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'The Voice of Heroic Love': Historical Clarinets at the

Royal College of Music, London

Context

Founded in 1882 with its first intake of students the following year, London's Royal College

of Music (RCM) continues to enjoy a reputation as one of the world's leading conservatoires.

George, later Sir George Grove was its first director, serving the College until 1894. The RCM's

founding professor of clarinet was Henry Lazarus, then in his 68th year. We can glean something

of Lazarus as a clarinettist, from William H. Husk's biographical entry in A Dictionary of Music and

Musicians (A.D. 1450-1889) by eminent writers, English and foreign with illustrations and woodcuts edited

by Sir George Grove D.C.L. Sometime Director of the Royal College of Music, London.¹

Husk, at that time librarian to the Sacred Harmonic Society, reports:

On the death of Willman in 1840 Lazarus succeeded him as principal clarinet at the Opera and all the principal concerts, festivals etc. in London and the provinces, a position he has since retained

with great and ever-increasing reputation.2

He continues:

In both orchestral and solo playing the beauty and richness of his tone, his excellent phrasing, and

his neat and expressive execution, are alike admired.3

In 1895, the year of his death, Lazarus had amassed a significant collection of clarinets,

some of which made their way into the Shackleton collection. A simple-system clarinet in A, in

rosewood with thirteen silver keys, presented to Lazarus in 1860 by Eugène Albert, has been

widely photographed, and now resides in Edinburgh.4

¹ Husk, William H., 'Lazarus, Henry' in A Dictionary of Music and Musicians... ed. George Grove (London, 2/1900), 2, p. 108. A revised edition of this publication endures, as The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians (London,

2001).

² Husk, op. cit.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Simple-system clarinet in A, EUCHMI 2614, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Collection of Historic Musical Instruments, see Myers, Arnold ed., Catalogue of the Sir Nicholas Shackleton Collection (Edinburgh, 2007), p. 618. A Lazarus's most successful RCM pupil was probably Charles Draper (1869-1952). A scholarship enabled Draper to begin his studies, which he continued with Julian Egerton upon Lazarus's retirement. Draper changed from simple- to Boehm-system clarinets after hearing the émigré Spanish player Manuel Gomez in London c.1895. Gomez inspired the now-widespread use of the Boehm clarinet in England, although a few players continued to use simple-system instruments until the 1950s. Lazarus himself remained a player of the simple system despite recommending the Boehm clarinet to his pupils. Draper, on the other hand, preferred wide-bore clarinets by the Parisian maker Martel *frères* with a medium lay and reed to match. Instruments of this type are also represented in Edinburgh.

A glimpse of Draper in rehearsal is afforded us by Hester Stansfield Prior's report from the first issue of the magazine of the Royal College of Music from 1953:

No detail was passed over at rehearsal nor time grudged to make a performance as perfect as possible...The appearance of Brahms' late chamber music gave full opportunity for his beautiful phrasing and use of *rubato*.⁷

Draper's importance and influence encompasses more than his choice of instruments, as his career spanned both the era of wax cylinders and electrical 78s. As a result he is possibly the most recorded of any clarinettist in the pre-electric era, including, as Michael Bryant suspects, recordings made under various fictitious names.⁸ Draper's most notable pupil was Frederick Thurston, who also taught at the RCM and influenced the next generation of clarinettists.

In his *c*. 1905 recording of a truncated version of Weber's *Concertino* op. 26, for Gramophone Monarch (later HMV), Draper displays a fondness for a flexibility of tempo and a

similar instrument can be heard in Colin Lawson's recording of the RCM pupil, and later professor, Sir Arthur Somervell's *Romance* op. 4 for clarinet and piano, *100 Years of the Simple-System* Clarinet, Clarinet Classics CC0044 (2003).

⁵ Weston, Pamela, *Clarinet Virtuosi of the Past*, (London, 1971), p. 271.

