

EARLY HUNTING HORN CALLS AND THEIR TRANSMISSION: SOME NEW DISCOVERIES

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Introduction

Through words, pictures, and forms of notation, calls for the hunting horn have been preserved and passed down through the ages. The hunting horn is one of the earlier distinguishable lip-reed instruments, not so much by its construction (animal horn, later metal) but by its function. Groups of hunters found that they could signal each other in order to track game more effectively, to let the others in the hunting party know in what direction the quarry would go, and also to signal triumph to the village after a successful hunt. As the hunt became better organized and evolved from a quest for food into a serious sporting activity adopted as recreation by the upper classes, the hunting horn became much more than a mere noisemaker. Horn playing became an important activity in itself, with all of the day's hunting activities revolving around the instructions it conveyed. It was considered a necessary skill by the gentry and noble classes and was a tradition passed from generation to generation and from court to court. The skill of playing the hunting horn became so closely integrated with the identity of the hunting gentry that it became an icon for it. In medieval courts in Wales for example, huntsmen took oaths on their hounds, leashes, and horn.¹ In *De Fructu qui ex Doctrina Percipitur (The Benefit of a Liberal Education*, 1517), Richard Pace described a nobleman with a horn: "Now there happened to be a person there, a nobleman, or so we call them, who always carry horns hanging down their backs as though they were going to hunt while they ate." The importance of the horn to this particular nobleman became apparent when he offered his opinion on the benefit of education: "...I'd rather see my son hanged than be a student. Sons of the nobility ought to blow the horn properly, hunt like experts, and carry a hawk gracefully."²

This article surveys the evolution of hunting horn calls, and identifies similarities between this evolution and the development of other forms of music. It suggests that the hunting horn may have had musical capabilities earlier than it has been generally assumed, and that these capabilities evolved gradually, rather than arising spontaneously at the beginning of the seventeenth century when horns began to be used in orchestras. Even though, as will be shown presently, systems of notation were developed to encode these hunting calls, we unfortunately cannot know how the calls sounded, or exactly what these notations mean in terms of execution. This does not, however, negate the fact that hunting tablatures functioned much like modern notated music.

In the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University are two sheets of hunting horn calls from the 16th century, written to be executed during the course of a hunt. The first, MS 200, is from the David Wagstaff collection of hunting literature, found, appropriately enough, in an early copy of Dame Juliana Berner's *Boke of Saint Albans*, one

of the first and best known treatises on hunting. The second was acquired as part of the Osborn Collection in June 1993. I was asked to comment on the new acquisition for the *Yale Library Gazette*, and that short commentary forms the basis for part of this article. The horn calls in these manuscripts are notated in a unique form of tablature; different types of notation as well as verbal descriptions were used in other sources discussed later.

Three well-known musical sources from the 16th and 17th centuries reveal how widely the musical view of hunting horns differed between France and Germany. The German musician and priest Sebastian Virdung (b. 1465?), in his *Musica Getutscht* of ca. 1510, regarded the hunting horn as nothing more than an annoying noisemaker.³ Apparently because Virdung cast aside the hunting horn as a “foolish instrument,” the German composer and theorist Michael Praetorius (1571-1621) saw fit follow suit a century later, merely quoting Virdung in his *Syntagma Musicum* of 1614.⁴ While Praetorius questioned the accuracy of Virdung’s text as it applied to ancient and unusual instruments, in some cases he quoted from *Musica Getutscht* simply because he could find no other source of information about the instruments in question.⁵ The use of the horn in the hunt was not widespread in Germany until the 17th and 18th centuries. Germany did not adopt the cultivated hunting horn tradition from France as Britain did early on, although it did adopt some similar hunting procedures.⁶

The French theorist Marin Mersenne (1588-1648), in his *Harmonie universelle* of 1636, wrote in great detail about the horn and its pedagogy, addressing such items as embouchure placement, articulation, and movement of the embouchure to produce at least some of the notes of the overtone series. He also distinguished the hunting horn from the trumpet, giving each its own separate explanation in Proposition X.⁷ Mersenne’s treatment of the hunting horn as a musical instrument by his inclusion of horn technique in his musical treatise defines the endpoint of this discussion. It was at about this time that the composer Michelangelo Rossi (c. 1602-1656) became the first composer to call for horn fanfares, in his opera *Ermiona sul Giordano* of 1633,⁸ followed by Pier Francesco Cavalli in *Le Nozze di Teti di Peleo*, first performed in Venice in 1639.⁹

The French hunting tradition, which was also adopted in England, gave great importance to the ceremonies of hunting and hunting music. Most of the activities revolved around the music of the horns, from calling the hunting company in the morning, to butchering quarry (in itself a complicated ritual in which due homage was paid to the animals killed), and calling the stragglers home after the hunt. The German hunting tradition did not include many of the dramatic ceremonies of the French/English hunt—with the horn in a pivotal role—until the 17th and 18th centuries, when French influence in Germany was at its highest.¹⁰ In Gottfried’s *Tristan* legend, Tristan’s hunting skills—not least among them his talent for playing the hunting horn—are famous. He had learned them while in France, however, and brought them back to Germany.¹¹ Thus the hunting horn was known in Germany, as Virdung and Praetorius confirm, but there it was not the cultivated musical instrument described by Mersenne.

This study includes evidence of the use of the hunting horn found in religious and secular literature and in early specialist literature on hunting, a chronological list of selected

French and English hunting treatises that include instructions for playing the hunting horn, a discussion of the two similar manuscripts of 16th-century hunting-horn calls owned by Yale University, a discussion of the hunting horn's earliest appearances in musical treatises, and a comparison of several hunting horn calls as they appear throughout the ages in various forms.

