempo alterations (Figure 28). His attention to detail is evident throughout the piece. Unlike *Prelude for Horn*, which had a specific tempo frame and fewer overall dynamic changes, *Elegia* has no specific tempo frame but many dynamic changes.

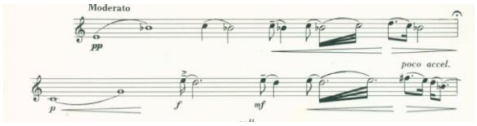


Figure 28: Lines one and two of *Elegia* by Baumann[53]

There are several instances of articulation or special notation that must be observed for an effective performance. Many articulation markings are notated in the first several lines, such as tenuto, tenuto accent, staccato, accent, and staccato accent. The type of articulation dictates the stage of grief that Snedeker wrote about in his article. The sadness of which he speaks comes with very few articulated notes (lines one and two). Increasing frustration is characterized not only by the articulations, but also the tempo alterations. Figure 29 shows lines three through seven, in which there are several points of tension and release. The musical

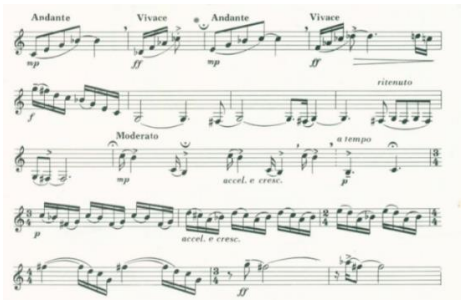


Figure 29: Lines 3-7 of *Elegia* by Baumann[54]

53. Ibid.
54. Ibid.

expression of anger can be found at the bottom of the first page and the top of the second page (Figure 30), which is notated by several breath marks, staccato notes, flutter tonguing, glissandi, short angular rhythms, and extreme registral shifts.

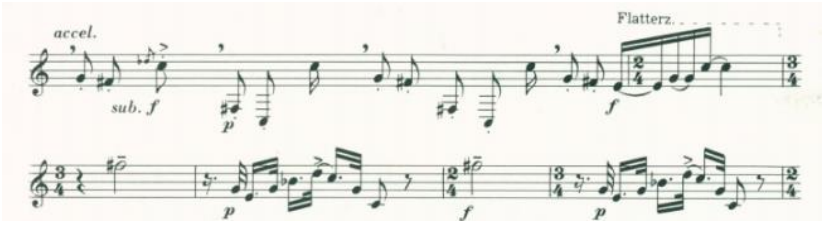


Figure 30: The expression of anger in *Elegia* by Baumann [55]

The piece ends with resignation and acceptance of loss. These two stages are characterized by longer note values and articulations (Figure 31), a recapitulation of the opening two lines (calling back to the sadness one feels), and the final line which imitates wailing or sobbing by the hornist changing notes with the appropriate hand position.

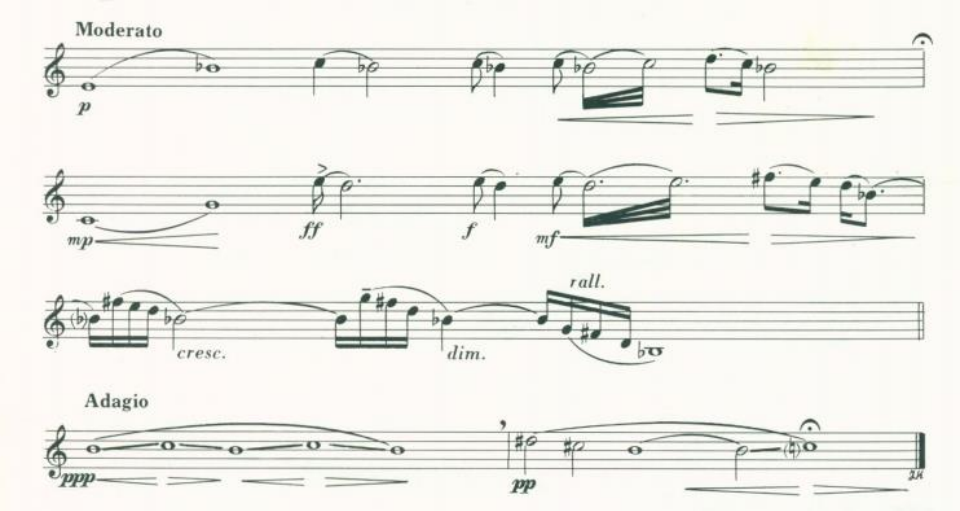


Figure 31: The ending of *Elegia* by Baumann [56]

