

HORNS AND TRUMPETS IN A TREATISE BY FRIEDRICH PONSING (Vienna?, ca. 1800)

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Translated by Rita Steblin

In 1991 the Museum of Fine Arts in Vienna organized the special exhibit *Die Klangwelt Mozarts* (Mozart's World of Sound) in which a handwritten treatise with the title *Uebersicht des Instrumentalsatzes* (Survey of Orchestration) (see Figure 1) was displayed for the first time.¹ It contains instructions on setting music for instruments—that is, orchestration. The title is thus not to be understood in the sense of composing music. This manuscript represents the working tools of a composer in that it describes how instruments are used with respect to their range, key signature, choice of clefs, and combinations with other instruments.




The treatise was purchased about twenty-five years ago in an antique shop.² The inscription “zum Andenken für Karl Bitrasch par Fred. Ponsing” (dedicated to Karl Bitrasch by Fred. Ponsing), found on the title page, refers to the author, Friedrich Ponsing, who wrote the work for a certain Karl Bitrasch. Research undertaken in Vienna to identify Friedrich Ponsing has produced no results. The possibility of a connection with the church musician Joseph Ponsing, who died in the Viennese suburb of Leopoldstadt in 1778, could not be verified.³ The treatise itself belonged to a roll of papers consisting of fifty items of printed music, twenty-two items of music manuscript, and three theoretical works about music, all stemming from the end of the eighteenth to the middle of the nineteenth century. The music ranges from works for solo guitar or piano to settings for full orchestra. The genres represented include songs, dances (*Ländler*), sonatas, concertos, and cantatas. In several of these a Viennese provenance is clearly recognizable. The theoretical sections comprise a basso continuo method handwritten in Italian, several printed works by Johann Philipp Kirnberger, and the treatise by Ponsing. Unfortunately, no connection could be established between the Ponsing treatise and the other parts of the convolute. Its assemblage sheds light only on the final owner's interests. Thus the treatise can be separated from the other written and printed materials and discussed on its own.

Ponsing wrote his discourse around 1800 in ink on music paper in broadside format, each sheet containing ten staves of five lines each. In all there are eight sheets, each measuring 225 x 315 mm; the sheets are bound with twine. The text is written in *Kurrentschrift* (running hand) and words of Italian origin, such as *tutti*, *solo*, *forte*, *piano*, and the names of instruments are in Latin script (printed in italics in this article). Ponsing gives the notes as letters and usually sets them also in musical notation. A comparison of this treatise with better-known contemporary treatises⁴—for reasons of time and place, those of Johann

violoncello, and double bass. He next discusses the woodwinds: oboe, transverse flute, piccolo, clarinet, bassoon, basset horn, and English horn.⁹ The *Survey of Orchestration* closes with remarks about horns and trumpets below (see Figure 2), using the original text in a diplomatic transcription:¹⁰

Corni et Clarini

Sind fast gleich, nur ist der Unterschied, daß man dem Corno mehr ziehende, und dem Clarin mehr stoßende Noten giebt. Diese Instrumenten werden aus allen Tönen in C, d.h. durchgängig ohne Wesentliche Vorzeichnung, gesetzt, und man schreibt nur an, aus welchem Ton der Gesang ist. Nur ist zu merken, das das Horn aus allen Tönen, hingegen das Clarin den G. A. As. E Ton nicht aufstecken kann. Im Tutti setzt

man diese Instrumenten selten höher als bis G  in die Tiefe aber bis G  Im Solo setzt man dem Horn vom G  besonders im

Durchlauf, alle Töne bis ins C, D, E, F, auch G hinauf, im Tutti hingegen, hat das Instrument, nemlich die Clarine nur die Accord-Töne von unten hinauf, bis das E im 4ten Felde.

