

Masterly crafted trumpets from Thuringia

German C-Trumpet by Alexander Weimann

Building good C-trumpets can sometimes be a delicate undertaking. The main problem is to align a good playing feel with a clean intonation. Well-known and experienced instrument makers are said to have failed here, so the more exciting we are when it comes to the new orchestra model from Kapellendorf in Thuringia.

By Holger Mück

German rotary valve trumpet in C

For this test Alexander Weimann provided me with one of his new C in its rough state. The “engine” of this trumpet is again the reliable Meinschmidt valve with the drop-shaped touch pieces and the patent-registered lubricant groove. The bore hole of the machine is 11.0 mm. According to Alexander Weimann, “the rotary valve from the company Bernhard Zirnbauer with an 11.05mm bore hole would also be an option”. Both versions have been proved and tested in the market, not least because of their high reliability due to high-quality materials such as nickel-silver (valve) and bronze (changer). Also with further components and materials Alexander Weimann does not accept compromise with his new C model: inner and outer slides consist of corrosion-resistant and saliva-resistant nickel-silver, the rose brass bell has been made of one piece. Weimann uses the same material for his lead pipes which are placed in the cylindrical nickel-silver tube without being fixed. Besides the lead pipe, the tested C trumpet is also equipped with a removable bell (bell diameter 130 mm), which is only 0.4 mm thick. There is another purchased part for the C trumpet, the bell. With the bell the instrument maker relies on his long-standing cooperation with the bell manufacturer Bernd Martin Sandner in the Vogtland-district. According to Weimann’s own chasing block and cut, the bells are crafted in a traditional way. Then they are bent and shaped at the workshop in Kapellendorf. The “Weimann” engraving on the bell makes it distinctive. The finely wrought braces (on the lead pipe tube and at the exit of the third valve) are accurately fitting. They keep the bell immovably in its position, but on the other hand, changing the bell is a child’s play. The basic equipment of the new orchestra model include a tuning slide with a trigger on the third valve, a water key as well as the C-key, typical for a C trumpet. Upon request more overblow keys (e.g. an A-key) can be added. In general, the customization of instruments to the wishes of the musicians is part of

Alexander Weimann's business philosophy. On both, the water key and the overblow key, round mute cork pads have been attached. Suitable things were just borrowed from the big sister, the Bb orchestra model without modifications. Such as the trigger mechanism by means of MINIBAL-ball joints, the slide pull knob on the first valve slide, so that it can also be used for the tone adjustment, the water key on the crook, or the "Weimann" engraving on the bell. Of course, all these accessories and braces for the C trumpet, as well as for the Bb trumpet, are hand-forged at the master workshop.

Alexander Weimann is a brass instrument maker with all his heart, which is reflected in the perfect manufacture of his instruments. A stylish, but plain design and fastidious precision have made his name a brand. It is simplicity and devotion to detail that makes this instrument something very special. The optical overall impression of the provided test model could not be better! All slides of our test model run perfectly and show excellent tightness.

First blowing impression

This instrument can be played really pleasantly, the trumpet responds easy and the air flows freely and effortlessly through the instrument. The overblow key has been positioned user-friendly, and it works faultlessly; the pressure unit and the valve section can be operated precisely and conveniently. The return spring of the trigger is perfectly balanced. The tone adjustment is easy to operate and returns into its original position really fast and without jerking. The change of the lead pipe can be done unobstructed. For making a lead pipe and shaping it, you will need an aligning gauge tool, a so-called "thorn". On this tool the pipe is given its inner course, which is decisive for the air flow and blowing resistance, the response and also the intonation of the finished instrument. Nowadays, conical or bellied shapes are quite common. These different tools, and also the lead pipes made on them, have been named alphabetically by Weimann. For this test, I was provided with three lead pipes named A, DE and D (thin stamping at the pipe end). Depending on the blowing behaviour, and above all on the used mouthpiece, different trumpet players will prefer different types of lead pipes. I liked lead pipe D best, it could convince me most in connection with my JK-mouthpiece (size 4C). Consequently, this combination was relevant for the test experience.

Sound

It is amazing, how big, clear and well-balanced this C-trumpet sounds in all registers – it is just fun playing it! The classical trumpet sound of a German rotary valve trumpet is present in each facet. When played in the low registers, the Weimann trumpet has a big volume with a rich and full-bodied sound, and each tone can be articulated clearly. The high registers sound classy and unusually big for a C-trumpet. Its rich and lively sound allows for playing lyric pieces effortlessly, but also clarion orchestral parts with a "signal

character". Weimann's new trumpet masters challenging tasks brilliantly, and with the sound characteristics described above and with its tone colours it meets the requirements of each composition. Its sound remains well-balanced and centred in all dynamic levels. Also in *fortissimo* the trumpet is easy to control, and there are no breaks of sound. It doesn't start "shrieking", which allows an almost "unlimited *forte*".

Intonation

Despite sufficient offers, finding a well-tuned C-trumpet seems to be difficult, especially in Germany. It is by far not enough to shorten the slides and to reduce the total length; there are more factors that play an important role here. Finding a bell, respectively a diapason that is especially suitable for the C-tuning is a crucial aspect. Alexander Weimann has spent a lot of time on that and has experimented with several pressing forms. The intonation of our test instruments fully convinced us. The only thing that we noticed when using the trigger mechanism is the well-known problem tone "Eb" in the second octave. Here you will have to use the alternative fingering, which shouldn't be a problem. In spite of that there aren't any noticeable tuning problems.

