Anton Weidinger and the Emergence of His Voice: The Keyed Trumpet

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Abstract
This paper examines Anton Weidinger, the 18th- and early 19th-century keyed trumpet player for whom Joseph Haydn and Johann Nepomuk Hummel composed their trumpet concerti. As the most successful of many attempts to chromaticize the trumpet in the late 18th century, during which the Baroque clarino style of trumpet-playing was waning, Weidinger’s keyed trumpet enjoyed a short-lived period of prominence from about 1800 to 1804, the period during which Weidinger premiered these two concerti. Subsequently, the keyed trumpet declined in popularity, and eventually it was replaced by the valve trumpet. Both concerti emphasize the chromatic capabilities of the new instrument. A detailed examination of some passages from the third movements of the two concerti suggests a deliberate attempt on the part of Hummel (perhaps under Weidinger’s influence) to “quote” and outdo the most virtuosic passages in the Haydn concerto and to cast the new instrument as capable of playing in a “singing” operatic style. Musical quotation from Luigi Cherubini’s opera Les Deux Journées further cements the implicit connection Hummel draws between the keyed trumpet and opera (and, by extension, the human voice). The paper concludes that Weidinger and Hummel sought, in Hummel’s concerto, to announce to the musical world that the trumpet was ready to move beyond its Classical status as a tutti instrument. Though the success of Weidinger and his keyed trumpet was transient, the two concerti composed for him today stand as cornerstones of the solo trumpet literature.

Keywords
Anton Weidinger, Joseph Haydn, Johann Nepomuk Hummel, Keyed Trumpet, Trumpet Concerto

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The keyed trumpet originated in the late eighteenth century as one of many alternatives to the natural trumpet when the use of the trumpet in much music was waning. The pitches playable on a natural trumpet are restricted to the notes of the harmonic series built on that trumpet’s lowest pitch. During the Baroque era, however, trumpeters were trained to play in the upper register of the instrument. This style of playing, called “clarino,” enabled the trumpet to serve as a melody instrument due to the relatively small distance between pitches high in the harmonic series. The decline of this virtuosic manner of playing was both a cause and a consequence of a new, less demanding style of trumpet writing in the Classical era. As Edward Tarr writes, the Classical style “made a tutti instrument of the once heroic trumpet.”¹ The lower range of trumpet parts during the Classical period severely limited the number of

playable pitches since pitches near the bottom of the harmonic series are more widely spaced. As a result, the melodic potential of the natural trumpet was severely diminished, and a number of trumpeters sought methods of chromaticizing the middle registers of their instruments.²

It is possible that the first keyed trumpet was invented in Dresden around 1770.³ Johann Ernst Altenburg mentions what appears to be a type of keyed trumpet, “on which a' and b' [pitches outside the natural trumpet’s harmonic series] could be sounded perfectly in tune by means of a little leather slider” over an opening bored in the side of the instrument.⁴ Other attempts followed this early experimentation. In the 1780s, the trumpeter and horn player Ernst Kellner increased the number of pitches available to him by covering and uncovering holes bored in the side of his instrument.⁵ One observer notes that in 1793, Christoph Friedrich Nessmann, an amateur musician at

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² In addition to the use of keys, other early methods of increasing the number of pitches playable on the trumpet included the use of hand stopping, a technique developed by horn players as early as the 1740s, and the addition of a slide, a method that became especially popular in England, remaining there long after the valve trumpet had assumed a dominant role elsewhere. For more information on early attempts to chromaticize the trumpet, see the summary by Tarr in *The Trumpet*.


Hamburg, used hidden keys to produce all of the chromatic pitches in the octave from $c'$ to $c''$.\(^6\)

A few other scattered attempts may have been made to increase the number of playable notes on the trumpet using keys prior to Anton Weidinger, father of the keyed trumpet, but in the words of one nineteenth-century writer, “none of these experiments . . . [became] a success.”\(^7\) This initial lack of success was largely due to the intense and disciplined training required to master keyed trumpet technique and overcome the instrument’s physical imperfections. Christian Schubart, a keyboardist and writer who heard an early form of the keyed trumpet (circa 1775–85), complained that the instrument’s tone resembled an oboe’s as much as a trumpet’s and rejected the addition of keys in favor of hand-stopping.\(^8\) Indeed, excerpts compiled by Friedrich Anzenberger in his survey of nineteenth-century method books for the keyed trumpet make it clear that the instrument’s timbre and volume differed between keyed and non-keyed notes. These method books provide some instruction for correcting these differences in timbre and also hint at specific intonation issues unique to the instrument.\(^9\) By the nineteenth century, such methods might have provided assistance to a trumpeter who wanted to learn the keyed trumpet, but in the eighteenth century, when the instrument was still largely experimental, a person attempting to create or