As with other works seen in this document, correct hand position is of vital importance. The rapid shifts, particularly in line six (see Figure 29), require diligent practice. The safest way to

55. Ibid.
56. Ibid.

manage this passage is by repetitious correct practice, first on the valved horn (for inexperienced players) and then on the natural horn. This method ensures that the correct pitches are heard by the performer, making the transition to natural horn easier. Line three (Figure 32) can also be problematic as it requires an awareness of pitch relation. Moving from

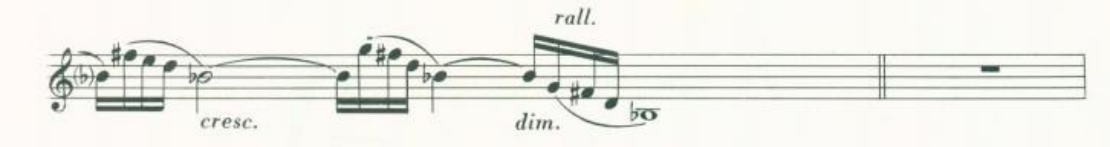


Figure 32: Line three of *Elegia* by Baumann [57]

the last note in the measure to the first note in the next measure requires precision and practice.

The final line of the work is one of the more challenging aspects to perform (Figure 33). The advantage of an unaccompanied, unmetered solo with no tempo frame is the amount of time the performer can take in expressive moments. The hornist has the opportunity to utilize

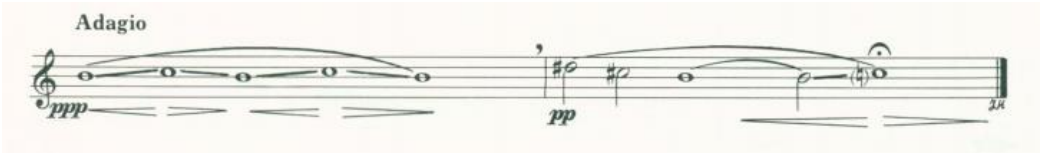


Figure 33: The final line of *Elegia* by Baumann [58]

the natural horn technique in a unique way; much like Faust's *Prelude for Horn*, the glissandi at the end of *Elegia* should be elongated. This effect draws the listener in and creates anticipation to the end of the piece. While Baumann was a prolific performer on the natural horn, he only wrote one piece for the instrument. A composer and arranger of several other pieces, his only piece for natural horn is his most well-known, having been performed consistently for decades.

57. Ibid.
58. Ibid.

CHAPTER 6

SEPTEMBER ELEGY FOR NATURAL HORN AND PIANO (2001) BY JEFFERY AGRELL

Biography and background information

Writing music in response to tragic events has resulted in many powerful works, particularly in the last one hundred years. With each war or major tragedy, composers sought either to honor those who lost their lives or capture the raw emotion felt during these events. Krysztof Penderecki in 1960 composed *Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima*, a memorial piece for string orchestra to those who lost their lives during the bombing of Hiroshima, Japan in 1945. *Different Trains* for string quartet and electronics was composed in 1988 by Steve Reich to relive the journeys he took before, during, and after World War II. In 2002, John Adams composed *On the Transmigration of Souls* for double choir and orchestra for the 2001 attacks on New York and in Washington D.C. Another work written in response to 9/11 is *September Elegy* for natural horn and piano by Jeffrey Agrell.

Agrell was born in 1948 in Minneapolis, Minnesota and is the oldest of three siblings. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Saint Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota and a Master of Music degree in horn performance from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. From 1975 to 2000, he was Associate Principal Horn of the Lucerne Symphony Orchestra. Currently, he is the Associate Professor of Horn at the University of Iowa, where he teaches applied horn, directs the horn choir, and is a member of the Iowa Brass Quintet.

Agrell is an awarding-winning author, composer and performer. He has written “Horn Technique: A New Approach to an Old Instrument,” “The Creative Hornist,” and has edited

several books by Georg Kopprasch. His compositional output extends from solo horn pieces to large woodwind, brass, or percussion ensemble pieces. He has spent two terms on the International Horn Society Advisory Council, been on faculty at both the Kendall Betts Horn Camp and the Asian Youth Orchestra in Hong Kong. Some of the most influential horn ensembles today, including Genghis Barbie, the Berlin Philharmonic Horn Section, and the Four Hornsmen of the Apocalypse, have performed his music.