The following is a literal translation of the original German/Italian text:

Corni and Clarini

are almost equal, being differentiated only in that the *Corno* is given longer [drawn-out] notes and the *Clarin* is given flourishes [strongly articulated notes]. These instruments are always notated in C for all keys, that is, without fundamental key signature, and one marks down only what key the piece is in. It must only be observed that the horn can be used in all keys. The *Clarin* on the other hand cannot use crooks for the keys of G, A, A \flat , and E. In the *tutti* these instruments are seldom written higher than g²; they are written as low as g. In solos the horn is set with tones from g upwards, especially in passagework, to c", d", e", f", g". In the *tutti*, on the other hand, the [other] instrument, namely the *Clarine*, has only chord tones from the lowest notes up to e".

In an earlier chapter of the treatise two different woodwind instruments, the basset horn and English horn, were treated together. The horns and trumpets are likewise summarized in a single chapter. Since Ponsing's treatise deals with the manner of writing for these instruments, the expression "almost equal" means that both horns and trumpets are to be set in a very similar way. The manner of orchestration for these instruments is differentiated, however, in that the horn is to be used for rather longer, drawn-out tones and the trumpet, on the other hand, for strongly articulated (non-legato) flourishes. Both instruments are to be notated in C Major, with the transposition being given in each case. While one can write for the horn in all keys, the trumpet cannot be used in the keys of G, A, A \flat , and E, since no corresponding crooks are available for these keys. Therefore the permissible keys

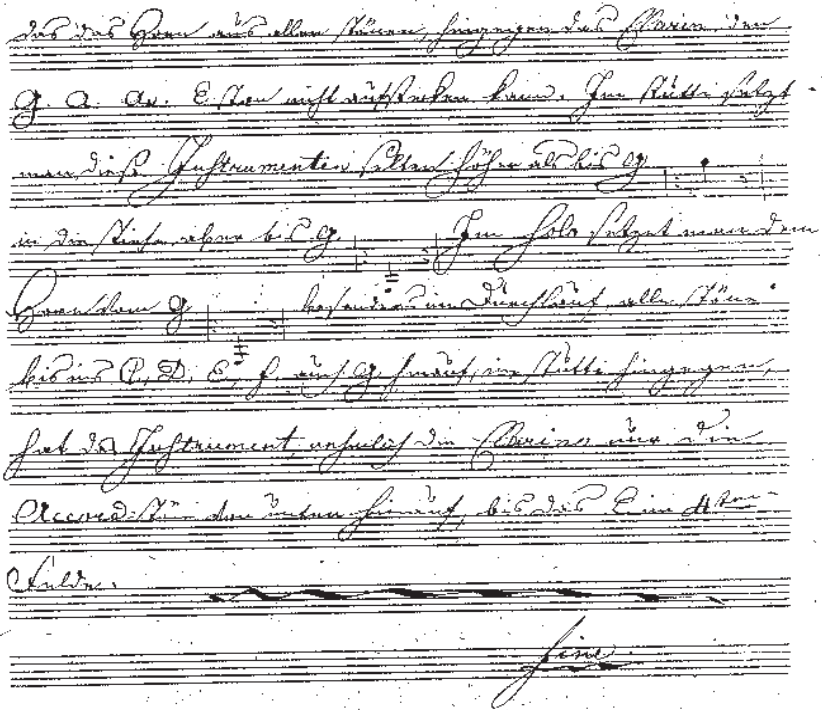


Figure 2
Ponsing, *Uebersicht*, fol.

for trumpet are C, D, Eb, F, and Bb.¹¹ With the use of half-tone crooks—which are not mentioned in this treatise—the keys of C#, F#, and B would also become available. For the tutti horn, all the natural tones between g and g' with the exception of d' are possible. For the solo horn, the range can be extended upwards. The diatonic scale can be utilized here at least between c' and g'; therefore these tones are preferred in playing ascending or descending passages. This indicates a case-by-case use of hand-stopping. A qualification introduced by the word “namely”¹² signifies that the tutti trumpet is used only for triadic notes from g to e'. The musical use of the solo trumpet is not addressed in Ponsing's treatise.

