Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society

VOLUME VIII • 1982



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A Trumpet by Any Other Name: Toward an Etymology of the Trumpet Marine

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Of the many unanswered questions surrounding the fascinating instrument known as the trumpet marine, there is none more perplexing than that of the derivation and significance of the many peculiar names attached to it. It would seem that enough industrious digging should unearth clear-cut explanations. But after years of searching we must report discouraging results: some clarification, but no neat answers. In fact, the etymology of the trumpet marine appears to be a history of misconceptions, misunderstandings, and mistranslations.

The myriad names of the instrument can be sorted rather tidily into three related groups:

- I. Names of the Trumscheit family
- II. Combinations of the Trumpet marine family
- III. Compounds based on the stem Nonne-

The three groups of names form a clear chronological progression encompassing the last five hundred years (table 1). The earliest written occurrence of the German form was in 1511, when Sebastian Virdung and Johannes Cochlaeus discussed, respectively, the *Trumscheit* and *Trumelscheit*. Similar compounds were then used exclusively for over one hundred years, last appearing in Michael Praetorius's *De organographia* of 1619. No earlier combination of *trumpet* with *marine* has been discovered than the *trompette marine* discussed by Christophe de Villiers in a letter written to Marin Mersenne in 1634. From that time on, however, some form of this name became the near-universal designation for the instrument. Although the German *Trumscheit* was reintroduced (as *Trummel-scheit*) by Johann Gottfried Walther in 1732⁴ and was pa-

^{1.} Sebastian Virdung, Musica getutscht (Basel, 1511), fol. B ii v; Johannes Cochlaeus, Tetrachordum musices, trans. C. Miller (Rome: American Institute of Musicology, 1970), p. 32.

^{2.} Michael Praetorius, De organographia (Wolfenbüttel, 1619), pp. 57-59.

^{3.} Letter of Christophe de Villiers (3 March 1634) in Marin Mersenne, Correspondance, ed. C. de Waard (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1955), 4: 59.

^{4.} Johann Gottfried Walther, Musicalisches Lexicon (Leipzig, 1732), p. 621.

TABLE 1 Chronology of Trumpet Marine Names

	Trumscheit	Trumpet marine	Nonnengeige	
1500	1511			Period of primary citations
1600	1619	1634		· · Period of historical · · · citations
1700	·	!!!		···
1800	: "," :	: 1797 :		
1900			. 1890 .	

triotically fostered by later German historians, and though *Nonne*-compounds were coined in the late nineteenth century, variants of the name *trumpet marine* have continued to be the most commonly used.

Group I: Names of the Trumscheit Family

The principal problem with this group is the dual meaning of the German etymon *Trumbe* as either *trumpet* or *drum*. A glance at some entries from a Middle High German dictionary⁵ will show how troublesomely vague in meaning the stem *trumbe*- can be (table 2). This is vexing, because there is no way to determine with certainty the thinking of those who first combined some form of *Trumbe* with *Scheit*, a stick or log. Did they intend to refer to the trumpetlike timbre of the instrument, or to the drumming sound of the vibrating bridge?

TABLE 2
Various Meanings of the German Stem Trumbe-

trumbe, trumpe, trumme, trume swf. posaune, trompete; trommel; laute trumbel, trumel stf. trommel; lärm trumbelen, trumelen swv. trommeln trumbelierer, trumlierer stm. trompeter trumbel-nunne swf. begine [béguine, lay-sister] trumben, trumpetn, trumen swv. trompeten; trommeln trumbiere, trumiere swf. = trumbe

^{5.} Matthias Lexer, Mittelhochdeutsches Taschenwörterbuch (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1901), p. 274.

