



The Horn Call

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On the Cover: In the interview with IHS51 co-host Jeroen Billiet (page 28), you will read that a feature of the Ghent Symposium will be to "Wake the Dragon." The dragon is Ghent's icon – a statue atop its medieval Belfry tower. Thus the IHS (represented by our three horn logo) is calling to that dragon, in several randomly selected languages, to "Wake Up!"

The International Horn Society recommends that HORN be recognized as the correct English label for our instrument.
[From the Minutes of the First IHS General Meeting, June 15, 1971, Tallahassee, Florida, USA]

Keys to Transposition: A Method for the Teaching & Learning of Transposition on the Horn by Pete Nowlen with Brian O'Donnell and Heidi Oros, Ensemble Publications; www.enspub.com. ENS 134, 2018, \$24.95 (Print Edition).

The quantity and variety of horn method books is greater now than it has ever been, including many that address specific challenges of horn technique. While transposition has long been considered a required skill for the intermediate to advanced player, until now no single volume has addressed it in as much depth as *Keys to Transposition*.

The authors have a variety of professional performing and teaching experience. Prior to his position as Horn Instructor and Director of Concert Bands at UC Davis, Pete Nowlen was a member of the Sacramento Symphony. Brian O'Donnell, a commissioned officer and conductor with The United States Air Force Bands, is an active freelance performer. Heidi Oros is also an active freelancer, and a former member of La Orquesta Sinfónica del Estado de México.

This book is well informed, makes use of the latest research and pedagogical techniques, and packs a wealth of information

into a slim volume. A succinct description of the book's scope and intent can be found on the back cover:

Keys to Transposition is a complete method devoted to teaching this essential skill. This method provides a concrete strategy to master transposition by building skills through exercises and excerpts from the horn literature with helpful transposition tips, musical advice, and practice techniques.

Keys to Transposition is organized into several large sections. In the Introduction, the authors provide a brief background on natural horn technique, and cite several sound reasons for mastering the skill of transposition. This reviewer would also add that transposing should be considered a basic musical skill, like reading treble and bass clef. It is a skill that future band and orchestra directors, among others, also should possess, regardless of their primary instrument.

The Introduction is followed by preparatory exercises and explanations, including natural horn studies, bass clef (old and new notation), and scales. Eight units are then devoted to the most common keys for transposition: C, D, E^b, F, B^b basso, A alto, G, and B[♯]. Each unit consists of the following:

- An explanation of written and sounding pitch for that transposition
- The C major scale, with smaller notes showing the actual pitches to be played for that transposition
- Arpeggios in various configurations
- Lower octave arpeggio patterns in treble and bass clef in preparation for second horn parts in Classical repertoire
- Stereotypical scale and arpeggio patterns in the chosen key (but transposed for horn in F). Once these patterns are thoroughly learned, the student is instructed to perform them from a non-transposed part found in the Appendices.
- Several orchestral excerpts from the standard repertoire utilizing that transposition. Each excerpt is accompanied by a description of the general style as well as practical tips for executing each passage. Though multiple recordings of these entire works and the excerpts are available online, a companion CD or dedicated website with recordings might be helpful. Perhaps even more helpful would be play-along tracks for the various patterns and fundamental exercises.

Unit 9 addresses uncommon keys often found in opera, and Units 10-12 introduce more advanced concepts such as Transposing with a Key Signature, Stopped Horn While Transposing, and Interesting and Chromatic Excerpts.

In addition, several appendices address issues related to transposition, but which can and should be applied to other areas. These include common patterns found in Classic era horn writing, Practice Techniques, Intervals, Octave Transpositions, and a list of Resources. These are full of excellent gems for teachers and performers, especially the appendix on practice techniques. The inclusion of multiple charts, tables, and images of historical instruments helps solidify written explanations in this combination orchestral excerpt collection and method book.

While horn teachers may not approach the subject of transposition in exactly the same way, *Keys to Transposition* is an excellent addition to existing tools for learning this valuable skill. It is highly recommended for teachers of college and high school horn players to have in their library. James Boldin, *University of Louisiana-Monroe (JB)*

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