September Elegy was written in November 2001 as an expression of grief from the tragic events of September 11, 2001. The work, roughly ten minutes long, is divided into four sections: Prologue, Chorale, Reflection, and Epilogue. This work is unlike any other natural horn and piano piece, as large sections of movements are to be improvised by one instrument or the other. The natural hornist is to improvise over a limited piano part in the Prologue and Epilogue, while Reflection contains piano improvisation; Chorale is the only fully notated section of the work. This work was written for the natural horn in E-flat, giving the horn a darker and richer tone color, which coincides with the somber emotions about which Agrell writes. In an interview with Beyond9-11.org, a non-profit organization that commissioned works of art by Iowans that commemorate the 9-11 tragedy, Agrell states:

> It was a way, an artistic way, of expressing my sorrow and other people's sorrow, and grief at these events that is very difficult to express any other way. I think everybody has the same feelings; I'm no different than anyone else. But I had at that point the means to express it in a way that could help people deal with those feelings and find a kind of a closure and that's what art is supposed to do. It's supposed to take the raw emotions and send them to a higher plane, where you attain some edification, satisfaction, and transformation of those into something positive and higher.[59]

59. www.beyond9-11.org/about.htm, accessed 3/5/20.

September Elegy was commissioned for Beyond 9-11 along with several other musical works, paintings, and literary contributions. Other contributors include painters of note Elise Kendrot, Wendy Rolfe, and Daniel Weiss; authors include Ann Struthers and Marianne Taylor.

Improvised sections

The Prologue, Reflection, and Epilogue sections are all to be improvised by one instrument with minimal accompaniment by the other. Figure 34 illustrates the Prologue and how the limited number of notes are to accompany the freely improvised natural horn line. The "slow and declamatory" improvised section by the horn contrasts the steady and slow pulsating

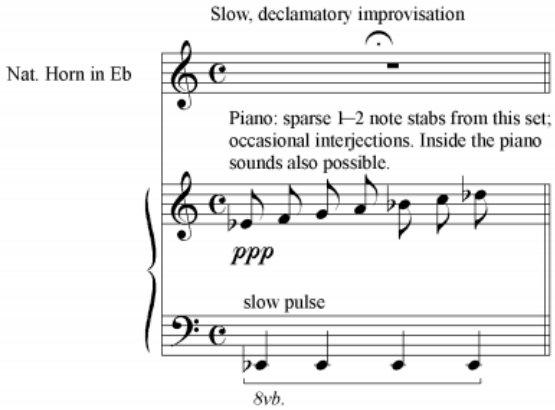


Figure 34: The opening of *September Elegy* by Jeffrey Agrell [60]

piano left-hand line, which mimics a heartbeat, or perhaps the life of New York City before it experienced tragedy. The sparse "jabs" in the right hand compliment the natural hornist's improvisatory character. These three lines meld together to create a tranquil yet unrelenting section, calm—yet uneasy—and always moving forward. The E-flat crook gives the horn a deeper tone than the F crook, but is more ringing than the D, C, or B-flat basso keys.

60. Agrell, *September Elegy.*

The Epilogue section is written in the same manner as the Prologue, taking on the same character. This construction—as well as the melancholy nature—imitates Benjamin Britten's *Serenade* for tenor, horn, and strings. This cross-generational connection indicates a universal need for artistic expression in times of great sorrow or joy. In an interview with Sherry Holbrook Baker, when asked "How (if at all) do these compositional techniques respond to your feelings of loss or grief (if those feelings are present)?" Agrell states:

> It's not a one-to-one ratio, but more about creating an atmosphere. What was nice about this is that I felt it was easy to be very sensitive, very nuanced, sometimes very discreet expression of the natural horn. With improvisation, you can build atmosphere in different ways—the piano and horn part play off each other. Because of this, it can be a personal performance for every performer. Everybody that plays it has their own personal expression. [Through improvisation] everyone can use whatever techniques they want to create their own expression of grief. How I did it on the recording is one way frozen in there. It's different every time I play it.[61]

Performance suggestions

Because a large part of this piece is improvised by the natural hornist, each performance of *September Elegy* is truly unique. Agrell writes in the program notes:

> Since beginning to work with the natural horn last year I have become very impressed with its powerful expressive capabilities, which can be used to surprising advantage in playing contemporary music. For example, the range of tone colors, the use of stopped and half-stopped hand positions (including portamento effects) is much more vivid than that possible on the modern valve horn. The natural horn is also capable of extraordinary crescendos and decrescendos that can be startling and dramatic. Add to this extended spectrum of expression the element of improvisation—completely unknown on the horn since Punto ad libbed classical cadenzas in the early 1800s—and you have a very unusual musical adventure, and one that will be different for every performance.[62]