The "trumpet" derivation was championed by Jeffrey Pulver, 6 who, following the lead of Ludwig Bechstein in the last century, insisted that the form Trumbscheit was based on the old German Trumbe as it was used, for instance, in the Nibelungenlied (verse 2990): "Von Trumben und von vloiten der schall war so groz." It does not seem, however, that the puzzle is solved as neatly as Pulver and others would have it. As an example, in the two earliest German citations, both from 1511, the intention of the writers is not at all clear. When Virdung in his Musica getutscht spoke derogatorily of the trumpet marine, along with such other unfretted string instruments as rebecs, he employed the ambiguous term Trumscheit. But Johannes Cochlaeus, in his Tetrachordum musices, made passing reference to the Trumelscheit, a spelling definitely suggesting a "drumming" derivation. 10

This dichotomy of interpretation, aggravated by the lack of spelling standardization, produced a bewildering array of orthographical variants in Germanic and Eastern European languages. Even after the reappearance of the name *Trumscheit* in the eighteenth century, new versions continued to be invented (table 3). In only two instances has the *trum*- stem (in the sense of *trumpet*) been combined with a word other than -scheit: in the *Trompetengeige* employed by occasional nineteenth-century commentators, ¹¹ and in the *violitromba* of Vissian's musical dictionary. ¹² On the other hand the rattling, buzzing sound of the instrument, which may have given rise to the "drum" association, has inspired several imaginative designations preserving the -scheit stem. Olof Lind in his 1749 dictionary listed *Kratzscheit* [kratzen: to scratch] as an alternative name, ¹³ and Edward Payne in his Grove's *Dictionary* article cited *Brummscheit* [brummen: to hum or growl]. ¹⁴

Loosely associated with the *Trumscheit* group of names are a pair of Latin designations, the one derived from the "trumpet" idea, the other

^{6.} Jeffrey Pulver, "The Tromba Marina, or Trumscheit," The Strad 25 (1914): 56.

^{7.} Ludwig Bechstein, "Die Trompetengeige, ein alterthümliches, musikalisches Instrument," Hennebergischer alterthümsforschender Verein 5 (1834): 92.

Ibid.

^{9.} Virdung, Musica getutscht, fol. B ii v.

^{10.} Cochlaeus, Tetrachordum musices, p. 32.

^{11.} E.g., Heinrich Welcker, Neu eröffnetes Magazin musikalischer Tonzeugwerke (Frankfurt, 1855), pp. 80-97.

^{12.} Massimino Vissian, Dizionario della musica (Milan, 1846), p. 192.

^{13.} Olof Lind, Teutsch-schwedisches und schwedisch-teutsches Lexicon oder Wörter-buch (Stockholm, 1740-49).

^{14.} Edward Payne, "Tromba Marina," A Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 1st ed., ed. G. Grove (London, 1890), 4: 174.

TABLE 3 Variants of the Trumscheit Family

Drumelscheid	Trummelscheit	Trumscheidt
Drumscheit	Trummscheid	Trumscheit
Trumbelschit	Trummscheidt	Trumschit
Trumbscheit	Trummscheit	Trumschyt
Trumelscheit	Trummschit	Trumšejt
Trumelscheyt	Trumšayt	Trumšeyt
,	Trumscheid	,

from the "drum." The former, tuba manualis, was derived by Dechalles in 1674 specifically to distinguish the instrument from the mouth trumpet. The other, a more intriguing form fabricated by Glareanus for his Dodecachordon of 1547, translated the Trommel idea into tympani and added to it the late Latin schiza [stick] in place of Scheidt. Although neither version found general acceptance, the tympanischiza of Glareanus did inspire an enterprising suggestion by one writer that, in light of the instrument's history of use in the church, chiza might be viewed as a corruption of chiesa! 17

Group II: Combinations of the Trumpet marine Family

Early in the seventeenth century numerous variants of trumpet marine became established as the most widely employed designations for the instrument (table 4). But neither then nor now has anyone proposed a completely successful explanation of the puzzling modifier marine. Certainly the most enduring interpretation has been the one relating marine to the sea. A typical explication of the association with the sea was set forth in the last century by Paul de Wit in his Pearls from the Collection of Musical Instruments: the instruments were "named sea trumpets because they were frequently employed on ships entering port to signal for a pilot." Julius Rühlmann in his Geschichte der Bogeninstrumente cited a similar account in Ree's Encyclopedia of 1820, and affirmed that "this instrument was introduced into the English navy as a signal

^{15.} R. P. Dechalles, Cursus seu mundus mathematicus (Lyon, 1674), book 4, prop. 23.

