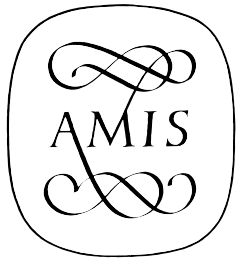
Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society

VOLUME XLVII • 2021



Something More about Straight-Top Oboes

Marcello Rizzello

The aim of this research is to ascertain the origin of a particular type of oboe, widespread in the eighteenth century and beyond, called "straight-top" by hautboy historians and also known as Type C in an established scheme of classification.[1] This peculiar name comes from the main feature of this type of hautboy, namely the lack of a baluster[2] and standard beading in the upper joint, which therefore assumes a simple conical profile. This absence quickly strikes the observer, since the baluster is common, in various forms, to all other types of oboe at least until the mid-nineteenth century. During the 1840s, in Paris, the baluster was eliminated for practical reasons: the addition of an increasing number of keys; for those placed higher on the body of the instrument, such as the second octave key, the baluster can be a bulky obstacle.[3] However, this is not valid for the eighteenth-century straight-top, since its history fits almost perfectly into the era of the two- and three-keyed oboe. Exceptional specimens having more keys are very rare, and unlikely to justify a radical change as the complete elimination of the baluster in the upper joint, along with other typical elements of the turning. The straight-top oboe, fairly common in public and private collections around the world, has so far received good attention from scholars, although several aspects of its origin still have to be clarified. This paper is meant to be a short history of this type of hautboy, from the oldest Italian specimens to its spread through the rest of Europe and beyond. I will consider the results of the latest studies, together with other new sources hitherto not considered, which allow a reformulation of hypotheses already presented, but here more strongly supported.

1. This was introduced by Eric Halfpenny, "The English 2- and 3-Keyed Hautboy," *Galpin Society Journal* 2 (1949): 10–26. For an overview of the types of oboes of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Bruce Haynes, *The Eloquent Oboe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 65–89.

2. For the terminology about the instrument's external form, see Haynes, *The Eloquent Oboe*, 65–69.

3. Robert Howe, "Nineteenth-Century French Oboe Making Revealed: A Translation and Analysis of the Triebert et Cie '1855' *Nouveau Prix-Courant,*" *Galpin Society Journal* 64 (2011): 89.

The Beginning

Cecil Adkins was the first to write specifically and at length about the origin of the straight-top in his article "William Milhouse and the English Classical Oboe."[4] Some years later, Robert Howe replied to him with his paper "Historical Oboes 5: The Milhouse Family and the English Straight-Top Oboe."[5] Adkins stated that the invention of this peculiar style of oboe making is attributable almost entirely to Richard Milhouse Sr. (1724–1775), active in Newark-on-Trent from the mid-1740s.[6] Adkins also wrote that oboes of this type would have been used mainly, if not exclusively, in the musical activity of the English country parishes, and that this occurred because the straight-top would be simpler and therefore cheaper to produce than the more common type of oboe with baluster, the baluster-top.[7] However, several objections can be raised towards these hypotheses and how they were made.

Adkins's comments are colored by a prejudice about the external appearance of the straight-top, which he considered ugly and therefore confined to secondary, if not downright poor, musical milieux such as the English country churches of the eighteenth century.[8] Such personal opinions are not scientifically relevant and therefore they will not be considered here.[9] We may briefly recall Howe's observations on some problems of Adkins's thesis. First, there is no evidence that the oboes mentioned in the payment registers of the various country parishes[10] were straight-tops;

4. *Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society* 22 (1996): 42–88. Reprinted in *The Double Reed* 24, no. 3 (2001): 101–20.

5. *The Double Reed* 24, no. 4 (2001): 17–19. An earlier version of this article was published as "Communication," *Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society* 25 (1999): 164–65.

6. Adkins, "William Milhouse and the English Classical Oboe," 77–79.

7. Ibid., 66; 75.

8. Ibid., 45–46; 66.

9. Robert Howe as well assumes that the straight-top was used in English country churches, which informs his impressions of the outward appearance of the instrument (I am referring in particular to words such as "chaste" and "pious"). See Howe, "Historical Oboes 5," 18–19. But I do not consider it appropriate to base historical hypothesis on such considerations, which may be also influenced by contemporary taste. Furthermore, as will be shown in the part of this work dedicated to iconography, we have clues about English oboists who played the straight-top, but whose activity certainly cannot be said to be limited to country churches.

10. Adkins, "William Milhouse and the English Classical Oboe," 83–88 (Appendix B).

so, it cannot be established that the straight-tops really had a lower price than the baluster-tops.[11] Not only there is no direct association between instrument type and price, both in these sources and elsewhere, but also, as Howe notes, it is not possible to assume that the straight-top is easier to make and therefore less expensive. Surely it is easier to make an oboe without baluster and beading, but their lack increases the risk of cracks during extensive playing of the instrument. This occurs especially in the beginning of the top joint, the most fragile part of the oboe, which is more subject to stress, due to the moisture absorbed by the wood: the absence of a baluster seems to be one of the causes of cracks in this area even in the modern oboe, which has almost a straight-top profile.[12] For this reason, makers very often added strengthening rings of ivory or other materials; but this inevitably increased the time and cost of the job.[13] Moreover, the quality of the workmanship could become a new issue, since the maker must be able to work in ivory, horn, or metal. Therefore, something other than cheapness must have prompted the creation of such a new type of oboe; but I will discuss this below.

In his paper, Adkins considered only the English straight-tops. Those by members of the Milhouse family, according to him, are among the oldest (they were mostly made in Newark and sold in the surrounding countryside); in contrast, those produced in London would date only from the mid-eighteenth century onward.[14] The oldest London-made straight-top, and therefore contemporary of those made by Richard Milhouse Sr. in Newark (if one accepts their early dating proposed by Adkins), is probably the one by Thomas Stanesby Jr. (1692–1754).[15] Still, Adkins dated it to 1754, in the belief that Stanesby Jr.'s apprentice and successor, Caleb Gedney (1726–1769), would have continued to use his master's name on his own instruments for some time after Stanesby's death; for this reason, Adkins hypothesized that actually this oboe may be by Gedney himself.[16]

11. Howe, "Historical Oboes 5," 17–18.

12. Ibid. See also Howe, "Nineteenth-Century French Oboe Making Revealed," 90.

13. Howe, "Historical Oboes 5," 18.

14. Adkins, "William Milhouse and the English Classical Oboe," 76–79.

15. Reported for the first time by Graham Wells, "London Salerooms," *Early Music* 3, no. 4 (1975): 368–369. Sold by auction in London on May 8, 1975, it is now preserved in Hamamatsu, Museum of Musical Instruments, A-0243R. See also Eric Halfpenny, "The Christ Church Trophies," *Galpin Society Journal* 29 (1976): 126; Haynes, *The Eloquent Oboe*, 84.

16. Adkins, "William Milhouse and the English Classical Oboe," 78.

But Adkins did not report any source to prove this,[17] and the hypothesis is undercut by the existence of two straight-tops with Gedney's name.[18] There is also a private inventory of musical instruments, written between 1768 and 1770, that includes oboes and bassoons, some attributed to Gedney and others to his master.[19] This source seems to indicate a clear, conscious distinction between the production of Stanesby Jr. and that of his apprentice, so Gedney probably was not hiding himself behind someone else's mark. Therefore, it cannot be certain that Stanesby Jr.'s oboe was made later than the earliest specimens by Milhouse Sr., even assuming that these really date from the 1740s.

Adkins provided no explanation as to how he obtained the table in which he shows the chronological distribution of English straight-tops, divided according to their place of production (either in London or outside the city).[20] Dating instruments which do not have serial numbers, or a direct indication of the year of manufacture, is a very difficult task, even harder if little or any documentation of production and biographical details is available, as for most of the ancient makers. Also, the data reported by Adkins on the number of manufacturers and related oboes[21] lack transparency, since it is not possible to trace them. Until a list, as exhaustive as possible, of both makers and instruments is compiled,[22] it will not be possible to proceed even with rough estimates and dating, which must follow defined and explained criteria for each case. This is not a starting point, but on the contrary a result achieved after a lot of work.

A flaw of Adkins's theses, recognized by himself, is that only oboes by the Milhouses, made in Newark, may be considered as dating from the 1740s onward and produced for the surrounding countryside; no other maker is involved in this phenomenon.[23] But a bigger defect of Adkins's

17. For the origin of the conjecture about Stanesby's and Gedney's stamps, see David Lasocki, "Woodwind Makers in the Turners Company of London, 1604–1750," *Galpin Society Journal* 65 (2012): 74, note 47.

18. Vermillion, National Music Museum, 05298; Colchester, Hollytrees Museum, 1932.356.1. To these one must add a tenor oboe which is almost straight-top (Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, 17.1912).

19. Catherine Frew and Arnold Myers, "Sir Samuel Hellier's 'Musicall Instruments,'" *Galpin Society Journal* 56 (2003): 7–8; 26.

20. Adkins, "William Milhouse and the English Classical Oboe," 77, fig. 27.

21. Ibid., 76–77.

22. See the Appendix to the present paper for a first attempt.

23. Adkins, "William Milhouse and the English Classical Oboe," 77.

article, in my opinion, is that a good number of other straight-top oboes, which are not English, were not considered. This lack, together with Howe's criticism, led Adkins to undertake a deeper and broader research, culminating in a second paper: "Why Straight-Tops?"[24]

Missing Oboes

The most evident novelty of this second work was taking into account many more oboes: two by Giovanni Maria Anciuti (1674–1744),[25] one by each for Carlo Palanca (1691–1783),[26] Vincenzo Panormo (1734–1813),[27] Jacob Anthony (1736–1804),[28] Uzal Miner (1785–1822),[29] N. Cosins (*fl.* mid-eighteenth century),[30] and sixteen by Andrea Fornari (1753–1841).[31]

Since Adkins's comments are very detailed, it is necessary to discuss each case that bears on his argument or needs some clarification, starting with Anciuti. A first element is the dating of the famous ivory oboe at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, which was obtained by Adkins through a method[32] that I consider unreliable, even more so for an exceptional maker like Anciuti. Considering the straight-top of Rome marked 1738 (fig. 1) and an alto recorder from 1740,[33] Adkins dated both the London oboe and another one preserved in Paris[34] between 1738 and 1740;

24. *Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society* 37 (2011): 88–156.

25. London, Victoria and Albert Museum, 1127-1869; Rome, Museo Nazionale degli Strumenti Musicali, 829/1094.

26. Vindelle, Ecochard private collection. Information from: Giacomo Silvestri, "Carlo Palanca and the Oboe: A Study of His Surviving Instruments," *The Double Reed* 43, no. 1 (2020): 74.

27. Present whereabouts unknown, ex-Piguet private collection. Information from: Adkins, "Why Straight-Tops?" 115.

28. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997.272. Location not reported by Adkins.

29. Dearborn, Henry Ford Museum, 83.45.1. Location not reported by Adkins.

30. Nuremberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, MIR375.

31. Specific locations not reported by Adkins. Only these are indentifiable: Leipzig, Museum für Musikinstrumente, 1327; Venice, Fondazione Querini Stampalia, 400–1; Ibid., 400–2; Rome, Museo Nazionale degli Strumenti Musicali, 3264/1085.

32. For a graphic summary, see Adkins, "Why Straight-Tops?," 108, fig. 16.

33. London, Victoria and Albert Museum, 7469-1861.

34. Musée de la Musique, E.107.

FIGURE 1. G. M. Anciuti, oboe (1738). Rome, Museo Nazionale degli Strumenti Musicali, 829/1094. Used by permission. Courtesy of Direzione Musei Statali della Città di Roma – Museo Nazionale degli Strumenti Musicali.

and this on the basis of no more than two features[35] (excluding the stamp) which the four instruments have in common, when considered in pairs.[36] However, these instruments have so many differences that it could be deduced, in the same way, that the oboe of Rome (1738) and the recorder of Paris (1740) cannot really have been made so closely, having nothing in common. But this is absurd, since they are stamped by the maker with dates, and so we understand that Anciuti could make very different instruments at any time. Moreover, there is another oboe by Anciuti in ivory with an octagonal tube, very similar to the one in Paris, but dated 1722 in the stamp,[37] hence well before 1738–1740. Its minimum bore diameter is 4.6 mm, although it has been suggested that this exceptionally low measure is probably not the original one, because this oboe shows evident signs of heavy use on the tone holes, and ivory does shrink, though less than wood.[38] So, the measurement reported by Adkins (6.2 mm)[39] is of uncertain origin. Considering all these elements, Adkins's dating of these oboes rests on a rather weak basis.

Furthermore, Anciuti had been active in Milan since 1699 and was already able to make instruments in 1693, though the earliest to survive are from 1709.[40] We also know that Anciuti completed his apprenticeship in a family workshop in Venice, probably run by his uncle Tomaso, between 1691 and 1694.[41] Therefore, not only could the straight-top in London date earlier than 1740, but it is possible that Anciuti made others, now lost to us; if not so treasured and ornate as this survivor in ivory, such hypothetical instruments might have been at least similar to the one now in Rome, and might have dated from the beginning of the eighteenth century. This possibility was intuited by Bruce Haynes: "Anciuti began making

35. Such as: octagonal tubes, pearled beading, key mounts, carved turned balusters.

36. Adkins, "Why Straight-Tops?" 106; 109.

37. Milan, Museo degli Strumenti Musicali, 752.

38. Alfredo Bernardini and Renato Meucci, "L'Oboe d'Avorio di Anciuti (1722)," *Rassegna di Studi e Notizie* 26 (2002): 376. About ivory shrinking, see Bruce Haynes, *A History of Performing Pitch. The Story of "A"* (Lanham, Maryland, and Oxford: Scarecrow, 2002), 37.