62. Baker, Sherry Holbrook. "In Memoriam: Nine Elegiac Works for Horn, 1943–2004." (2010).
63. Agrell, *September Elegy.*

The Prologue can incorporate many of the different techniques associated with the natural horn, including playing fully stopped, half-stopped, glissandi using the right hand (moving down a half or a whole step), flutter tonguing, and multiphonics. The character of the section, though, is somber and reflective. The natural hornist should exercise some tact, although Agrell does state that the Prologue and Epilogue reflect personal expression. In this manner, the natural hornist may consult recordings by Agrell himself or Jeffrey Snedeker on his album *The Contemporary Natural Horn*. Agrell's scholarship into improvisation extends to method books and other solos and it may be prudent to consult his views on the subject before beginning to learn this work. A younger or more inexperienced player should be more conservative in an approach to improvisation, limiting it to a select set of pitches, range, dynamics, and extended techniques (if one wishes to put in any at all). It is recommended that the inexperienced hornist mimic the pitches given by the piano (Figure 35).

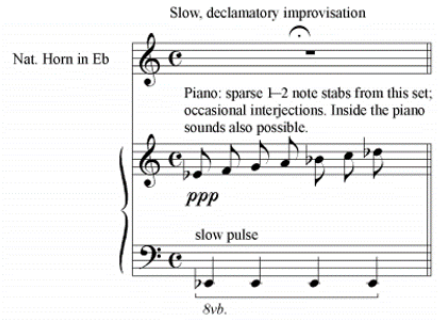


Figure 35: The opening of *September Elegy* by Agrell[63]

Once comfortable with basic improvisation, the hornist may expand the range and pitch set. This method ensures that the hornist will not get overwhelmed with the amount of choices available when improvising.

63. Ibid.

The second section, Chorale, is the only fully notated segment in the entire piece. The piano continues its driving nature while the horn has a sparse part on top. Agrell uses the capabilities of the natural horn to his advantage in this section, giving the hornist, for example, a sustained A with a long diminuendo in measures 17-20 (Figure 36). This note is muffled on the horn because it is half stopped. The quiet and eerie tone is set above a consistent pulse in the left hand and fragmented right-hand line. This haunting horn note is preceded by a glissando in measures 14-16 from d'' to c-sharp'' (Figure 37). It is suggested that the hornist begin the glissando soon after establishing the pitch to extend the effect for as long as possible.

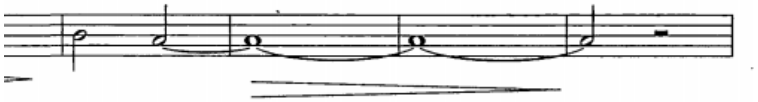


Figure 36: Measures 17-20 in *September Elegy* by Agrell[64]

Figure 37: Glissando in measure 14 of *September Elegy* by Agrell[65]

This is also heard in measure 36, near the end of the section. At letter B, measure 22 (Figure 38), the hornist is required to perform the most actively notated musical line. This section can be heard as the terror and grief experienced during and initially after the attacks on 9/11, as characterized by the multiple stopped notes e-flat'' in measure 24, b' in measure 26, and f-sharp' in measures 29-30. As with other pieces discussed in this treatise, it is important for the inexperienced hornist to play this section first on the valved horn. The hornist should then press the first valve down on the F side of a standard double horn to access the E-flat overtone and

64. Ibid.
65. Ibid.

learn the hand positions for the piece. Finally, the hornist should play the work on a natural horn.

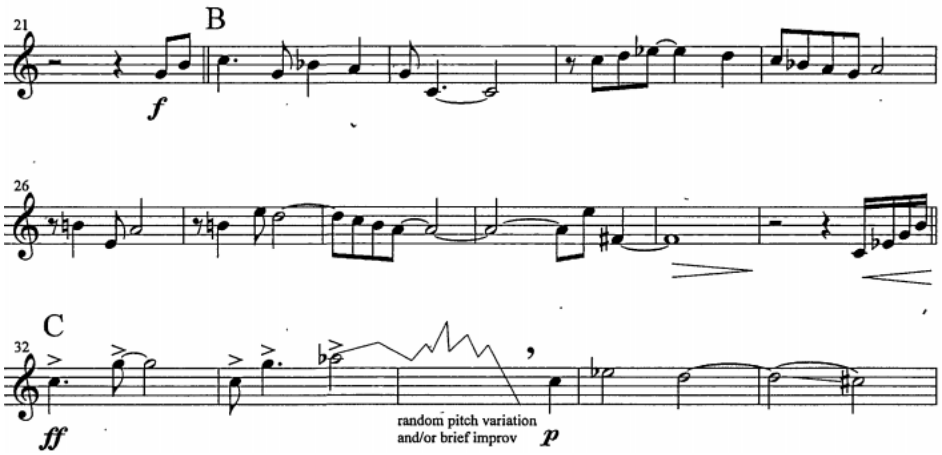


Figure 38: Measures 21-36 in *September Elegy* by Agrell[66]

