

The French Horn

Early History

The European Orchestral Horn developed from the 13th century Scandinavian *lur*, the Hebrew *schofar*, and the Roman *cornu*. The horn we know of today originated in France in the 14th century, hence the name "French Horn", and became a modified version of the military horn.

In its early stages of development, the French horn was a close-coiled instrument, much like the *trompe Maricourt*. Unfortunately, composers and performers required many instruments of different sizes in order to play different scales.



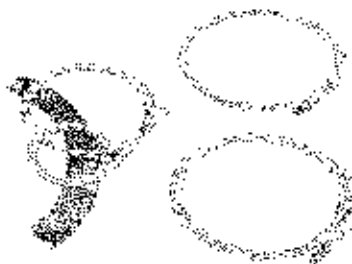
Later Developments

It was not until the musician named Michael Leichnam Schneider, of Vienna, introduced "crooks" to horn players, that the horn was able to play in different keys (scales). Crooks were small rings of different lengths that were added to the horn. This changed the length of the horn

and gave it the ability to play new pitches. However, many performers found the use of crooks to be very sloppy as it took time to change crooks in performance.

In 1815, the first "omnitonic" horn was developed. This horn made use of valves to change pitches (very similar to the French Horn of today). Later, in 1818, musicians Stolzel and Bluhmel introduced modern French horn which makes use of the rotary (spinning) valve.

One other musician, named Anton Joseph Hampl, developed a style of playing that enabled players to change the pitch of the instrument. Rather than making use of valves or crooks, Hampl simply placed his hand into the bell of the horn to change the pitch of the instrument. However, he was only able to gain one more set of notes through the use of this method.



Beginning Players

The French Horn is probably the most challenging brass

instrument for beginner students. The following are some suggestions that would help new players with the horn:

1. Students should have a good sense of pitch. Those with prior musical knowledge (such as piano lessons) will find it easier to play the correct pitch.
2. Normal teeth, lip, and chip formation make it easier for students to learn the instrument. Students with overbites, under bites, crooked or straight teeth, or even thick or thin lips may have to adjust their mouth position to get a proper sound.
3. Students with braces may find it challenging as the braces could cut into the lip. Students can either modify mouth position or purchase a Brace Guard.

In Performance

Although it is very possible to play several styles of music with the French Horn, it is most commonly found in Orchestral and Concert Band settings. Because of his playing style, Barry Tuckwell, a performer, has inspired many composers to write solo French Horn music.