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## Energy for Modernity. Aluminum in Musical Instrument Making

This paper combines music history with the history of science by means of aluminum, one of the most abundant metals in the earth's crust. The history of its industrial production is quite short, about 150 years. Science and capitalism brought aluminum into use, and its qualities are fascinating: it shines like silver and is very light. Aluminium's aura of modernity was shaped not only by economic circumstances, but also by literature and other forms of art. It became a symbol of modernity and exclusiveness. Surprisingly, aluminum was also processed for one of the most traditional and popular musical instruments: the violin. Especially instrument makers in North America and Germany developed various methods to replace wood with the light metal. Drawing on examples from collections in the USA and Germany, this paper explores questions of sound quality and motivation for using aluminum as a key material in modern music and material history.



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**Rebecca Wolf** is the director of the Staatliches Institut für Musikforschung in Berlin. She is a musicologist with a focus on the cultural history of music and organology in the 19th and 20th centuries, on the history of interpretation and media studies. In previous years, Rebecca Wolf served as visiting professor in Regensburg and Munich and also taught in Berlin, Stuttgart, Vienna, Zurich and Amsterdam. She was Alexander von Humboldt Fellow at Harvard University, and a Fellow at the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin. Moreover, she has led the research group *Materiality of Musical Instruments: New Approaches to a Cultural History of Organology* at Munich's Deutsches Museum. Rebecca Wolf's first book *Friedrich Kaufmanns Trompeterautomat. Ein musikalisches Experiment um 1810* won the Award of Excellence of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research.