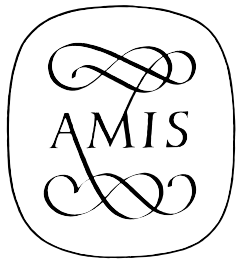
Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society

VOLUME XXXV • 2009



COMMUNICATIONS

More on the Heckelphone

Robert Howe and Peter Hurd

This communication is an addendum to our article "The Heckelphone at 100," this Journal 30 (2004): 98–165. We noted there that only the firm of Wilhelm Heckel GmbH, Biebrich, has made heckelphones commercially. We noted also the common confusion between the heckelphone and bass oboe, which share general range and orchestral roles. The lower range of both of these instruments varies, with heckelphones available to sounding *B*, *B*♭, or *A* (the latter being commonest: parts are notated an octave above sounding pitch) and bass oboes to *B* or *B*♭ (the former predominating). The missing low notes create difficulty when substituting bass oboe for heckelphone, as is often done.

We commented upon the physical challenges of playing instruments that are too long to be comfortably used in an orchestra chair. We inferred that the heckelphone, which initially sold well and was extensively used by then-contemporary composers, might have achieved great popularity had it not been introduced in the decade before World War I. Finally, we concluded that much of the heckelphone's difficulty in gaining use today stems from its very high price relative to other woodwinds, making it unattractive as a doubling instrument.[1] Unmentioned in our paper was that in the staple orchestral work of the heckelphone repertoire, Richard Strauss's *Eine Alpensinfonie*, the heckelphone has exposed passages down to *F;* these must be taken by bassoon, bass clarinet or another deep woodwind.

All of these observations are altered by a recent invention of the German woodwind makers Guntram and Peter Wolf (figs. 1 and 2). Working since 2001, the Wolfs have constructed a double reed instrument in the shape of a saxophone, with an adjustable floor peg. The bore is smaller than that of a heckelphone, but larger than that of a French bass oboe, and the taper of the bore is likewise intermediate between the two instruments. The tone holes are as large or larger than those of a

1. This last point was emphasized in Robert Howe's presentation "The Maturation, Use and Abuse of the Heckelphone" at the thirty-sixth annual meeting of the American Musical Instrument Society, New Haven, CT, June 28, 2007.

FIGURE 1. Lupophone #1, with Peter Wolf behind. Wolf is holding a heckelphone and stands next to a bass oboe.

FIGURE 2. Peter Wolf, Robert Howe, and Guntram Wolf with lupophone #1.

heckelphone. The upturned portion of the instrument (including the CNC-milled bell) carries tone holes to extend the range to *F*.

This instrument, named the *lupophone* ("lupus" being Latin for "wolf"), is intended to serve the roles of both bass oboe and heckelphone in a way that neither instrument can alone. In the public debut of the instrument, we played lupophone #1 for more than sixty minutes each at the International Double Reed Society meeting in Provo, Utah, on July 25–26, 2008, comparing it to Lorée bass oboe HW13 and heckelphone 3985 (fig. 3). We spent several hours talking with the Wolfs, who, in an unintended analogy with Wilhelm and August Heckel, are father and son. The Wolfs are also the inventors of the contraforte, a new variety of contrabassoon.

We found the lupophone to be an effective woodwind. It has the character and timbre of the heckelphone with the more subtle articulation of the bass oboe. That the bottom note is *F* makes problematic low notes in the bass oboe literature easy. For example, the low *B* solos in Holst's *The Planets* now vent from the center of the instrument. The shape of the instrument and use of the floor peg place the reed and finger touches in

FIGURE 3. Robert Howe with heckelphone; Peter Hurd with lupophone. Provo, Utah, July 26, 2008.

easy reach, while the weight of the instrument is borne by the floor. The double reed is of a comfortable size for bassoonists. It will take some getting used to for oboe players (which we both are), but the instrument is a legitimate double for players of either instrument. Priced at €13,000 (about 40% the price of a heckelphone and 120% of a bass oboe), this new woodwind is meant to provide symphony and opera orchestras with a single choice for music written for either instrument.

For the lupophone to be accepted in this role will be very difficult. There will be confusion among three instruments of similar range and role, especially since, as a courtesy to the Heckel firm, the Wolfs chose not to call their instrument an extended-range heckelphone, but instead gave it an unfamiliar eponymous name, while describing it as "the new bass oboe." Furthermore, the lupophone was introduced just as global economic conditions made budgets unusually tight for arts organizations and for individual musicians.

Whether the lupophone will become a footnote of the twenty-first century even as the heckelphone is "a curiosity of the twentieth"[2] will be decided by oboists, bassoonists, conductors, composers, and (most especially) orchestra comptrollers in the coming decades.