39. Adkins, "Why Straight-Tops?," 110, tab. 3.

40. Francesco Carreras and Cinzia Meroni, "Giovanni Maria Anciuti: A Craftsman at Work in Milan and Venice," *Recercare* 20 (2008): 182–83; 190–92; 200.

41. Nichola Voice, "Venetian Woodwind Instrument Makers, 1680–1805: Their Interaction with the Guild," *Recercare* 26 (2014): 97.

FIGURE 2. Anonymous oboe (probably Italian, first half of the eighteenth century). Rome, Museo Nazionale degli Strumenti Musicali, 3295/1369. Used by permission. Courtesy of Direzione Musei Statali della Città di Roma – Museo Nazionale degli Strumenti Musicali.

Type Cs possibly as early as ca.1709."[42]

On the other hand, Adkins acknowledged: "contrary to the stylistic similarity of the output of many makers, Anciuti's oboes show an almost constant variation in design and material."[43] But this inevitably discredits the comparative method of dating that Adkins used shortly before. A further element that he used to argue the late dating of the London oboe was to show how its minimum bore diameter (5.25 mm) fits into a progressive decrease of this parameter throughout the whole production of Anciuti's oboes.[44] However, there are two cases of increase in a sample of only eight measurements, and one of these may be not correct, as shown above.

An instrument surviving in Rome[45] could open new perspectives on the production of straight-tops prior to 1738: it is an oboe by an anonymous maker, probably Italian, and similar to Anciuti's (fig. 2). It is a typical Italian-style straight-top: a clear and linear profile without balusters, doubled third and fourth holes, simplified key rings (blocks), and metal ferrules placed on the upper end of each joint (on the middle one there is a repair with wire bandage, instead of the original ring). Given the total length of the instrument (560 mm), it probably has a lower pitch than Anciuti's oboe, which is 513 mm long; but precise and complete technical measures will be needed for future research.

For Palanca's oboe, Adkins proposed a late dating, after 1760, due to its low taper: "in this regard, it leans slightly toward the later eighteenth-century oboes that feature narrower bores."[46] However, at the beginning of the 1770s the elderly Palanca, already retired from his job as a bassoonist at the Royal Court of Turin, had probably stopped making instruments, at least regularly, because of health problems.[47] Furthermore, it seems that in his maturity he already had a well-defined style in oboe making[48] and it is likely that this unique straight-top, together with other more anoma-

42. Haynes, *The Eloquent Oboe*, 84.

43. Adkins, "Why Straight-Tops?" 109.

44. Ibid., 109–10.

45. Museo Nazionale degli Strumenti Musicali, 3295/1369. Reported by Haynes, *The Eloquent Oboe*, 84.

46. Adkins, "Why Straight-Tops?," 114.

47. Alfredo Bernardini, "Carlo Palanca e la costruzione di strumenti a fiato a Torino nel settecento," *Il Flauto Dolce* 13 (1985): 22–23. See also Haynes, *The Eloquent Oboe*, 397.

48. Classified as Type A in the scheme of Silvestri, "Carlo Palanca and the Oboe," 76; 79. This terminology must not be confused with that about hautboy types, introduced by Halfpenny and expanded by Haynes.

lous instruments,[49] is the result of youthful experiences characterized by experimentation and external influences, such as those of an exceptional and prolific maker of the previous generation active in nearby Milan, namely Anciuti. Also, it is known that Palanca himself, with his work, exerted a wide influence on some important German makers of the following generation, Augustin Grenser (1720–1807) and Jakob Grundmann (1727–1800).[50] Therefore, considering only the internal features of this straight-top by Palanca, one may get the impression that it belongs more to the second half of the eighteenth century than to the first.[51] Finally, it is interesting to observe that also in some other oboes by Palanca there is a tendency to simplify the turning style and in particular the key mounts.[52] On the other hand, blocks instead of rings for the keys are quite common not only for Type C, but also for Types B and E; I will return to this issue later.

Fornari's straight-top oboes constitute a specific, clearly identifiable group and are direct descendants of Anciuti's exemplar, now preserved in London. Rightly, Adkins defined this sub-type as "vase-shaped,"[53] because of the characteristic profile of the upper joint, different from the more common straight-top.[54] For this and other reasons, one could speak of a "spiritual heritage" received from Anciuti, since Fornari in turn used precious materials such as ebony, silver, and ivory (the latter also for the keys).[55] As Alfredo Bernardini pointed out, Fornari's instruments, like An-

49. Type C in Silvestri, "Carlo Palanca and the Oboe," 79.

50. Haynes, *The Eloquent Oboe*, 396–400; 429–30. This is explicitly denied by Adkins, "Why Straight-Tops?" 113.

51. I think that also Silvestri is wrong about the dating of this oboe, although for stylistic reasons. See Giacomo Silvestri, "Gli Oboi di Carlo Palanca: l'Importanza del costruttore attraverso uno studio analitico e pratico degli strumenti superstiti" (MA diss., Conservatorio di Perugia, Perugia, 2019), 29.

52. I am referring to two specimens. The first (Salzburg, Bernardini private collection) is similar to a Type B hautboy, but retains the top column bead and has the metal ferrules typical of the Italian straight-top. The second (Modena, Museo Civico) has blocks for the keys, rather unusual for a Type D1 hautboy. Photos of these instruments can be seen in Silvestri, "Gli Oboi di Carlo Palanca," 20; 34.

53. Adkins, "Why Straight-Tops?" 97.

54. Fornari also made vase-style English horns as early as 1791, and it is likely that he himself developed this peculiar model, later imitated by makers such as Guillaume Triebert (1770–1848) and Carl Theodor Golde (1803–1873). Straight-top, curved English horns by other contemporary Italian makers are not very common.

55. Alfredo Bernardini, "Andrea Fornari (1753–1841) «Fabricator di strumenti» a Venezia," *Il Flauto Dolce* 14–15 (1986): 33.

ciuti's, show accuracy in decoration and turning, and most of them are dated.[56] Another similarity between these two makers is the production of instruments which are unique rather than rare: for Anciuti a contrabassoon with zoomorphic bell,[57] while in the case of Fornari a sort of vase-style basset oboe, probably in F and with two octave keys.[58] However, it has been established that some initial operations in the realization of Fornari's instruments, such as turning and boring, were entrusted by him to other professionals.[59] So, he probably reserved to himself the design and the final refinement of the instruments; this is even more likely, given his in-depth knowledge of mathematics mentioned in documentary sources.[60]

An oboe, sold in 2018 by William Petit, confirms the long-term success of the vase-shaped type in Italy. It is marked "MAGAZARI / A BOLOGNA / 1799," but unlike Anciuti's and Fornari's instruments, it has a column bead in the upper joint. According to the seller, it was made by Vincenzo Magazari (1776–18??) and, since the first name is lacking in the stamp, this could be true.[61]

From America, an additional straight-top, joining those of Anthony and Miner, is by John Meacham Jr. (1785–1844), made in Hartford, presumably in 1807.[62] It is likely that all these American instruments are directly influenced by the activity of the English makers.

As for the oboe signed by "N. Cosins," Adkins hypothesized that it is of Italian origin due to the presence, in the mark, of the Habsburg eagle.[63] It is true that after the War of the Spanish Succession, with the Treaty of Rastatt, in 1714 the Duchy of Milan came under the direct dominion of the House of Austria. However, the surname "Cosins" is not Italian; he

56. Ibid., 34.

57. Salzburg, Museum Carolino-Augusteum, A 15/18. See Carreras and Meroni, "Giovanni Maria Anciuti," 182; 204.

58. Milan, Museo Teatrale della Scala. See Alfredo Bernardini, "Woodwind Makers in Venice, 1790–1900," *Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society* 15 (1989): 60–61.

59. Voice, "Venetian Woodwind Instrument Makers, 1680–1805," 100–06.

60. Ibid. See also Stefano Toffolo, "La Costruzione degli strumenti musicali a Venezia dal XVI al XIX Secolo," *Il Flauto Dolce* 14–15 (1986): 27–29.

61. See Alfredo Bernardini, "Due Chiavi per Rossini? Storia e sviluppo dell'oboe a Bologna prima del 1850," *Il Flauto Dolce* 17–18 (1987): 26–27.

62. Castile, New York, Letchworth State Park Museum. See Robert E. Eliason, "Oboe, Bassoons, and Bass Clarinets, Made by Hartford Connecticut, Makers Before 1815," *Galpin Society Journal* 30 (1977): 48 and pl. V(a).

63. Adkins, "Why Straight-Tops?" 120. This conjecture was also proposed by Haynes, *The Eloquent Oboe*, 407.

was indeed a subject of the Habsburgs, but rather as a citizen of the Spanish Netherlands, which became Austrian in 1714, for the same reasons as Milan. The presence of the straight-top in these territories is evidenced by another oboe (fig. 3),[64] unmentioned by Adkins, made by an otherwise unknown I. A. Braet (*fl.* mid-eighteenth century). The discussion by Stefaan Verdegem[65] about this instrument is illuminating:

> very little is known about Braet. From his family name one could deduce that this maker came from the Low Countries or the 18th century Habsburg area. This oboe, being a . . . type-C, is very similar to the Nuremberg Cosins oboe. . . . The origin of Cosins is also not known, but the family name suggests the Low Countries, and the Habsburg eagle in the mark would place this instrument and/or the maker in the Austrian Netherlands (1715–1795). If so, these instruments seem to suggest that this type-C was not restricted to Italy in the early eighteenth century and England in the late eighteenth century.[66]

Braet's oboe is an Italian-style straight-top, but probably made in Brussels, the capital of the Austrian Netherlands; the same location is very likely for Cosins's instrument. Verdegem writes as well: "the type-C also appears on Rottenburgh . . . tenor oboes."[67] These are three instruments preserved in the same museum in Brussels, to which one must add another three tenor oboes also belonging to the Rottenburgh family. Of these six, five[68] are marked with the name of Jean Hyacinth (1672–1756) and one[69] belongs to his son Godfroid Adrien (1703–1768). These instruments form a quite homogeneous group characterized by the typical Italian straight-top profile (no balusters, metal ferrules, key blocks), with a bulb-shaped bell (fig. 4). All, except the one kept in Paris, have three keys (counting two E-flat ones); the number of doubled holes is variable. Considering these external

64. Brussels, Musical Instruments Museum, 2612.

65. Author of the valuable online catalog of the Brussels Musical Instruments Museum Oboe Collection.

66. Stefaan Verdegem, "Remarks," http://brusselsmimoboecollection.kcb.be/instrument-checklist/braet-2612/

67. Ibid.

68. Oxford, Bate Collection, 248; Stockholm, Scenkonst Museet, F288; Brussels, Musical Instruments Museum, 2618; ibid., 2619; ibid., 0180 (the latter has the middle joint by G. A. Rottenburgh). A copy of one of the instruments in Brussels was made in 1896, and is now preserved at La Couture-Boussey, Musée des Instruments à Vent, 403. I thank Emanuele Marconi, director of the Musée, for this information.

69. Paris, Musée de la Musique, E.2184.

FIGURE 3. I. A. Braet, oboe (first half of the eighteenth century). Brussels, Musical Instruments Museum, 2612. Photo by Anne Deknock.

FIGURE 4. I. H. Rottenburgh, tenor oboe (first half of the eighteenth century). Brussels, Musical Instruments Museum, 2618. Photo by Anne Deknock.

features and the years of activity of the makers,[70] these instruments probably date from the first half of the eighteenth century. Another oboe by Godfroid Adrien Rottenburgh is almost a straight-top (fig. 5).[71] A simple top column bead makes it unique, but not so different from the aforementioned oboe by Magazari; instead, the middle joint and bell look like Type E. Not discussed by Adkins, these instruments deserve an in-depth study as important evidence of the widespread presence of the straight-top even in the Austrian Netherlands. Later, I will try to explain the contemporary presence of this hautboy type in Italy and Northern Europe.

Returning to Italy, in Milan, one can see that even here there were straight-top tenor oboes, but in an unusual shape (fig. 6). This two-piece instrument, called *serpentino*,[72] seems more nearly unique than rare, but has characteristics similar to those of the group of tenor oboes just examined: metal ferrules, no balusters, and simplified key rings. The current metal rings date from later interventions;[73] but in my opinion, the ferrules must have been originally present, since otherwise this would be the only Italian straight-top (not vase-style) without them. Be that as it may be, this instrument, marked "GRASSI / IN MILANO," was made around 1770, almost certainly by Paolo Grassi[74] (sometimes mistakenly called Barnaba), active in Milan probably by 1736, the year of birth of his son Antonio, who in turn worked as a maker of wind instruments.[75]

In the past, this serpentino was attributed to Anciuti[76] and it is quite rel-

70. William Waterhouse, *The New Langwill Index* (London: Tony Bingham, 1993), 337–38. Jean Hyacinth's stamp continued to be used by his son and grandson. See Stefaan Ottenbourgs, "Rottenburgh," Grove Music Online (2001), https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic.

71. Stockholm, Scenkonst Museet, F278.

72. Paris, Musée de la Musique, E.584. Another similar instrument is E.794. In Italian, *serpentino* literally means "little snake." Much information about these instruments comes from: Renato Meucci, "Les «Serpentini» utilisés par Mozart à Milan," *Musique-Images-Instruments* VI (2004): 181–87; Antonella Varvara, "Il Serpentino, uno sconosciuto strumento musicale richiesto da Mozart a Milano" (MA diss., Università degli Studi di Milano, Milan, 2013). Meucci was the first to identify the instrument requested by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791) in *Ascanio in Alba* (Milan, 1771) with the two specimens kept in Paris.