⁶ A pair of such instruments in Bb and A, with an impressive pedigree of owners are, respectively, EUCHMI 5244 and 5245, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Collection of Historic Musical Instruments, see Myers *op. cit.*, p. 498.

⁷ Cited in Weston, op. cit., p. 265.

⁸ Private conversation with Michael Bryant, April 2007.

dislocation between soloist and ensemble. As was common practice at the time, the accompaniment is provided by a band rather than an orchestra.⁹

Due partly to the vision of its founders, particularly Grove, the RCM now holds collections of international significance. An early and important benefactor was Sir George Donaldson (1845-1925). His donations to the College include the autograph manuscript of Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 24 in C minor K.491. Donaldson's taste in musical instruments, particularly clarinets and basset horns, was similarly refined (see Fig. 1). On 2 May 1894 the College's main building on Prince Consort Road, designed by Sir Arthur Blomfield, was officially opened by the Prince of Wales, in the name of Queen Victoria. The 'Donaldson Room', a museum of over 150 instruments with décor designed in the manner of the Italian Renaissance, financed by Donaldson himself, was also inaugurated. The room is still an important part of the RCM today, functioning as the reading room in the College's library.

Housed in its current location since 1970, the RCM's Museum of Instruments houses an internationally-renowned collection of over 800 instruments and accessories from *c*. 1480 to the present day. This encompasses 700 European, keyboard, stringed and wind instruments and about 100 Asian and African specimens. Functioning as an important resource for the College, the Museum's holdings also impact significantly on curricula.

Embracing some 60 instruments from the clarinet family, the modest collection includes examples by makers and from workshops well-known to clarinet players and scholars. These include Albert; Boosey & Co.; Buffet-Crampon et Cie; Cahusac; Clementi; Doleisch; Griesbacher; Maino & Orsi; Martin *frères*; Rudall Carte & Co.; Stengel; Thibouville-Lamy and Uhlmann. In using a small selection of clarinets from the RCM Museum as a case study, this paper investigates the nature of such collections as well as our individual and collective modes of interaction.

⁹ The Clarinet: Historical Recordings – Volume I, Clarinet Classics CC005 (1993).

Clarinet in D, RCM 101

Despite its listing in the George Dyson's 1952 catalogue as an 'Ivory Clarinet by Denner' this clarinet is now catalogued correctly as:

RCM 101, Clarinet in D, Georg Heinrich. Scherer, Butzbach, c. 1750, in ivory, including mouthpiece: two silver keys with plain square covers mounted in a turned ring; the mouthpiece integral with the barrel (see Fig. 2). 10

The instrument, like its contemporary in the *Musée de la Musique* in Paris (C529/E697) is well-known.¹¹ Until other clarinets come to light, these Scherer instruments remain the only examples of clarinets made from ivory. Apart from the difference in stamps, the RCM and Paris instruments are very similar.¹² It was, in fact, the matter of Scherer and his stamps that the late Phillip T. Young, Professor of Music at the University of Victoria in British Columbia, Canada, sought to investigate in the 1980s. With hindsight we can comprehend the value of surviving correspondence which documents such a research process, highlighting the importance of collaboration and co-operation amongst scholars before the advent of email and digital photography.

In his first letter to the RCM curator, dated 10 December 1983, Young writes:

I do want to take advantage of the opportunity to express my delight with yours and Mr. Ridley's catalogue of wind instruments. I have obtained several from Tony Bingham and am sending a copy to several of my Eastern Bloc friends.¹³

He continues:

I have been making a study of instruments by Scherer, and have some interesting conclusions brewing. Quite important to me is the precise stamp that appears on each instrument. Might I trouble you again, please, and ask you to have a look at your ivory clarinet 101 and the ivory flute 102?¹⁴

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¹⁰ Dyson, George, Catalogue of Historical Musical Instruments, Paintings, Sculptures and Drawings (London, 1952), p.

¹¹ Clarinet in D, C.529, E.697, Paris, Musée de la Musique.

¹² See the dimensions in Young, Phillip T., 4900 Historical Woodwind Instruments (London, 1993), p. 209.

