

REFINING THE NARRATIVE OF ANTON WEIDINGER’S PROTOTYPE KEYED TRUMPET

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ABSTRACT

Viennese trumpeter Anton Weidinger (1766–1852) was the first to develop a fully chromatic trumpet in the guise of his revolutionary keyed instrument, and as such stands as a pivotal figure bridging the gap between the natural trumpet and the modern valve trumpet. The narrative of his connections with his “close friend” Joseph Haydn before the composition of the 1796 Trumpet Concerto (based purely on a family anecdote dating to 1907) and of the invention itself (especially that a functional prototype existed in 1796) do not, however, stand up to close scrutiny. The curious delay between Haydn’s composition and its 1800 premiere combined with the chronological inconsistencies between Weidinger’s arrival in Vienna in 1792 and Haydn’s absences during his two London journeys (in 1792–93 and 1794–96) are significant irregularities that have been overlooked in the scholarly literature. My paper will use surviving works for Weidinger’s keyed trumpet by Leopold Koželuch (1798) and Joseph Weigl, Jr. (1799) together with concert reviews and other surviving biographical details to refine the chronology of events that transpired as the chromatic trumpet finally emerged. Replacing the oft-repeated “close friend” narrative, I will make the case that Weigl, Haydn’s godson and a composer closely associated with the same Viennese theatres as Weidinger, was potentially the figure who convinced Haydn to undertake the composition. I will argue that when Haydn wrote his Trumpet Concerto in 1796 he had little direct knowledge of Weidinger’s invention and that the instrument itself was not developed to the point of being capable of playing the work publicly until ca. 1800. This indicates that Haydn composed a work for an idealized chromatic trumpet not yet in existence and that the work was not tailor-made to be idiomatic to Weidinger’s invention.