^{16.} Heinrich Glarean, *Dodedachordon*, trans. C. Miller (Rome: American Institute of Musicology, 1956), 1: 87.

^{17.} Paul Garnault, La trompette marine (Nice: Chez l'auteur, 1926), p. 10, n. 18.

^{18.} Paul de Wit, Pearls from the Collection of Musical Instruments (Leipzig, 1892), p. 10.

TABLE 4
Variants of the Trumpet Marine Family

Marientrompete	tromp marine	trumarina
marina trompa	Trompa Maria	trumarýna
marin-trompette	•	trumerina
marine Trompet	trompet mariae	
marintrompete	trompet marin	trump marin
marintrumpet	trompet-marine	trump marine
	trompeta-marina	trumpet marin
tromba marina	trompete marine	trumpet marine
tromba marino	trompetmarin	
	trompetta Mariana	Rumpelmarie
trombe marinen	trompetta Maria	
trombeta marinha	trompetta marina	tuba marina
trombeten marinen	trompette marine	tubalcanna
trombo marino	-	tubmaryna

instrument on their ships, to which purpose the English name 'trumpet marine' corresponds." A more romantic exposition of the instrument's history was proffered by the French trumpet marine virtuoso Jean-Baptiste Prin in his monograph of 1742. Prin placed the instrument initially in the hands of students who

subsist during the course of their studies only through the alms given to them in the evenings at the various doors of citizens and rich students, where they go in concerted bands to perform musical numbers to their liking. The trumpet marine, which is audible from a distance and is pleasant at night, especially with the oboes and other curious instruments which they played alternately and in chorus, was in favor with them for a time. As all nationalities are accepted in these universities, there were Dutch and English students there who conveyed to their homelands the enjoyment of this trumpet. They played it on their ships, and made themselves heard in the various sea lanes where they cast anchor. The French sailors likewise applied themselves to playing it and soon surpassed their neighbors in performance. They called it "marine" and were the last to play it. They did not restrict themselves to using it at sea; they played it on the rivers, in the forests, in the castles, country houses, often even in the towns.²⁰

Regrettably, all such stories must be judged more picturesque than pertinent, for we have uncovered no authentic documentation of the

^{19.} Julius Rühlmann, Geschichte der Bogenistrumente (Braunschweig, 1882), p. 24.

^{20.} Jean-Baptiste Prin, Traité sur la trompette marine, Bibliothèque de la Ville de Lyon, Rés. 133670, fol. 7v.

use of the trumpet marine on shipboard.²¹ Moreover, there is scarcely a less likely candidate imaginable for use in the cramped quarters of a ship, either as a signalling device or as an instrument for diversion. The trumpet marine is, after all, a clumsy beast as tall as a man, which when cased would require a pair of husky sailors to haul it about, and which would often necessitate the better part of an hour spent in delicate adjustments to produce a sound. Nevertheless, such fictional histories of the trumpet marine have been so generally accepted that the instrument could be used in serious music to convey the spirit of the sea and of sailors.²²

There remains one "nautical" hypothesis which cannot be lightly dismissed, because it is the most plausible attempt to explain both the name and the tenuous connection with the sea. It has been suggested that the instrument was called *tromba marina* in Italian because its shape resembled the naval speaking trumpet or megaphone of that name. In fact, such a device was pictured by Filippo Bonanni in his *Gabinetto armonico* of 1723. Regarding such a derivation Edward Payne wrote:

Little doubt on this point can remain in the mind of anyone who compares the figures of the two objects in old pictures and engravings, or the objects themselves as they stand side by side in the Munich Museum.

One wonders, however, what Payne's understanding of the speaking trumpet was, since he concluded his comparison with the puzzling observation:

The name was perhaps confirmed by the character of the tone, and by the circumstance that both instruments have the same harmonic scale. 23

Not only in Italy does there seem to have been a link between the trumpet marine and the speaking trumpet. In a French translation of *Oliver Twist*, a passage describing a man's roar as "something between a mad bull and a speaking trumpet" was rendered "qui tenait du mugissement d'un taureau furieux et des accents d'une trompette marine."²⁴

There have been a number of earnest attempts to relate the word

^{21.} E.g., Garnault, La trompette marine, p. 11, n. 20, reported that while ear trumpets and speaking trumpets were mentioned in old English navigation manuals, there were no references to the trumpet marine.