73. Varvara, "Il Serpentino," 32–33.

74. Meucci, "Les «Serpentini» utilisés par Mozart à Milan," 184.

75. Varvara, "Il Serpentino," 35–36.

76. Meucci, "Les «Serpentini» utilisés par Mozart à Milan," 183–184; Bernardini and Meucci, "L'Oboe d'avorio di Anciuti (1722)," 379. See also Phillip T. Young, *4900 Historical Woodwind Instruments* (London: Tony Bingham, 1993), 8.

FIGURE 5. G. A. Rottenburgh, oboe (middle of the eighteenth century). Stockholm, Scenkonst Museet, F278. Photo by Hans Skoglund.

FIGURE 6. P. Grassi, *serpentino* tenor oboe (ca.1770). Paris, Musée de la Musique, E.584. Photo by Jean-Claude Billing.

evant that his aforementioned contrabassoon from 1732 has a similar zoomorphic bell.[77] Considering the influence that a master like Anciuti must have exerted over the youngest colleagues in Milan, it has been hypothesized that Paolo Grassi had some connection with him, at least of simple imitation[78] if not perhaps of apprenticeship. In my opinion, the notion of a serpentino made by Anciuti is rightly conceivable because of this double Italian tradition, indeed specifically Milanese, of straight-top oboes and zoomorphic instruments.[79] Moreover, one could hypothesize that Anciuti himself invented the serpentino, especially since his contrabassoon bears the following mark: "IOANNES MARIA ANCIVTI / INVENIT ET FECIT / MEDIOLANI / MDCCXXXII."[80]

Crossing the Channel

Finally, we will consider the English specimens. About them, Adkins in 2011 cited the same survey of 111 instruments, without reporting the instruments and their makers.[81] He also reproduced the same chronological table of the production of straight-tops in England, dating from 1996.[82] Then he stated:

> the inevitable conclusion would be that these instruments [the straight-tops] were an indigenous development of the English countryside, beginning sometime in the 1740s, rather than of cosmopolitan London. They may have appeared as early as the beginning of the decade. For example, Richard Milhouse Sr. was born in 1724 and it is not impossible that he was manufacturing such instruments in his teens. If he were apprenticed at eleven or twelve as many youths were, he could easily have been an independent journeyman by eighteen, which would have been 1742.[83]

77. Meucci, "Les «Serpentini» utilisés par Mozart à Milan," 183; Varvara, "Il Serpentino," 36; 59–62.

78. Bernardini & Meucci, "L'Oboe d'avorio di Anciuti (1722)," 383, note 13.

79. Meucci, "Les «Serpentini» utilisés par Mozart à Milan," 186.

80. Bernardini and Meucci, "L'Oboe d'avorio di Anciuti (1722)," 375.

81. Adkins, "Why Straight-Tops?" 120–21.

82. Ibid., 122, fig. 23. This corresponds to Adkins, "William Milhouse and the English Classical Oboe," 77, fig. 27.

83. Adkins, "Why Straight-Tops?" 121.

However, "I have not been able to find one bona fide historical source that discusses this striking change,"[84] Adkins admitted, referring to the invention attributed to Milhouse. Still, he proposed again the assumption that Stanesby Jr.'s straight-top was actually made by his disciple Gedney, and again gave no source to support this.[85] But Adkins noted that this instrument has a larger bore than the other oboes by Stanesby, and because of this he thinks that the maker could have copied the pattern of someone else, like Richard Milhouse.[86]

Adkins's theory, explaining the origin of the straight-top, has a clear polemical objective: rebutting the hypothesis, advanced by Haynes, that it was introduced into England by the Milanese virtuoso Giuseppe Sammartini (1695–1750), playing an oboe by his fellow citizen Anciuti.[87] Given Sammartini's success, the instrument symbolizing his fame would have been imitated by local makers who, indulging fashion, would have made it "the most typically English form of the hautboy."[88] In the long run, the oblivion was such that towards the end of the century the straight-top was even called "English hautboy" in contrast to the baluster-top, which was instead named "Italian hautboy."[89] I will discuss this theory later.

To the contrary, Adkins argued that "it is not likely that the English straight-tops were produced under Italian influence, because of the almost simultaneous appearance of the style in both places"[90] and asserted again the centrality of the Milhouse family in the development of the English straight-top.[91] I have already stressed the critical issues that detract from this thesis, and Adkins in 2011 added almost nothing to the argument of his first article. Indeed, the only new element consists in an analysis of the acoustic features of the considered instruments, from which he concludes

84. Ibid.

85. Ibid., 122.

86. Ibid.

87. Ibid., 111; 121–24. See note 65, in which Adkins cites Haynes, *The Eloquent Oboe*, 441; 443.

88. Halfpenny, "The English 2- and 3-Keyed Hautboy," 16.

89. This distinction is made in an advertisement of William Milhouse (1791), one of George Astor (1793) and sale catalogs of the same (1799) and of Goulding, Phipps, & D'Almaine (1800). See David Lasocki, "New Light on Eighteenth-Century English Woodwind Makers from Newspaper Advertisements," *Galpin Society Journal* 63 (2010): 80–81; 119; 129.

90. Adkins, "Why Straight-Tops?" 123.

91. Ibid., 123–24.

that "the English country oboes as a group are acoustically different from those of later London manufacture, which for the most part were simply classical oboes with straight tops."[92] However, there is a contradiction, in this regard, between Adkins's two texts; in the first he stated: "even the earliest Milhouse oboes were conceived on the classical pattern."[93] But if this is true, rightly one might think that Adkins's insistence on the early dating of Richard Milhouse Sr.'s straight-tops appears even more questionable: why should one innovate not only externally, but also internally, for an instrument intended for country parishes? These places do not seem to pose particular and high musical demands or frequent repertoire changes such as to push for experimentation and innovation. In fact, the tendency to make oboes with a narrower bore[94] is recognized in the work of Italian makers at least from the 1730s onward. Also, the virtuosos who traveled around Europe in that period were largely Italian, thus they exported from Italy not only novelties of musical repertory, but plausibly also novelties of instrumental design.[95] At any rate, Adkins in his second paper affirmed: "the most striking aspect of the English country oboes—specifically those made by the Milhouse family—is the consistent wideness of their bores, like those of instruments several decades earlier."[96] Of course, this would support Adkins's hypothesis of an early dating of Milhouse's straight-tops. But at the same time, this analysis is inconsistent with the first, which considers these instruments as narrow bored and so dating from the 1750s onward, when the other makers became influenced by the developments of the Italians. So, which argument is correct? In absence of the precise data available to Adkins, we cannot have a definitive answer. However, if the last statement is true, therefore in contradiction with what Adkins himself previously wrote, why must it have been Richard Milhouse Sr. who influenced Stanesby Jr.? In fact, I think it is more likely that a young maker from peripheral areas might absorb influences from another in his full maturity and active in the English capital, than the other way round. But Adkins was convinced that the production of

92. Ibid., 124.

93. Adkins, "William Milhouse and the English Classical Oboe," 59.

94. That is, with an average internal diameter not much greater than 5 mm; instead, the earlier oboes (therefore mostly of Type A) are placed around 6 mm, or even more. See Haynes, *The Eloquent Oboe*, 397.

95. For an excellent overview of the period 1730–1760, see ibid., 396–450.

96. Adkins, "Why Straight-Tops?" 124.

straight-tops by Milhouse Sr. predates those of Stanesby Jr. and Gedney, with whom he would not have had, according to Adkins, any concrete possibility of contact.[97]

Italian Iconography

Completing this survey requires an analysis of the historical iconography, at least for the most important testimonies. I will start with those of Italian origin also considered by Adkins, although he was looking for an instrument different from the usual Italian straight-top.[98] He was convinced of the existence of another type of oboe whose shape is a "straight-sided cone," which would appear "in a number of engravings and paintings beginning about 1750, but no exemplar is extant."[99] In particular, he refers to two well-known illustrations (figs. 7 and 8), but let us proceed in order.

Adkins considers the 1738 Anciuti oboe unique, because of its external appearance;[100] however, the reason for this is not clear, since it is an excellent example of Italian straight-top, such as those by Palanca, Braet, Cosins etc. However, unlike these, as Adkins rightly observed, it has a very high pitch (A = about 466 Hz),[101] known as *Corista di Lombardia* (Lombard pitch), commonly used in Northern Italy (and especially in Venice) at least until the 1740s;[102] other hautboys have this same pitch, but they are baluster-tops by German and Austrian makers.[103] But I think that the adaptation of an imported instrument, such as the oboe, to the local pitch does not mean the maker "clung to a more primitive instrument."[104] Adkins stated this following some remarks by Johann Joachim Quantz (1697–1773), according to which a pitch as high as the Venetian one would alter the nature of the oboe, which originated in France at a much lower one

97. Ibid., 150.

98. Whose typical profile is defined as "a smooth curving taper from the top of the instrument to the beginning of the bell flare." Ibid., 95.

99. Ibid.

100. Ibid., 129.

101. Ibid., 109.

102. Haynes, *A History of Performing Pitch*, 160–66; 269–71; 304–05; 368.

103. Adkins, "Why Straight-Tops?" 110, note 36. About these instruments, see Haynes, *The Eloquent Oboe*, 95–96.

104. Adkins, "Why Straight-Tops?," 130.

FIGURE 7. P. L. Ghezzi, *Gioseppe, a Venetian Oboist*, drawing on paper (ca.1751). Rome, Gabinetto Nazionale dei Disegni e delle Stampe, vol. 2606, F.N. 4659. Used by permission. Courtesy of Istituto Centrale per la Grafica, Roma – Ministero della Cultura. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

FIGURE 8. Music Division, The New York Public Library. "Matteo Biscioli" New York Public Library Digital Collections. https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47dc-7e81-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99

(A = about 392 Hz). Quantz claimed that the sound of oboes with such a high pitch is irremediably similar to the much shriller one of the shawms, double reeds of medieval origin but in use, in a different form, until the early decades of the eighteenth century.[105] Following this reasoning, Adkins wrote that "this small straight-top [Anciuti's] appears to have been an attempt to perpetuate the older Venetian style."[106] But in my opinion, Quantz's words should be interpreted as concerning the timbre and not as if really the oboe becomes another instrument similar to the shawm (from which the hautboy derived).[107]

Adkins believed that one should look for another instrument, different from the Italian oboes, about which he stated that "any [of them] . . . given a short enough length, might have qualified as a smaller oboe as discussed by Quantz."[108] So, Adkins acknowledged that his "examination of Venetian oboes has as yet yielded no viable candidate for the smaller instrument envisioned by Quantz."[109] But this conclusion is unfounded, at least for two reasons. Firstly, the instrument that Adkins sought does exist, and it is the 1738 Anciuti straight-top at high pitch, which Adkins himself had well described. Furthermore, Quantz was referring to the Roman situation. As Haynes wrote, "since there is reasonably clear documentation of a pitch standard at A – 2 [A = about 392 Hz] at Rome at this time (used with strings), it seems players . . . used hautboys pitched at A + 0 [A = about 440 Hz], a major second (or close enough to it to be usable) above prevailing Roman pitch."[110] Therefore, Adkins should not look for such an instrument at A = about 466 Hz, because this was not the pitch of the oboes used in Rome in the period referred to by Quantz, that is, the first decades of the 1700s.[111]

However, Adkins saw in the instruments of figs. 7 and 8 "two likely candidates . . . which are visually outside the mainstream of oboe develop-

105. Johann Joachim Quantz, *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversière zu spielen* (Berlin, 1752), quoted in Adkins, "Why Straight-Tops?" 132-33; 140. About the shawm, see Haynes, *The Eloquent Oboe*, 173–74.

106. Adkins, "Why Straight-Tops?" 131.

107. For the differences between them, see Haynes, *The Eloquent Oboe*, 22–23.

108. Adkins, "Why Straight-Tops?" 137.

109. Ibid., 140.

110. Haynes, *The Eloquent Oboe* 311.

111. See also Haynes, *A History of Performing Pitch*, 167–68.

ment."[112] Before examining them, it is necessary to reflect on some specific problems that arise from the representations of the straight-top: as for the reliability of each one, the extreme stylization of an oboe's external profile could be simply due to the hand of the artist, either because he was not interested in a realistic illustration, or he did not know much about the shape and the details of musical instruments.[113] For this reason, one can often mistakenly see the straight-top in frequent rural, pastoral or similar scenes: but here there are only simple fifes or other folk instruments, with which the straight-top shares the essentiality of the turning style. But also, from this fortuitous similarity one should not conclude anything on the possible musical use and associations of the straight-top oboe. So, every time one wants to determine if what is seen is really a straight-top, one must adhere to the following criteria. Firstly, make sure that it is explicitly an oboe: because such is written, or by deducing it from the subject. Secondly, that the artist is familiar with music or there is a desire for an exact representation. Thirdly, check whether there exist by the same artist, even if not in the same image, representations of the more common baluster-top, so that the intent to illustrate something different is explicit.

This said, it is evident that in the two images mentioned above, one is dealing with authentic straight-tops: Ghezzi habitually attended the Roman musical environment and he had already portrayed an oboist many years before, with a clear baluster-top;[114] and Matteo Bissoli (ca.1711–1780) was among the most famous oboists in Europe.[115] Furthermore, under both portraits, it is written that the two men are oboists.[116] However, as it has been said, Adkins believed to see here evidence of an instrument that has not come down to us. But it is obvious that those depicted have

112. Adkins, "Why Straight-Tops?" 140.

113. For example, the oboe in plate 23 of *Gabinetto Armonico* (Rome: Placho, 1722) by Filippo Bonanni (1638–1725) appears very stylized, so it is difficult to consider it a genuine straight-top, even if by 1722 it is likely that straight-tops already circulated in Italy.