\(^6\) Ibid., 9.
\(^7\) Ibid., 10.
\(^8\) Ibid., 4–6.
learn a viable keyed trumpet would have had to discover and correct such issues of intonation and timbre for himself—no small task even for a person trained in the Baroque clarino style. It seems clear, therefore, that the keyed trumpet required a highly skilled and dedicated performer to embrace the instrument if it were to achieve any kind of success. This performer was the devoted virtuoso, Anton Weidinger. Two major works written for Weidinger and his keyed trumpet—concerti by Joseph Haydn and Johann Nepomuk Hummel—briefly raised the trumpet to the status of a solo instrument, something that it would not enjoy again for several decades. The development of the keyed trumpet largely corresponds with Weidinger’s personal development as a musician, and both instrument and player reached their pinnacle with the 1803 Concerto for Trumpet and Orchestra in E Major by Hummel.

Born in Vienna in 1767, Weidinger studied trumpet there with the chief court trumpeter (Oberhoftrompeter), a position he would later assume himself. Remarkably, in 1785, Weidinger passed his apprenticeship before the standard two-year period had ended, a rare and impressive feat that would have required him “to perform the main military signals and show aptitude in the high or clarino register.” From this, two inferences can be drawn: first, that he was a player of rare talent; and second, that he was fully conversant in both the

principale and the clarino styles of playing. As Weidinger grew as a player, however, he appears to have become weary of the restrictions of the natural trumpet parts that he played during his military service immediately following his apprenticeship. He was not alone in his views; apathy towards trumpet writing seemed to be engulfing both the military and civilian musical worlds. In 1792, he resigned permanently from the military and was employed at the Marinelli Theater in Vienna. An appointment as an Imperial court trumpeter followed in 1799. Sometime between 1792 and 1796—probably 1793 or 1794—Weidinger began experimenting with the keyed trumpet.

Weidinger’s 1785 letter of release from apprenticeship praised him for his “diligence.” Indeed, in addition to his talent, “diligence” is a quality that seems to have distinguished Weidinger throughout his career. Between 1792 and 1796, Weidinger became sufficiently skilled on the keyed trumpet to convince Haydn to compose a trumpet concerto. Weidinger must have invested many laborious hours of practice to fine-tune his instrument and technique in order to convince the composer to treat the trumpet, which mostly played a supporting role in the Classical idiom, as a solo instrument.

12. The principale style of trumpet-playing was cultivated alongside the clarino style in the Baroque era. Whereas the clarino style emphasized melodic playing in the instrument’s upper register, the principale style utilized the middle and lower registers and was associated with military signals.
Haydn’s trumpet concerto was groundbreaking—the first major work to be written for chromatic trumpet. It is rightly considered a masterpiece, and although a detailed analysis of the concerto is beyond the scope of this paper, two features of interest should be noted: chromatic passages in the trumpet’s middle and lower register are present in every movement; and, the *Andante* second movement features a modulatory passage from A-flat major to C-flat major in which the trumpet is a full participant.\(^\text{16}\) Thus, the Haydn concerto includes trumpet parts that are only playable on a chromatic trumpet. There are hints, however, that Haydn had some reservations about the new instrument’s capabilities, as he occasionally treats the solo part with caution. Aside from the passage in the middle of the second movement of this concerto, the trumpet does not participate extensively in modulation. Also, Haydn keeps technically difficult passages short, separating them with rests and allowing Weidinger time to reset his instrument and prepare for the next passage.\(^\text{17}\) It has been argued that the purpose of these rests was “to give the brass player’s lips respite.”\(^\text{18}\) The concerto is not long enough, however, and the trumpet part not high enough, to pose a serious endurance challenge to a skilled and practiced trumpeter, especially a player who, like Weidinger, had been trained in the clarino style. Most likely, therefore, the rests between difficult figures are the result of Haydn’s reservations about the effectiveness of this early chromatic trumpet as a solo


\(^{17}\) Ibid., 176.