Early Evidence of the Hunting Horn as an Integral Part of the Hunt

The tradition of the use of the horn in the hunt is documented in sources from the fifth century A.D. or earlier. One of these sources is a passage from the *Heptateuchos*, a Latin hexameter version of the first seven books of the Hebrew Bible, all that survives of a large poem that once included all of the historical books of the Hebrew Bible. It is generally thought to date from the early fifth century A.D., perhaps between 397–430. For the most part, the *Heptateuchos* follows the biblical text closely, especially in the narrative passages, but in the passage in question (G. 804–7 = Genesis 25:27 “Et erat esau homo sciens venari, agrestis, Iacob autem homo simplex habitabat in tabernaculis.” [from B. Fischer, *Vetus Latina: die Reste der Altlanteinischen Bibel*, 2. Genesis]), the biblical comparison provides the framework for the poet’s emphasis of the hunting horn’s role:

Lustrabat senior vacuos venatibus agros,
Bucina raucisono dum complet saxa tremore.
Ast alius, blandi conservans pectoris acta,
Gaudebat patriis inlaesus vivere tectis.¹²

The elder of the two, having hunted down all the game wandered the empty fields and set the rocky waste a-tremble with the raucous tones of his horn. But his brother remained steadfast in the exploits of a gentle disposition and rejoiced to live unharmed in the dwellings of his fathers.

Particular attention is drawn to the *bucina* (in this context, a type of “hunting horn”) from the way it is placed in the text; while the language used is traditional, the reference to the *bucina* in terms of “hunting horn” is unparalleled in the authors of Classical Antiquity.¹³

Another example of the word *bucina* in the sense of “hunting horn” appears in *De Reditu* by the poet Rutilius Namatianus, describing his journey from Rome to Gaul in A.D 417: “Tum responsuros persulant bucina colles” (*De Reditu*, 1.629). The *bucina* is sounded, apparently in triumph, after a boar has been killed, and its notes echo.¹⁴

In both this passage and in the *Heptateuchos*, the use of the hunting horn is treated as normal practice. It is characteristic of the *Heptateuchos* to minimize the unfamiliarity of Hebrew life and customs to the Roman reader by including activities with which its readers were familiar. It would not suit the author’s purpose to incorporate a detail, such as the hunting horn, that was atypical of the hunt as his readers knew it. The evidence therefore strongly suggests that at the time the poem was written, the horn was a familiar feature of

the hunt.¹⁵

These two examples are probably not literary borrowings from each other, since the poet of the *Heptateuchos* was using material from the Hebrew Bible, while Rutilius was not a Christian. They were in agreement on the use of the horn in the hunt because of their similar observable experiences, and it is likely that both had observed the hunting horn's use at roughly the same time and in the same general location.¹⁶

The Hunting Horn as a Sophisticated Communications Device, and the Advent of Notation for It

In the early examples cited above, the horn was used to assist in the hunt, to sound in triumph, or to signal others. Its function changed as the hunt evolved from a quest for food into a serious sporting activity. In the more sophisticated organized hunt the horn functioned as the main means of communication that directed the participants. The significant measures that were taken to preserve hunting calls, through verbal descriptions and several systems of notation, are evidence of this evolution from a noisemaker capable of conveying sound over a long distance to a vehicle for communicating real ideas. In order to accomplish this, hunting horns and their players had to be sophisticated enough to produce more than mere noises. While both the calls and the technique used to play them may have been rudimentary by modern standards, the fact that these calls exist in various notational and descriptive forms demonstrates the existence of common basic playing techniques and practices.

The invention and development of a written script advances and refines a language, but before it can be written down and preserved, that language itself must first exist as a spoken tongue. The same principle holds true for the notated calls for the hunting horn. Before these systems for encoding and preserving hunting calls could develop, a common practice or method of playing must already have existed. Since horn playing was regarded as a necessary skill by medieval aristocrats (who could afford to support many dogs, horses, serfs, etc., and have access to the land on which to do it), it was taught and passed on from one person to another.¹⁷ As the activities involved in hunting became increasingly complex (more participants, using horses, controlling dogs—to name a few), more information had to be conveyed to the participants, both human and animal. The calls increased in number and became more complex, and preserving them by passing them on orally from player to player became impractical. In other words, the musical language existed and the means to pass it on from one person to another was firmly in place; but when the calls became too complex to preserve adequately by memory alone, systems of notation were developed to encode them. Musical notation requires a performer to have knowledge of the style and technique needed for its interpretation—knowledge that is first passed on orally from teacher to student or from one player to another. As a result, horn tablature, which was invented to record and preserve hunting calls, is similar to early forms of music such as liturgical chant, which was also an oral tradition before it was notated.¹⁸

Queen Mary's Psalter contains authentic pictures of the English hunt, circa 1300. It

clearly depicts hunting procedures with the hunting horn in its prominent role as communications device. It further shows hunters playing the horn during various phases of the hunt, and even includes an illustration of two women hunters on horseback, one playing a horn.¹⁹

William Twiti, in his treatise *The Art of Hunting* (1327), uses syllables to describe a series of calls to communicate the various phases and activities of hunting. The section entitled “Of Blowing” describes the calls in detail; further references to the calls (“blowing motes,” “blowing the menee”) appear later in the text. In his descriptions of the calls he uses the term “moot” and syllables such as “trout” and “trourourout.” His description of the “parfit” call, for example, is: “A moot and then trourourout, trout, trout, trourourout. trourourout, trout, trout, trourourourout … And to commence with a moot and finish by a moot.”²⁰ More specific descriptions appear in the section of this article entitled “Comparison of Selected Hunting Horn Calls.”

The *Livre de la chasse* (1380) of Gaston III Phoebus includes an illustration of an early tutorial session in horn-playing, in which a master (perhaps Phoebus himself) instructs a group of students in playing hunting calls.²¹ Hardouin de Fontaines-Guerin’s hunting treatise *Le Livre du Trésor de vénerie* (1394), of which almost half is devoted to “Le livre du Corner,” includes fourteen calls for hunting horn represented in a series of woodcuts in a notation of black and white squares—another example of notation specifically developed for horn calls.²² Edward of Norwich, Second Duke of York, wrote *The Master of Game* between 1406–1413, which is for the most part an English translation of Phoebus’ *Livre de la chasse*. Edward added several chapters dealing primarily with English changes to French hunting procedures. One of the added chapters, entitled “How a Hunter’s Horn Should be Driven,” explains in detail the various types of hunting horns, their appearance, and construction:

Ther byn divers maners of hornes, that is to say vugles, grete abotes, hentes hornes, Reuttis, smale forsters hornes, and mene hornes of .ii. maners. That oo manere is waxed with grene wex, and grettene of sum, and for thei ben best for good hunters, therof will I devise how and of what fasson thei shuld be drive.

