

Edge, Dexter. 2014. "Mozart as a model for the use of wind instruments (5 Dec 1791)." In: *Mozart: New Documents*, edited by Dexter Edge and David Black. First published 19 Sep 2014; updated 15 Jan 2023. [[direct link](#)]

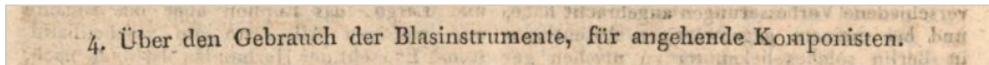
## Mozart as a model for the use of wind instruments (5 Dec 1791)

Dexter Edge

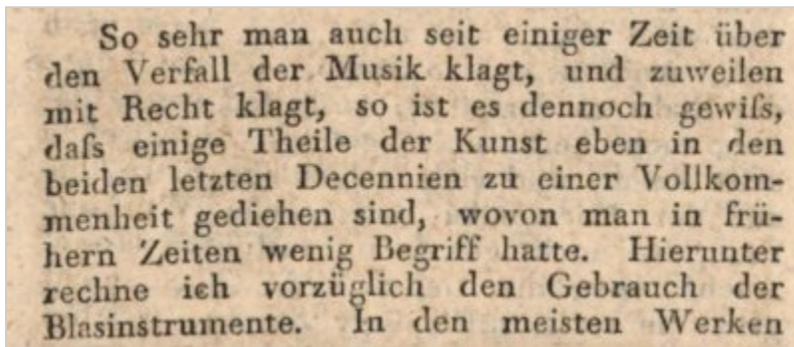
[Bernhard Wessely], *Musikalisches Wochenblatt*, x, ?5 Dec 1791

[78]

4. Über den Gebrauch der Blasinstrumente, für angehende Komponisten.



So sehr man auch seit einiger Zeit über den Verfall der Musik klagt, und zuweilen mit Recht klagt, so ist es dennoch gewiss, dass einige Theile der Kunst eben in den beiden letzten Decennien zu einer Vollkommenheit gediehen sind, wovon man in frühern Zeiten wenig Begriff hatte. Hierunter rechne ich vorzüglich den Gebrauch der Blasinstrumente. [...]

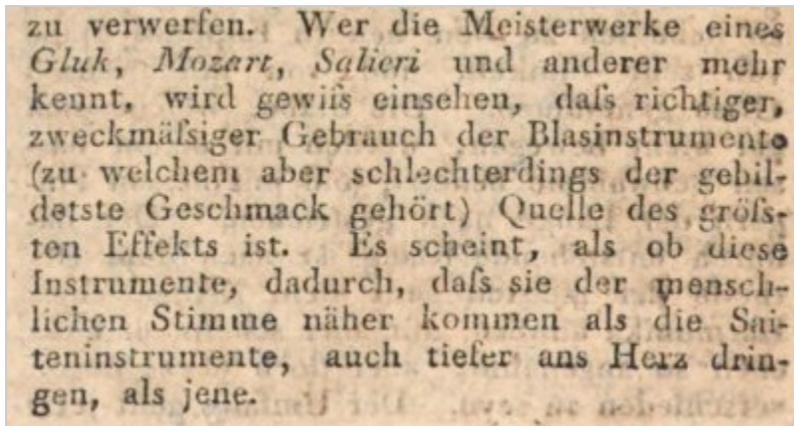


[toward the end of the 2nd paragraph:]

[...] Wer die Meisterwerke eines *Gluk*, *Mozart*, *Salieri* und anderer mehr kennt, wird gewiss einsehen, dass richtiger,



zweckmässiger Gebrauch der Blasinstrumente (zu welchem aber schlechterdings der gebildetste Geschmack gehört) Quelle des grössten Effekts ist. Es scheint, als ob diese Instrumente, dadurch, dass sie der menschlichen Stimme näher kommen als die Saiteninstrumente, auch tiefer ans Herz dringen, als jene. [...]

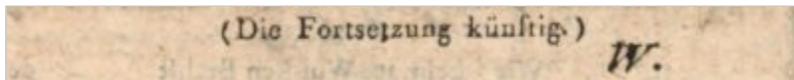


zu verwerfen. Wer die Meisterwerke eines Gluck, Mozart, Salieri und anderer mehr kennt, wird gewiss einsehen, daß richtiger, zweckmässiger Gebrauch der Blasinstrumente (zu welchem aber schlechterdings der gebildetste Geschmack gehört) Quelle des grössten Effekts ist. Es scheint, als ob diese Instrumente, dadurch, daß sie der menschlichen Stimme näher kommen als die Saiteninstrumente, auch tiefer ans Herz dringen, als jene.