The uncertainty of the horn line in the Chorale culminates in another "brief improv" or random pitch variations in measure 33 leading into 34. The piano stops playing at this point and the only thing heard is the horn line, which is slowly descending, characterizing the fall of the towers. The piano continues by playing in the same mood as before: unrelenting steady pulses in the left hand and a fragmentary right-hand line.

The final two sections of the piece are to be improvised by the piano, followed by the horn. The Epilogue, as Agrell states in the score, is to be like the Prologue, but shorter.

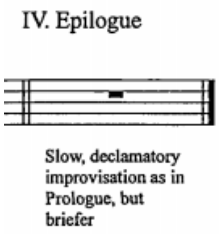


Figure 39: Final section of *September Elegy* by Agrell[67]

66. Ibid.
67. Ibid.

It is recommended that the hornist write out—in a similar manner to a cadenza for a Mozart concerto—the intended improvisation for both the Prologue and Epilogue. This way, cuts can be made from the Prologue when performing the Epilogue, ensuring that the performer achieves the intended character. With the freedom of improvisation, the unrelenting pulse of the left hand in the piano, and the key of the natural horn, Agrell succeeds in giving the natural hornist a new landscape to express serious emotions.

September Elegy uses the natural horn in both modern and historical contexts. The piece's use of improvisation is a modern device that has not been seen much in solo natural horn repertoire, or solo horn literature in general. Advocates such as Agrell, Patrick Smith, and Arkady Shilkloper promote the use of improvisation in their writing and performances. In terms of its historical context, *September Elegy* features certain stopped notes, such as a' in measures 17-20 (Figure 36) to signify an important cadential point or harmonic shift. Composers of the Classical and early Romantic Eras in music utilized the natural hornist's ability to play stopped in order to add another level of sound to important structural passages in their music. This mixture of modern and classical usage of the natural horn strengthen *September Elegy*'s pedagogical value and its versatility on recital programs.

CHAPTER 7

SUPERNATURAL: II. "GHOST CIRCLES" (2013) BY JAY BATZNER

Biography and background Information

The use of extra-musical sound helped to open a new medium of possibilities for composers in the 20th century. The first known work for solo instrument and fixed media was Henk Bading's *Cappricio for Violin and Two Sound Tracks* in 1952. John Rimmer wrote *Composition I* in 1968, which was the first composition for horn and electronic media.[68] Shortly after that, in 1976, Randall Faust composed *Horn Call* for horn and electronic media. It was not until the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st that horn and electronic media became more common. Erika Loke refers to this pairing as 'horn and fixed media.' This terminology "avoids the ambiguity of 'horn and electronics,' which can also refer to compositions that incorporate live electronic processing of the horn sound."[69]

Jay Batzner, born in 1974, is primarily known for composing electronic music; his piece, *As If To Each Other… for piano and electronic media,* was recorded by prominent pianist R. Andrew Lee. Batzner is on faculty at Central Michigan University where he teaches theory and composition. He holds degrees from the University of Kansas (BM in Composition and Theory, 1996; MM in Theory, 1998), the University of Louisville (MM in Composition, 2000), and the University of Missouri-Kansas City (DMA in Composition, 2006). His compositions have been performed at various music organizations including the Society of Composers, Inc., the Society for Electro-Acoustic Music, the National Flute Association, the International Horn Society, and

68. Loke, Erika. "Horn and Fixed Media," *The Horn Call*. October 2018. pp 82-83.
69. Ibid.

the North American Saxophone Alliance. It was his relationship with Bruce Bonnell, Professor of Horn at Central Michigan University, that led to his composition of "Ghost Circles."