First, a good hunters horn shul be dryve of .ii. span of lengthe, and nought moche more ne moch lasse; and nought to crokyng neither to straught, but the flewe of .iii. or .iv. fingers uppermore than the hede, that lowde hunters callen the grete eende of the horn: and also that it be as greet to the bandrike [baldrick?] ward than at the nether side; and that the hede be as wide as it may be, and ay ay dryve smallere and smallere to the flewe; and that it be wel waxed, thikker or thinner after as the hunter thenketh that it wil best soun, and that it be waxed the length of the horn from the flewe to the byndyng; and also that it be not to smal dryven from thick byndyng to the flue, for if it be the horn will be to mene of soun.

And of hornes for fewtrees and wodemen I speke not of, for every smale horn and other mene hornes unwaxed ben good inow for hem.²³

Edward promised “a chapter which is all of blowing,” but failed to provide it. He made many references to horn calls in the text, using standard terms,²⁴ such as blowing a “mote” or a “rechase,” and descriptive syllables similar to those in Twiti’s *The Art of Hunting*. He also described in detail two fanfares to be played by an ensemble of horns upon returning home after the hunt:²⁵

[the curee]...than shuld the lorde, if hym list, and ellis the Maister of the Game, or in his absence who so is grettest next hym, shuld strake in this wise, that is to say blow .iiii. moot, and stinte not half an Ave Maria while, and blowe other .iiii. mootis a litil lenger than the first .iiii. moot, ...and than the groomys couple up the houndes and draw homeward faire and soft. And alle the remenaunte of the hunters shuld strake in this wise: trut trut trororow trororow, and .iiii. moot, with al of one length, no to longe, no to short, and other wise shuld not the hert hunters strake fro then forth til thei go to bedde.²⁶

[the menee]...first the Maister or who so is grettest next hym shalle begynne, and blowe .iii. mote allone, and at the first moot the remenaunte ...shuld blowe with hym, and be ware that noon blow lenger than other, and after the thre moot, even forthwith thei shuld blowe to recopes, as thus: Trut Trut trorororot, and that thei be avised that from that tyme that thei falle inne to blowe togedir, that none of hem begynne afore other ne ende after other.²⁷

In *Morte Darthur* (1470) Sir Thomas Mallory alludes to the hunting horn:

...And after, as [Tristram] growed in might and strength, he laboured ever in hunting and in hawking, so that never gentleman more, that ever we heard read of. And as the book saith, he *began good measures of blowyng of beasts of venery and beasts of chase* [emphasis mine], and all manner of vermin, and all those terms we have yet of hawking and hunting. And therefore the book of venery, of hawking and hunting, is called the book of Sir Tristram.²⁸

In 16th-century literature on hunting, references to the “lawes,” “precepts,” or “book” of Tristram are common. For example, in *A Short Treatise of Hunting* (1591) by Sir Thomas Cockaine, the instructions for the hunting horn are referred to as “Sir Tristram’s Measures of Blowing.” These instructions consist of verbal descriptions not unlike those in Twiti. Instead of using syllables, Cockaine’s descriptions of the calls refer to “windes,” a term which may refer to a single section or phrase of a call, and “long,” and “short.” (These latter terms do not refer to how long the “windes” are, but are names of separate calls; see below, “Comparison of Selected Hunting Calls.”) For example: “To blow in the field. With two windes, the first [winde consisting of] two short, one long, and two short. The second

[winde consisting of], one short, one long, and a longer. To uncouple the hounds in the field: Three long notes and with three windes.”²⁹

Apparently the earliest instance of horn calls in standard musical notation occurs in the hunting treatise *La vénerie* (1573) by Jacques du Fouilloux. The calls are notated on a conventional staff, with the conventional rhythmic values, entirely on the pitch c'.³⁰ The syllable “tran”—similar to Twiti’s “trout”—is used to describe some calls.

George Gascoigne’s The *Noble Art of Venerie or Hnting ...* (1575) is for the most part a direct translation of Du Fouilloux’s *La vénerie*, but adds the term “windes,” usage similar to that in the Cockaine, and notates the horn’s pitch on the staff as d'.³¹

Two Manuscripts Of Hunting Horn Tablature

A sheet of hunting horn calls acquired in June 1993 by the Osborn Collection in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library of Yale University is an instructive complement to one already housed there (MS 200). Both manuscripts are from the second half of the sixteenth century and outline the basic activities of the organized hunt, from the beginning of the day (“To call the company in the morninge”) to the end of the hunt (“The Strake of Nine to draw home the company”). The horn calls communicated the important events of the hunt—such as “When the hounds hunt a game unknown,” “The earthinge of a fox of hee bee recoverable,” “The call for a Keeper in parke or forrest,” and “The death of a buck with bow or greyhound”—and reflect many of the same calls passed down from the earlier treatises. Above each title, the call the horn player or players were to play for that particular event is notated in tablature specifically developed for this purpose. MS 200 contains seventeen such calls, the Osborn manuscript, sixteen.³²

The Osborn manuscript is less formal in layout. It is written in at least three different hands, informal remarks appear in the margins, later hands have added notes to particular calls, and the calls are repeated, but without their names, on the verso of the sheet. MS 200 is presented more formally and neatly in a single hand, and the signature of the calligrapher, Thomas Parker, appears on the verso. The less formal presentation and the marginal notes suggest that the Osborn manuscript may have been used in the manner of a tutor. (The significance of some of these notes will be discussed in the section, “Comparison of Selected Hunting Calls.”) Because of its formal presentation, MS 200 may have been a sheet of horn calls available for sale for instructional purposes. In the 17th century, hunting horn tutors were sold commercially, as notated on the bottom of a set of horn calls in the hunting treatise *The Gentleman’s Recreation* (1697) by Nicolas Cox: “These Noats are Taught & Sould by Michaell Marsh at ye Huntsman at Holbourne Bridge.”³³ Both manuscripts are in English, and probably originated at a British court. The handwriting is in a style known as “Facile Elizabethan Secretary,” which was used primarily during the second half of the sixteenth century.³⁴