114. *Caricature of a German Oboist* (1720), Rome, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Ottob. Lat. 3113, 40. Reproduced in Adkins, "Why Straight-Tops?," 136, fig. 33. A third caricature of an unknown "Famous Italian Oboist" is in plate 27 of *Raccolta de vari disegni dell Cavalliero Pietro Leone Ghezzi romano … Incise in rame da Matteo Oesterreich* (Potsdam: 1766). Here the oboe is rather odd. About Ghezzi, see Giancarlo Rostirolla, "Il *Mondo novo* accresciuto. Trenta nuovi Disegni di Pier Leone Ghezzi dal Museo dell'Ermitage di San Pietroburgo," *Recercare* 21 (2009): 229–87.

115. Alfredo Bernardini, "The Oboe in the Venetian Republic, 1692–1797," *Early Music 16*, no. 3 (1988): 379–80.

116. As for Bissoli's portait, it seems that the inscription is present only in the specimen owned by Alfredo Bernardini.

been further stylized by the artists, and certainly they do not respect the real proportions in relation to the human body. Therefore, it cannot be argued that these instruments "are decidedly unlike a normal straight-top oboe."[117] So, the following attempt by Adkins to derive the measurements of the instruments from the two portraits is, in my opinion, problematic: the images are very distant from the real oboes, given the presumed very high taper,[118] but not because they are different instruments. In the same way, if one wants to find the real dimensions of the face of Mr. Gioseppe, portrayed by Ghezzi, it will appear that he is not a human being: but precisely because this is a caricature, whose aim is to emphasize peculiar features, both of the person and of the oboe. Also, what seems to be a fourth hole for the left little finger in the upper joint of the instrument is due to the imprecision of the representations, and it cannot be concluded that these virtuosos played the *ciaramella* or the *piffero*, as Adkins suggested.[119] Furthermore, in what appears to be the original drawing of Bissoli's portrait (fig. 9), one sees how the oboe is more realistic than in the printed engraving: the fourth hole, the only one doubled, is evidently for the right index, so it is the first hole of the middle joint. One must say that the third hole of the top joint should certainly be doubled, but this is an excusable inaccuracy by the artist.

For all the reasons just outlined, one should reject Adkins's thesis that there was a "Venetian straight top . . . bridging instrument between the early straight-top group and the classical oboe."[120] Also, the other iconographic sources, which Adkins mentioned to support his position, are problematic: in the painting *La Lezione di Musica* (fig. 10), once attributed to Pietro Longhi (1701–1785), the oboist is holding not a straight-top but a baluster-top. Instead, in the caricatural print *A Concert* (ca.1770) by Abraham Hume (1749–1838) there is probably a straight-top, played by John Frederick Ranish (ca.1692–1777), but given the late dating and the geographical origin, it is evident that it is an English specimen, though represented in a very sketchy way (fig. 11). Also, it should be noted that Ranish apparently did not work in country churches.[121]

117. Adkins, "Why Straight-Tops?" 141.

118. Ibid., 143–45.

119. Ibid., 145.

120. Ibid., 137. For a graphic summary, see ibid., 139, tab. 5.

121. Richard Platt, "Ranish, John Frederick," Grove Music Online (2001), https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic.

FIGURE 9. Music Division, The New York Public Library. "Matteo Biscioli" New York Public Library Digital Collections. https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47dc-7e80-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99

FIGURE 10. Detail from: Follower of Pietro Longhi, *La Lezione di musica*, oil on canvas (ca.1750–1770). Vicenza, Palazzo Leoni Montanari – Intesa Sanpaolo Collection, Gallerie d'Italia. Used by permission.

FIGURE 11. Detail from: A. Hume, *A Concert*, etching (ca.1770). Oberlin, Frederick R. Selch Collection of American Music History, Conservatory Library, FRS-202. Public domain.

English Iconography

Given the great diffusion of the straight-top in England, images abound, and I will examine only some already considered by Adkins, with some important additions. Firstly, it is true, as Adkins said, that:

> some early oboe engravings indicate a "balustered" section between the lower finial beads and the beads at the top of the column on what would otherwise appear as a straight-top instrument. The intent, however, is to convey the impression of a complex top joint within a simple artistic style, and these illustrations should not be considered particularly reliable or as representing straight-top oboes.[122]

One must add this to the remarks made above about the presence of the straight-top in paintings, drawings, prints, etc. However, some critical issues can be found in Adkins's own analysis. For example, he considers the

122. Adkins, "Why Straight-Tops?" 97.

FIGURE 12. Detail from: Anonymous, Frontispiece to *The Compleat Tutor for the Hautboy* (London: Thompson, [ca. 1746]). Washington, Library of Congress, 42006757.

FIGURE 13. Detail from: Anonymous, Frontispiece to *New and Complete Instructions for the Oboe or Hoboy* (London: Cahusac, [ca. 1777–85]). Washington, Library of Congress, 41034402.

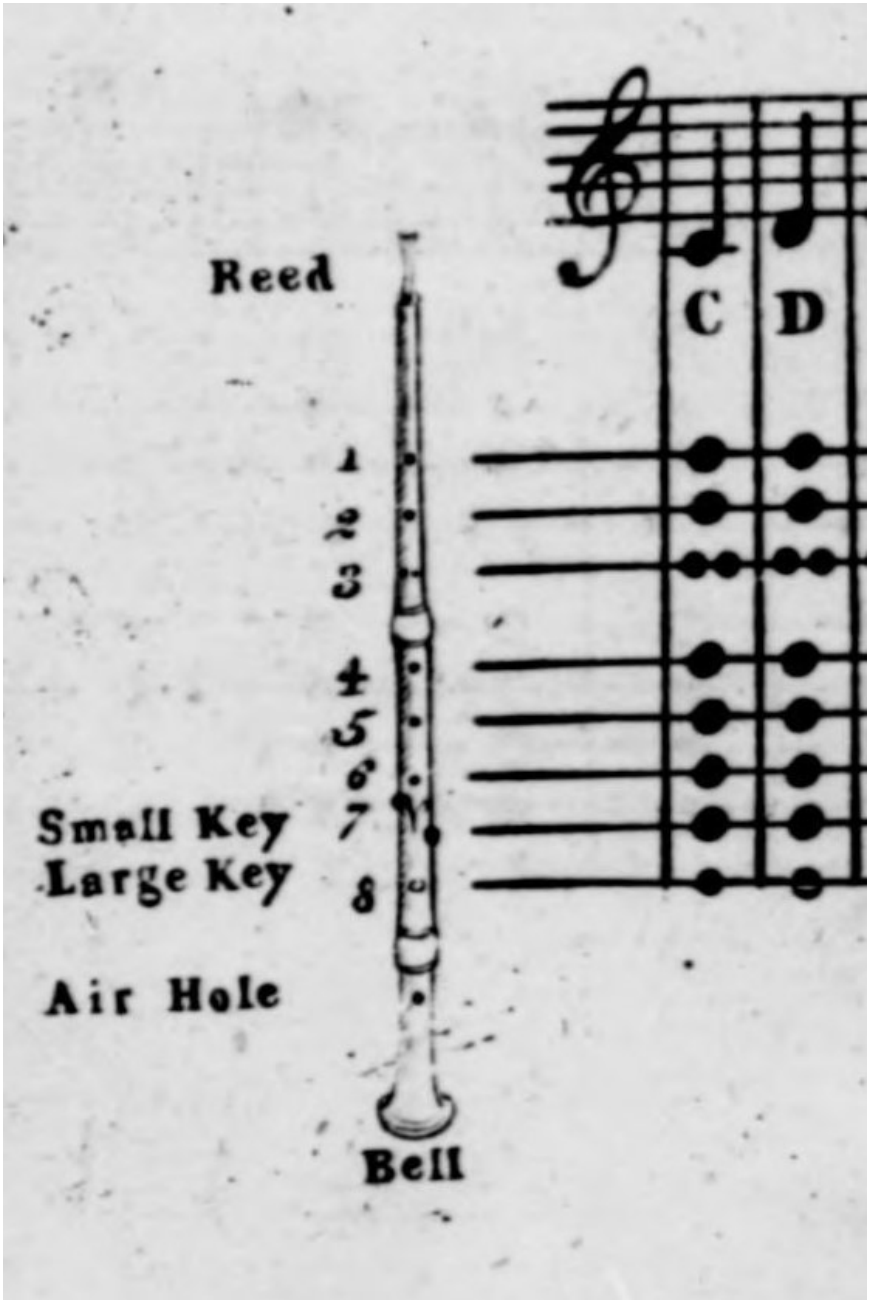


FIGURE 14. Detail from: *The Compleat Tutor for the Hautboy* (London: Thompson, [ca. 1746]), p. 2. Washington, Library of Congress, 42006757.

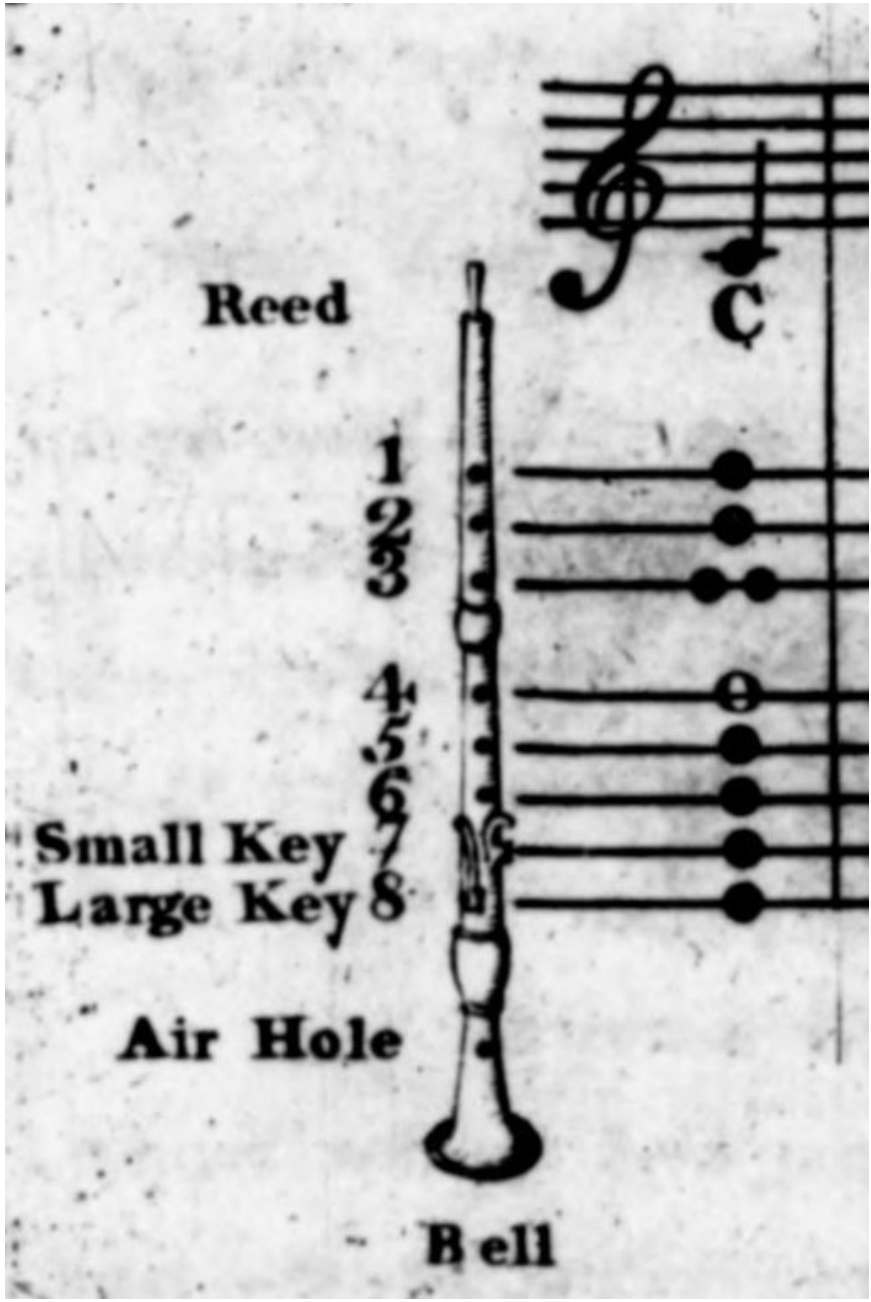


FIGURE 15. Detail from: *New and Complete Instructions for the Oboe or Hoboy* (London: Cahusac, [ca. 1777–85]), p. 3. Washington, Library of Congress, 41034402.

FIGURE 16. Anonymous, *Concert italien*, engraving (first half of the eighteenth century). Present whereabouts unknown, probably lost. Reproduced in E. Singleton, *The Orchestra and Its Instruments* (New York: Plimpton, 1917). Public domain.

FIGURE 17. J. Malchair, *Two Musicians*, engraving (second half of the eighteenth century). London, British Museum, 1867.0309.573. Used by permission. ©The Trustees of the British Museum. All rights reserved.

