

A Leitzinger Bassoon in the Gewandhaus Orchestra, Leipzig

What do you think of new developments in the musical instrument market? Do you try new instruments?

For over a year, the Leitzinger company, from Hösbach, Germany has been producing a newly developed bassoon.

For many bassoonists, Leitzinger has been respected for years for its bocals. Now, besides bocals, one can try out the Leitzinger bassoon.

I have been a customer of Leitzinger since 1990, and have used their bocals since then. I am also a personal friend of Stephan Leitzinger. Stephan was my advisor for the purchase of my Heckel bassoon, which I have owned since a year before the completion of my studies with Klaus Thunemann in Hannover. I still play the Heckel bassoon regularly. Since the Heckel bassoon is an old instrument, No. 8024, built in 1936, it required some restoration, which Stephan performed to perfection. The instrument had sustained severe damage to the wing joint, which required complete reconstruction. The reconstructed wing joint performs excellently. The instrument lost none of its specific properties, which as far as I can tell, is a success unique to Leitzinger.



Principal bassoonist of the Gewandhaus Orchestra

At the beginning of 2004, the new Leitzinger bassoon was ready to be introduced. With great excitement, we gave the instrument its first test in the Great Hall of the Gewandhaus. As a first impression, the appearance of the instrument was very engaging. The instrument was light, nicely finished, delicate but strong, and with a well-placed mechanism. It lent itself well to the 'modern' keys, such as the high E. That such a light instrument had such a large sound was apparent from the first playing. It was freely vibrating, flexible, and with a rich, colorful sound. These properties have only intensified with time. After over a year of playing the instrument, the instrument has become a much admired new standard among bassoons. The scale is more balanced in sound and intonation than any instrument I have ever heard. After getting used to the instrument, I took the instrument to play in the Gewandhaus. Prior to this first test, I did not tell my colleagues of the new instrument, so as to judge their reaction to it. At first, it was not mentioned. At least, it was not worse than my previous bassoon. But then, more and more of my colleagues expressed a positive reaction, especially those in the string section, who noticed the freedom of play of the instrument, and its rich tones. There were many positive remarks made about it.

The confidence of the Gewandhaus in the Leitzinger bassoon led them to acquire it as one of their instruments. Since then I have played it exclusively. Naturally, it took some time before I could fully appreciate and take advantage of all the instrument's qualities. I will certainly discover more as time passes. But what I experienced from the first year was the unaccustomed ease of the playing of the instrument. The resistance of the instrument is pleasantly small.

I have been able to change the structure of my reeds, they have become lighter and more free. The instrument's intonation is so stable, I do not have to adapt my reeds to 'sick' notes and the high notes do not demand special treatment.

In October 2004 I played the instrument in a Jolivet Concert, and it allowed me to master low as well as high notes. In the summer of 2005, the instrument performed convincingly in Mozart's Oboe Concert during a concert tour of Japan. I have played it in many concerts and opera performances, continuo and chamber orchestras, as well as the 4th and 6th Symphonies of P.I. Tschaikowski. In every case, the instrument performed wonderfully.

I always notice how the instrument fully develops its spectrum of sound in large halls. I performed a test, in which I had colleagues play the instrument and I listened from different points in the hall. Regardless of whether I stood at the front of the hall or in the back, the sound was always the same, which I found incredible.

In closing, I can say that I am very happy with the instrument, and will continue to use it in all the concerts that I play. It mixes equally well in chamber and orchestral concerts, and is perfect for solo performances. The intonation is extremely stable making reeds is easier, and I am certain that there are still many pleasant features of the instrument to be discovered.

Perhaps you should have the courage to try a new instrument that is not from one of the large manufacturers; it is well worth it! Meanwhile, Leitzinger has sold more Oboes, and several artists have played my instrument, mostly with positive reactions, and some recommendations for improvements.

Best wishes to Stephan Leitzinger!

David Petersen