The calls are notated in a unique form of tablature. It will be remembered that in hunting treatises roughly contemporary with these manuscripts (Du Fouilloux, Gascoigne), calls for hunting horn are written in standard musical notation, showing only the rhythm

of the calls. Why did two distinctly different ways of notating similar calls exist at the same time? Since there was a long tradition of horn playing being passed from one generation to the next and from court to court, there existed a pedagogy for teaching the horn. Perhaps for those who played and taught the hunting horn, conventional musical notation was inadequate for accurately representing these horn calls. There may have been certain elements inherent in the teaching and execution of these calls that could be represented in horn tablature, but not in rhythmic musical notation. A further mystery concerns the calls notated in conventional staff notation, but showing rhythm only, with no change in pitch. Perhaps the authors of these hunting treatises did not understand the technique of horn playing, and thus opted for notating the rhythm only. Examples of the various types of notation appear in the section “Comparison of Selected Hunting Horn Calls”.

At the time these manuscripts were being written, the hunting horn was going through a period of transformation in its construction. Previously the instruments had been made from curved animal horn or ivory. The technique of bending metal conical tubes for instrument making, knowledge that had been lost during the barbarian invasions, was rediscovered in the sixteenth century (the metal trumpet, with cylindrical bore, its tube looped or made with S-shaped curves, appeared at least a century or more earlier).³⁵ The calls in the Beinecke manuscripts were probably for metal horns, and iconography from this time bears this out. For example, Du Fouilloux’s *La vénerie*, roughly contemporary with these manuscripts, illustrates huntsmen carrying small coiled metal hunting horns. Once horns began to be made from metal, relatively rapid changes in their construction began to take place, facilitating the development of an instrument whose primary function was musical.

The Hunting Horn in Music Treatises

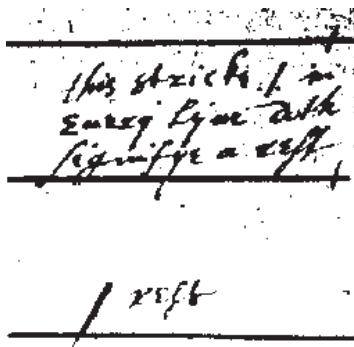
Marin Mersenne (*Harmonie universelle*, 1636) is the earliest music theorist to describe in great detail the playing technique of the hunting horn. In Proposition X, entitled ‘To explain all sorts of trumpets and horns, and particularly those used in hunting,’ he begins by referring to the brass instrument family as “the instruments with crooks:” “The *embouchures* [mouthpieces] are called crooks or *boquins* ...and are so affixed into the body of the *trompes* that they are easily removed at will.” Later he refers to the mouthpiece as the “cup,” and uses the term *embouchure* in its modern sense, to mean the formation of the lips, facial muscles, and jaw in proper playing. His advice on the proper placement of the mouthpiece in relation to the embouchure and how it is set with firm corners is the very same advice given to brass students around the world today. He outlines five different methods of producing sounds: by blowing air through the horn (“imitating the sound of bellows”), by moving [vibrating] the lips on the mouthpiece, by moving the lips to produce a second note [breath attack?], by moving the lips to produce different notes of the overtone series, and using the tongue to articulate the notes. He relies heavily on the information on hunting horns supplied by Du Fouilloux’s *La vénerie*. Throughout the chapter on brass instruments, Mersenne is careful to distinguish between the trumpet and the horn, their differing uses, players, and music. Hunters of this time had varying ranges and levels of

skill, and Mersenne claimed that some had as great a range on the horn as trumpet players had on their instrument.³⁶

Comparison Of Selected Hunting Horn Calls

Specific instructions on the execution of horn calls appear in some of the treatises and manuscripts. While none of these instructions are as complete as a late twentieth-century reader would like (e.g., there is no Quantz-like interpreter), they offer important clues on certain topics. To attempt to "break the codes," however, would entail drawing a colossal amount of inferences, to the extent of grasping at straws. If, for example, hunting horn calls were executed according to a literal interpretation of the musical notation in Gascoigne and Du Fouilloux, they would be indistinguishable one from another. This is purely a practical consideration. An especially puzzling point here is that while the Yale manuscripts are roughly contemporaneous with Gascoigne's and Du Fouilloux' treatises and list mostly the same calls, why did the latter fail to indicate any melodic elements? Simply playing eighth notes in succession on the same pitch tells the hunting participants nothing, especially in the heat of the chase. Each call had to sound distinctive, for both the hunting participants and the horn players. Players must have used whatever pitches that were available, in some way, on the hunting horns of their time. While at least some melodic elements were very likely a significant component to these calls, we have no direct way of knowing what they were and how the horn tablature reflects it. Undoubtedly whatever notes available on a given hunting horn by a given player were used in some way; however, there is simply not enough solid evidence relating to the horn tablature to enable us break the code.³⁷

The following may be specifically concluded: In the Yale Osborn MS, in the informal notes that appear on the right side margin, a significant piece of information appears: "this stricke ./ in every lyne doth signifie a rest." Underneath this note is added: "/ rest".



This is the only symbol in this tablature whose meaning can be positively identified.

A note appears in Cockaine's *A Short Treatise of Hunting* regarding the terms "long," "short," and "minome," used not as designations of length of individual notes, but as

shorthand for a designated group of notes:

Note this, for it is the chiefest and principallest poynt to be noted. Every long conteineth in blowing seaven quavers, one minome and one quatter. One minome conteineth fourre quavers. One short conteineth three quavers.³⁸

The term “quaver” is readily equated with “eighth note.” However, the term “minome” is used not in the usual sense of “minim,” or half note, but rather, like the terms “long” and “short,” to designate a grouping of four quavers. In other words, a “long” is executed by playing seven eighth notes, a “minome” (sub-group) of four eighth notes, and a “quatter.” The term “quatter” may be an obscure form of *quatre*, defined as a note higher than the treble, an octave above the mean.³⁹ It could have meant that at the end of the long a note was slurred upward to a higher partial, as an ending, or as a way of breaking up the calls—a partial solution, perhaps, to the problem of static eighth notes.