"Ghost Circles" was composed in 2013 as part of a two-movement work, *Supernatural,* inspired by the comic book series *Bone*, written by Jeff Smith. "To contrast with the hectic and spastic counterpart movement "Silhouettes, Receding," this movement is a single melody set against a gradually evolving drone."[70] "Ghost Circles" is a serene and slow-moving work; the shorter-duration notes provide little to move the piece forward. Instead, structural changes of the work occur during each of the electronic pitch changes (Figure 40) or additions (Figure 41). The relatively sparse electronic accompaniment adds to the murky nature of the horn line, which centers around on the seventh harmonic. Adding to the eerie ambiance created by the

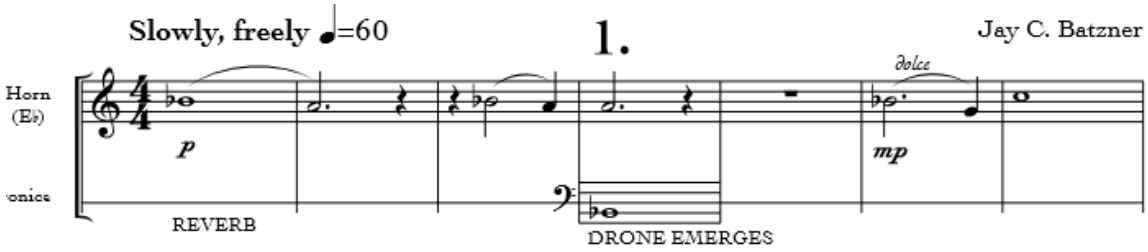


Figure 40: Change 1 in "Ghost Circles" by Jay Batzner[71]

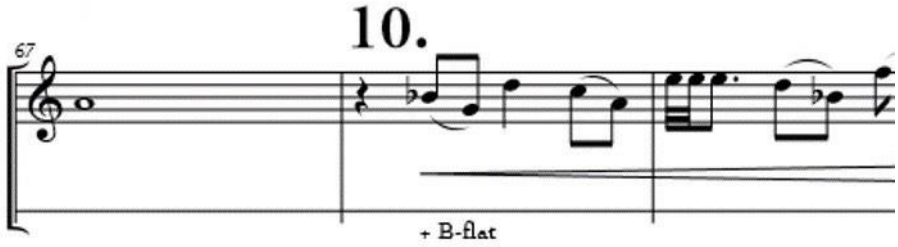


Figure 41: Change 10 in "Ghost Circles" by Batzner[72]

electronic changes and flat seventh-harmonic tonal center, the electronic patch adds

70. www.cmich.edu/colleges/cam/MUS/abouttheschool/faculty/pages/default.aspx, accessed 2/9/20.
71. Batzner, Jay. *Ghost Circles*, Unsafe Bull Music. Michigan. 2013.
72. Ibid.

reverberation to the horn. The added reverberation creates a sense of stillness by echoing the slow-moving horn line.

Performance suggestions

The first thing the hornist should notice is the pitch of the natural horn: E-flat. This is done deliberately and with care by the composer. Batzner's relationship with Bonnell helped shape the larger work of *Supernatural*. The purpose of "Ghost Circles" is to contrast the other movement, "Silhouettes, Receding," which is also for horn in E-flat. Unlike *Elegia* by Baumann which has no specified key, the pitch of the horn is specified at the beginning of "Ghost Circles." "Ghost Circles" is in a specific key because the pitches of the drone are tuned to E-flat horn. The horn part can be executed in one of two ways: performing the piece on natural horn with the E-flat crook (as the composer intends) or, if the hornist does not have access to a natural horn or an E-flat crook, performing the piece on valved horn using the E-flat tubing.

"Ghost Circles" begins on the seventh-harmonic B-flat (see Figure 42), which is notoriously flat. Because the composer specifies natural horn, these seventh-harmonic B-flats should be played vented. Similarly, the eleventh-harmonic F-sharp should also be vented.

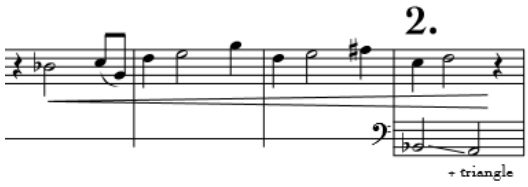


Figure 42: Eleventh-harmonic f-sharp in "Ghost Circles" by Batzner [73]

73. Ibid.

Much like in *Elegia* the amateur natural hornist should work through this piece on the valved horn first to establish pitch and interval centers. The tempo is not fast; it is marked "Slowly, freely quarter=60."[74] Not only should the hornist take time when rests are marked, it is encouraged so that the listener can enjoy the electronics. Because this work is not on a click-track and does not have a pre-determined time frame, the changes can occur at the pace of the hornist, making each performance unique.

The thematic material presented in "Ghost Circles" centers around two main intervallic motives: the half step and the minor third. The half step can be heard throughout not only in the horn line, but also in the electronic drone.