^{22.} E.g., The fourth entrée of Lully's ballet music to Xerxes or Alessandro Scarlatti's Mitridate Eupatore, introduction to act 4.

^{23.} Payne, "Tromba Marina," p. 176

^{24.} Cited in René Brancour, Histoire des instruments de musique (Paris: Laurens, 1921), p. 10, n. 1.

marine to the name of some individual said to be the inventor of the instrument. The most common conjecture along this line is that the trumpet marine was invented in the sixteenth century by an Italian named Marino or Marigni. S As recently as 1933 Canon Galpin made the ingenuous assertion that the instrument could be attributed "to the inventive skill of Maurin or Marin, a celebrated French artiste and trumpeter, of the closing years of the fifteenth century, or it may have received its name in his honour." Although such suppositions have frequently been repeated, none is now taken seriously. Indeed, Franz Krautwurst proposed that Galpin's derivation be relegated to the realm of fables. T

In 1911 Edmund van der Straeten conjectured that the extensive use of the trumpet marine in convents "caused it to be called trompetta Mariana, which was afterwards corrupted to trompetta marina." It is more likely that the corruption proceeded in the other direction, since names reminiscent of the Virgin Mary do not begin to appear until the eighteenth century. Paul Garnault, in his monograph on the instrument, facetiously suggested that the amateur who translated trumpet marine as Marien trumpet was probably the same person who identified the orgue de Barbari as the invention of a Modenese luthier named Berberi. Still, however erroneous their derivation, names for the instrument honoring Mary were seriously employed. In 1738 Wolfgang Iten, in the first of two pieces he composed for the Convent St. Andreas at Sarnen in Switzerland, actually specified the parts for "2 violini oder trompetta Maria." Then again, in the 1733 inventory of the Cöthen Chapel, item 36 was cited as "eine trompete mariae."

As early as 1883 Carl Engel had suggested that an investigation of the word maryna, as it was employed around Cracow for a folk bass

^{25.} Vigneul-Marville, cited by Garnault, La trompette marine, p. 11; John Robison, "Trumpet Marine," Encyclopaedia Britannica, 3d ed., Supp. (1801), 2: 709; John Good, Pantologia, 12 vols. (London, 1813), cited by Francis Galpin, "Mr Prin and His Trompette Marine," Music and Letters 14 (1933): 22.

^{26.} F. Galpin, Old English Instruments of Music (London: Methuen, 1911), p. 98; idem, "Mr. Prin," p. 22.

^{27.} Franz Krautwurst, "Trumscheit," Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1966), vol. 13, col. 853.

^{28.} Edmund van der Straeten, *The Romance of the Fiddle* (London, 1911; facs. ed., New York: B. Blom, 1971), p. 132.

^{29.} Garnault, La trompette marine, p. 10, n. 18.

^{30.} Wolfgang Iten, Pastorella oder ein Lateinisches Weihnachtslied, Stift Engelberg, Musikbibliothek, Ms. E.02.11.

^{31.} Cited in Curt Sachs, Real-Lexikon der Musikinstrumente (Berlin: Hesse, 1913), p. 254.

instrument, might reveal the original, unsuspected meaning of marine.³² This proposal was then reiterated by Curt Sachs in the Real-Lexikon of 1913.³³ Although the relation between the Polish maryna and the pan-European marine has not as yet been carefully studied, it seems probable that once again the direction of etymological development has been misconstrued. It is far more likely that the trumpet marine (tub-marina, trumarýna, etc.), which has frequently been depicted played as a one-string bass, lent its name to the various related folk bass instruments found in Eastern Europe. Similarly, the term Rumpelmarie, employed by the Germans around Hirschberg in Czechoslovakia, probably derived, not from Maria, but from the familiar marine, particularly so in that these folk trumpet marines commonly served as simple bass instruments.³⁴