Generally speaking, the term “strake” or “stroke” refers to the call in its entirety. “Strake” was probably a synonym for our modern term “hunting call.”⁴⁰

The following is a comparison of selected hunting calls from the treatises and manuscripts discussed above, presented in order to illuminate the practice, with its similarities and differences, as it was passed down through the ages. Calls that appear consistently throughout the hunting literature have been selected for comparison.

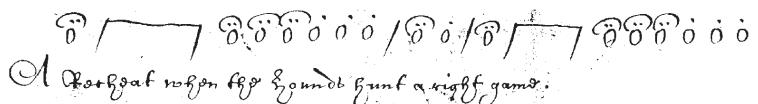
THE RECHEAT is the most widely mentioned term throughout the calls. The term is defined in OED as “the act of calling together the hounds to begin or continue the chase of a stag, or at the close of a hunt. The series of notes sounded on a horn for one or other of these purposes.”⁴¹ It stood on its own as a call, and was often added at the end of others.

The clearest description of the recheat appears in Cockaine, as part of the call “The Prize of an Hart Royall”: “... the Rechate with three winds. The first one long and five short. The second one long and one short. The third one long and five short.” [First wind: seven eighth notes, four eighth notes, and a “quatter,” followed by five groups of three eighth notes. Second wind: seven eighth notes, four eighth notes and a “quatter,” followed by one group of three eighth notes. Third wind: seven eighth notes, four eighth notes, and a quatter, followed by five groups of eighth notes.]⁴²

THE RECHATE. WITH THREE WINDES (Gascoigne)



A RECHEAT WHEN THE HOUNDS HUNT A RIGHT GAME (Yale MS 200)

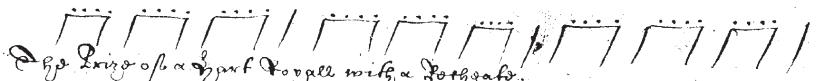


WHEN THE HOUNDE HAVE FOUND THE GAME THE RECHATE (Yale Osborn MS)

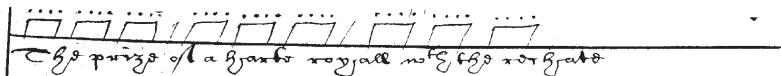


THE CALL FOR THE HART ROYALL. The hart royall was a stag of ten years or older that had been hunted by the King and not taken; a proclamation was then issued to warn everyone that no one could chase or kill the hart, making it a "hart royall".⁴³

THE PRIZE OF A HART ROYALL WITH A RECHEAT (Yale MS 200)



THE PRIZE OF A HARTE ROYALL WITH THE RECHATE (Yale Osborn MS)



THE PRYSE OF AN HART ROYALL. WITH THREE WINDES (Gascoigne)



THE PRISE (William Twiti, *The Art of Hunting*)

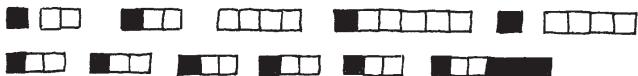
Sir, how do you blow the prise? By three long motes, then three short motes, and a long at the end ...when the Buck is taken, you blow the prise and reward your hounds with the paunch and entrails.⁴⁴

CORNURE DE PRISE (Hardouin de Fontained-Guerin, *Le trésor de vénerie*)⁴⁵

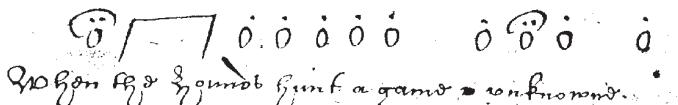
Et si vous voules corner prise,
Par ce romment vous ert aprise:
Un mot sengle prandres primier,
Un demi-double, un double entier
De chemin, un double de chasse

Sera le quart mis en espace;
 Et se pluseurs veneurs estoient,
 Ces iiiii mos cy changeroint
 Antour a chascune alenee;
 Puis doit estre chasse cornee:
 Un mot lonc; enfin la mesure
 En demonstre cette figure.

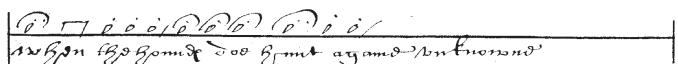
WHEN THE HOUNDS HUNT A GAME UNKNOWN (Yale, MS 200)



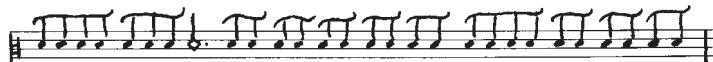
WHEN THE HOUNDDES DOE HUNT AGAME UNKNOWNE (Yale, Osborn MS)



WHEN THE HOUNDDES DO HUNTE A GAME OR CHASE UNKNOWNEN. ALL WITH ONE WINDE. (Gascoigne)

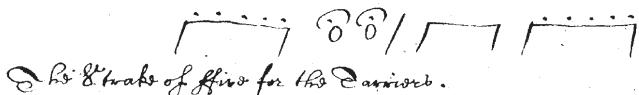


WHEN THE HOUNDS HUNT AFTER A GAME UNKNOWNE, BLOW THUS (Cockaine):



