

A CORNETT ODYSSEY

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What do Brussels, Braunschweig, Munich, Sigmaringen, and New York have in common? They formed a cornett odyssey in the early 1980's during which I came to the conclusion that a number of curved cornetts and cornettini shared a common provenance. Of the some 14 instruments involved, I had the chance to examine and compare six personally. Eight were beyond my geographical grasp. Four of these are located in Leipzig and, although I did not examine the instruments there, an analysis of Dr. Herbert Heyde's very thorough description (to be discussed below) makes it possible to state that these instruments share a common heritage with the six instruments I did examine. An instrument in Prague, based on its construction, is also tentatively attributed to the same origin. The same holds true for one in Basel. Two Oxford instruments have characteristics similar to those examined by me and those described by Dr. Heyde. These, too, are possibly from the same well.

I think there are at least three makers: "IK" produced six of the instruments, all cornettini. "HWK" made four instruments, three cornetts and one cornettino. "IKH" constructed two cornetts. Another cornettino bears the mark "IIIK," which possibly should be "IK." Yet another has no known marks.

A maker's mark consisting of two crossed curved cornetts on an octagonal field appears on the bell of five instruments, those with the initials "HWK" and "IKH." The initials "HWK" also form part of the maker's mark on the Brussels instrument. Unfortunately, the maker's marks on the other instruments have deteriorated, and initials are not discernable. The presence of crossed cornetts in the maker's mark suggests specialization in or renown for cornetts. These marks and initials are not known to appear on any other type of instrument.

To retrace the journey, the first of these instruments, a cornettino, was found in the Instrumental Museum of the Royal Conservatory of Music in Brussels. This instrument, Brussels #1187, is described in the Mahillon catalog as German.¹ Its pitch is Chorton d' (six finger note), about a half step above modern pitch (thus, its a'=ca. 465 Hz). It attracted my attention because it possessed features different from those commonly found on Italian cornetts, my principal interest.

First of all, Brussels #1187 has an octagonal brass ferrule mounted under the leather at the mouthpiece end. This ferrule, about 1 mm thick and 12 mm long, keeps the instrument—which is made from two wooden halves gouged out, glued together, and covered with leather—from separating as a result of playing moisture or pressure from the mouthpiece in the mouthpiece socket. Ferrules are not found on all cornetts. Italian cornetts have a recessed linen binding about 12 mm wide reinforcing the mouthpiece socket, but no metal ferrule. One occasionally finds them as a repair feature on Italian instruments; however, they seem indigenous to German instruments.

Second, Brussels #1187 appears to have no linen bindings. Because of the curved cornett's two-piece construction, linen bindings about 4-5 mm wide were generally wrapped around the instrument to strengthen it. These bindings are found near the thumbhole, in the middle of the instrument (between the third and fourth fingerholes), and near the bell. While the leather covering helps hold the instrument together, omission of the bindings demonstrates great confidence in the brass ferrule and the hide glue used, possibly made water resistant through the addition of alum.

Third, Brussels #1187 has a maker's mark stamped on the leather on the top of the instrument near the bell end (Fig. 1). It consists of crossed cornetts with an octagonal border some 12 mm across the flats. The octagonal border probably represents the eight sides of a curved cornett. One may discern the initials "HWK," one letter in each of the three angles (side, top, side) formed by the crossing of the cornetts. There also appears to be a sphere in the bottom angle. The maker's mark, an elaborate bas-relief pattern, is integrated into the bell decorative scheme, which consists of a rosette stamped on each of the other seven facets. At the time I originally looked at the instrument, I did not examine the mark closely and thought it was an indication of ownership rather than origin.



Figure 1

Finally, as if to insure that the initials would remain, "HWK" is also stamped in the wood on the end of the bell, on the top facet. This was the first cornett I examined which had any identifying features in this location.

A subsequent visit to the Braunschweig City Museum in Germany revealed a second instrument, also cataloged as German, with an octagonal brass ferrule, the maker's mark, and initials on the bell end. This instrument, Braunschweig #62 (listed as #63 in the catalog), is a cornett in Chorton.² Its maker's mark consists of an octagonal figure the same size and in the same location as that found on Brussels #1187. However, the details in the center of the stamp are no longer legible. Its brass ferrule is 21 mm long and the bell initials, difficult to read, are different. They appear to read "IKH." No special

note was taken of the Braunschweig instrument until I visited the Deutsches Museum in Munich.