Summary

Ponsing's comments on the horn and the trumpet are summarized in a table at the end of this article. His instructions for the setting of horn and trumpet differ the most between tutti and solo; for the setting of woodwind instruments, on the other hand, between *primo* or *secondo*, and also *forte* and *piano*. Sometimes particular respect for the capabilities of individual musicians is apparent,¹³ as was also the case with Joseph Haydn.¹⁴ While Ponsing's

ranges for woodwind instruments stay within customary limits, he expects especially high notes from the string instruments—in particular from the violin and viola. This is all the more amazing since Ponsing constantly warns about taking risks with difficult notes on wind instruments. Obviously the violinists and violists he had at his disposal were particularly capable musicians.

Ponsing's ranges for horns and trumpets also remain within customary limits.¹⁵ The solo horn could play a diatonic scale and perhaps also the partly chromatic scale by means of hand-stopping, while the tutti horn was used to produce only the notes of the harmonic series. The essential range for both instruments extends from *g* to *g''*. There is no indication of the presence of keys, and valves were not used in Vienna until much later in the nineteenth century. Mutes also are not mentioned. In any case, Ponsing pays less attention to the trumpet than the horn—perhaps because the horn at this time was used in a greater variety of musical contexts.¹⁶ Incidentally, the trombone, which was relatively widely used in Vienna at this time, is not mentioned by Ponsing.¹⁷

Ponsing makes no allowances in his treatise for the sound (*Klangfarbe*) of the instruments. This omission can be explained by his intention to comment only on the capabilities of instruments. Ponsing's treatise is not intended as an encyclopedic account of everything that can be said about instruments, but is rather a practical method for those who write for instruments. As a practical musician, Friedrich Ponsing gives other musicians, in particular Karl Bitrasch, this advice: "One should do this, one can do that, and one should rather not do this." Ponsing uses simple, direct language for his *Survey of Orchestration*.

This treatise is therefore of interest because the small bits of information imparted here can be regarded as the quintessence of that which appeared to be worth knowing about orchestration.

<u>Instrument</u>	<u>Notation</u>	<u>Range (tutti)</u>	<u>Range (solo)</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
Horn	transposing "all" keys	harmonics: partly chromatic(?) <i>g'-g''</i>	diatonic and <i>g'-g''</i>	"rather drawn- partly out"
Trumpet	transposing "all" keys except G, A, A \flat , E	harmonics: <i>g'-g''</i>	not mentioned	"rather heavily articulated"

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NOTES

¹ Gerhard Stradner, *Die Klangwelt Mozarts: Eine Ausstellung des Kunsthistorischen Museums Wien* (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1991), p. 216, no. 57.

² The manuscript was purchased in Klosterneuburg, a town approximately nine miles north of Vienna. The dealer provided no information about its previous history.

³ No person in Vienna named Ponsing (including all the variant spellings of this name) with the first name Friedrich has been found prior to 1850. The above-mentioned Joseph and his wife Amalie are the only Viennese Ponsings with any known musical connections. Their son Franz became a pharmacist. Karl Bitrasch has proved equally elusive. The fact that the manuscript was found near Vienna suggests that it comes from that city or its environs.

⁴ Johann Georg Albrechtsberger, *Anweisung zu Composition* (Leipzig: J.G.I. Breitkopf, 1790). Albrechtsberger spent his youth in Klosterneuburg.

⁵ See Hans Hollerweger, "Die Reform des Gottesdienstes zur Zeit des Josephinismus in Österreich," in *Studien zur Pastoraltheologie*, vol. 1, ed. Bruno Kleinheyer and Hans Bernhard Meyer (Regensburg: Verlag Pustet, 1976); and Carl Maria Brand, *Die Messen von Joseph Haydn: Musik und Geistesgeschichte*, Berliner Studien zur Musikwissenschaft, vol. 2, ed. Arnold Schering (Würzburg: K. Triltsch, 1941), esp. pp. 187ff.

⁶ Albrechtsberger wrote "Von dem Kirchen-, Kammer und Theater-Styl, und von der Kirchen-Musik mit begleitenden Instrumenten" (On Church, Chamber, and Theater Style and on Church Music with Accompanying Instruments), but had this work printed in Leipzig. See Albrechtsberger, *Anweisung*, p. 544, n. 4.