2. Howe and Hurd, "The Heckelphone at 100," 107–8.

A Recently Found Graves & Co. Valved Bugle

Robert E. Eliason

In July of 2009, Mark Elrod and Jeff Stockham were performing with Stockham's Excelsior Brass Band of Syracuse, New York, at the Montour County Iron Heritage Festival in Danville, Pennsylvania. Between events they visited the Montour County Historical Society Museum to see an unusual instrument they had heard about. What they discovered was one of the finest Graves & Co. presentation instruments they had ever seen: a silver E-flat valved bugle with elaborately decorated bell and unique enclosed-stop string-action rotary valves (fig. 1). This newly discovered

Figure 1a. Left side.

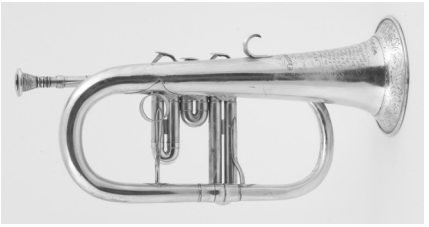


Figure 1b. Right side.

Figure 1c. Bell engraving.

Figure 1. Graves & Co. Boston E-flat cornet. Photos courtesy of the Montour County Historical Society, Danville, Pennsylvania.

instrument provides additional evidence of the firm's involvement in the evolution of American string-action rotary valve design.

The engraving on the bell includes the following:

Presented to
Charles H. Stoes
Leader of
Stoes' Silver Cornet Band
Danville, Pa
BY HIS FRIENDS
[list of 21 names]
AND OTHERS
Made by Graves & Co. Boston

According to D. H. Brower's *Danville Past And Present, Danville, Montour County, Pennsylvania: A Collection of Historical and Biographical Sketches* (Harrisburg, PA: Lane S. Hart, Printer and Binder, 1881), page 154:

> The first regular cornet band there, "The Danville Independent Band," was organized early in 1838. Abraham Sechler [1814–1897] was chosen president and leader. . . . The uniform was blue cloth. The coats were trimmed with yellow lace and brass buttons. The by-laws also required them to wear "stand-up collars." The constitution and by-laws adopted, were drawn up with much care and contain some excellent rules, among them is one imposing a fine of two dollars in case of intoxication during the hours of duty. . . . In 1855, Charles H. Stoes became the leader of the Danville Cornet Band as it was then called, and in 1857, through the aid of the citizens, a complete set of new instruments was procured. As these were of German Silver and an instrument presented to Stoes was of solid silver, the band gained the name "Stoes' Silver Cornet Band." For years this band was one of the most distinguished in the state, bearing away the honors on many public occasions in various parts of the country.

The Montour County Historical Society has an original 1857 map with an image of Stoes' Silver Cornet Band on Main Street in Danville in their horse-drawn bandwagon (fig. 2). A broadside of ca. 1859 advertising a concert by this band also survives (fig. 3). The program contents confirm that this was indeed a fine musical organization.

One of the details of the bugle's design is a right thumb support ring (fig. 4). This certainly made a lot of sense in holding the instrument securely, and it is surprising that it was not a standard feature on all top-action rotary-valve cornets and valved bugles. Among other interesting