\(^{18}\) Ibid.
instrument—reservations that were justified, since Weidinger found the piece sufficiently challenging that he could not perform it immediately. Instead, he performed other, less difficult and less significant early works for chromatic trumpet while he “gained the necessary confidence to go on to higher things.”\textsuperscript{19} With his characteristic diligence, Weidinger continued to improve his technique, and by 1800 he was finally ready to perform the concerto—four years after its composition. While the Haydn concerto is regarded as a “classic” today, the caution with which Haydn treated the solo writing prevents the work from fully exploiting the possibilities of the keyed trumpet as a solo instrument. It would take another concerto from a different composer for Weidinger and his instrument to achieve their full potential.

Technical improvements to the keyed trumpet and Weidinger’s assiduous practice culminated in the Concerto for Trumpet and Orchestra in E Major by Hummel, written for Weidinger in 1803. A comparison of the styles of writing in the rondo-form third movements of the Hummel and Haydn concerti reveals that, in general, Hummel treated the use of keys in the solo trumpet part more freely than Haydn. For example, Matthew McCready notes that in many passages, Haydn avoids pitches that would require the use of keys, including extensive passages where “almost all of the pitches used are natural pitches.”\textsuperscript{20} While Haydn typically starts and ends phrases on non-keyed notes and rarely uses keyed notes in succession, Hummel “makes no apparent distinction” between

\textsuperscript{19} Tarr, “Haydn’s Trumpet Concerto,” 33.
notes that do and do not require keys and often has the trumpet leap from keyed note to keyed note. Furthermore, the passages in the Haydn movement that employ extensive chromatic motion in the solo trumpet part (see mm. 93–8 in Ex. 1) mostly contain notes of long duration relative to the surrounding material, suggesting that Haydn was wary of the technical demands required to play such chromatic pitches quickly. In contrast, the solo trumpet part in the Hummel concerto features a rapid chromatic ascent in sixteenth notes—a challenging figure that requires double tonguing and considerable manual dexterity even when performed on a modern valve trumpet (see Ex. 2). The Hummel concerto also features an extended passage (mm. 100–68) in the parallel minor (E minor) of the home key—a modulation that would have been impossible for a natural trumpet to execute. Although the third movement of the Haydn concerto includes some extensive modulatory passages, as in mm. 137–81, the trumpet plays a minimal role in such passages except to reinforce the new key with fanfare figures after it is established by the strings. As noted above, the solo trumpet does participate in a modulatory passage from A-flat major to C-flat major in the second movement of the Haydn concerto; however, this participation only occurs in the slow movement and is much less extensive than in the third movement of the

21. Ibid.

22. Examples 1–4 and 5b are transcribed from relevant sections of the two concerti, as written in the scores cited in the bibliography. All references to measure numbers come from the cited scores, and all statements about the music for which I do not cite another source are based on my own interpretation of these scores.
Hummel concerto. The differences between the last movements of these two concerti probably reflect, in part, improvements in both Weidinger’s technique and his instrument between 1796 and 1803.

**Example 1.** Haydn, Concerto in E-flat Major for Trumpet and Orchestra, solo trumpet, mvt. 3, mm. 86–98. (All examples transcribed by the author.)

![Example 1](image1)

**Example 2.** Hummel, Concerto for Trumpet and Orchestra in E Major, solo trumpet, mvt. 3, mm. 53–4.

![Example 2](image2)

A comparison of material from the two movements suggests that Hummel knew of Haydn’s concerto and deliberately tried to surpass it in technical demand, virtuosic display, and experimentation with the chromatic abilities of the trumpet. This is most evident in mm. 194–232, near the end of the movement. As McCready notes, the passagework in mm. 86–93 of the Haydn concerto is borrowed and expanded by
Hummel in mm. 194–202. Hummel’s removal of the rests interspersed throughout the passage in the Haydn concerto creates a more brilliant and virtuosic sound that would have showcased Weidinger and his novel instrument to a greater extent than the passage from Haydn. I propose that the extent of Hummel’s borrowing is greater than McCready acknowledges. Measures 194–216 of the Hummel concerto can be seen as a direct parallel to mm. 86–98 of the Haydn concerto, while mm. 222–32 of the Hummel concerto mirror Haydn’s mm. 249–256 (see Ex. 3 and 4). The ornamented arpeggio passage in mm. 86–92 of the Haydn concerto precedes a descending chromatic line in mm. 93–8—an idea Hummel adapts in his mm. 210–16 (see Ex. 3). Finally, Hummel immediately follows this idea with another near-quotations from Haydn; in mm. 249–55 of the Haydn concerto, the trumpet plays a descending series of trills, all on diatonic pitches (see Ex. 4a). Hummel, in mm. 222–32, inverts the material from Haydn and adds chromatic pitches as passing tones (see Ex. 4b). The use of trills involving chromatic pitches makes Hummel’s version of this idea more virtuosic and technically demanding, providing a better opportunity for the soloist to demonstrate the chromatic capacities of his instrument. By borrowing and expanding material from Haydn’s trumpet concerto—the only major model of solo writing for chromatic trumpet in existence at the time—Hummel invites a direct comparison between the two works. This explicit connection allows Weidinger to demonstrate his