The features of the Deutsches Museum cornett #10185, also an instrument in Chorton a, immediately attracted attention. This instrument is missing its ferrule. The wood, however, is filed away to accomodate an octagonal ferrule some 18 mm long which, when fitted, would be flush with the wood. The leather of the instrument has been cut away, leaving the ferruleless section of the instrument exposed (Fig. 2).



Figure 2

The maker's mark is identical to that found on the Brussels and Braunschweig instruments. The maker's mark of Deutsches Museum #10185 is not quite as clear as that on Brussels #1187, but crossed cornetts and vague initials may still be seen within the octagonal border. Like the Brussels and Braunschweig instruments, the mark is integrated into the bell decorative pattern. The initials "HWK" on the bell end are the same as those found on the Brussels cornettino (Fig. 3). The museum catalog contains no information regarding the origin of the instrument, which was obtained from a Berlin museum in 1907.³



Figure 3

During discussions of these findings with Rainer Weber, the noted German instrument maker and restorer, he revealed that another cornettino with initials on its bell was located in Sigmaringen castle, seat of the Catholic branch of the Hohenzollern family in southwestern Germany.

Sigmaringen castle turned out to possess two Chorton cornettini. These instruments, slightly longer than the Brussels cornettino, share common features but also have some differences. Sigmaringen #4958 is distinguished by an octagonal ferrule 17 mm long, no bindings, no maker's mark stamped in the leather, and the initials "IK" on the bell. Sigmaringen #4959, slightly longer than #4958, has a brass ferrule some 18 mm long and lacks either bindings or the maker's mark stamped on the leather. It has the initials "IK" or "HK" (probably the former) stamped on the bell. This cornettino also has more elaborate blind leather stamping than is found on the previous four instruments

(Fig. 4). There is no instrument catalog, and the inspection of the castle inventory revealed no information concerning the origin of the instruments. It is believed they may have been among instruments purchased from an Augsburg antique dealer around 1900.⁴



Figure 4

Subsequently, Ralph Bryant, cornett player with the Concertus Musicus Wien, informed me that a cornett in New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, #53.56.9, had a n octagonal maker's mark in the leather. I consulted x-rays of the instrument and this led to an exchange of letters with Dr. Laurence Libin, Curator of the museum's instrument collection. I found out that this instrument was also stamped "HWK" on the bell end. A transatlantic trip finally gave me an opportunity to examine the instrument itself. It shares the features of the others at which I looked and is clearly from the same source (Fig. 5). Like Sigmaringen #4959, MMA #53.56.9 is decorated with symmetrical floral stamping more elaborate than on most of the other instruments. However, it is not the same stamping as found on #4959.⁵

In an attempt to identify the above makers, I consulted the late Lyndesay Langwill's invaluable reference book, *An Index of Musical Instrument Makers*, and discovered that there are two curved cornetts (sic) with the initials "IK" and "IKH" in the musical instrument collection of Karl Marx University in Leipzig.⁶

I subsequently wrote to Dr. Herbert Heyde, formerly associated with that collection. Dr. Heyde was extremely helpful in identifying these two instruments plus another two, and most generous in furnishing me advance copies of the text from his catalog, *Hörner und Zinken*, which documents those instruments.⁷ These data are extremely detailed, permitting analysis of the instruments without having direct access to them and providing valuable information about their possible origin. Leipzig #1563 and #1564 (formerly de Wit #569 and #572, respectively) are Chorton cornettini with the initials "IK" on the bell. Leipzig #1569, a Chorton cornett (formerly Krause #232 or #728)

contains the initials "IKH" on its bell. Finally, #4030, a Chorton cornettino, also has the initials "IK" on its bell.⁸ On the basis of construction features and measurements, Dr. Heyde concludes that the Leipzig instruments came from the same workshop, if not the same maker.⁹ A comparison of the data from the Leipzig instruments with those I collected on the other instruments described leads me to conclude that all share a common origin.