FIGURE 18. Teeds, *Portrait of Peter Philip Eiffert*, oil on canvas (second half of the eighteenth century). Oxford University, Faculty of Music Collection. Bridgeman Images. Used by permission.

instruments in figs. 12 and 13 to have baluster tops;[123] instead, I think that in both cases there is a straight-top oboe, at least in the upper joint. In fact, some doubts may arise when looking at the bell balusters, perhaps too pronounced even for an English straight-top, although the bell flares seem typical of it. However, when turning the page in both treatises,[124] one clearly sees a straight-top alongside the fingering charts (figs. 14 and 15, almost identical). Continuing, Adkins states that "straight-top oboes were not part of the musical scene when Prelleur's book [*The Modern Musick-Master*] was first published in 1731."[125] But one cannot draw such a

123. Ibid., 97–101.

124. Adkins dates *The Compleat Tutor for the Hautboy, Containing the Best and Easiest Instructions* (London: Thompson) to ca.1746; the *New and Complete Instructions for the Oboe or Hoboy* (London: Cahusac) would date to ca.1777–85. See Adkins, "Why Straight-Tops?" 100. A new and slightly different edition of *The Compleat Tutor for the Hautboy* [*Containing the Easiest and Most Improv'd Rules*] was issued by Thompson in ca.1770, but with the same illustration of the *New and Complete Instructions*; it is possible that this was the first and original occurrence of the figure. The ca.1770 edition is reproduced in Geoffrey Burgess (ed.), *Hautbois: Méthodes & Traités: Grande-Bretagne 1600–1860* (Terves-Bressuire: Fuzeau, 2006), Volume I, 197–215.

125. Adkins, "Why Straight-Tops?" 101.

clear-cut conclusion, based on a single and isolated testimony; furthermore, I think that the straight-top was probably still not very widespread at that time in England.

A famous print is that of fig. 16. It is very important, since one sees portrayed, among other virtuosos, Giuseppe Sammartini; but clearly, he is not playing an oboe. So, it cannot be said that Sammartini is with a straight-top, here.[126] However, Adkins was short-sighted when he referred to an unknown "Casarelli,"[127] since the satire is about the famous Italian castrato Caffarelli, pseudonym of Gaetano Majorano (1710–1783).

Let us now pass to the testimonies not considered by Adkins, starting with fig. 17.[128] This print by John Malchair (1730–1812) is a caricature of two musicians, an oboist and a violinist. According to what is written on the back, they are respectively a certain Philips from Oxford, and maybe the violinist Jean-Jacques-Baptiste Anet (1676–1755), although his surname is difficult to read.[129] Indeed, it is unlikely that the violinist is Anet, given his date of death and the fact that nothing is known about his presence in Oxford or elsewhere in England.[130] Moreover, I think that the oboist may be Peter Philip Eiffert, active in Oxford from 1754 to 1773.[131] This hypothesis is corroborated by the existence of a portrait of him as a young man, now preserved at the Faculty of Music of Oxford University (fig. 18). Many similarities between the two faces seem to confirm his identity, in particular the nose, lips, cheeks, and chin.[132] The painting, of good workmanship, indicates the prosperity of Eiffert, well dressed in Turkish

126. The opposite is argued by Haynes, *The Eloquent Oboe*, 443. It is likely that a portrait of Sammartini existed and was sold by auction after his death in 1750. See Benoît Laurent, "So Sweet Martini Claims Attention Here . . . Nouveaux Regards sur le hautboïste et compositeur Giuseppe Sammartini, son répertoire et l'interprétation de sa musique (en particulier ses sonates solo)" (PhD diss., Université Libre de Bruxelles & Conservatoire Royal de Bruxelles, Brussels, 2020), 1: 72. Of course, it is not sure that Sammartini's oboe was represented in the painting, so the portrait may be extant, but we are unable to identify it.

127. Adkins, "Why Straight-Tops?" 102.

128. I thank Giuseppe Nalin for having made it known to me.

129. Information from the online record: https://www.britishMuseum.org/collection/object/P_1867-0309-573

130. Neal Zaslaw, "Baptiste [Anet, Jean-Jacques-Baptiste]," *Grove Music Online,* 2001, https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic

131. Haynes, *The Eloquent Oboe*, 458.

132. After I formulated my identification hypothesis, the existence of the painting as well as the listed resemblances were pointed out to me by Giuseppe Nalin, to whom I renew my thanks.

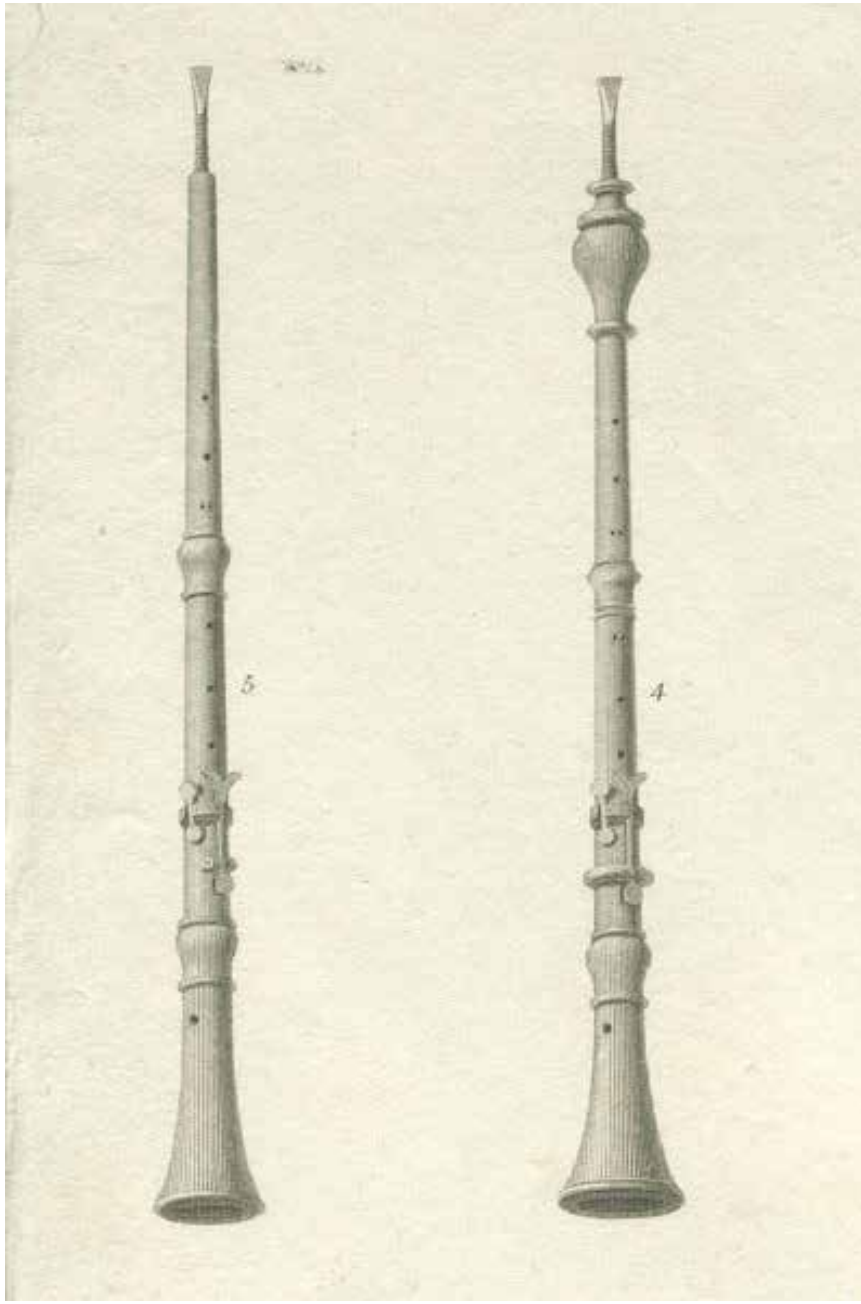


FIGURE 19. Detail from: J. Lee, *Musical Instruments, Plate XI for the Cyclopaedia*, engraving (1811). Italy, Private collection of the Author.

clothes: evidently, he did not need to work in country parishes, given his documented and extended London activity.[133]

A representation of musical instruments from 1811 (fig. 19), belonging to the *Cyclopædia* edited by Abraham Rees (1743–1825), confirms the success of the straight-top in England also in the very first decades of the nineteenth century. In addition to the turning of the top joint, there are other differences between the two oboes: the middle joint and bell balusters are less pronounced in the straight-top, and its lower key mount is a block; a slight difference can also be seen in the bells, since that of the baluster-top has a final ring that makes it less austere, and an additional bead is located under the baluster of its middle joint. The reeds are identical and the same goes for the lengths, but the straight-top has a single fourth hole, a typical feature of the English specimens.

A Clue in Holland

As for the iconography analyzed so far, the origins of the straight-top, in Italy and elsewhere, have not yet been clarified. Indeed, in the case of England, it has only been possible to observe its spread from the mid-eighteenth century onward, without having any evidence of what must have happened before. But an early and relevant example comes from Amsterdam. The Frenchman Bernard Picart (1673–1733), who settled there in 1711, was one of the greatest engravers and drawers of his time. A prolific artist, he depicted musical instruments in many works: for example, his famous and extremely precise illustrations for the *Principes de la flute traversiere, de la flute a bec, et du haut-bois* (1707) by Jacques-Martin Hotteterre le Romain (1674–1763).[134] Here, the *Oeuvres* of Nicolas Boileau (1636–1711) are of particular interest, printed in two volumes in 1718 by Mortier in Amsterdam. This book contains small illustrations by Picart, and in three of them we find the same decorative frame with two oboes: a baluster-top on the left and a straight-top on the right (fig. 20). They are depicted in a trophy with a panpipe and perhaps a fife or flute: the *Explication des Figures*

133. Janet K. Page, "The Hautboy in London's Musical Life, 1730–1770," *Early Music* 16, no. 3 (1988): 368.

134. About Picart, see Alexander Pilipczuk, "The 'Grand Concert dans un jardin' by Bernard Picart and the Performing Musical Arts at the French Court Around 1700," *Tijdschrift van de Vereniging voor Nederlandse Muziekgeschiedenis* 30, no. 2 (1980): 121–48.

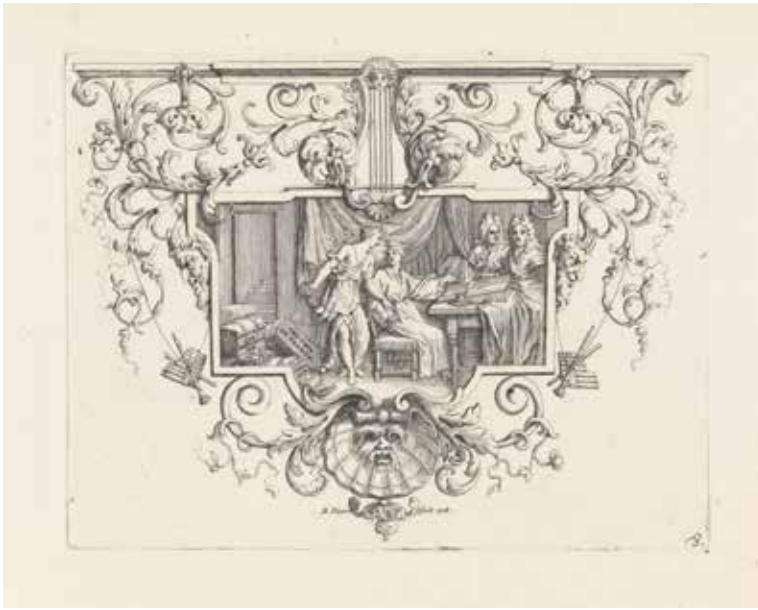


FIGURE 20. B. Picart, *Boileau s'addressant à sa muse*, engraving (1718). Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, RP-P-1921-73. Public domain.

FIGURE 21. B. Picart, *Boileau s'addressant à sa muse*, engraving (1728). Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, RP-P-OB-51.960. Public domain.

FIGURE 22. B. Picart, *Le Jugement de Midas*, engraving (1728). Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, RP-P-OB-51.976. Public domain.

et Vignettes talks about "*lyres, fiflets, flutes*."[135] The double reed instruments are not named, but because of the baluster on the top, the instrument on the left is not a shawm and the bell is more reminiscent of that of an oboe. Moreover, the coexistence of the two types seems to reveal the will to represent different forms of the same object.

In 1729 a new edition of Boileau's *Oeuvres* was published in The Hague by Gosse and Neaulme. At the same time Picart issued, in Amsterdam, an *Explication des Vignettes de la Seconde Edition des Oeuvres de Boileau*, in which the illustrations for the first edition are gathered but "with many changes and new drawings."[136] Let us see how the oboes are represented again. In the first illustration (fig. 21) the changes are almost imperceptible: the reed and the baluster of the oboe on the left are more defined, but there is no shading in the body of the instrument and inside the bell; the straight-top has a clearer and more streamlined shape, the shading is different and here too the reed is represented more precisely. In the second, the orna-

135. Nicolas Boileau, *Oeuvres* (Amsterdam: Mortier, 1718), 1: a 4.

136. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, RP-P-OB-51.977. Information from the online record: https://www.Rijksmuseum.nl/nl/collectie/RP-P-OB-51.977. Original text: "avec divers changemens & plusieurs nouveaux desseins." Translation by the author.

mental frame is completely reworked, and the oboes disappear. The case of the third representation is more interesting (fig. 22). Here too the frame is rethought, but the two specular trophies remain: one notes the presence of two flutes, a panpipe, and a new double reed instrument without balusters, although different from the previous straight-top. The shape of the reed is very stretched and rather triangular, with a slight difference between the instrument on the right and the one on the left; being more stylized, the reed is different from those in fig. 21 which, on the contrary, are quite realistic for an oboe. Furthermore, the new instrument seems longer and more conical than the straight-top, with a very short and pronounced bell, different from those of the oboes (see the details in figs. from 23 to 27). Therefore, probably this is a purely invented instrument, which is represented in a scene of the myth of Apollo and Marsyas because of the typical association between satyrs and woodwinds; also, it serves to vary the monotonous ornamentation of the first edition, and reveals the differences between a true and a misleading representation of the straight-top.

