Orchestration – Horn

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Instrument History

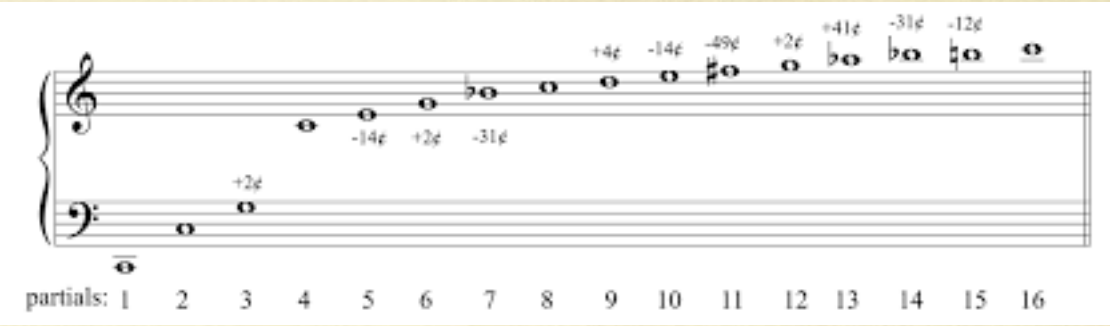
- Hunting horn: French vs. English

- Natural horn: German adaptation, crooks to change keys, inclusion in orchestras

- Valved horn: completely chromatic, expanded low range

Natural Horn

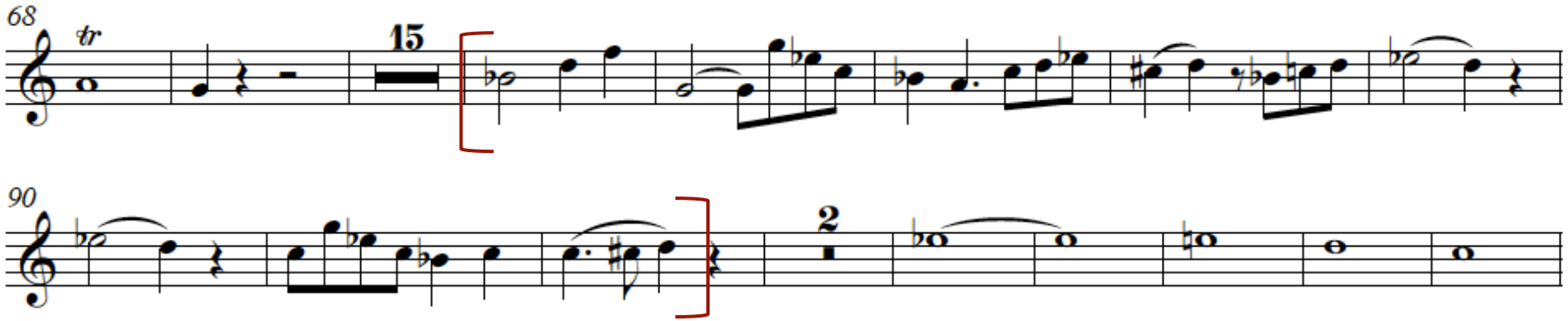
- Harmonic series
- Hand stopping



gets more pitches,

½, ¾, and fully stopped

- Different crooks to change keys: most popular for horn in F, E, E ♭ , and D, sometimes in A, G, C, B ♭ , and H
- Mozart Horn Concerto No. 3 example: Horn in E ♭



Valved Horn

- Valves added: increased chromatic flexibility, low range, and even tone/volume on all pitches

- Single horn: usually pitched in B ♭ or F
- Double horn: expanded range, more secure upper register, usually combination of F and B ♭ (most common)

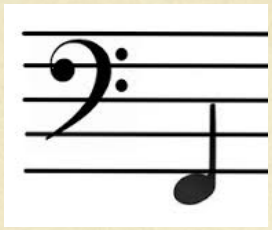
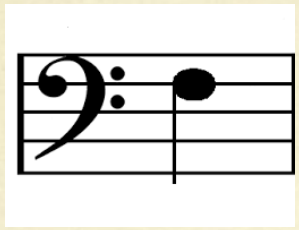
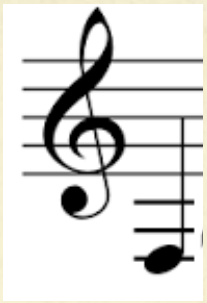
- Triple horn: addition of (usually) high F horn, helps for extreme upper register – also descant horns (Baroque)
- International Horn Society: decision to call the instrument the “horn” not the “French horn”

Range

- Common range: G3 to G5 (horn pitch)
- Advanced/professional common range: C3 to C6
- Advanced/professional “possible” range: C2 to G6
- Pitches below F3 usually notated with bass clef

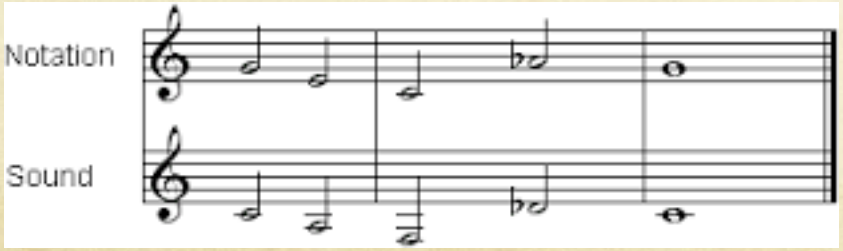
Notation

- "Old" vs. "new" bass clef notation: old notated an octave below what is played, new notated as played

F3: old bass clef notation, new bass clef notation, and treble clef

- Concert B ♭ = Horn F
- Sounds P5 lower than notated pitch

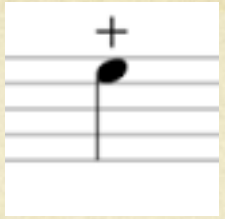


Orchestration

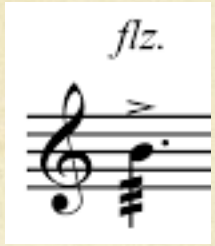
- Orchestra: usually in high-low pairs, odd numbers are high horns, and even numbers are low horns – tradition from natural horn days
- Can play high and can play low – can't play in the extreme registers the entire piece, use bars of rest
- Bars of rest before and after solos and muted passages
- Bars of rest to turn pages and empty slides
- G3 to G4 is traditionally "weaker range," especially for playing loud

Special Techniques

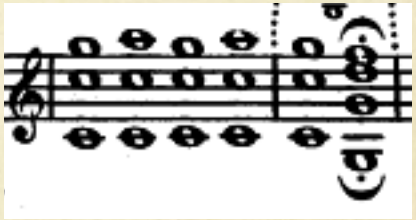
- Lip trills: close partials, whole step trills E4 and up
- Hand stopping: closed hand position, can't go much lower than C4, raspy tone (echo horn is half stopped) (bouché)



- Multiple tonguing: double/triple tonguing for fast passages
- Flutter tonguing: roll tongue while playing, growly sound



- Multiphonics: sing/hum one pitch while playing another, tune to get harmonics in between (very difficult) – Weber Concertino example
- Half-valve: depress valves half way to get ethereal sound



- Mutes: straight, sometimes stop, rarely cup (con sordino)
- Horn rips: characteristic of horns, loud high glissando
- Bells up: raise horn to approx. vertical, visual effect, increase volume

Questions?