[...]

(Die Fortsetzung künftig.)

W.



(Die Fortsetzung künftig.) W.

[translation:]

On the use of the wind instruments, for aspiring composers.

As much as complaints have been made for some time about the decline of music—and sometimes with reason—yet it is certain that some aspects of the art have, in just the past two decades, reached a perfection that one could scarcely have imagined in earlier times. I number among these particularly the use of wind instruments. [...]

[...] Whoever knows the masterpieces of a Gluck, Mozart, Salieri and others, will certainly notice that the correct, purposeful use of the wind instruments (which, however, absolutely requires the most refined taste) is

a source of the grandest effects. It seems as if the former instruments, because they more nearly approach the human voice than do the string instruments, also make a greater impression on the heart than the latter. [...]

[...]

(The conclusion follows.)

W.

[Translation by Janet Page]

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### Commentary

The author of this article on wind instruments is probably Bernhard Wessely (1768–1826), music director of the Nationaltheater in Berlin at this time. (On Wessely as the author of the articles attributed to “W” in *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* and its successor *Musikalische Monatschrift*, see our entry for [12 Oct 1791](#). For more on Wessely, see the entry for [23 Jun 1792](#).) Wessely points to the exemplary use of winds by Gluck, Mozart, and Salieri. He promises a continuation of the article in a later issue (“Die Fortsetzung künftig”), but this continuation seems not to have appeared.

As it happens, an extended exchange on wind instruments began in the following issue ([XI, 86](#)) with an aesthetic question posed by [Carl Spazier](#), one of the regular contributors to the *Wochenblatt*, who asked:

Aus dem Umstande, dass die Blasinstrumente der menschlichen Stimme so nahe kommen, pflegt man ihre Herzandringlichkeit herzuleiten. Liegt nicht aber auch grade darin der Grund, dass wir es damit am wenigsten aushalten können, und steht nicht die Dauer unsers Vergnügens an einem Instrumente, mit der grössern Ähnlichkeit desselben mit der Menschenstimme, im umgekehrten Verhältniss?

[translation:]

From the circumstance that wind instruments so nearly approach the human voice, one is inclined to deduce their emotional urgency. Is this not, however, precisely the reason that we can tolerate them the least; and is not the duration of our pleasure in an instrument in inverse proportion to its greater similarity to the human voice?

Spazier mentions specifically the desirability of an answer from an aesthetician such as [Johann August Eberhard](#) (1739–1809) in Halle. (Spazier does not refer to Wessely’s article, but one of Wessely’s key points is the similarity of the winds to the human voice.)

Eberhard did, in fact, respond to the question in issue XIII ([97–98](#)) with an article entitled “Fragmente einiger Gedanken zur Beantwortung einer Frage über die Blasinstrumente”; this was

accompanied by a short response by Spazier, and another brief one in the following issue (XIV, 105). There followed a two-part article by literary historian Johann Joachim Eschenburg (1743–1820), "Noch etwas über die kürzere Dauer des Wohlgefallens an dem Spiel der Blasinstrumente" (XX, 155–6, and XXI, 162–3). Wessely may have felt at this point that the duration of the topic had exceeded the patience of the readers, and decided against the continuation of his own article.

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### Notes (↑)

Schwob (2015, 187–89) includes the complete text of the item transcribed above, without reference to our publication in 2014. Schwob follows Deutsch in attributing items with the byline "W." in the *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* and the *Musikalische Monatschrift* to Bernhard Anselm Weber. However, there is no evidence for this attribution; Wessely is a much likelier candidate (see our entry for 12 Oct 1791).

On the *Musikalische Wochenblatt*, see the Notes to our entry for 10 Oct 1791. Page 79 of issue X of the *Wochenblatt* (the page following the one on which Wessely's reference to Mozart appears) prints a report, dated 9 Oct 1791, from a correspondent in Vienna on *Die Zauberflöte*. Deutsch includes the report on *Die Zauberflöte* (*Dokumente*, 358), but overlooks Wessely's mention of Mozart on the preceding page, as well as another reference to Mozart in a footnote to a different article on page 79 (see our second entry for 5 Dec 1791).

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### Bibliography (↑)

Schwob, Rainer J. ed. 2015. *W. A. Mozart im Spiegel des Musikjournalismus, deutschsprachiger Raum 1782–1800*. Beiträge zur Mozart-Dokumentation, vol. 1. Stuttgart: Carus Verlag.

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