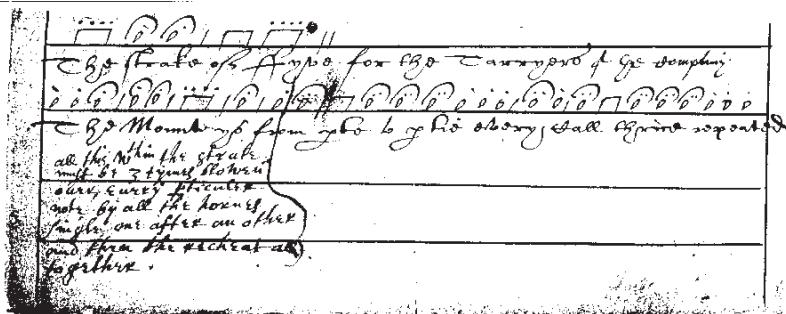
Blow the Ueline, one long, and five short: The second winde, two short and one long. The third winde, one long, and two short. [Ueline: seven eighth notes, four eighth notes and a quatter, followed by five groups of three eighth notes. Second wind: two groups of three eighth notes and seven eighth notes, four eighth notes and a quatter. Third wind: seven eighth notes, four eighth notes and a quatter followed by two groups of three eighth notes.]⁴⁶

THE STRAKE OF FIVE FOR THE TARRIERS (Yale, MS 200)



THE STRAKE OF FFYVE FOR THE TARRYERS OF THE COMPANY (Yale, Osborn) MS:

The most significant piece of information in the Osborn MS is associated with this call. A note added at the bottom of the MS, with a line leading up to the call, says, "All these within the Strake must be 3 tymes blowen ouer, euery particuler note by all the hornes single one after an other and then the Recheat all together."



Another term for used for this call is MENEE, used by Edward of Norwich in *The Master of Game* (Twiti uses the term menee as a call for animals...). His description of the call:

...first the Maister of who so is grettest next hym shalle begynne, and blowe .iii. mote allone, and at the first moot the remenaunte...shuld blowe with hym, and be ware that noon blow lenger than other, and after the thre moot, even forthwith thei shuld blowe to recopes, as thus: Trut Trut trororot, and that thei be avised that from that tyme that thei falle inne to blowe togedir, that none of hem begynne afore other ne ende after other.⁴⁷

Note the similarity with the instructions in the Osborn MS, in that the call is executed singly at first, then together.

Initially it may appear surprising that virtually all of the information on the early history of the horn is found only in non-musical sources. While it is generally known that the horn's history can be traced back to its use in the hunt, documents such as hunting literature and the two Beinecke manuscripts of hunting calls help to illustrate the development of a musical instrument whose development prior to the seventeenth century is little known.

Deducing information on performance practice from these sources may seem like grasping at straws, and the comparative wealth of information available on the early history of many other instruments makes this seem even more so. Since we have no composed music in the conventional sense to provide information on instrumental practices, evidence must

be extracted from these other non-musical sources. However, while the code for the tablature may never be broken, and the calls themselves may never be heard again as they were when taught as part of a nobleman's basic skills, the evidence is clear that playing the horn was a significant activity and that the hunting calls bear some of the same developmental features of other types of early music. The hunting horn was a unique instrument, considered not only worthy for noblemen to play, but also a necessary skill for them to master. Whatever their exact form (undoubtedly they changed through the centuries, although their basic function remained the same), these calls typified "music," and the highly evocative character of this music is what originally led composers to use them for programmatic (and perhaps symbolic) reasons in early opera and ballet, and ultimately earned for the horn a permanent spot in the orchestra.

Author's note: I am grateful to Kendall L. Crilly, Music Librarian of Yale University, for his kind advice and support in the preparation of this article.

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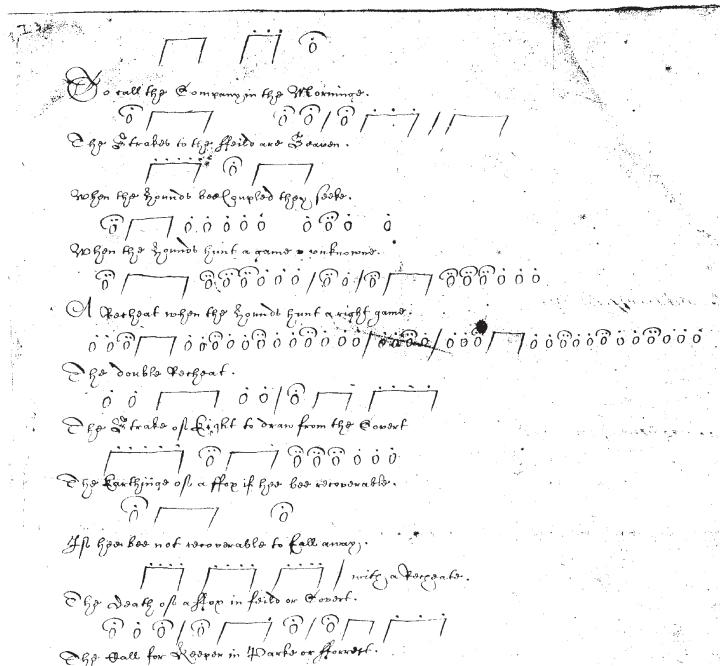


Figure 1

Manuscript 200. From the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University

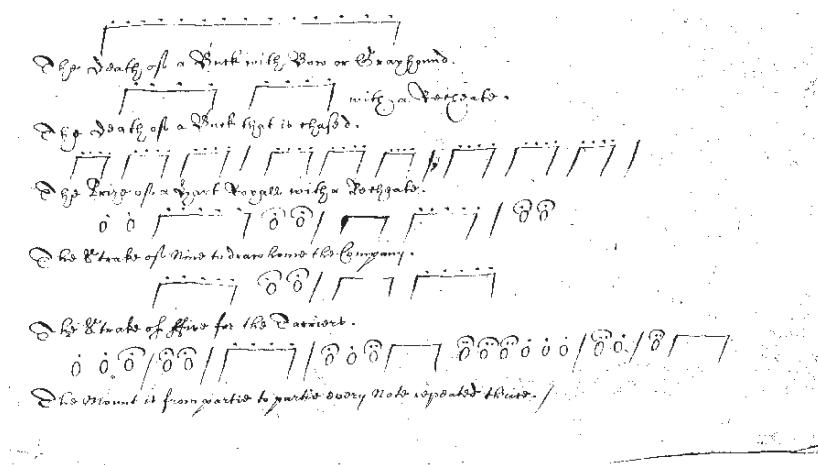


Figure 1 (cont.)