¹³ Young, Phillip T., letter, 10 March 1983, RCM 101 file.

¹⁴ Ibid.

I will reproduce several of the more common Scherer stamps on a separate sheet and will ask you to look very closely to see if one of these stamps is used or some other variant? The slightest deviation is of interest to me. For example, I am certain that sometimes what is above Scherer is a "1" or "2" but at other times is "I". Sometimes, too, "I" is <u>before</u> Scherer, clearly an initial.¹⁵

Young concludes:

I continue to be shocked and puzzled by our discovery of that contradictory J.C. Denner stamp on your ivory recorder 63.16

In April the following year, in response to Young's request for information on the stamps,

the curator writes:

On the clarinet the marks are also very faint. On the left hand section, I see SCHERER curved, with this (MARK) below, and on the right hand section SCHERER straight, with the same marks below. I can see nothing above or before SCHERER in each case. Mr. Ridley has called this a flying bird or halberd head as a means of describing what is a conventional and not a representational mark, the flying bird being referable only to the form with the 'tails'. I am afraid that our marks are too faint for you to be able to draw any safe conclusions from them.¹⁷

On a more positive note:

We have at last been able to acquire your book, which I am looking forward to using!18

Young's response comes in March 1985, when he writes:

Thank you for your helpful letter in reply to my own just year ago. I am still struggling to make some sense of the various stamps that appear on Scherer instruments, which can therefore hardly be termed rapid progress, can it? But progress, perhaps, nonetheless. This time I write to ask if your Donaldson Collection records by any chance include the city and/or country in which the two ivory Scherer instruments were bought? There is some possibility that instruments made specifically for sale in Germany were stamped differently than those made for export to France, Holland etc. It is now very certain that several generations of Scherers lived and worked in Butzbach, Germany, not in Paris or elsewhere in France, as long believed. I will give a paper on the Scherers at the upcoming meeting of the Galpin Society and American Musical Instrument Society in Boston.¹⁹

¹⁶ *Ibid*.

¹⁵ *Ibid*.

¹⁷ Wells, Elizabeth, letter, 11 April 1984, RCM 101 file.

¹⁸ *Ibid*.

¹⁹ Young, letter, 25 March 1985, RCM 101 file.

The final letter in this correspondence dates from the following month, when the RCM curator reports:

I am afraid that we have no records, and his family say that they have none, as to where Donaldson acquired his instruments, apart from a very few exceptions. We cannot therefore help over the 2 ivory Scherer instruments... Donaldson is known to have collected in Paris and in Italy and his grandson told me that he would 'go anywhere to buy an instrument he wanted', so he may have been in Germany as well. Not much help I'm afraid.²⁰

Incorporating observations from the likes of Laurence Libin, Eric Hoeprich, Albert Rice and David Ross with his own, Young's research was published in 1986 and added significantly to our knowledge of this maker.²¹ Young examined 46 of 60 extant Scherer instruments, and observed 'a frightening assortment of stamps'.²²

Young's remark that 'It may be said, in fact, that the branding with maker's mark is more haphazardly and even erratically done than on instruments by any other maker of my acquaintance' certainly caught my attention when trying to reconcile maker's stamps during my doctoral research into clarinet reed-position.²³ Only by drawing upon a wide range of sources, including printed music, music manuscripts, published and unpublished documents, iconographical representations as well as surviving instruments, was it possible to begin to arrive at a truly holistic understanding of the issues surrounding clarinet reed-position. Whilst only a part of the whole, the organological part of this study corroborated well with the presentation of the research findings in performance, featuring much of the repertoire discussed on copies of instruments from the period (see Fig. 3).²⁴

Phillip Young's observations serve as a timely reminder to us of the almost-unimaginable inconsistencies regarding instrument stamping practices. Another convincing articulation of this aspect appeared in 1991 from Herbert Heyde, which William Waterhouse's 1983 English

²⁰ Wells, letter, 1 April 1985, RCM 101 file.