Changing the valve and more

For our test Alexander Weimann also provided us with an instrument with a Zirnbauer-valve. Another valve, but there is more to it! This trumpet is the counterpart to our test instrument with another valve, but there are further features that made us curious. Besides the firmly soldered "D"-lead pipe of thin-walled brass, the connections between the valve canisters – made as one piece and seamless – as well as one-piece tuning slides are other refinements of this trumpet. The advantages are obvious: an unobstructed air flow results in a very easy and excellent response with a low blowing resistance. Problems caused by solder joint faults or by gaps can thus be avoided. This trumpet has been manufactured expertly and faultlessly, too. For better comparableness also this trumpet was given to us in its rough state. The intonation remains steadily good. The lead pipe fits optimally to the slightly bigger measures of the valve. The trumpet can be blown extremely easy, and responds easy, even easier after these modifications. You will be really surprised by the changed sound: especially in the upper registers the Zirnbauer model has an even bigger and more open sound, which can be attributed to the above-mentioned seamless connections and valve slides, but also to the thin-walled brass lead pipe without the nickel-silver lead pipe tube. In direct comparison the trumpet with the Meinlschmidt rotary valves sounds a bit livelier and richer in the high registers; it is more full-bodied in sound nuances. According to Weimann, this is due to the gold brass lead pipe on the one hand, and to the nickel-silver lead pipe tube on the other hand. "With this further development we intended to make an instrument which is as big and well-balanced as our existing C-trumpet, but which responds easier. This has

mainly been achieved by the light and firmly soldered lead pipe, but also by the modifications to the valve. I think that we have found an ideal combination of components for our latest C-trumpet model”, says Alexander Weimann.

Trumpet players are individualists

Of course, all trumpet players have their individual sound on their instruments; however, the new Weimann C rotary valve trumpet clearly shows a distinct way. The big orchestra is home to this instrument, but it also brings all the necessary requirements for a brass ensemble or a chamber orchestra – whether in the brass movement or as a principal they are most suitable. A comment of one of my colleagues is characteristic and should therefore be mentioned: “The boss does not notice if we are playing on the “big” or on the “C” trumpet. That’s great! Trumpet players are individualists, and each of us is looking for an instrument that comes as close to his/her sound ideal as possible. One likes it the way it is, another would prefer another brace, or could do without a brace or would prefer to have it in another place.

Here you can see the high flexibility of a small specialist manufacturer compared with the big companies. Necessary adjustments and wishes can be discussed on site and they can be done expertly and at once. It is up to the trumpet player to decide for a certain valve-lead pipe combination, the surface finish, etc. Alexander Weimann has two extremely recommendable and high-quality valves available, and he will certainly be keen to “tailor-make” the musician an instrument of his choice and preferences. It would be preferable if the third slide could be made as a double slide, which would allow for a faster and complete draining without a water key. For trumpet players who would like to be flexible, a bell changing device would be recommendable. If desired, there are several bells at Weimann’s show room to choose from, but the tested bell was a perfect match with the other set-up (valve, lead pipe, etc.).

Conclusion

Artistry and inventive talent characterise Alexander Weimann as a master instrument maker, kindness and sympathy as a person. His expert business has made a name for itself far beyond the borders of the state of Thuringia, and renowned musicians have become enthusiastic about his products. The C-orchestra model is a perfectly crafted instrument, which comes up to the highest professional expectations. The well-balanced sound, a good playing feel and an ideal intonation make this trumpet what it is: an instrument absolutely suitable for professionals. I was especially impressed by the dark and rich sound which can hardly be told apart from a “big” Bb-trumpet.

Pro & Con

+ Good intonation

- + Dark, centred and lively orchestra sound
- + Easy response
- + Masterly classy manufacture

Product Information

Manufacturer: Musikinstrumentenbau Alexander Weimann

Model: German rotary valve trumpet in C

Technical data:

Rotary valve made by Meinlschmidt with the patent-registered lubrication groove (bronze/brass), bore hole 11.00 mm; or the rotary valve made by Zirnbauer with an 11.05mm bore hole;

Rose brass bell made as one piece (diameter 130 mm, 0.4 mm thick);

Trigger on the 3rd slide;

Water keys on the crook;

C-overblow key, A-key upon request;

Meinlschmidt valve: removable lead pipes (rose brass in nickel-silver tube);

Zirnbauer valve: soldered lead pipe of brass

Machine and lead pipe type (removable or soldered)

Prices:

Silver-plated from 2,380.00 EUR,

Gold-plated from 2,930.00 EUR,

Additional bell 430.00 EUR,

Additional lead pipe 60.00 EUR,

Surcharge for Zirnbauer machine 250.00 EUR

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We would like to thank you very much for this comprehensive, detailed and very good test report. As was the case with the Bb-trumpet (sonic 3.2007) also with this instrument we put a high value on good intonation and easy response in all registers, together with a beautifully dark, full and still bright tone. We are very pleased that also the manufacture, functionality and its aesthetic and elegant look found the tester's approval. The test result has been confirmed by several trumpet players. However, there had been a request for a double slide. In order to assure an unobstructed air flow and the easy response of the trumpets, we have deliberately shunned from making the 3rd slide a double slide, because therefore the slide would have to be cut up and broken. That would undo the special features of the Zirnbauer valve. We are looking forward to curious musicians, for whom the trumpet might be the desired instrument.

Alexander Weimann