23. McCready, “An Idiomatic View,” 50. See also Ex. 3, which provides a comparison of these passages.
total mastery of material that was even more challenging than the Haydn concerto.

**EXAMPLE 3A.** Haydn, Concerto in E-flat Major for Trumpet and Orchestra, solo trumpet, mvt. 3, mm. 86–98.

**EXAMPLE 3B.** Hummel, Concerto for Trumpet and Orchestra in E Major, solo trumpet, mvt. 3, mm. 194–216.
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**Example 4A.** Haydn, Concerto in E-flat Major for Trumpet and Orchestra, solo trumpet, mvt. 3, mm. 248–56.

**Example 4B.** Hummel, Concerto for Trumpet and Orchestra in E Major, solo trumpet, mvt. 3, mm. 222–32.

In the third movement of the Hummel concerto, the quotation and stylistic imitation of contemporary operatic repertoire further showcases the capabilities of the keyed trumpet. Immediately upon the return to the home key of E major at m. 167, the violins introduce a new melody: an upbeat march that Hummel borrowed from *Les Deux Journées*, an 1800 opera by Luigi Cherubini (see Ex. 5). The opera was quite popular in Vienna (and elsewhere) at the time that Hummel was working on the concerto. In the concerto, as Ian

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EXAMPLE 5B. *Les Deux Journées* theme in Hummel, Concerto for Trumpet and Orchestra in E Major, mvt. 3, mm. 167–78.

Pearson notes, the violins continue to play the march theme, while the trumpet soloist plays a fanfare melody resembling Mikéli’s vocal part (see Ex. 5b). Mikéli is the heroic water-carrier who protects the fugitives, Count Armand and his wife Constance, in the opera.26 After these fanfare figures, “Where

26. Ibid., 16.
Mikéli once sang of the fate of Armand and Constance,” the trumpet plays material borrowed and expanded from Haydn. Specifically, the trumpet “heroically executes perilous gruppetto-like turns . . . performs a series of triplet figures, and ascends a chromatic scale, trilling as it goes.”27 The “triplet figures” can be seen as an extension of what Pearson calls the “gruppetto-like turn” idea because the triplets resemble the turns in the preceding measures and serve to ornament the same pitch as the turns, b'. In other words, much of the trumpet part that replaces the vocal part of Mikéli in this second passage consists of material adapted from the Haydn concerto (see Ex. 3b and 4b). Furthermore, the minor section of the movement that immediately precedes the quotation from Les Deux Journées is written largely in a lyrical style reminiscent of the Italian operatic tradition, with the trumpet playing melodious, vocally-conceived lines.28

As Hummel’s quotations from Haydn overlap with quotations from Cherubini and combine with stylistic traits drawn from opera, the implications of each of these instances of musical borrowing also overlap to create a fundamental reinvention of the Classical trumpet. Unlike the typical Classical trumpet, whose restricted selection of pitches limited its expressive potential, the trumpet in Hummel’s concerto is

27. Ibid. See Ex. 3b and 4b for the material described by Pearson here. See also my discussion above. Note that “gruppetto” is defined as “a turn” or “any ‘group’ of grace notes” in Theodore Baker, ed., Pocket Manual of Musical Terms, 5th ed. (New York: Schirmer Trade Books, 1995), s.v. “gruppetto.”