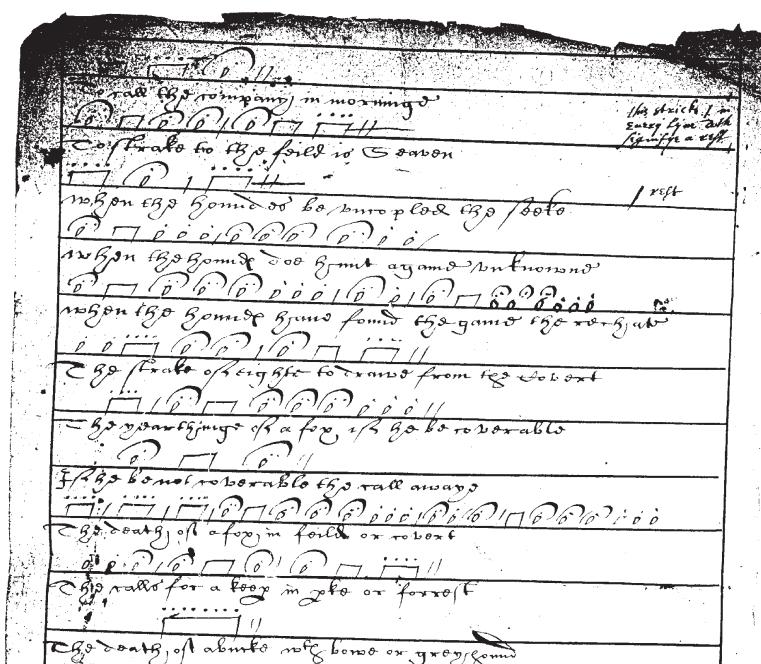


Figure 2

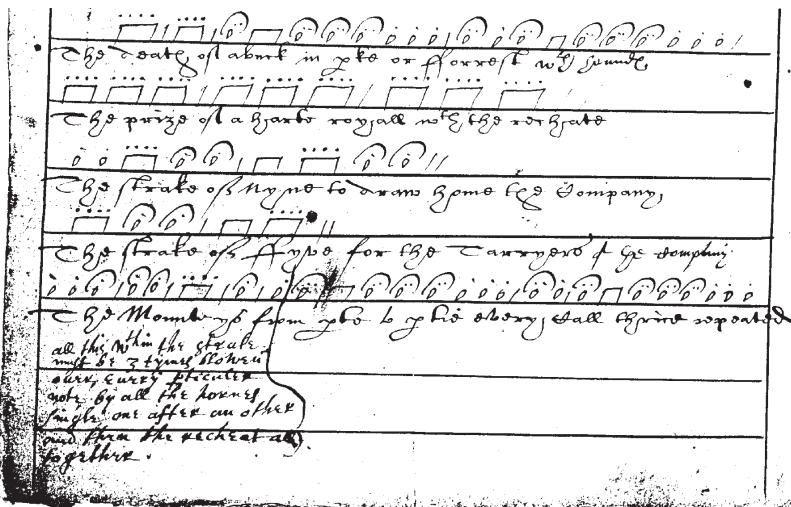


Figure 2 (cont.)

NOTES

- 1 John Cummins, *The Hound and the Hawk: The Art of Medieval Hunting* (New York, 1988), p. 160; see also the many references to the horn in *The Law of Hywel DDA: Law Texts from Medieval Wales*, transl. and ed. by Dafydd Jenkins (Llandysul, Dyfed, 1990). In the reference to oaths by the King's officers on p. 22, no mention is made of swearing by one's hounds: "...it is right for him to take his hounds and his horns and his leashes, and to go to hunt hinds (and it is right for his horn to be of buffalo-horn, and its value is a pound) and to hunt hinds from then until St. John's day at Midsummer. And during that period he is not bound to answer to anyone for a claim he may have on him, save to one of his fellow-officers. And some say that it is not right for him to swear save by his horn and his leash."
- 2 Richard Pace, *De Fructu qui ex Doctrina Percipitur* (The Benefit of a Liberal Education, 1517). Ed. and transl. by Frank Manley and Richard S. Sylvester (New York, 1967), p. 23.
- 3 Sebastian Virdung, *Musica Getutscht: A Treatise on Musical Instruments* (1511), transl. and ed. by Beth Bullard (Cambridge, 1993), p. 119.
- 4 Michael Praetorius, *Syntagma Musicum II. De Organographia Parts I and II*, transl. and ed. by David Z. Crookes (Oxford, 1986). See chapter 46, "Some Other Instruments of Classical Antiquity," p. 78.