⁷ The complete text of the treatise was discussed on 28 January 1974 at the International Schubert Symposium in Vienna. The entire treatise will be dealt with extensively at a later time (Gerhard Stradner, *Musikinstrumente in Österreich* [Vienna: Verlag der Akademie der Wissenschaften, in preparation]).

⁸ Gerhard Stradner, "Die Streichinstrumente in einem Traktat von Friedrich Ponsing, Wien (?) um 1800," in *Alte Musik und Musikpädagogik*, Wiener Schriften zur Stilkunde und Aufführungspraxis, ed. by Hartmut Krones (Vienna/Cologne/Weimar: Böhlau Verlag, 1997), vol. 1, pp. 33-41.

⁹ Gerhard Stradner, "Die Rohrblattinstrumente in einem Traktat von Friedrich Ponsing, Wien (?) um 1800," in *Oboe, Klarinette, Fagott* 5, no. 2 (Schorndorf: Hofmann Verlag, June 1990): 66-77; this publication is the printed version of a paper the author gave at the symposium "Rohrblattinstrumente zwischen 1650 und 1800" on 30 November 1989 in Graz.

¹⁰ With the appearance of the present article the entire text of the treatise by Friedrich Ponsing has now been published.

¹¹ Johann Georg Albrechtsberger gives the trumpet tunings A, B \flat , C, D, E \flat , F, and G. Thus he allows the tunings E, B, and A, which Ponsing omits, and avoids only A \flat . See Ignaz Ritter von Seyfried, *J. G. Albrechtsbergers sämtliche Schriften* (Vienna: Tobias Haslinger, 1837), vol. 3, pp. 186ff. On the other hand, Gustav Schilling says the following: "Vormals blies man nur aus B, C, D und Es, gegenwärtig fast in allen Scalen, z.B. H, A, Des, E, Fis, As, F und der gleichen." (Formerly one blew only in B \flat , C, D, and E \flat , [but] at present in almost all scales, e.g., B, A, D \flat , E, F \sharp , A \flat , F and so on.) See Gustav Schilling, *Universal-Lexicon der Tonkunst* (Stuttgart: F.H. Köhler, 1838), vol. 6, p. 695 (s.v. "Trompete").

¹² This word "expresses more precisely what at first was only hinted at." See Friedrich Kluge, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1975), p. 502.

¹³ Haydn writes as follows in his accompanying remarks to the *Applausus* Cantata of 1768, at the

same time excusing himself: “letzten / Bitte jeden besonders von denen Herren Musicis um meine und ihre Ehre zu befördern Ihren möglichen Fleiß anzuwenden. Solte ich etwan mit meiner arbeit den geschmack derselben nicht errathen haben, ist mir hirinfals nicht übl zu nehmen, weil weder die Persohnen, noch der orth beckant sind, die verhellung dessen hat mir in wahrheit diese arbeit sauer gemacht ...” (finally / I request especially those gentleman musicians to apply their best possible diligence in order to promote my honor and theirs also. Should I perhaps not have divined their taste with my work, I am not to be thought of badly in this, because I do not yet know the persons or the place [where this music will be played] and this circumstance has in truth made this hard work for me ...). See Joseph Haydn, *Gesammelte Briefe und Aufzeichnungen* (Kassel 1965), p. 60, after Christoph Hellmut Mahling, “Orchester, Orchesterpraxis und Orchestermusiker zur Zeit des jungen Haydn (1740-1770),” in *Beiträge zur Aufführungspraxis*, vol. 1 (Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1972), p. 98.

¹⁴ Stradner, “Streichinstrumente,” pp. 36-41, n. 8; idem, “Rohblattinstrumente,” pp. 68-76, n. 9.

¹⁵ I would like to thank Leo Kappel and Gregor Widholm for sharing their expertise in this matter.

¹⁶ In other treatises the trumpet no longer appears, while the horn is treated extensively. See Johann Ferdinand von Schönfeld, *Jahrbuch der Tonkunst von Wien und Prag* (Vienna, 1796), ed. Otto Biba (Munich/Salzburg: Musikverlag Katzbichler, 1976), pp. 193ff.

¹⁷ Seyfried, *J. G. Albrechtsbergers sämtliche Schriften*. See pp. 184ff., n. 11.