²¹ Young, Phillip T., 'The Scherers of Butzbach', *The Galpin Society Journal XXXIX* (1986), pp. 112-124.

²² *Op. cit.*, p. 115.

²³ *Op. cit.*, p. 117.

²⁴ Pearson, Ingrid Elizabeth, *Clarinet Embouchure in Theory and Practice: the Forgotten Art of Reed-Above*, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Sheffield, 2001.

translation brought to wider attention.²⁵ Notwithstanding this research, the lack of the Scherer name on the mouthpiece joints of his six extant clarinets, as well as the letter 'T' marking on all parts including <u>both</u> sides of the mouthpiece joint of a two-keyed privately-owned Scherer clarinet have both been suggested as indicative of a choice of reed position!²⁶

Other correspondence in the Museum's file on RCM 101 recalls a professional player who wrote requesting to 'do some work on the clarinet for a period of about one week...', fully aware of 'the great value and rarity of this instrument' and received the following reply:

You are welcome to come and see the Scherer clarinet; we have a drawing with detailed measurements which we can Xerox for you. You will appreciate that it is not good for early instruments to undergo constant measuring, so unless there is a measurement you need which is not on the drawing we would not permit a further measurement.²⁷

There are further notes in the file, hand-written on a scrap of paper, in anticipation of the player's visit noting that 'It has to be watched continuously' and '2 mins playing time <u>if</u> he asks'! In sharp contrast, current access to this and other instruments is far less constrained by matters of time and curatorial apprehensions. But what issues arise when the provenance of an instrument is far less certain?

Clarinet in Bb, RCM 326/C8

The case of the clarinet catalogued as RCM 326/C8 provides much food for thought (see Fig. 4). Following his retirement from the Treasury Solicitor's Department in 1969, the lawyer and amateur clarinettist, the late E.A.K. Ridley, worked as a volunteer in both the RCM Museum and the Horniman Museum. Like Nick Shackleton, Keane Ridley began collecting clarinets when he was in his 20s.²⁸ By 1941 his collection was housed in the St. Albans County Museum, moving to

²⁵ Waterhouse, William, *The New Langwill Index: A Dictionary of Musical Wind Instrument Makers and Inventors* (London, 1993).

²⁶ Hoeprich, T. Eric, 'Die Klarinetten Johann Scherers', *Tibia* 10 (1985), p. 436.

²⁷ Wells, letter, 5 November 1982, RCM 101 file.

²⁸ Wells, Elizabeth and Jenny Nex, 'E.A.K. Ridley (1904-2000)', *Royal College of Music, Museum of Instruments:* Catalogue Part 1: European Wind Instruments http://www.cph.rcm.ac.uk/Catalogues/Wind%20Catalogue (accessed 17 May 2007).

the Luton Museum in the early 1950s.²⁹ A catalogue, with text by Ridley himself, was published in 1957.30

With the completion of new premises for the RCM Museum in 1970, Ridley's gift of his entire collection of wind and brass instruments had a more satisfactory home. Whilst current documentation describes RCM 326 C/8 as:

Clarinet in B flat, Ioan. Panormo, Naples, early 19th century

Ridley's own catalogue entry mentions the presence of the stamp on the upper joint, marked 'Natale Bonaviri, Messina'.31 Glancing at the instrument through the display cabinet, however, the viewer remains oblivious that this is in fact a composite instrument! In the state in which it came to Ridley, this clarinet, in ebony with ivory mounts, has eight silver-plated keys, five of which are mounted in turned blocks, two on saddles and one on pillars.

No doubt because of the condition in which it survives, this clarinet has attracted less attention than the Scherer. This is surprising given that relatively few instruments from Naples and Sicily survive.³² According to Waterhouse's New Langwill Index, Bonaviri's workshop was active between 1834 and 1846.33 Panormo, as Waterhouse suggests, was active during the latter half of the 18th century. His work is represented by the survival of four other instruments; a recorder, flute, oboe and tenor oboe.34

What is particularly tantalising about this clarinet is the fact that, at the time it was made, the now almost extinct reed-above embouchure was favoured by the overwhelming majority of clarinettists in southern Italy. Research has brought the activities of the Neapolitan clarinettist and pedagogue Ferdinando Sebastiani to greater prominence, including his collaboration with the

²⁹ *Ibid*.