Ultimately, in my opinion, these etchings by Picart oblige us to consider the fresh hypothesis that the straight-top, or something very similar, was already present in Northern Europe by 1718; this is not improbable if Anciuti, in Milan, began making them as early as the beginning of the century. As Haynes recalls, "players probably changed instrument designs regularly to keep up with the latest developments. Changes, once discovered or invented in one place, would quickly become known elsewhere";[137] and "there is considerable evidence that not only players but hautboys commonly crossed borders."[138] This is true not only for instruments, but obviously even more so for music. For example, around 1717 and precisely in Amsterdam, Estienne Roger (1665/6–1722) published a collection of twelve *Concerti a cinque con violini, oboè, violetta, violoncello e basso continuo* by Italian composers, including four with oboe; the first is by Giuseppe Sammartini from Milan, very young but already successful both as an oboist and as a composer.[139] About ten years later, before arriving in London in the early months of 1729,[140] he stopped in Brussels; his stay for a few

137. Haynes, *The Eloquent Oboe*, 3.

138. Ibid., 10.

139. Danilo Prefumo, *I Fratelli Sammartini* (Milan: Rugginenti, 2002), 106–07.

140. Certainly by May 21, date of his earliest known London performance. See ibid., 118; David Lasocki, "Professional Recorder Playing in England 1500–1740. II: 1640–1740," *Early Music* 10, no. 2 (1982): 187. Sammartini's departure from Milan was on July

months in the city could be a pivotal element to explain the existence of the instruments by Cosins, Braet and Rottenburgh.[141] Indeed, if this was the route that musicians from the Habsburg-dominated Duchy of Milan took to arrive in England, then one should not be surprised to find in Brussels, and earlier than in London, the products of the Italian musical export, including straight-top oboes. This path was favored under the Austrian rule of both the Duchy of Milan and the Spanish Netherlands since 1714. It is easy to imagine that Sammartini and others, before and after him, were able to take advantage of this for traveling and working between Milan and Brussels, capitals of the two kingdoms.[142] Haynes hypothesized that Sammartini had already made a stay in London between 1723 and 1724,[143] but recently it has been concluded that the oboist mentioned in the sources was in fact Francesco Barsanti (ca.1690–1775).[144] Given the presence of Sammartini as a composer in Milan in May 1724,[145] this new identification is even more credible.

Anciuti, Sammartini, and the Straight-Top

The elements considered so far lead to Italy and more precisely to Milan, at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Now we are ready to examine the activity of Anciuti, the most likely candidate for the invention of the straight-top. I will begin by citing those authorities who have already dealt with this topic. Firstly, one should remember that

> Anciuti's exceptional craftsmanship and creativity in the construction of wind instruments, often using precious materials such as ivory and silver or rosewood and grenadillo, rare at the time, and his fine execution, rich in original

13, 1728. See Prefumo, *I Fratelli Sammartini*, 111.

141. A link between Sammartini and the tenor oboes by the Rottenburgh family is also suggested by Laurent, "So Sweet Martini Claims Attention Here," 1: 144.

142. The advertisement for the concert in London on May 21, 1729, mentions Sammartini's recent activity at the Brussels court. See Lasocki, "Professional Recorder Playing in England 1500–1740," 191, note 113. Sammartini's stay in Brussels is described by Laurent, "So Sweet Martini Claims Attention Here," 1: 27–31.

143. Haynes, *The Eloquent Oboe*, 345–47.

144. Jasmin Cameron and Michael Talbot, "A Many-Sided Musician: The Life of Francesco Barsanti (ca.1690–1775) Revisited," *Recercare* 25 (2013): 106–08.

145. Prefumo, *I Fratelli Sammartini*, 108.

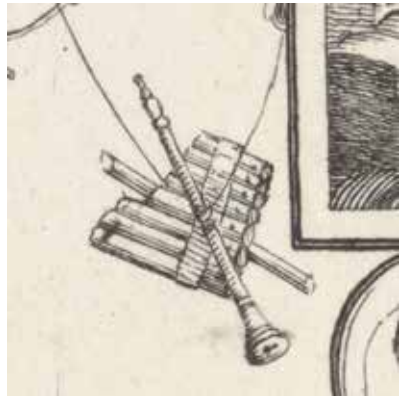


FIGURE 23. Detail from fig. 20.

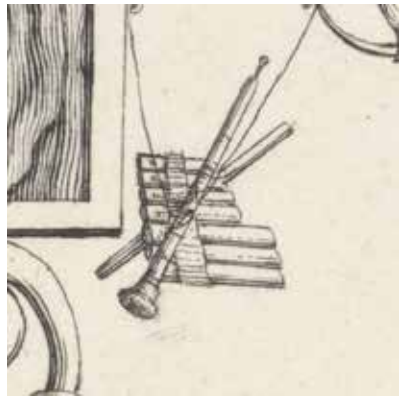


FIGURE 24. Detail from fig. 20.

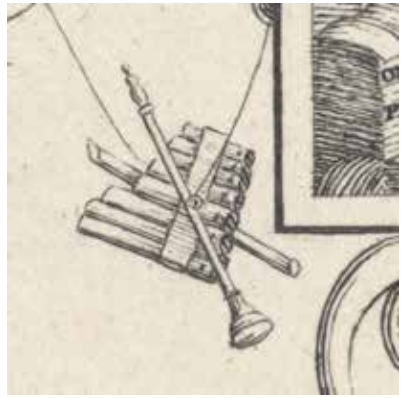


FIGURE 25. Detail from fig. 21.

FIGURE 26. Detail from fig. 21.

FIGURE 27. Detail from fig. 22.

> solutions, make this Milanese figure one of the most note-worthy and esteemed makers of musical instruments of the first half of the eighteenth century.[146]

Moreover, we can observe "a constructive skill constantly reaffirmed by the entire production of Anciuti," since "his works are . . . characterized by an exceptional executive accuracy and by a prominent inclination to experiment, which always imposes on forms and models, of his own design or by others, a strong mark of constructive originality."[147] But Anciuti, however outstanding, was not isolated:

> [the oboe] was . . . imported to Milan from France probably by Aléxis Saint-Martin, who belonged to the first generation of oboists and was the father of Giuseppe Sammartini. . . . Aléxis was also a maker, if it is correct to attribute to him an oboe signed "Saint Martin" now in Nuremberg[148] . . . which has a rather high pitch, therefore suitable for the pitch standard that, we know, was the most common in Milan. That Aléxis or Giuseppe Sammartini, both excellent oboists active in Milan in the early decades of the eighteenth century, may have come into contact with Anciuti and may have also collaborated with him, appears to be a more than likely hypothesis, especially in virtue of the habits and the close professional ties existing at that time.[149]

Furthermore, Renato Meucci proposes an interesting reason for Anciuti's

146. Carreras and Meroni, "Giovanni Maria Anciuti," 181.

147. Bernardini and Meucci, "L'Oboe d'avorio di Anciuti (1722)," 371. Original text: "un'abilità costruttiva costantemente ribadita dall'intera produzione di Anciuti"; "i suoi manufatti sono . . . contraddistinti da un'eccezionale accuratezza esecutiva e da una marcata inclinazione alla sperimentazione, che impone sempre a forme e modelli, di propria o di altrui ideazione, una spiccata impronta di originalità costruttiva." Translation by the author.

148. Germanisches Nationalmuseum, MIR373. There is also a precious oboe marked "S. MARTIN" (Paris, Musée de la Musique, E.210). See Haynes, *The Eloquent Oboe*, 133.

149. Bernardini and Meucci, "L'Oboe d'avorio di Anciuti (1722)," 376; 378. Original text: "[L'oboe] fu . . . importato a Milano dalla Francia verosimilmente per iniziativa dell'oboista Aléxis Saint-Martin, appartenente alla prima generazione di suonatori di questo strumento e padre di Giuseppe Sammartini. . . . Aléxis doveva essere anche costruttore, se è corretto attribuirgli un oboe firmato "Saint Martin" conservato a Norimberga . . . che presenta un diapason piuttosto alto, quindi adatto all'intonazione che sappiamo essere stata la più comune a Milano. Che Aléxis o Giuseppe Sammartini, entrambi eccelsi oboisti attivi a Milano nei primi decenni del settecento, possano essere entrati in contatto con Anciuti e possano aver anche collaborato con lui, appare ipotesi più che verosimile soprattutto in virtù delle consuetudini e degli stretti legami professionali esistenti a quell'epoca." Translation by the author.

arrival from Venice:

> the presence in Milan, in those years, of Aléxis de Saint Martin. . . . To me, this seems to indicate a possible and fruitful context of collaboration, in particular with Giuseppe Sammartini, who . . . may have been in close personal relationship with Anciuti. . . . The . . . transfer from one city to another in the Po Valley still had to be strongly motivated, since such an undertaking was certainly difficult at that time for a simple craftsman. Whatever the motivation for Anciuti's settlement in the Lombard capital . . . it coincides precisely not only with the start of the economic and commercial rebirth of the city, but also with the progressive conquest of that role of European musical center which Milan would never stop having.[150]

Benoît Laurent suggests that the Sammartini and Anciuti families may have lived, for a certain period of time, in the same Milanese district (Porta Ticinese).[151] However, he does not share the hypothesis, already formulated by Haynes,[152] of Anciuti's apprenticeship with Aléxis for the construction of oboes.[153] But the presence of oboes in Venice (where Anciuti lived before going to Milan) as early as 1692,[154] does not imply that local makers were already able to produce the new French instrument.

The French-born Aléxis de Saint Martin (ca.1661–1724) arrived in Milan towards the last decade of the seventeenth century, presumably attracted by job opportunities, since the oboe was still a valuable novelty in Italy.[155] He was likely an excellent musician, to judge by the musical talent

150. Renato Meucci, "Strumenti e strumentisti nella Milano di metà settecento," in Davide Daolmi and Cesare Fertonani (ed.), *Antonio Brioschi e il nuovo stile musicale del settecento Lombardo* (Milan: Edizioni LED, 2010), 139. Original text: "La presenza a Milano in quegli anni di Aléxis de Saint Martin. . . . Questa presenza mi sembra poter additare un possibile e fruttuoso contesto di collaborazione, in particolare con Giuseppe Sammartini, il quale . . . può essere stato in stretti rapporti personali con Anciuti. . . . Il . . . trasferimento da una città all'altra del territorio padano dovette essere comunque fortemente motivato, visto che una tale impresa era all'epoca sicuramente disagevole per un semplice artigiano. Qualunque sia la motivazione dell'insediamento di Anciuti nella capitale lombarda . . . , esso coincide appunto non solo con l'avvio della rinascita economica e commerciale della città lombarda, ma anche con la progressiva conquista di quel ruolo di centro musicale europeo che Milano non avrebbe più smesso di svolgere." Translation by the author.

151. Laurent, "So Sweet Martini Claims Attention Here," 1: 124.

152. Haynes, *The Eloquent Oboe*, 133.

153. Laurent, "So Sweet Martini Claims Attention Here," 1: 123–25.

154. Ibid., 117.

155. Prefumo, *I Fratelli Sammartini*, 15–16; 105–06. It has been hypothesized that Aléxis also worked in Venice and Rome; see Haynes, *The Eloquent Oboe*, 134; 300; 309.

of at least two of his children: Giuseppe was "the finest performer on the hautboy in Europe,"[156] as well as an excellent composer, appreciated by Burney and Hawkins, while Giovanni Battista (1700/1–1775) was a very influential composer and prominent personality in the Milanese musical scene, as well as abroad.[157]

Finally, we get to the fundamental thesis of this research: the creation of the straight-top by Anciuti, subsequently introduced in Brussels and in London by Giuseppe Sammartini. Haynes wrote:

> it was apparently in the 1740s that the first straight-top hautboys, Type C, began to be made in England. . . . There is a good chance that the straight-top model, which Anciuti was already making in the 1730s, was brought from Milan to London by Sammartini, and that (with its obviously different appearance) it was associated with him. . . . Stanesby's straight-top (or others like it that have not survived) was most likely made before Sammartini's death in 1750 (Stanesby himself died in 1754). Soon afterwards, Type C became all the rage in England.[158]

So, it seems that Anciuti is the one whom Stanesby Jr. was imitating, in making his own straight-top model.[159] On the other hand, "from the moment Sammartini moved to London in 1729, hautboy playing in England was never the same. The 1730s and 1740s were dominated by this remarkable player. . . . Sammartini's playing profoundly affected his audiences and was fondly remembered well into the next century."[160] Haynes also points out that "players frequently traveled or moved to other countries, bringing with them . . . instruments of the latest design. An obvious example of an international hautboy player is Giuseppe Sammartini, trained in Milan by his French father, and culminating his career in London."[161]

The hypothesis that Sammartini played an oboe by Anciuti is supported by an episode in London around 1735, when he unfortunately lost the

156. Obituary in the Whitehall Evening Post, November 24, 1750. See Prefumo, *I Fratelli Sammartini*, 121.

157. Ibid., 27; 30; 38; 44; 124.

158. Haynes, *The Eloquent Oboe*, 443.

159. Laurent points out some interesting elements suggesting a collaboration between Sammartini and Stanesby. See Laurent, "So Sweet Martini Claims Attention Here," 1: 142–53.

