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Instruments on the test stand 6/2010

B trumpet »Classico«

by Alexander Weimann

>>> Special print. clarino.test is part of the specialist magazine clarino.print

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Passionate

Bb trumpet »Classico« by Alexander Weimann

On Alexander Weimann's homepage you can read that »It has always been our aim to provide each musician with an instrument that allows them to realize their individual ideas of the sound, which can be achieved by varied possible combinations«

Our testers Rainer Hauf and Dominikus Schmelzer are absolutely convinced of the tested Bb trumpet »Classico«. If you had to testimonialise this trumpet, you would come up with an overall rating of »summa cum laude«.

In Kapellendorf, situated in the picturesque federal state of Thuringia, they are not only masters of their trade, but here they actually work precisely with passion.

The tested instrument, a Bb trumpet »Classico«, is made of gold brass, and gold plated in the version that we had. The bell, with a final diameter of 140 mm, makes a massive impression, and it has been bent by hand, just like the crook.

For the brass instrument maker Dominikus Schmelzer the overall impression is extremely positive. The surface is smooth and slightly polished at the sockets. "The »Classico« has been made and soldered beautifully straight and symmetrically. The instrument feels comfortable in your hand, it is neatly built. It is an obviously hand made instrument, but nevertheless – or that is why? – the measurements, the design of the braces and the overall concept are optically sophisticated", so the conclusion of the testing craftsman.

Cone-shaped construction of the machine

The rotary valve machine that has been used comes from Zirnbauer, and according to Schmelzer it runs "as well as usual". In this context, the musical tester Rainer Hauf noticed that "the response is very free, open and direct". The resistance remains the same throughout all registers and leaves nothing to be desired. "As I had not experienced that before, I was wondering why this was such a striking feature of this instrument." The reason: a cone-shaped machine 11.05 – 11.2 mm was built into the trumpet. The cone-shaped construction, which Zirnbauer introduced for rotary valve

trumpets in 1996, allows the especially well-balanced characteristics of the instrument when the main slide and the bell are accordingly tuned.

Here, the middle register does not stand out very much from the low and high registers. The resistance is reduced through an optimized airflow in the valves. This leads to a very open blowing feel with a beautifully centred core.

The cone-shaped lead pipe is inserted into a cylindrical nickel-silver tube, and thus offers the possibility to remove the lead pipe. The chosen lead pipe of 148 mm is quite long, which leads to a slight shift of weight towards the bell.

"It does not feel awkward at all, as the instrument lies perfectly balanced in your hand", says Schmelzer. There is a MINIBAL joint on the third slide and an overblow key on the tuning slide crook for C3. Water key, overblow key and trigger lever are cushioned with a cork pad, so there is no noise when pressing them.

The assessment of an instrument often stands and falls with the spontaneous feel good factor. If the musician has to "struggle" with it at the beginning, it will be tough for the instrument. If the musician feels good from the very first moment, it will be the first plus. The latter is the case with the »Classico«. "The trumpet lies perfectly balanced in your hand, and from the first tones it shows its strength", states Rainer Hauf. The instrument responds immediately to the smallest amount of air, and converts the lip vibration into tones. "This is something I have not experienced before" the tester is enthused. The response is very direct and clear, which conveys an easy and secure blowing feel. At each dynamic level the air flows freely and with little resistance through the instrument. You are never forced to push more air or to push harder. The sound remains solid and stable. "My students, who blew this instrument too, have confirmed this feeling." The musician should never have the feeling that the instrument could let him down.

The intonation leaves nothing to be desired

Also where intonation is concerned the trumpet leaves nothing to be desired. You can play the instrument without spending a lot of time to get accustomed to it, and you will find all tones in exactly the right place. "That was something I liked very much, as it is often a problem with German trumpets", Hauf sums up. Especially in the high mid-range and in the high registers this means an enormous saving of power, as you do not have to "bend" the tones. Besides that, there is no risk of slipping into another natural tone.

