



Brass Instruments

The Performer's Perspective

Trevor

Do you find that in professional life you actually take more than one instrument if you are playing in, say, a recording session?

Sandy

Very often that would be the case. We will often turn up with a full case load of trumpets maybe 4 or 5 trumpets and depending on the register of the music that we are playing we may use smaller or larger instruments and also as the recording session perhaps goes on and the lip gets a bit tired we often find ourselves moving to smaller trumpets basically just to make it that little bit easier.

Trevor

It's quite a compromise of history isn't it?

Sandy

It certainly is, especially when we are playing Baroque music on piccolo trumpets and it's an instrument which is about a quarter of the length of the trumpet that was intended for that repertoire. And if we take the music of Bach for example, he wrote some fantastic trumpet pieces. He generally scored for three trumpets and a small orchestra of strings and perhaps oboes and if we use modern piccolo trumpets the trumpeters really dominate the ensemble and it becomes very shrill, quite exciting, but I'm sure it's along way from the sound that Bach envisioned, because with the natural trumpet, the longer trumpet, there's a much greater blend between trumpet and strings.

Trevor

Are there real attempts to perform music on brass instruments in a historic way or are we just getting a sort of historical fluff around the very modern culture?

Sandy

There are lots of compromises especially with historical or so-called historical performances of Baroque trumpet music. Most of that is just an expediency to meet the demands of modern life, and the demands of conductors and audiences, who are expecting a very polished performance every time.

Trevor

I have to say that the, the piece I enjoyed you demonstrating most was the piece on the cornet where you played a 19th century cornet solo...

You seemed to do that very naturally as if it came from somewhere in your heritage, is that true?

Sandy

Yes well I started on the cornet at about the age of ten (IV): and I switched to trumpet a few years later.

Trevor

In a brass band?

Sandy

In a brass band yes.

Trevor

And is the culture of the brass band and the orchestral player very different?

Sandy

The style of playing is very different but most of the orchestral players in Britain I'm sure started playing in brass bands.