³⁰ Ridley, E.A.K., *The Ridley Collection of Musical Wind Instruments in Luton Museum* (Letchworth, 1957).

³¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 29.

³² As confirmed by Waterhouse op. cit.

³³ Waterhouse, op. cit., p. 39.

³⁴ Waterhouse op. cit., p. 291.

maker Gennaro Bosa.³⁵ Indeed, the Bonaviri/Panormo instrument may well be a further legacy of the lack of homogeneity in instrument making of the past. Were the Panormo and Bonaviri workshops in partnership? Or is the meeting of two joints stamped by different but contemporary makers largely the result of careless treatment by a past custodian?

Clarinet in C, RCM 329

In 1970 RCM organ professor Richard Latham donated a clarinet to the College. Current documentation describes this instrument as:

Clarinet in C, Anonymous (?German), early 19th century and its file, like the previous specimen implies scant interest in the direction of this clarinet from either players or scholars (see Fig. 5).³⁶

As we might expect from an early nineteenth-century German clarinet, the instrument is made from boxwood with six keys. The sixth key, its touch-piece parallel to the upper left-hand side of the instrument, however, is not at all what we would expect to find on a German instrument! Instead of the cross c#'/g#'' key for the left-hand fourth finger, RCM 329 has a trill key for a'/b'. The file, however, does note that RCM 329 was formerly used in a church band, calling to mind Thomas Hardy's descriptions.³⁷

RCM 329 is more likely to be an English instrument, dating from the late eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century. In addition to the placement and function of the sixth key, mentioned above, there are four other reasons in support of this hypothesis:

- 1. the shape of the touch-piece for the f#/c#' key;
- 2. the thin profile of the upper and lower joints;
- 3. the widening of the profile at the lower end of the lower joint near the hole for f/c' and

³⁵ Pearson, Ingrid Elizabeth, 'Ferdinando Sebastiani, Gennaro Bosa and the Clarinet in Nineteenth-Century Naples', *The Galpin Society Journal* LX (2007), pp. 112-115 and 203-214.

³⁶ Wells, Elizabeth and Jenny Nex, *Royal College of Music, Museum of Instruments: Catalogue Part 1: European Wind Instruments* http://www.cph.rcm.ac.uk/Catalogues/Wind%20Catalogue (accessed 17 May 2007).

³⁷ Particularly in *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872); see the discussion in Warson, Gillian, 'The English choir-band in literature', http://www.psalmody.co.uk/articles/GP1/GP1-2-Warson.pdf (accessed 21 June 2007).

4. the long-tenon contemporary mouthpiece.

Indeed the clarinet's thin profile is typical of English instruments from the late eighteenth century, such as those by Henry Kusder (fl 1762-1801), Thomas Collier (fl 1787-91) and, his employee and successor, John Hale (fl 1785-1804).38 With the addition of the trill key for a'/b' in England *c.* 1780 it seems likely that a date of *c.* 1800 for RCM329 is quite reasonable.

In a paper entitled 'Change lays not her hand: Organology and the Museum' Ardal Powell suggests that those who study musical instruments have much to gain from beyond the realms of music scholarship.³⁹ Indeed, organologists have sought to redefine and reposition themselves in recent years. So-called 'position' statements by Meucci (1999) and Myers (2000) acknowledge the need for an inclusive organology, combining both cultural/historical and scientific/technical approaches.40

The clarinet in B flat by Adolphe Sax after his 1842 patent acquired in 2004 by Shackleton confirms Meucci's remark that 'the mere survival of a specific item does not always accurately reflect the diffusion of that instrument in the past'.41 Whilst some of Sax's features were taken up by other makers, the sheer delicacy of the mechanism of this instrument clearly mitigates against its widespread use.