28. For a summary of the general stylistic features that characterized Italian opera through the mid-nineteenth century see J. Peter Burkholder, Donald J. Grout, and Claude V. Palisca, A History of Western Music (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2010), 328.
consummately expressive, capable of the lyricism, drama, and virtuosity required to play the role of a heroic operatic character. After Hummel demonstrates the ability of the trumpet to sing in an operatic style, he inserts, in place of a character from a well-known opera, a trumpet fanfare and then a dazzling passage playable only on a chromatic instrument—all within the span of a few measures. As Pearson states, “Hummel substituted the trumpet for the heroic role of Mikéli.”29 The solo trumpet in the Hummel concerto explores an enormous range of expression, calling for both the brilliant resonance of a trumpet and the sad, mellow intonations of an operatic lament. The sheer versatility demanded by the trumpet part in this piece challenged the Classical notion of what a trumpet could be, pushing instrument and player to limits beyond what Haydn or even Weidinger could have envisioned in 1796.

The introduction of this material from *Les Deux Journées* is especially significant because it “disrupts the rondo as it replaces the final statement of the opening theme.”30 The movement has often been criticized as being formally sloppy for this reason.31 Ian Pearson has suggested that the borrowing

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31. Pearson, “Johann Nepomuk Hummel’s ‘Rescue’ Concerto,” 14. Pearson cites a review of Mary Rasmussen as an example of an instance in which “the loose formal design” of the movement is “considered a weakness.” Such observations characterize critics’ reception of Hummel’s music in general. For a discussion of Hummel’s “weakness” in using large-scale formal structures to organize his music, see section 7, “Works,” in Joel Sachs, “Hummel, Johann.
of material from Cherubini provided a means of quickly finishing the movement when Hummel found himself facing “an approaching deadline,” or that the borrowing from both Cherubini and Haydn was intended to pay tribute to these two composers. I contend that the disruption of the movement’s rondo form by the borrowed material is not a formal oversight or a simple tribute, but a means of establishing the keyed trumpet as an instrument capable of technical brilliance and of recreating the depth of expression of the human voice in the hands of a virtuoso, Anton Weidinger. By quoting and expanding material from Haydn, Hummel enabled Weidinger to display his technical proficiency and his enormous progress since his four-year struggle to master the Haydn concerto. By including the march theme from Les Deux Journées, Hummel explicitly draws attention to the fact that the trumpet has just played (preferably with great expressivity and beauty of tone) a passage in the style of an operatic aria and that the instrument now assumes the role of an operatic hero. The movement ends with gestures resembling military fanfares, which suggest that the traditional role of the trumpet as a martial instrument has not yet vanished either. The third movement of the Hummel concerto combines all of these elements to demonstrate the versatility of the trumpet—a versatility that was repeatedly denied by the treatment of the trumpet as a tutti instrument in Classical music. Hummel’s third movement completely contradicts most Classical composers’ concept of what the


trumpet could and should be. Thus, the last movement’s deviation from the Classical rondo form, by interrupting the form with the most triumphant trumpet lines in the entire piece, acts as a symbolic statement to the audiences of the time: the trumpet is ready to move beyond its Classical status as a tutti instrument.

After the premier of the Hummel concerto at the Esterházy castle on New Year’s Day 1804, Weidinger spent the rest of his life trying to find additional performance opportunities, with only modest success. In at least one case, it seems likely that his offer to perform was turned down on the basis that the trumpet was still deemed unsuitable as a solo instrument. As Reine Dahlqvist states, “The public was not interested in trumpet solos any more.” Meanwhile, the valve trumpet was introduced around 1818, and by the 1840s it had become trumpeters’ instrument of choice throughout most of Europe. By the time of Weidinger’s retirement in 1850 and death in 1852, the keyed trumpet he had toiled so diligently to turn into a solo instrument had all but vanished from musical


34. When Weidinger sought permission to perform at a musical “academy,” he was “turned down because ‘a trumpet concerto… is not pleasing to her Majesty the Empress.’ A clarinet concerto was executed instead.” Tarr, “Haydn’s Trumpet Concerto,” 33.


36. Ibid., 21. Several writers stress that the initial goal of valves was not to make the trumpet chromatic, but to eliminate the time-consuming process of changing crooks when a different harmonic series was desired. For example, see Phillips, “The Keyed Trumpet and the Concerti of Haydn and Hummel,” 23.
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life. 37 However, two fine concerti, staples of the trumpet literature, still stand as a testament to Weidinger’s career, his persistent labor to perfect and promote his instrument, and the “voice” that emerged for one triumphant moment in Hummel’s 1803 trumpet concerto.

37. Ibid., 20–1.
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Bibliography