One little-explored line of derivation with intriguing possibilities reaches back to the term used in the earliest written description of the trumpet marine. In the manuscript Liber viginti artium (ca. 1459) Paulus Paulirinus of Prague employed the designation tubalcanna. ³⁵ The Latin canna can be interpreted as either reed or boat, but the latter is the more likely here, since Paulus had earlier described the related monochord as "a long instrument in the shape of a boat [canna]."36 Thus we seem to have in tubalcanna a trumpet-boat—apparently a prime contender for the honor of etymological ancestor of the vernacular trumpet marine. However, any enthusiasm for this neat solution must be considerably dampened by two facts: some 175 years separate tubalcanna from the first appearance of trompette marine (1634); and Paulus's treatise, the only source to employ this Latin designation, was not widely circulated. 37 Moreover, Hans Seidl and more recently Standley Howell have further muddied what might first have seemed to be a clear spring by asserting that tubal did not refer to trumpet, but was a name inter-

^{32.} Carl Engel, Researches into the History of the Violin Family (London, 1883), p. 14.

^{33.} Sachs, Real-Lexikon, p. 398.

^{34.} Cf. Ludvik Kunz, Die Volksmusikinstrumente der Tschechoslowakei Leipzig: VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, 1974), p. 72.

^{35.} Paulus Paulirinus, Liber viginti artium, Cracow, Biblioteka Jagiellónska, Codex 257, fol. 162v.

^{36.} Ibid., fol. 162r.

^{37.} The only copy known to have survived the sixteenth century is incomplete and imperfect. It was discovered in the mid-eighteenth century hidden in a wall where it had lain for more than one hundred years. See Standley Howell, "Paulus Paulirinus of Prague on Musical Instruments," this *Journal* 5–6 (1980–81): 12–13.

changeable with the Biblical Jubal.³⁸ Since Jubal was often represented in medieval literature as the discoverer of the musical hammers, tubalcanna becomes in the thinking of Seidl and Howell, not trumpet-boat, but hammer-boat. This is, according to Howell, "perhaps a reference to the hammering of the bridge's shorter foot on the body of the instrument.³⁹

Finally, there is the innovative hypothesis proposed a few years ago by Martin Vogel, which demonstrates a close relationship between the words marine and amore. 40 Vogel traces both back to the ancient stem h-m-r, forms of which were used in various Semitic languages for beasts of burden, especially hybrid animals like the mule. Through a long series of derivations he equates amore and marine to the parallel Indo-European terms bordone and bastarda. Vogel then suggests that the trumpet marine, the viola d'amore, the viola di bordone, and the viola bastarda were so named because they were hybrid instruments—specifically that they were hybridized by the addition of sympathetic strings to an existing bowed string instrument.

There is, however, a basic organological problem with Vogel's otherwise impressive semantic demonstration. Except for the viola di bordone, all the names seem to have been in common use before sympathetic strings were added to the instruments. For example, the term *viola bastarda* dates back at least to 1589, 41 but the first references to sympathetic strings did not appear until well after 1600. 42 Similarly, Praetorius described a viola d'amore with bowed metal strings in 1619, 43 but the earliest evidence of sympathetic strings on the instrument comes from the 1670s, and the first printed description from 1687. 44 As to the trumpet marine, although the term is first

^{38.} Hans Seidl, Der "Tractatus de Musica" des Pergament-Kodex Nr. 257 Krakow unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Musikinstrumentenkunde (Ph.D. diss., Karl Marx University, Leipzig, 1957); Howell, "Paulus Paulirinus," p. 33.

^{39.} Howell, "Paulus Paulirinus," p. 34.

^{40.} Martin Vogel, "Zur Etymologie von tromba marina," Report of the Eleventh Congress, Copenhagen 1972 (Copenhagen: Wilhelm Hansen, 1974), 2: 696-701.

^{41.} Otto Kinkeldey, Orgel und Klavier in der Musik des 16. Jahrhunderts (Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, 1910), p. 173.

^{42.} Praetorius, De organographia, p. 47; John Playford, Musick's Recreation on the Viol, Lyra-way (London, 1661), preface.

^{43.} Praetorius, De organographia, p. 48.