The trumpet comes with a big and round tone. When playing *piano* it is stable and singing, when playing *forte* it is very bright and centred. "You are present without being in the foreground. In churches you can play dark tones, and for signals you can produce

a brighter tone”, explains Rainer Hauf the instrument as being extremely practicable. The sound spectrum is very wide, and thus makes a number of applications possible: from the brass quartet up to the symphony orchestra.

And, there is another top mark “excellent” for the Alexander-Weimann-Trumpet in one more category: There are definitely no bad tones.

Also from a musical point of view, the machine was positively assessed by Rainer Hauf. The Zirnbauer valve runs very nicely and smoothly. The articulation of tones when playing trills and fast figures is very good and direct. The air flow is very pleasing when changing tones.

However, in the practical test Rainer Hauf has noticed a slight problem with the action. When taking out the 3rd slide, the slide push-rod suddenly re-bounces. It is not easy to replace it easily after draining out the water. Quickly getting the water out, as it is often necessary in practice, is quite risky, because you do not know if the slide is ready for use in short time. “I think this needs to be improved”, demands Hauf. “But it is not supposed to be a great challenge for the brass maker.” Rainer Hauf’s suggestion: “A water key on the 3rd valve would be an option.”

The price/performance ratio (at a basic price of 2,820 EUR) is very good, because the trumpet absolutely comes up to the requirements of professional players, and it represents another top product in the segment of German trumpets for professional players.

Register coordination is well balanced

The register coordination is well balanced due to the cone-shaped structure of the machine. You feel comfortable in each register, and the sound can develop very well.

Due to the excellent workmanship – certified by the craftsman, who tested the instrument – and the outstanding musical and practical features – as presented by the musical-practical tester – the Weimann-trumpet »Classico« is an absolute top instrument. There are, however, some additional characteristics that make it even more remarkable. A red screw on the water key for example, marks the Alexander Weimann’s models for professional musicians.

This is just an optical element, and it is not relevant for practical issues, but in the overall picture it is an eye-catcher. And the eye must be pleased as well.

Moreover, several lead pipes make it possible for the player to vary sound and response. A trumpet with a wide sound spectrum and easy, direct response is probably something each player wishes to have. With this instrument, this span has been covered extremely well, and it enables the player to produce a large bandwidth of tone colours.

The air can flow freely through the instrument in all registers, and thus convey a comfortable blowing feel. The trumpet is very versatile, too. Whether it be a brass quintet, a brass ensemble of ten, Egerlaender brass music, church music, a brass orchestra or a symphony orchestra – no matter what the instrumentation is – playing it is always fun and convenient. Just “summa cum laude”.

Redaktion: Klaus Härtel

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- + The response is very free, open and direct
- + The intonation is excellent, which means it is an enormous saving of power, especially in the middle and high register
- + When playing *piano*, the sound is very stable and singing, when playing *forte* it is very bright and centred
- When taking out the 3rd slide, the slide push-rod suddenly re-bounces, and it is not easy to replace it after letting the water drain out.

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Manufacturer: Alexander Weimann

Material: Gold brass, gold plated

Bell, hand hammered: 140 mm

Bore: between 11.05 and 11.2 mm

Special feature: Zirnbauer machine with one-piece tuning slides and valve joints of gold brass, 3<sup>rd</sup> slide trigger,

Hand-forged braces, removable lead pipe, C key

Recommended price:

Basic price 2,820.00 EUR

Gold plated 3,690.00 EUR

Supplier/Information:

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## The testers

Rainer Hauf studied the trumpet at the Richard-Strauss-Conservatory and at the University for Music and Performing Arts, Munich, and he participated in a number of master classes (among others, German Brass and Günther Beetz). At present, the musician works as a teacher for brass instruments at a Secondary school, the St.-Thomas-Gymnasium in Wetttenhausen. He gives a lot of concerts as a soloist, but also with the Nördlinger Bach Trumpet Ensemble that he has founded.

Dominikus Schmelzer trained as a brass instrument maker with Wenzel Meinel in Geretsried, where he also completed an additional year in tuba, cimbasso, and bass trumpet making. In 2004 he finished further education and received his master craftsman's diploma as a brass instrument maker, and nowadays he is the Managing Director of Musikhauses Frei in Marktoberdorf.