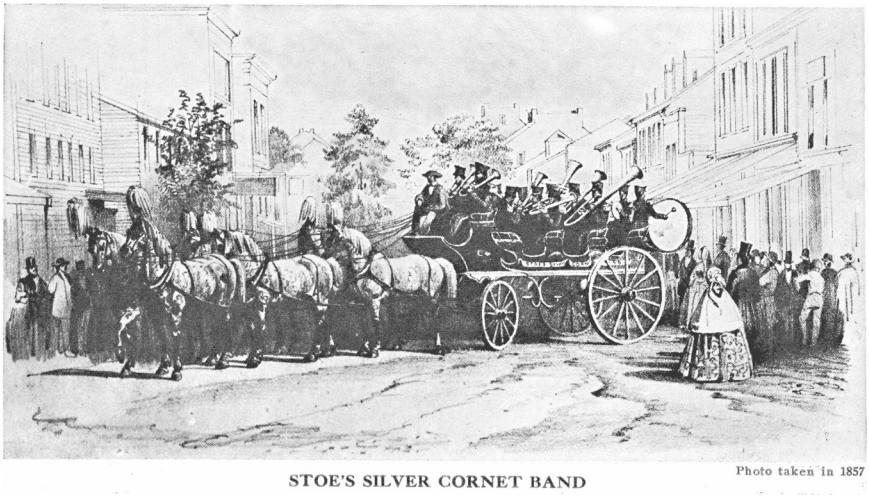
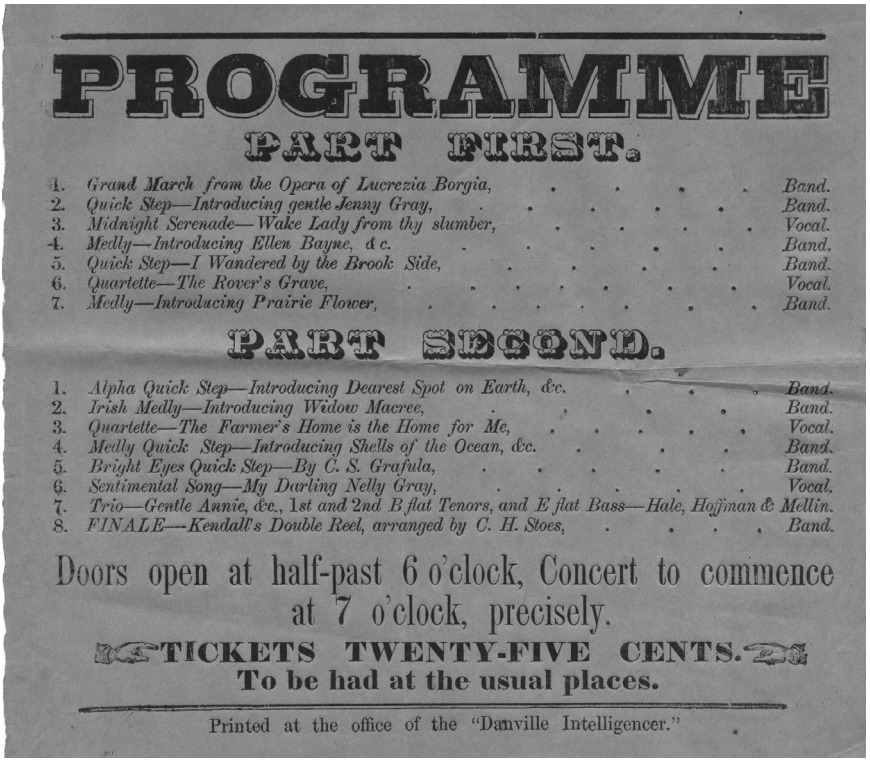


FIGURE 2. Stoes' Silver Cornet Band and band wagon in 1857, depiction appearing on a map of Danville, "engraved and published by Thomas A. Hurley, Civil Engineer, Perth Amboy, New Jersey, 1857." Photo courtesy of the Montour County Historical Society, Danville, Pennsylvania.

details are the distinctive X braces between bell and main tube and their diamond-shaped footplates (fig. 5).

The biggest surprise, however, was the use of internally stopped string-action rotary valves. No other instrument by Graves & Co. is known to have this type of valve. In my article "D. C. Hall and the Quinby Brothers, Boston Music Industry Leaders: Makers of Brass Instruments with Flat, Round, Square, and Piston Valves," this JOURNAL 33 (2007): 84–161, I wrote that "internally stopped string-action 'round' rotary valves first appeared on instruments of the mid-1850s signed by Henry Prentiss, a Boston music retailer, and by the New York makers Rohe & Leavitt and Christian R. Stark. Similar valves, but with mechanical action, appear on instruments signed Klemm & Bro., Philadelphia" (pp. 94–95). In these models, "the corks are mounted at either end of a slot in the bearing plate and engaged by a pin sticking up from the rotor"; a screw cap covered the bearing plate and corks. The earliest American internally stopped string-action valves, also described in "D. C. Hall and the Quinby Brothers," were the so-called "flat" valves designed by J. Lathrop



PROGRAMME

PART FIRST.

1. *Grand March from the Opera of Lucrezia Borgia,* . . . . . *Band.*
2. *Quick Step—Introducing gentle Jenny Gray,* . . . . . *Band.*
3. *Midnight Serenade—Wake Lady from thy slumber,* . . . . . *Vocal.*
4. *Medly—Introducing Ellen Bayne, &c.* . . . . . *Band.*
5. *Quick Step—I Wandered by the Brook Side,* . . . . . *Band.*
6. *Quartette—The Rover's Grave,* . . . . . *Vocal.*
7. *Medly—Introducing Prairie Flower,* . . . . . *Band.*

PART SECOND.