While I was focusing on the similarities of these instruments, three others came under scrutiny. Two belong to Dr. Anthony Baines and are presently displayed with the Bate collection at Oxford. One is a cornettino, #x501, with three silver mounts, the center one of which has the date "1518" engraved upon it and the lower one the initials "IIIK." Dr. Baines labels the date "1518" as probably spurious.¹⁰ The second instrument, cornett #x500, has a silver mount over a brass ferrule, but other features are similar to those of another of the cornetts under discussion, Leipzig #1569, the more curved cornett by "IKH." The design of the Oxford cornett's silver mount is said to point to the early 17th century, and its design is similar to its counterpart on cornettino #x501, reinforcing the belief that both instruments date from the early 17th century.¹¹

Is x501 actually a 1618 instrument by "IK" which was antiqued to "1518" in order to increase its value? An early seventeenth century origin would be more consistent with cornettino usage. Or, was "IIIK" another member of the same group of makers, one who did not stamp the bell of his instruments like the others?

Unfortunately, I have not seen these instruments personally, but based on the excellent photographs in both Phillip Young's catalog of the 1981 Vancouver Instrument Exhibition, *The Look of Music*,¹² and Dr. Baines' classic, *The History of Wood Wind Instruments*, as well as information in the *Galpin Society Journal* concerning cornett #x500, I am convinced they can be ascribed to the same workshop. Both the "1518" cornettino and the cornett were owned by Canon Francis Galpin, who said they were German.¹³

The third instrument is in the Prague National Museum collection. I first learned of its existence from Frantisek Pok, cornett player with the Clemencic Ensemble, who provided me with measurements and a tracing which included the notation "*Schloss Kynzvalt, 1634*." Unfortunately requests for further information on the instrument went unanswered by museum authorities, but Edward Tarr informs me that this instrument is the same as curved cornett #986E, listed in *Das Zink Buch* as being on display in the Prague National Museum on loan from Kynzvalt castle.¹⁴ The dimensions taken by Dr. Kopecká for the instrument and listed in *Das Zink Buch* are roughly the same as those I received from Frantisek Pok. The origins of this cornett are unknown, but one may deduce that the instrument was originally located in the Kynzvalt castle (the summer residence of the Austrian statesman, Prince von Metternich). According to Dr. Kopecká, the number 1634 is not a date but rather an accession number in the Kynzvalt collections. The instrument has no known maker's mark, but has the initials "HWK" on the bell.

Reading through Edward Tarr's "Katalog" in *Das Zink Buch* when it arrived revealed a pleasant surprise for me: another instrument by "IK." It is a cornettino,

#1980.2160, once part of the collection of Pastor Bernoulli, and now in the Basel collection of musical instruments.¹⁵ Based on the description, dimensions, and the photos of the instrument, it, too, comes from the same source. It shows the more elaborate stamping, such as that found on Sigmaringen #4959 and MMA 53.56.9, but the stamps are different from any used on the other instruments. Not all the cornetts and cornettini have the same number of rows of diamonds, but they are similar in size and execution, indicating a common heritage.

Based upon similarities in shape, design, construction features, decorations, maker's marks, and initials, I conclude that 12 of the instruments discussed share the same provenance. In addition, it is highly possible that the Oxford instruments do as well, a determination that will have to await personal examination.¹⁶

Where did the instruments come from? All signs point to Germany. Here, the most specific information comes from Dr. Heyde. He considers the four Leipzig instruments to be Saxon in origin because their dimensions coincide with Saxon units of measurement, and cornettino #4030 came from the village church of Kaditz, near Dresden. According to Dr. Heyde, Dresden court archives identify only one maker, Jacob Lasius, who made cornetts and violins for the court in 1587. (This is not such a strange combination since both instruments are made by carving wood.) The initial "K," he speculates might indicate manufacture by some member of the Koch family, a many-branched family that served the Dresden court as musicians around the end of the 17th/beginning of the 18th century. The Koch family provided four schalmei players and one trumpet maker to the court during this period.¹⁷

While I believe that the instruments are German in origin, based on their construction, on the cornettino as a basically German phenomenon, and on other indicators gleaned during the odyssey, I can neither confirm nor refute their Saxon origin. Nor can I definitely ascribe them to the Koch family. However, if the instruments were made by the Kochs, I believe they were made by the ancestors of the known family members, say during the first half of the 17th century, not around 1690 or 1700, although German usage persisted longer than in most places. (I attribute this to German attributes of thriftiness and conservatism.)