Instruments, Museums, Meanings

Those in search of the development of 'organology' in the English-speaking world may be surprised to learn that only in the 1980 edition does the New Grove venture to offer a definition, albeit anonymously written.⁴² By the time of the second edition, published in 2001, Libin's

³⁸ Halfpenny, Eric, 'Early English Clarinets', *The Galpin Society Journal XVIII* (1965), pp. 42-56.

³⁹ Powell, Ardal, 'Change lays not her hand: Organology and the museum', unpublished conference paper (2006).

⁴⁰ Meucci, Renato, 'Organology: A Position Paper', Historic Brass Journal XI (1999), pp. viii-x and Myers, Arnold,

^{&#}x27;Organology: A Position Paper', Historic Brass Journal XII (2000), pp. viii–xi.

⁴¹ *Op. cit.*, p. xx

⁴² Anon., 'Organology', The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians (London, 1980), 13: p. 784.

'organology' is a process which takes account of acoustical, architectural, cultural, historical and social considerations.⁴³ But is this truly possible?

With the ever-increasing impact of globalisation and technology, the meaning and value of musical instruments continues to change. Kevin Dawe reminds us that musical instruments comprise physical, social and personal materials, which impact on how and why instruments become collected and, therefore, part of a collection.⁴⁴ When an instrument enters a museum its meaning changes, either becoming more or less fixed, depending upon the recipient, and the nature of their interaction with the object. Do collections 'host' or 'colonise' instruments?

Ethnomusicologists such as Bruno Nettl have long since regarded musical instruments as component parts of a holistic musical view, concerning themselves with classification, representation, documentation and preservation.⁴⁵ An understanding the nature of their physical manifestation, however, is also a priority. A more reflexive approach could enable us to view musical instruments as silent subjects of a different sort of fieldwork. How do we affect the object of our study, individually and collectively?

How can the study of musical instruments embrace the reciprocity, experienced between researchers and their human subjects? As someone whose musical activities embrace performance far more often than organology, I am fascinated by the position of instruments within the deliciously elusive interaction between performance and scholarship.

In her chapter for a volume investigating new perspectives in ethnomusicology, Kay

Kaufman Shelemay reminds us that anthropology has both positive and negative consequences.⁴⁶

Surely this is also true of organology? The role of 'heurism', or self-learning, is certainly important

⁴³ Libin, Laurence, 'Organology', *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London, 2/2001), 18: pp. 657-658.

⁴⁴ Dawe, Kevin, 'The Cultural Study of Musical Instruments' in *The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction* ed. Martin Clayton, Trevor Herbert and Richard Middleton (New York, 2003), pp. 274-283.

⁴⁵ Nettl, Bruno, 'The Creatures of Jubal: Instruments', in *The Study of Ethnomusicology: Thirty-one Issues and Concepts* (Urbana, 1983/R2005), pp. 376-387.

⁴⁶ Shelemay, Kay Kaufman, 'The ethnomusicologist, ethnographic method, and the transmission of tradition' in *Shadows in the field: new perspectives in ethnomusicology* ed. Gregory F. Barz and Timothy J. Cooley (Oxford, 1997), pp. 189-204.

in the study of musical instruments. How does an organologist's relationship with an instrument change? What are the by-products of organology? Are we, as Shelemay puts it, 'supporting continuity' or 'engendering change'? As honorary fieldworkers, we are 'mediating' as well as 'preserving' and 'memorializing' between the object and beyond, all the more profound and meaningful if the researcher is also a performing musician.⁴⁷

Whilst ethnomusicologists and anthropologists are working towards a 'practice-informed theory', how could this work for those studying the instruments of Western Art music? Can organology ever achieve, in the words of Shelemay 'a reality of sharing and interaction... predicated on negotiated relationships'?48

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank the curator Jenny Nex and her colleagues at the RCM Museum of Instruments. This article is dedicated to the memory of Nikki (Professor Sir Nicholas Shackleton).