1. *Alpha Quick Step—Introducing Dearest Spot on Earth, &c.* . . . . . *Band.*
2. *Irish Medly—Introducing Widow Macree,* . . . . . *Band.*
3. *Quartette—The Farmer's Home is the Home for Me,* . . . . . *Vocal.*
4. *Medly Quick Step—Introducing Shells of the Ocean, &c.* . . . . . *Band.*
5. *Bright Eyes Quick Step—By C. S. Grafula,* . . . . . *Band.*
6. *Sentimental Song—My Darling Nelly Gray,* . . . . . *Vocal.*
7. *Trio—Gentle Annie, &c., 1st and 2nd B flat Tenors, and E flat Bass—Hale, Hoffman & Mellin.*
8. *FINALE—Kendall's Double Reel, arranged by C. H. Stoes,* . . . . . *Band.*

Doors open at half-past 6 o'clock, Concert to commence at 7 o'clock, precisely.

TICKETS TWENTY-FIVE CENTS.

To be had at the usual places.

Printed at the office of the "Danville Intelligencer."

FIGURE 3. Stoes' Silver Cornet Band program, ca. 1859. Photo courtesy of the Mark Elrod Collection, Germantown, Maryland.

Allen about 1853. There, the stopping corks were at either end of a slot in the top of the rotor, and a blade mounted on the bottom of the bearing plate engaged them. In this design, there is no need for a cap since the bearing plate itself covers the mechanism (p. 95). Examples from 1851 show that Graves & Co. Boston was the earliest maker of several types of "round" string-action valves with external corks (pp. 91–94). The valves on the newly discovered instrument show that Graves also tried enclosed-stop valves, borrowing much of the design from the work of Allen (fig. 6).

These valves are not flattened like the Allen valves, but use a similar stopping design. The only difference is that where Allen "flat" valve stopping corks are mounted in a slot in the top of the rotor, those by Graves

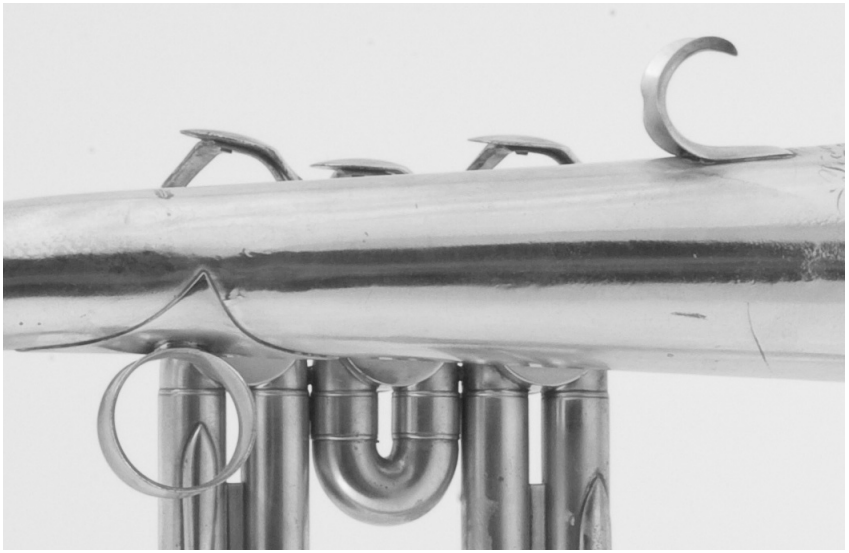


FIGURE 4. Graves & Co. Boston E-flat cornet, detail of finger supports. Photo courtesy of the Montour County Historical Society, Danville, Pennsylvania.

FIGURE 5. Graves & Co. Boston E-flat cornet, detail of brace and foot plates. Photo courtesy of the Montour County Historical Society, Danville, Pennsylvania.

FIGURE 6. Graves & Co. Boston E-flat cornet, detail of valve design. Photo by the author.

are mounted under Z-shaped plates soldered to the top of the rotor. It is a very attractive design, with corks protected and muffled by the bearing plate. Perhaps the reason it did not continue in use was that the condition and accuracy of the stopping corks was not immediately visible, and access required removing the collar and ring nut.

For the first few years after moving to Boston in 1850, Samuel Graves's son George M. Graves was in charge of Graves & Co., and Samuel Graves was listed in the city directories separately. From 1856 on, Samuel was once more listed with Graves & Co. The earliest string-action rotary valve designs came from the shop headed by George M. Graves, and although Samuel was back with the firm by 1857, I suspect, for this reason, that the valve design adaptation of Stoes's bugle was the work of George. In any case, this instrument gives additional evidence of the experimentation and sharing of ideas occurring among the Boston makers of the 1850s and of the preeminence of Graves & Co. in the early development of the string-action rotary valve. It is also one of the finest presentation valved bugles known.