160. Haynes, *The Eloquent Oboe*, 437.

161. Ibid., 9.

top joint of his oboe. The missing joint was probably an ad hoc adaptation to the frequent pitch variations with which the woodwind players had to cope when moving;[162] and Anciuti was "among the very first to equip his oboes with alternate joints, as replacements for playing at different pitches ."[163] In particular, the aforementioned ivory oboe, now in Milan, "already in 1722 had two alternate top joints . . . while the practice of equipping an oboe with them . . . would become customary only after 1750."[164]

Where is the true origin of the straight-top to be found? In my opinion, it must be sought in the bold artistic genius of Anciuti. As Adkins put it:

> in search of beauty, eighteenth-century oboe makers incorporated venerable proportional systems and many familiar architectural motives and decorative shapes into the designs of their instruments.[165]

And so,

> if the concept of oboe design were grounded on a larger architectural form, then it might be said that the decorations fulfilled an aesthetic function as part of the whole, and, of course, that larger form would have to have been the column.[166]

Why was Anciuti attracted to the straight-top design? If one compares the straight-top to a column, it would be very austere, almost fragile and precarious because of so much simplicity. This is why this oboe type is frequently accompanied by reinforcing rings, which however do not alter its profile: "the straight-top oboe's simple lines . . . are severe, even with ivory mounts."[167] The shape of the straight-top is a "challenge to the material"[168]

162. Ibid., 97. See also Haynes, *A History of Performing Pitch*, 291.

163. Bernardini and Meucci, "L'Oboe d'avorio di Anciuti (1722)," 375. Original text: "tra i primissimi a dotare i propri oboi di pezzi di ricambio, ossia dei pezzi sostitutivi per suonare con diapason differenti." Translation by the author.

164. Ibid., 376. Original text: "già nel 1722 presentava due pezzi superiori alternativi . . . , mentre la pratica di dotare un oboe di tali pezzi . . . sarebbe in effetti diventata consuetudinaria solo dopo il 1750." Translation by the author.

165. Cecil Adkins, "Proportions and Architectural Motives in the Design of the Eighteenth-Century Oboe," *Journal of the American Musical Instrument Society* 25 (1999): 61. Reprinted in *The Double Reed* 25, no. 2 (2002): 61–75.

166. Ibid., 70.

167. Howe, "Historical Oboes 5," 18.

168. Bernardini and Meucci, "L'Oboe d'avorio di Anciuti (1722)," 375. Original text:

typical of Anciuti, a complete overturning of the common and consolidated baluster-top. He does not add further complexity to an instrument, the Type A2 hautboy, that is already very ornate; on the contrary, rejecting a rather common notion of virtuosity (as a synonym of skilled elaboration), he removes and eliminates that same complexity.

Only two straight-top oboes by Anciuti remain, while we have at least eleven baluster-top models.[169] This scarcity of surviving specimens might suggest that he produced them only for a few exceptional performers.[170] My considerations on the outward appearance of the straight-top and its symbolism, albeit partly conjectural, do not insert it a priori in a context of use, but try to associate it with the few items of evidence we have (such as Bissoli's portrait), providing a hypothesis on its origin. So, I suggest that this radical change was due to purely aesthetic needs: a design virtuosity associated with musical virtuosity, as in the cases of Giuseppe Sammartini and Matteo Bissoli.[171] As Haynes notes, "the thrust of much of the playing of Italian hautboists was virtuosic display and extension of the limits of technique; it was therefore logical that experimental instruments would be made by Italians."[172]

Actually, the great simplification of the straight-top (Type C) is not completely alone among oboe turning styles, at least since the 1730s: less extreme trends can be found in two other similar hautboy types, the B and the E.[173] The lightening of balusters, beading, and the whole profile is progressive from Type E to C, passing through B; but this arrangement is purely ideal, not chronological, since, as I have tried to show, the inven-

"sfida alla materia." Translation by the author. Here Bernardini and Meucci refer to other features of Anciuti's activity, but to me the expression seems to be fitting in this case too, although the outward appearance of the straight-top initially arouses an impression of disconcerting simplicity.

169. Ibid., 379.

170. There was no such shortage in England some decades later, judging by the great number of surviving specimens by many English makers. So, the association between straight-tops and a few exceptional players was no longer valid there.

171. As for the latter, the oboe sonata in G minor speaks for itself; see Haynes, *The Eloquent Oboe*, 199; 408. Moreover, the straight-top played by Bissoli could well be by Anciuti (who died in 1744), since Bissoli was born around 1711 in Brescia and started his career here, near Milan.

172. Haynes, *The Eloquent Oboe*, 398.

173. Ibid., 88. I report the existence of a Type B hautboy by G. Astor, sold by the Gardiner Houlgate auction house in Corsham, on June 13, 2013. Therefore, it is the third Type B specimen made in England known so far, along with those of Stanesby Jr. (Oxford, Bate Collection, 29) and Schuchart (Glasgow, Art Gallery and Museums, A.1942.68.ao).

tion of the straight-top dates well before 1730, and therefore precedes the development of the other two types. However, they sometimes have in common the presence of keys mounted in blocks left standing in the wood, which contribute to a greater overall stylization (figs. 28 and 29).[174] Therefore, at first glance, the cause for this would seem to be purely aesthetic, such as to achieve even more refinement and essentiality.

However, Alberto Ponchio, maker of oboes and other historical woodwinds, offers a second reason of a practical nature: the absence of the baluster in the straight-top's upper joint arguably aggravates the imbalance of the instrument in the player's hands. This problem is already present in baluster-top models, where turnings at the end of the middle joint and on the bell add weight. To minimize this imbalance in the straight-top, the maker should remove heaviness in this area mounting the keys in blocks, instead of the usual rings. But sculpting the block mounts involves spending added time on an object already finished on the lathe. Furthermore, the last operations must necessarily be carried out by hand, not by machine, and a small imprecision is sufficient to visibly compromise all the work done before.[175] Given the high frequency of blocks and ornamental rings occurring in straight-top oboes, the suggestion is hardly sustainable that these models are easier to make and therefore cheaper than the baluster-tops. Some very few specimens have neither reinforcing rings nor blocks for the keys; only these particular instruments are inexpensive to make, not the straight-top type as such. Adkins suggested that keys set in rings are characteristic for oboes made in London, while blocks would be more common in those made in the English countryside and in the rest of Europe;[176] this seems to be true, although London straight-tops with blocks are not unusual, and probably are among the oldest made in that city.

As said above, Types B, C, and E fit into a general trend of simplified turning style. However, after the middle of the eighteenth century there was a reversal of the tendency, hence a recovery of the baroque forms, but combined with a more extensive use of classical proportions.[177] Furthermore, the typical fragmentation of the first phase, which began about

174. Haynes, *The Eloquent Oboe*, 44–45; 76.

175. I thank Alberto Ponchio for the information shared with me.

176. Adkins, "Why Straight-Tops?" 119–20.

177. Haynes, *The Eloquent Oboe*, 79. See also Adkins, "Proportions and Architectural Motives."

FIGURE 28. Detail from: G. Miller, oboe (second half of the eighteenth century), front. Brussels, Musical Instruments Museum, 0964. Photo by Anne Deknock.

FIGURE 29. Detail from: G. Miller, oboe (second half of the eighteenth century), back. Brussels, Musical Instruments Museum, 0964. Photo by Anne Deknock.

1730, was followed by a gradual uniformity after about 1770, with the generalized adoption of Type D (although in three variants).[178] These developments deserve a discussion of their own, at another time. As for the straight-top, one notes that in the transition from the Italian style to the English, the striking absence of balusters, replaced by metal ferrules on each joint, is softened by their cautious return on the lower joint and bell; but they are still different from those of contemporary baluster-tops, as is the beading (figs. 30 and 31). This has already been noted in the analysis of fig. 19.

A Little Coda: the Vox Humana

Another form of the straight-top oboe is the vox humana, a tenor in F; but although their morphology is noticeably alike, the origin may not be the same. The surviving vox humanas were made almost exclusively either in Italy or England: a distribution similar, though not identical to the that of the straight-top oboe. So, a doubt may arise, whether the vox humana was invented in England and only later it arrived in Italy, or the other way round. The first solution is more plausible,[179] given the evidence of the use of this instrument in England as early as 1733,[180] and the preponderance of English specimens. Moreover, all the Italian ones so far known date back to the second half of the eighteenth century, and their main maker is Giovanni Panormo (1743–1814), based in Naples.

There are many constructional differences between the two models. The Italian vox humana (fig. 32) can be made in three pieces; in contrast, it seems that the English has always two joints (lower one and bell united; fig. 33). Moreover, the Italian version retains light balusters resembling those of Type E, so it is not a straight-top, despite the general simplicity of the turning style. But since the top column bead is absent, the Italian vox

178. Haynes, *The Eloquent Oboe*, 397–98.

179. I agree with this hypothesis as proposed by Renato Meucci, "La «Voce umana»: uno Strumento del secondo settecento," in Carolyn Gianturco and Patrizia Radicchi (eds.), *Pietro Alessandro Guglielmi* (1728–1804): *Musicista italiano nel settecento europeo* (Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2008), 463; 471–73.

180. "Two performances at Drury Lane Theatre in May 1733 included 'music for two Vox Humanes, a new invented instrument.'" Page, "The Hautboy in London's Musical Life," 370, note 8.

FIGURE 30. Detail from: G. Astor, oboe (end of the eighteenth or beginning of the nineteenth century). Italy, private collection.

FIGURE 31. Detail from: G. Astor, oboe (end of the eighteenth or beginning of the nineteenth century). Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, BK-2018-16. Public domain.

FIGURE 32. G. Panormo, vox humana (second half of the eighteenth century). Rome, Museo Nazionale degli Strumenti Musicali, 633. Used by permission. Courtesy of Direzione Musei Statali della Città di Roma – Museo Nazionale degli Strumenti Musicali.

FIGURE 33. W. Gatley, vox humana (end of the eighteenth or beginning of the nineteenth century). Brussels, Musical Instruments Museum, 1979. Photo by Anne Deknock.

humana definitively belongs to Type B.[181] Another difference between the two models is in the keys: while the Italian has the usual butterfly shape in the C-key, the English often has a characteristic hook shape for both keys. Also, the third hole of the Italian vox humana is doubled, while each hole is single in the English instruments; a final Italian peculiarity is the presence, sometimes, of a rosette at the end of the bell. As demonstrated for the straight-top, one cannot argue for a greater ease and a lower cost in the production of the vox humana: ivory, horn, and metal rings together with blocks for the keys are typical of this instrument in both versions, with few exceptions.

Which music was written for the vox humana? The Italian instrument has a fairly circumscribed repertoire, consisting mainly of vocal works by composers of the Neapolitan School, such as Giovanni Paisiello (1740–1816) and Niccolò Piccinni (1728–1800).[182] Instead, about the English one, despite the surviving instruments no specific pieces of music are known to date.[183] It has often been claimed, perhaps because of this, that it was used in country parishes,[184] as it is sometimes thought of the straight-top oboe. But I am not aware that anyone has ever substantiated this thesis, and there are only few testimonies of the use of the vox humana in English country churches.[185] For example, there is an instrument by the Milhouses, made in Newark, now kept at the All Saints' Church in Winterton, Lincolnshire. Here there are also other instruments played by people of the parish at least until 1840, when the organ was built.[186] Another testimony is the purchase, in 1783, of a vox humana by Thomas Collier for the parish of Swalcliffe, Oxfordshire.[187] But I think that these are only signs of the widespread use of this instrument in England, as it

181. The only exception known to me is the instrument by Roustagneq (Birmingham Conservatoire Historical Instrument Collection, 3.6), which retains not only a pronounced baluster but also the top column bead.

182. Meucci, "La «Voce umana»," 470; 474–75.

183. Ibid., 471.

184. See, for example, Geoffrey Burgess and Bruce Haynes, *The Oboe* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004), 99.

185. Adkins, "William Milhouse and the English Classical Oboe," 73–74.

186. Information from the church's website: http://lincoln.ourchurchweb.org.uk/winterton/church-heritage/west-gallery-instruments/.

187. Maurice Byrne, "The Church Band at Swalcliffe," *Galpin Society Journal* 17 (1964): 89; 91.

was the standard type of tenor oboe available there at the time;[188] only after the first decades of the nineteenth century it was supplanted by the English horn.[189]

I suggest that the vox humana derives from the Italian straight-top oboe, reworked as a tenor. Very likely, the oldest surviving specimen is by Stanesby Jr., the most probable inventor of the instrument.[190] Significantly, to him is attributed a fingering chart for the vox humana, published by Longman, Lukey and Co. between ca.1769 and 1775.[191] This late publication, well after Stanesby Jr.'s death in 1754, could be the partial reissue of a lost advertisement in which his new creation was once announced. Furthermore, in the English testimony from 1733, the vox humana was referred to precisely as a newly invented instrument. So, my hypothesis is that Stanesby Jr. created the vox humana by 1733, inspired by Anciuti's straight-top, played by Giuseppe Sammartini, who arrived in London in 1729.[192] This would definitively demonstrate that the Italian straight-top oboe had already arrived in London well before Richard Milhouse Sr.'s activity in Newark, which began not earlier than 1742.[193]

In conclusion, I hope that the reader is now convinced that if ever a vox humana or a straight-top oboe was played in an English country church, this was because these were dominant oboes in England from the 1730s to the 1810s.

188. The only exception being that by Gedney, however similar to the vox humana (no top baluster, hook-shaped C-key). I could not check Schuchart's tenor oboe (Swindon Museum and Art Gallery).

189. The first English horn produced in England could be that made by William Milhouse (1761–1834/7) in London, hence not before than 1787, the year of his transfer from Newark (London, Horniman Museum, 2004.863). See also Eric Halfpenny, "The 'Tenner Hoboy,'" *Galpin Society Journal* 5 (1952): 25–26; about William Milhouse, see Adkins, "William Milhouse and the English Classical Oboe," 48; 55.

190. London, Victoria and Albert Museum, 291-1882. See Michael Finkelman, "Tenor Oboes," *Grove Music Online*, 2001, https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic.