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⁴⁷ Shelemay, op. cit., pp. 198-9.

⁴⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 202.

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CC0044 (2003)

Illustrations

Figure 1: George Donaldson by Sands (1878), Donaldson Room, Royal College of Music, London.

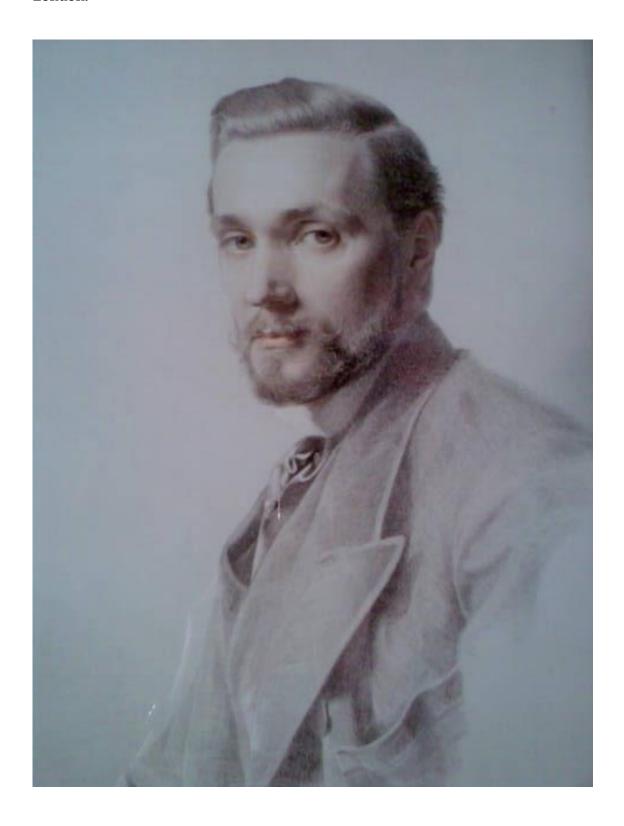


Figure 2: Left to Right: Jacob Denner recorder, RCM 63; Georg Heinrich Scherer two-keyed clarinet in D, RCM 101 and J.W. Oberlender recorder, RCM 96, RCM, London.



Figure 3: Stamps on Scherer clarinets, as drawn by Phillip T. Young, RCM 101 file notes.



a) mark on Scherer clarinet in D, RCM 101

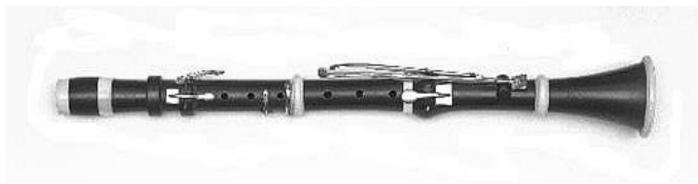


b) mark on all joints except mouthpiece of Scherer clarinet, USA: private collection

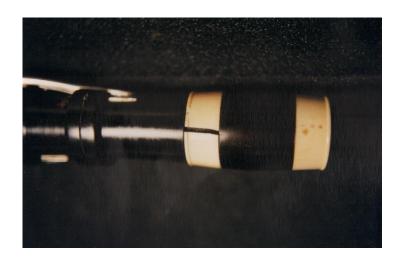


c) mark on all joints and both sides of mouthpiece of Scherer clarinet, NL: private collection

Figure 4: Two views of Joannes Panormo/Natale Bonaviri eight-keyed clarinet in Bb, RCM 326 C/8, RCM, London.



a) barrel unstamped, top joint 'Natale/Bonaviri/Messina/[eight-pointed star mark]', lower joint and bell stamped 'Ioan: /Panorm: /B / Neapoli'



b) showing crack in ivory ring of barrel

Figure 5: Anonymous six-keyed clarinet in C, RCM 329, RCM, London.