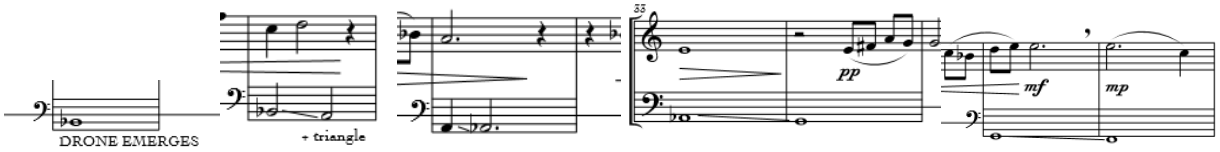


Figure 43: Half-step motion in "Ghost Circles" by Batzner[75]

The first four changes in the electronic drone consist of descending half steps (Figure 43). The horn's opening four measures are all half-step material. Additionally, the piece's climax is approached by half steps (Figure 44). This motive is significant because it emphasizes the natural horn's necessity for closing the right hand in the bell, which adds to the color landscape the composer has already presented.

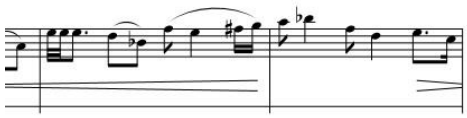


Figure 44: Climax of "Ghost Circles" mm. 69-70[76]

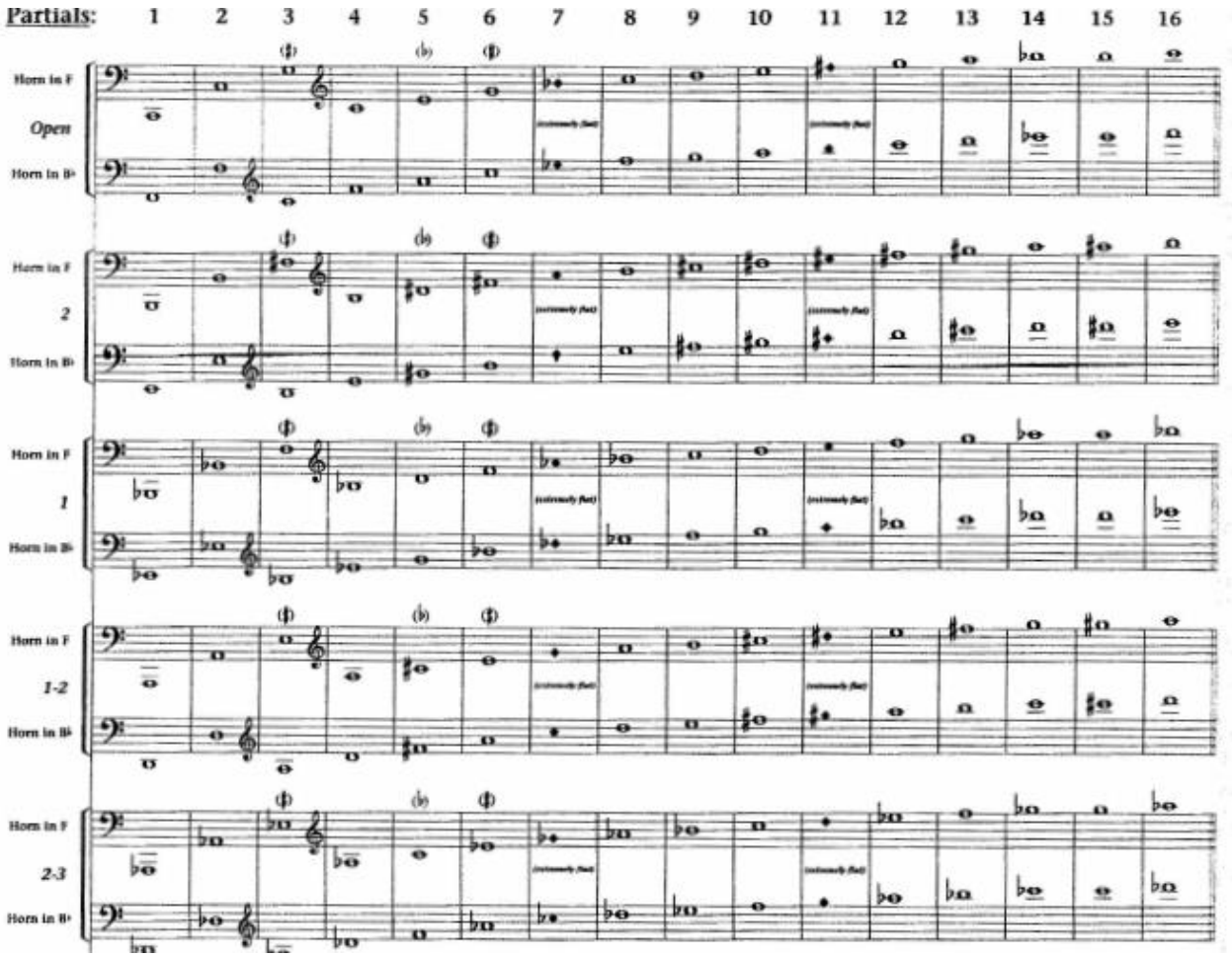
74. Ibid.
75. Ibid.
76. Ibid.