191. Halfpenny, "The 'Tenner Hoboy,'" 22–23 and pl. III. For the dating, see Bruce Haynes, "Oboe Fingering Charts, 1695–1816," *Galpin Society Journal* 31 (1978): 76.

192. As noted above, the straight-top by Stanesby Jr. is very likely the oldest English specimen of Type C, despite Adkins's claim that it was made by Gedney after the death of his master.

193. This hypothetical date is proposed by Adkins, "Why Straight-Tops?" 121.

I wish to thank, for their precious help, Stefano Maffioletti, Stefano Vezzani, Giuseppe Nalin, Alberto Ponchio, Renato Meucci, Antonella Varvara, Leo Duarte, Emanuele Marconi, William Petit, Nicoletta Bonazzi, Robert Howe, and Geoffrey Burgess.

Appendix

Surviving Straight-Top Oboes

These lists are admittedly incomplete and sometimes outdated, given the difficulty of tracing the many instruments in private or not accessible collections; however, the main digitized public collections of the world are included. Unless otherwise specified, the information come from online museum records or other publicly accessible resources. In a few cases, private collectors have contributed directly. Thanks in advance to anyone who contributes additions or corrections to the author after publication.

A = Ivory, metal, or horn ferrules.

B = Key mounts as blocks; if not both, at least the lower one.

* = Information from: Phillip T. Young, *4900 Historical Woodwind Instruments* (London: Tony Bingham, 1993).

Oboes

Anciuti, G. M. (Milan):

London, Victoria and Albert Museum, 1127-1869. (In ivory) B

Rome, Museo Nazionale degli Strumenti Musicali, 829/1094. A B

Anonymous [probably England]:

Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, BK-2018-24. (Clarinet-like instrument, with four keys)

Edinburgh University Collection of Historic Musical Instruments, 0063. A

Keighley, Cliffe Castle Museum, 9933. (Middle joint and bell only) A

Present whereabouts unknown, sold by Ladenburger Auktion on February 24, 2018. A

Williamsburg, Art Museums of Colonial Williamsburg, 1937-286. A

Anonymous [probably Italy]:

Rome, Museo Nazionale degli Strumenti Musicali, 3295/1369. A B

Anonymous "GG" (London):

Brussels, Musical Instruments Museum, 1978. A

Anthony, J. (Philadelphia):

New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1997.272. A

Astor (London):

Glasgow, Hague Collection of Musical Instruments, 112033. A
Greenville (South Carolina), Sigal Music Museum. A
Italy, private collection.
Oxford, Bate Collection, x2. A B?
Snowshill, Snowshill Manor and Garden, 1335318. A
Tachikawa, Kunitachi College of Music, 1057. A

Bland & Weller (London):

Edinburgh University Collection of Historic Musical Instruments, 1031. A
London, Horniman Museum, 2004.856. A
Oxford, Bate Collection, x205. A
Present whereabouts unknown, sold by Bonhams on September 10, 2007. A

Braet, I. A. [probably Brussels]:

Brussels, Musical Instruments Museum, 2612. A B

Cahusac (London):

Ann Arbor, Stearns Collection of Musical Instruments, 0665. A B
Birmingham Conservatoire, Historical Instrument Collection, 3.5. A B
Franklin (Pennsylvania), Abel private collection.* B?
Glasgow, Hague Collection of Musical Instruments, 112034. A B
Keighley, Cliffe Castle Museum, 112/1929. B
London, Horniman Museum, 14.5.47/88. B
Oxford, Bate Collection, x2. (Bell only) A B?
Present whereabouts unknown, sold by Bonhams on October 5, 2011. A B
Tachikawa, Kunitachi College of Music, 1058. A B
Wilbraham (Massachusetts), Howe private collection. A B
Washington, Library of Congress, DCM0033. A B
Yale Univerersity, Collection of Musical Instruments, 3425. A B

Collier, Th. (London):

Cuxton, Marshall private collection.* B?

England, Duarte private collection.
West Tarring, St Andrew's Church.* A B?

Collins (Collinge), J. (Manchester):
Present whereabouts unknown, Turner private collection.[194] A B

Cosins, N. [probably Brussels]:
Nuremberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, MIR375. A B

Fornari, A. (Venice):
Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, 17.1906. A
Cologne, Westermann private collection.* A B?
Copenaghen, Musikmuseet, C.458.* A B?
Greenville (South Carolina), Sigal Music Museum. A
Leipzig, Museum für Musikinstrumente, 4011327. A B
Leipzig, Museum für Musikinstrumente, 4011328. (In ivory) B
Lisbon, Museu Nacional da Música, 108.
Milan, Museo degli Strumenti Musicali, 379. (Attributed) A
Milan, Museo Teatrale della Scala. (Basset oboe) A
Mulhouse, Katz private collection.* A B?
Nuremberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, MIR380. A
Parma, Museo del Conservatorio Boito. A
Rome, Museo Nazionale degli Strumenti Musicali, 3264/1085. A
Venice, Conservatorio Marcello, 393.* B?
Venice, Conservatorio Marcello, 394.* B?
Venice, Fondazione Querini Stampalia, 400–1.* B?
Venice, Fondazione Querini Stampalia, 400–2.* A B?
Vienna, Internationale Gesellschaft für Alte Musik.* A B?

Gedney, C. (London):
Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, 17.1912. (Tenor oboe) B
Colchester, Hollytrees Museum, 1932.356.1. A B
Vermillion, National Music Museum, 05298. B

Goulding, G. (London):
London, Horniman Museum, 2004.837.

Goulding & Co. (London):
Brighton, Royal Pavilion and Museums, MS100156. A
Twickenham, Museum of Army Music, MAM60. A

Goulding, Wood & Co. (London):

194. Information from: John Turner, "Joshua Collinge: An Eighteenth-Century Mancunian Woodwind Maker," *Manchester Sounds* 8 (2009–10): 4–7.

London, Royal College of Music, RCM0326O2.

Grassi (Milan):

Paris, Musée de la Musique, E.584. (Serpentino tenor oboe) A B

Paris, Musée de la Musique, E.749. (Serpentino tenor oboe, attributed) A

Hallett, B. (London):

Oxford, Bate Collection, 21. (Top joint not original)

Key, Th. (London):

Present whereabouts unknown, sold by Sotheby's on November 21, 2001. A B

Kusder, H. (London):

Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, 17.1907. A

London, Horniman Museum, 14.5.47/258. A

Oxford, Bate Collection, 23. A

Oxford, Pitt Rivers Museum, 1900.67.1.1.

Present whereabouts unknown, sold by Gardiner Houlgate. A

Present whereabouts unknown, sold by Gardiner Houlgate on September 14, 2012. B

Wilbraham (Massachusetts), Howe private collection. A B

Magazari (Bologna):

Present whereabouts unknown, sold by William Petit in 2018. A

Meacham, J. Jr. (Hartford):

Castile (New York), Letchworth State Park Museum. A

Milhouse (Newark):

Aston on Trent, All Saints' Church.* A B

Dearborn, The Henry Ford Museum, 82.27.* A B?

London, Bradshaw private collection.* A B

Oxford, Bate Collection, 25. B

Oxford, Bate Collection, 26. A B

Oxford, Bate Collection, 293. B

Oxford, Montagu private collection. A B

Present whereabouts unknown, Darke private collection.[195] A? B?

Present whereabouts unknown, Vincent private collection.[196] A? B?

The Hague, Gemeentemuseum, Ea 23–1981.* A B?

195. Information from: Adkins, "William Milhouse and the English Classical Oboe," 57.

196. Information from: Halfpenny, "The English 2- and 3-Keyed Hautboy."

Tokyo, Ueno Gakuen School of Music, 93.* A B?
Turndich, Drackley private collection.[197] A B
Vermillion, National Music Museum, 02503. A B

Milhouse, W. (London):
Hamamatsu, Museum of Musical Instruments, A–0244R.[198] A B?
London, Horniman Museum, Mus. M62–1983.* A? B
Snowshill, Snowshill Manor and Garden, 1335316. A B
Wilbraham (Massachusetts), Howe private collection. A B

Miller, G. (London):
Brussels, Musical Instruments Museum, 0964. A B
Oxford, Bate Collection, x20. A

Miner, U. (Hartford):
Dearborn, The Henry Ford Museum, 83.45.1. A

Palanca, C. (Turin):
Vindelle, Ecochard private collection. A B

Panormo, V. [probably England]:
Present whereabouts unknown, ex-Piguet private collection. A

Parker, J. (London):
Vermillion, National Music Museum, 02686. A

Payne, G. C. (London):
London, Horniman Museum, 1969.681. A

Pinchbeck (Atherstone):
London, Horniman Museum, 2004.836. B

Potter, R. (London):
London, Victoria and Albert Museum, 288–1882. B

Power, J. (London):
Greenville (South Carolina), Sigal Music Museum. A

Power, Th. (London):
Wilbraham (Massachusetts), Howe private collection. A

Proser (London):
Edinburgh, University Collection of Historic Musical Instruments, 3343. A

Rottenburgh, G. A. (Brussels):
Paris, Musée de la Musique, E.2184. (Tenor oboe) A B
Stockholm, Scenkonst Museet, F278. A B

197. See note 195.

198. Information from: Haynes, *The Eloquent Oboe*, 86.

Rottenburgh, J. H. (Brussels):
Brussels, Musical Instruments Museum, 0180. (Tenor oboe) A B
Brussels, Musical Instruments Museum, 2618. (Tenor oboe) A B
Brussels, Musical Instruments Museum, 2619. (Tenor oboe) A B
Oxford, Bate Collection, 248. (Tenor oboe) A B
Stockholm, Scenkonst Museet F288. (Tenor oboe) A B
Stanesby, Th. Jr. (London):
Hamamatsu, Museum of Musical Instruments, A–0243R. A B

English Horns

Anonymous [probably Italy, Germany, or Austria]:
Leipzig, Museum für Musikinstrumente, 4011347. A B
Nuremberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, MIR395. A B
Bimboni, G. (Florence):
Oxford, Bate Collection, x24. A B
Stockholm, Scenkonst Museet, F291. A B
Fornari, A. (Venice):
Basel, Historisches Museum, 1956.398.* A B?
Bergamo, Museo Donizettiano.* A B?
Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, 17.1920. A B
Copenhagen, Musikmuseet, C.462.* A B?
Italy, private collection. A B
Kilmarnock, de Walden private collection.* A? B?
Milan, Conservatorio Verdi.* A B?
Milan, Museo degli Strumenti Musicali, 390. A B
Modena, Museo Civico, 47.* A B?
Munich, Deutsches Museum, 34503.* A B?
New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 89.4.889. A
Nuremberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, MIR396. A B
Oxford, Bate Collection, 251. A B
Parma, Museo del Conservatorio Boito. A B
Parma, Museo del Conservatorio Boito. (Attributed) A B
Richmond, Murray private collection.* A? B?
Rome, Accademia di Santa Cecilia, 42. A B
Scarsdale, Rosenbaum private collection.* A B?
Tokyo, Ueno Gakuen School of Music.* A B?

Turin, Museo Civico, 3690.* A B?
Venice, Fondazione Querini Stampalia, 400–3.* A
Venice, Museo Correr, 54.* A
Venice, Perini private collection.* (Top joint only) A

Grassi (Milan):
Rome, Museo Nazionale degli Strumenti Musicali, 641. A B?

Panormo, G. (Naples):
Rome, Museo Nazionale degli Strumenti Musicali. A B

Vox Humanas

Anonymous [probably England]:
Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, 17.1913. (Bass oboe) A B
New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 89.4.2029. (Bass oboe, nineteenth-century copy) A B?
Oxford, Bate Collection, x247. B
Present whereabouts unknown, sold by Bonhams on February 26, 2007. B

Anonymous [probably England or Italy]:
Present whereabouts unknown (Slovenia?). A B

Bilton, R. (London):
Wilbraham (Massachusetts), Howe private collection. A B

Bolton (Dolton?), G. [England or United States]:
Washington, National Museum of American History, MI650614. A

Cahusac (London):
London, Victoria and Albert Museum, 297–1882. A B
New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 89.4.1135. A B
Vermillion, National Music Museum, 03325. A B

Collier, Th. (London):
Edinburgh University Collection of Historic Musical Instruments, 1713. A
London, Oldham private collection.* B?

Gatley, W. [England]:
Brussels, Musical Instruments Museum, 1979. A B
Warrington, Warrington Museum, RA656. A B

Key, Th. (London):
Greenville (South Carolina), Sigal Music Museum. A B

Longman & Broderip (London):
London, Horniman Museum, 2004.864. A B
Wilsonville (Oregon), Robinson private collection. A B
Milhouse (Newark):
Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, 17.1911. A B
Edinburgh, National Museum of Scotland, A.1908.248. A B?
Edinburgh University Collection of Historic Musical Instruments, 3375. A B
Newark, Newark Museum. A B
Tokyo, Ueno Gakuen School of Music, 94.* A B?
Winterton, All Saints' Church. A B
Witenham, Church.* A B?
Panormo, G. (Naples):
Amsterdam, Bernardini private collection.[199] A B
Bologna, Museo Civico Medievale, 2813-2814. A B
Hamamatsu, Museum of Musical Instruments.[200] A? B?
Rome, Museo Nazionale degli Strumenti Musicali, 633. A B
Panormo, V. [London or Dublin]:
Paris, Musée de la Musique, E.1640. A B
Parker, J. (London):
Edinburgh University Collection of Historic Musical Instruments, 0961. A B
Roustagneq (Toulon):
Birmingham Conservatoire, Historical Instrument Collection, 3.6. B
Stanesby, Th. Jr. (London):
London, Victoria and Albert Museum, 291-1882. A B

199. Information from: Meucci, "La «Voce Umana»," 469–70.
200. Ibid.