

Thoughts on the First Movement of Hummel's Trumpet Concerto

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I view Hummel's *Concerto à tromba principale* through two perspectives when teaching and performing. First, what is unique about this piece. Second, how does it compare to its predecessor keyed trumpet concerto by Haydn. To me, these go hand-in-hand as Haydn's concerto created a model for the modern trumpet concerto with a chromatic trumpet. So, while there are certainly stylistic similarities specific to the period when written, these two concertos showcase the trumpet in vastly different ways.

The first things to keep in mind are the elements of balance, simplicity, and time. Classical period music does not have the overt emotionalism of the Romantic period and later. The performer needs to find a way to be expressive without distracting from the melody and balance between soloist and accompaniment. Here is where time comes in. I also practice and teach with a metronome on this piece. The musical element of time has been removed from our ability "musically manipulate" it. This means strict time, but to compensate, emphasizing the phrase shapes and the dynamics to be musically expressive. Look for ways to grow the line through how the melody was written: dynamically follow the ascent and descent of the melody, emphasize articulation alterations, accent the frequent syncopations. However, remember to do this in the simplest of ways, not in the style of contemporary composers. Enhance, don't distract.

In regards to comparison with Haydn's concerto, the full title gives a clear glimpse at the main difference. Haydn was a master of string writing and his concerto would very well as the melody for one of his string quartets. His style of writing for this piece would likely have been best suited to performers trained in the *clarino* style of trumpet playing. With its scalar passages and 16th note flourishes, the writing matches up with many similarly written pieces in that style. Hummel, by contrast, titled his work *Concerto à tromba principale*, for the *principale* trumpets. The players in this style typically played the low parts, limiting them to arpeggios due to the structure of the overtone series. The opening motive of Hummel's concerto demonstrates this with its initial tonic arpeggio. Looking through the entire movement, one sees similar arpeggios, especially as cadential figures. Another *principale* element in the first movement is the expanding interval motive with an ascending scale alternating with *sol*, eg. *do-sol-re-sol-mi-sol-fa-sol-sol-mi-do-sol*, etc.

Looking at the piece through highlighting the keyed trumpet is the final consideration. There are ascending scales with a chromatic alternation tone near the end of the exposition. The development modulates a minor 6th away from tonic and then proceeds to modulate within the section to "show off" the possibilities of the instrument. After the opening fanfare, the melody follows a similar stepwise motion as Haydn's concerto, which was impossible before Weidinger's addition of keys.

Overall, Hummel's concerto should be fun, exciting, and an example of *bravura* trumpet playing.