- 5 Virdung, *Musica getutscht*, pp. 59-60.
- 6 David Dalby, *Lexicon of the Mediaeval German Hunt* (Berlin, 1965), p. 104.
- 7 Marin Mersenne, *Harmonie universelle, The Book of Instruments*, transl. by Roger E. Chapman (The Hague, 1957), pp. 315-318; p. 341.
- 8 Peter Damm, "300 Jahre Waldhorn," *Brass Bulletin* 30 (1980): 25.
- 9 Reginald Morley-Pegge, *The French Horn: Some Notes on the Evolution of the Instrument and of its Technique*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1973), p. 79.
- 10 Dalby, *Lexikon*, p. 104.
- 11 Ibid, pp. xiii-xv; p. 104.
- 12 Michael Roberts, "A Note on the Hunting Horn (Bucina) in the Latin Poetry of Late Antiquity." *Classical Philology*, vol. 77, no. 3 (1982): 248-249. I am grateful to Randy Schotz for translating this passage into English.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Ibid, p. 251.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Cummins, *Hound and Hawk*, p. 1.
- 18 *The New Harvard Dictionary of Music*, (rev. ed., Cambridge MA, 1986), pp. 624-625.
- 19 William Twiti, *The Art of Hunting* (1327; modern ed., Stockholm, 1977), pp. 21-24.
- 20 Ibid, pp. 49-51. See also the section "Comparison of Selected Hunting Horn Calls" in this article.
- 21 Gaston III Phoebus, Count of Foix, *Livre de la chasse* (1380). Color illustration reproduced from MS français 616 in the Bibliothèque Nationale in: Kurt Janetzky and Bernhard Bruchle, *The Horn*, transl. James Chater (Portland OR, 1988), p. 81.
- 22 Hardouin de Fontaines-Guerin, *Le trésor de vénerie* [1394]. Henri Kling gave an interpretation of the meaning of this black and white square tablature in *Revista Musicale Italiana*, vol. XVII, 1911, pp. 95-136. He assigned each square a "presumed" equivalent rhythmic value in modern notation. Since the publication of Kling's article, this "presumed" interpretation has become dogma. Kling seems to have been merely suggesting a possible solution to this notation.
- 23 Edward of Norwich, Second Duke of York, *The Master of Game: The Oldest English Book on Hunting* (1406-1413). The version that I have reproduced here is in the orginal Middle English as it appears in Cummins on p. 161 (taken from the 1st modern ed., London, 1904). The second modern ed. is in modern English (London, 1909), pp. 128-129.
- 24 See "Comparison of Selected Hunting Horn Calls."
- 25 Edward of Norwich, *The Master of Game*, p. 233.
- 26 Cummins, *Hound and Hawk*, p. 166.
- 27 Ibid.
- 28 Sir Thomas Mallory, *Morte Darthur* [1470] (Oxford, 1906), vol. 1, p. 242.
- 29 Sir Thomas Cockaine, *A Short Treatise of Hunting* [1591] (Oxford, 1932), "Sir Tristram's Measures of Blowing" [no page numbers]. See the "Comparison of Selected Hunting Horn Calls" in this article.
- 30 Jacques du Fouilloux, *La vénerie* [1573] (Paris, 1928). These calls are interspersed throughout the book.
- 31 George Gascoigne, *The Noble Art of Venerie or Hvnting...[1575]* (London, 1908). This work has frequently been misattributed to George Turberville; it was sometimes bound as a companion piece with Turberville's own *The Booke of Faulconrie or Haulking* (1575). Cf. Halkett and Laing, *A Dictionary of Anonymous and Pseudonymous Publications in the English Language*,

1475-1640. 3rd ed., Harlow, 1980. Instead of interspersing the calls throughout the text as in Du Fouilloux's *La vénérie*, from which it is translated, Gascoigne added a section at the end entitled "The Measures of Blowing set downe in the Notes for the more ease and ready help of such as are desirous to learne the same..." Often, when a copy of a treatise such as this or Nicolas Cox's *Gentleman's Recreation* (see n. 33) comes up for sale at auction or through book dealers, the hunting calls section will have been torn out. Presumably horn players wanted to take the music out to the field with them, but did not want to burden themselves with the bulk and/or weight of the entire book.

- 32 There is an article about two similar manuscripts in England, written by Eric Halfpenny, based upon a presentation to the Royal Music Association ("Tantivy: an Exposition of the 'Ancient Hunting Notes,'" *Proceedings of the Royal Music Association* 80 [1953-54]: 43-58). In this article Halfpenny speculates on a possible meaning and execution of the horn tablature on these sheets of horn calls (as with the case mentioned in n. 22, this speculation has, over the years, become dogma). The two manuscripts mentioned in this article are the only others known to me.
- 33 Nicolas Cox, *The Gentleman's Recreation*, 4th ed. (1697; reprint of 4th ed., London, 1928). In the British Library's 1674 copy, the horn calls are missing (see n. 31), but in a postscript to the preface, Cox added: "To show gratitude, I must not omit mentioning in my collection for hunting, my honest master Michael Marsh, Horner, living at Holborn-Bridge, who taught me to blow an horn, and as a master who teaches the notes (it is not only mine, but the vogue of all who knew him) is inferior to none of that function." In the reprint of the fourth ed., the calls are in the same type of tablature as in the Yale MSS, indicating that this type of tablature may have been used into the 18th century.
- 34 Anthony G. Pettit, *English Literary Hands From Chaucer to Dryden* (Cambridge MA, 1977). See examples on pp. 82-93 (esp. p. 88).
- 35 *The New Grove Dictionary of Musical Instruments* (London, 1984), vol. 3, p. 643. See also the excellent article by Werner Flachs and Rainer Egger, "The Hunting Horn of Jacques Dufouilloux," *Brass Bulletin* 83 (1993): 47-51.
- 36 Mersenne, *Harmonie universelle*, p. 317.
- 37 There exists a recorded example of two calls from the Gascoigne *Noble Art of Venerie or Hunting*, played by Alexander Pickard on a steer's horn (*Music in Medieval and Renaissance Life: Anthology of Vocal and Instrumental Music, 1200-1614*. Collegium Musicum of the University of Missouri, University of Missouri Press, Columbia, recorded 1962, UMPR-1001.) The calls—"The Strake to the Felde," and "The Uncoupling of the Hounds"—are misattributed to George Turberville. Pickard realized the two calls using the notated rhythmic elements only. It must also be noted that these calls from about 1575 were in all likelihood played on metal horns.
- 38 Cockaine, "Sir Tristram's Measures of Blowing."
- 39 *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2d ed. (Oxford, 1989), vol. 9, pp. 813-814; 823-824. [heretofore referred to as OED]
- 40 This is my own conclusion, drawn from the observable evidence. In the Yale MSS and some of the other sources, the calls are named "the strake of..." In the glossary at the end of Twiti's *Art of Hunting*, the Middle English term "straken" is defined: "to blow the recheat". In the glossary at the end of *The Master of Game*, "stroke, strake, or stuke" is defined as: "to sound a note on a hunting horn." In OED, "strake" is defined: "to sound (a particular call) on the horn." See the Osborn MS version of the call THE STRAKE OF FFYVE FOR THE TARRYERS OF THE COMPANY, "All these within the strake..."
- 41 OED, p. 326.

- 42 Cockaine, "Sir Tristram's Measures of Blowing."
- 43 Edward of Norwich, *The Master of Game*, p. 226.
- 44 Twiti, *Hunting*, pp. 51, 53-55.
- 45 Kling, "Le cor de chasse," p. 106.
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 Cummins, *Hound and Hawk*, p. 166.