^{44.} John Evelyn, The Diary of John Evelyn, ed. E. S. de Beer (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1959), p. 675 (20 November 1679); Daniel Speer, Grundrichtiger, kurz, leicht, und nöthiger Unterricht der musicalischen Kunst (Ulm, 1687), pp. 90–91. According to Lütgendorff,

recorded—apparently as the generally accepted nomenclature—in the correspondence of 1634 between Mersenne and his friend Christophe de Villiers, there is no mention of sympathetic strings until Samuel Pepys referred to them with some amazement in an instrument he heard played in 1667, over a quarter of a century after the name was in common use. ⁴⁵ Furthermore, of the nearly two hundred surviving trumpet marines we have examined, only twelve have been equipped with sympathetic strings; of these the earliest is an instrument of Swiss manufacture dated 1689. ⁴⁶ Given such evidence, it appears that the hybridization required by Vogel's etymology would be better sought in other more essential characteristics of these instruments—in the case of the trumpet marine, perhaps in the anomaly of a pungent brass timbre produced by a string instrument.

Group III: Compounds Based on the Stem Nonne-

This last group of names, consisting of the three late nineteenth-century inventions *Nonnengeige, Nonnenbass*, and *Nonnentrompette*, is the least problematic. It is true that several twentieth-century commentators have scoffed at the idea that the trumpet marine was extensively employed in convents, often implying that anyone who would suggest it had a lively imagination. The English writer on instruments Gerald Hayes, for example, declared that "there are only shadowy grounds for supposing that it was used in convents." On the contrary, the evidence for such use is quite solid. Of the eighty-three instruments whose place of origin or use we have been able to identify, some thirty-four are traceable to convents. In fact, after 1800, convents were virtually the only places where the instrument was still employed for serious music. As late as the 1880s Julius Rühlmann could write of the nuns of St.

Handel composed a piece for an instrument built by Pietro Castrucci which resembled a viola d'amore. Castrucci called his invention a violetto marina—an interesting correlation of the words marina and amore, whose kinship has been pointed out by Vogel. Willibald Lütgendorff, Die Geigen- und Lautenmacher, 5th and 6th eds. (Frankfurt, 1922; facs. ed., Liechtenstein: Kraus, 1968), 2: 68.

^{45.} Samuel Pepys, The Diary of Samuel Pepys, ed. R. Latham and W. Matthews (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 8: 500.

^{46.} Basel, Historisches Museum 1956.423. Label: Johann Baltasar Berler aus Schwytz. . . 23 May Anno 1689.

^{47.} Gerald Hayes, The Viols and Other Bowed Instruments (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1930), p. 225.

Marienthal in Saxony performing intradas for special festivals on a quartet of trumpet marines with timpani.⁴⁸ As a reflection of such practices, "nunnish" appellations began to appear in the late nineteenth century: *Nonnengeige* in Edward Payne's article for the first edition of Grove's *Dictionary* in 1890, *Nonnenbass* in a Cologne auction catalogue of 1893, and then *Nonnentrompette* after the turn of the century.⁴⁹

* * *

What then have we found? Not, unfortunately, a clear explanation for the origin of many of the puzzling names attached to this vexing instrument. Regarding those names of the "marine" group in particular, there is a good deal of convincing evidence pointing in quite different etymological directions. Although it is tempting to leave this evidence to speak for itself, some expression of the authors' opinion is doubtless in order. Our own preference would be the hypothesis of Martin Vogel tracing both the words marine and amore back to a Semitic stem used for hybrid beasts of burden, although our enthusiasm is necessarily tempered by the organological difficulties previously discussed. And then there is the disconcerting fact of the persistent connection in the folk mind of the trumpet marine with the sea. It would perhaps be presumptious to discard out-of-hand all the popular "nautical" explanations, or at least the more reasonable of them, such as the one concerning the instrument's resemblance to the naval speaking trumpet, or tromba marina.

^{48.} Rühlmann, Geschichte der Bogeninstrumente, p. 30.

^{49.} Payne, "Tromba Marina," p. 174; Catalogue of Chr. Hammer's Auction (Cologne, May 1893), no. 1345; Olga Racster, *Chats on Violoncellos* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1907), p. 58.