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INTRODUCTION TO THE THIRD EDITION

Like most people, I first became acquainted with the basset-horn through the works of Mozart. As a budding clarinettist I eagerly listened to the rare performances of the Serenade, K.V.361, and the Requiem, K.V.626, straining to catch the sound of the basset-horn. The first time I ever saw the instrument in the flesh (or should it be 'in the wood'?) was at a performance of the Serenade, K.V.361, in Manchester. Two basset-horns had been brought up from London at great expense and, although the players (well-known professionals, both of them) struggled manfully, the results were most disappointing. Tone and response were poor, while intonation left much to be desired. Small wonder that in those days many eminent conductors asked for clarinets to be used instead of out-of-tune basset-horns.

When I first wrote this book in the early 1980s, the situation was beginning to change. For some years research had been carried out by enthusiasts such as Graham Melville-Mason, Heinrich Fink, Daniel Leeson and Hans Rudolf Stalder. Information they gave me helped to fill in gaps in the results of the researches which I myself had carried on for over twenty years. Three years later, Graham Melville-Mason kindly gave me free access to his own detailed studies in his thesis entitled *A Study of the Music for the Basset-Horn, 1770 - c. 1850, with an Examination of the Role of the Basset-Clarinet and the Revival of these Instruments in the Music of the Twentieth Century*. The information gained formed the basis of the extra repertoire listed in the second edition.

It is now seventeen years since the publication of the second edition and the position of the basset-horn in the music world is now much more secure. Improved instruments have meant that most performances of Mozart's Requiem are now done with the correct instruments. As the demand for the basset-horn in concerts grew, more clarinettists bought basset-horns; as the number of players available grew, so did the number of performances of the Requiem and the Serenade. It is not so unusual these days to hear a basset-horn trio on a popular radio station such as Classic FM. There is even a 'Bassetthorn Treffen' held in Germany each year through the enthusiasm of Thomas

Grass, a German amateur player. This is the only occasion I know where one can see up to sixteen basset-horns in one room.

During the same seventeen years many of the twentieth-century composers listed have now unfortunately died and a number of works for basset-horn have now been re-published, or, in many cases, published for the first time. There are new firms making basset-horns, especially in Germany. It therefore seems proper that the information given in the second edition should be brought up to date. I have not however attempted to revise the repertoire lists completely, although I know that a large number of modern works have been written, and the researches of the Répertoire International des Sources Musicales will surely yield details of further works from the past. I have, however, added a small number of works and arrangements. Readers who would like to know more about the basset-horn and its repertoire are recommended to consult the very detailed book by Thomas Grass and Dietrich Demus (see p. 123).

I would like to record my thanks to Bohumil Geist, Hymie Voxman, Tom Ayres and Dene Hicks for various pieces of information over the years. In addition I would like to thank Michael Bryant for his information on basset-horn recordings, and also for undertaking to produce this third edition.

John Newhill
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