The work also ends with half steps permeating the final twenty measures. The relationships between the half steps serve as a pedagogical tool for someone beginning on natural horn. Learning correct hand placement in the bell of a natural horn takes time and practice and it is beneficial to have music—in part or whole—that aids in advancing those skills. Bruce Bonnell's insistence of varying characters and timbres throughout "Ghost Circles" and the larger work *Supernatural*, coupled with the limited-yet-powerful electronics, gives the natural horn a unique medium to explore.

"Ghost Circles" from *Supernatural* is only a smart part of the ever-changing landscape of natural horn. The advancement of the use of natural horn and its technique in modern music since the beginning of the 20th century can be viewed as important, pedagogically and compositionally. Compositions such as *Villanelle* and *Serenade* for tenor, horn, and strings call upon the hornist to play natural horn in otherwise valved-horn pieces. *Prelude for Horn* serves as a thorough pedagogical tool for young hornists to sharpen skills on the natural harmonics of the horn and unaccompanied playing. *Elegia* serves to advance the medium of unaccompanied performance for the natural horn, and "Ghost Circles" from *Supernatural* provides a new medium of unaccompanied natural horn performance with electronics. *September Elegy* incorporates improvisation, which is another new compositional device for natural horn in the solo repertoire. Natural horn performance is more engaging than ever as new modern pieces continue to be written for the instrument. Further study for the author includes composing for the natural horn in this modern context.

APPENDIX A

THE OVERTONE SERIES

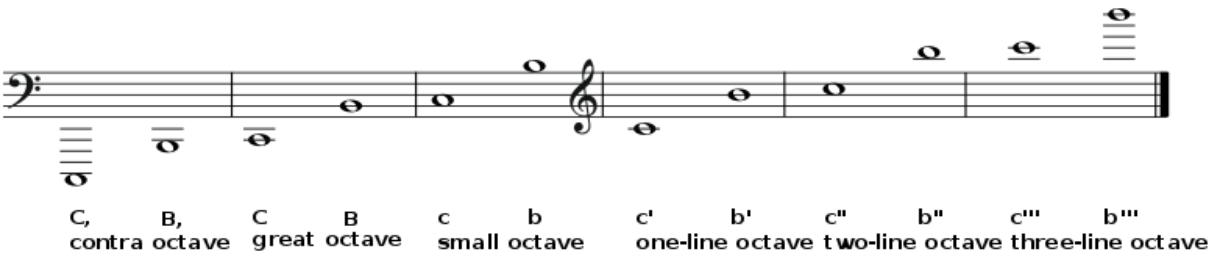


The overtone series[77]

77.www.lusd.org/cms/lib6/CA01001399/Centricity/Domain/868/French%20Horn%20Charts.pdf, accessed 5/24/18.

APPENDIX B

THE HELMHOLTZ NOTATION SYSTEM



The Helmholtz notation system[78]

78. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helmholtz_pitch_notation, accessed 3/20/20.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Robert Palmer is currently in his final year of study at the Florida State University College of Music, studying with Michelle Stebleton as a Brass Performance Doctoral of Music student. He has commissioned nearly a dozen works for Wagner tuba and piano by Randall Faust, Gina Gillie, David Ott, and Robert Davidson. Prior to starting at FSU, he spent two-and-a-half years as the Director of Athletic Bands at Alderson Broaddus University in Philippi, West Virginia where he expanded the athletic band program into several different avenues, built a network of professional relationships across the east coast, and gave clinics at over 100 high schools.

Palmer received his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Composition and Horn Performance from Western Illinois University, where he studied with Randall Faust and Lee Kessinger on horn, and Paul Paccione, James Caldwell, and James Romig in composition. He lives in Tallahassee, Florida with his wife Bekah and his three children, Gavin, Sophia and Kaitlyn.