Given the same provenance for the instruments—either from the same workshop or circle—we are possibly dealing with several generations of the same family. Perhaps "IK" was the original master. After "IK" established a name as a cornett maker and passed on, "HWK" took over the business and added the crossed cornetts maker's mark. "IKH" also used the "HWK" maker's mark, indicating some close association with "HWK." Perhaps "IKH" was an ambitious, talented apprentice who married his master's daughter, a common first step on the way to becoming a master craftsman, and succeeded him. Of course, this is all speculation. What about "IIK" on Oxford x501? This may be as spurious as the date "1518" on the instrument. Is the "IIK" a "Francolinized" version of "IK"?

Regardless of whether it is 12 or 14 instruments from a single provenance, this constitutes a significant surviving population. And, although being remiss in not



Figure 5

recording my observations some years ago, I do hope that with the above pointed out, someone will pursue the issue further and provide full names where now we have only initials.

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NOTES

1. Victor Mahillon, *Catalogue descriptif et analytique, Musée instrumental du Conservatoire Royal de Musique de Bruxelles*, vol. 2, p. 404. This and all the other instruments described in this article are discussed (and some pictured) under their respective modern locations in Edward Tarr, "Ein Katalog erhaltener Zinken," *Basler Jahrbuch für historische Musikpraxis V* (Winterthur, 1981), pp. 11-262 (hereafter, *Das Zink Buch*). However, my article was completed before Tarr's work appeared and so, with the exception of a few especially pertinent cases, it is not referred to here. Finally, it should be mentioned that #473 of the Brussels collection is said to be a copy of an original instrument which could be #1187; but it is possibly an original itself.

2. I have only two pages from this catalog, pages 23 and 24, and know nothing more about it. The pages are printed in Gothic type (Fraktur) which normally would indicate a pre-1945 printing. The instrument is designated as German, from around 1600.

3. Correspondence between the author and Herr F. Thomas, Deutsches Museum, 1982.

4. Ernst Fritz Schmid, *Musik an den schwäbischen Zollernhöfen der Renaissance* (Kassel, 1962), Chapter IV, p. 136.

5. *Das Zink Buch*, p. 175, gives an X-ray photograph to accompany the textual discussion concerning this instrument. In the text, however, the maker's mark is erroneously given as "NWK."

6. Lyndesay G. Langwill, *An Index of Musical Wind Instrument Makers*, 6th ed. (Edinburgh, 1980), p. 85.

7. Herbert Heyde, *Hörner und Zinken*, Catalog of Musical Instrument Museum, Karl Marx University, Vol. 5 (Leipzig, 1982), pp. 55-62.

8. Heyde, pp. 55-62.

9. Heyde, p. 61.
10. Anthony Baines, "The Galpin Cornett," *The Galpin Society Journal* xxix (May 1976), p. 125.
11. Baines, p. 125.
12. Phillip T. Young, *The Look of Music* (Vancouver, 1980), pp. 39-40.
13. Baines, p. 125.
14. The identity of Prague 986E and Kynzvalt 1634 was confirmed in a letter written to Tarr on 11 April 1983 by Dr. Michaela Kopecká, director of the musical instrument division of the Prague National Museum. I am grateful to Edward Tarr for sharing this information with me.
15. *Das Zink Buch*, p. 119.
16. In addition to the more obvious aspects of initials, maker's marks and construction features, a comparison of instrument shapes was done, as cornetts are made using a template. Assuming an instrument maker would make one template for each type of instrument, a comparison of instruments examined and traced was made. Additionally, a view graph transparency of the cornett photo in Heyde's book was made, projected full size and then traced. From this it was determined that the two Sigmaringen cornettini and the three Leipzig cornettini, all "IK" instruments were made from the same template. Likewise the cornetts in Munich, New York, and Prague, "HWK" instruments, were made from the same template. The two "IKH" instruments, Braunschweig # 62 and Leipzig #1569, were made from different templates, the former using the "HWK" and the latter a different, more curved template.
17. Heyde, pp. 55-56.

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