



*Philomena cisterciensis* (Burghausen, 1743), title-page

### Instrumental iconography

Eric Hoepfich, in "The earliest paintings of the clarinet" (*EM*, xxiii/2 (May 1995), pp.259–66), remarks on the inestimable value of the detailed renderings of the early clarinet found in two early 18th-century paintings and on the considerable detail found in the six panels of angel musicians painted in 1744–5 by Gabriel Weiss. Unfortunately, the 'artistic licence' shown by the painter is not restricted to depictions of hand positions or embouchures.

One of the two panels on which, we are informed, pairs of trumpeters are depicted, attests to a rather different iconographical tradition. The instruments played by the pair of angels on the sixth panel (that on the extreme right of illus.3 on p.261) are superficially trumpet-like as the entire body of each instrument is positioned in front of the player. However, and very noticeable in the case of the instrument 'nearest' to the viewer, is the constructional detail that places the end of the bell section closer to the player than the U-shaped tube that joins the first two

yards. Moreover, unlike the pair of trumpets, these instruments are held in a particular two-handed manner that betrays another identity.

The instruments in the sixth panel are trombones. No trombones of this shape have ever been found, nor has their existence ever been mentioned in the contemporary music textbooks. On balance, it must be the case that it is the artist, rather than the organologists, who has erred.

Yet Gabriel Weiss is merely one of innumerable artists who, since the appearance of the trombone in the early 15th century, have contributed to a long and hallowed tradition of iconographical virtual reality. The misdepiction in the present case—and also in all of the others—may be simply restricted to the trombone; many artists have considered the smaller sizes of trombone, in particular, to be trumpet-like in shape. However, in calling into question this particular artist's actual experience of the trombone, which may have been limited to a single identifiable Latin-German schoolbook, there is also brought into play the potential to compromise the accuracy of other instruments depicted by him.

Taken more generally, this should caution us against accepting at face value the aspects of any single piece of iconographical evidence in which we are interested, while simultaneously casting a blind eye at its shortcomings elsewhere.

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The richly illustrated article by Erich Hoepfich invites several observations. Hoepfich declares 'the early date of many three-key clarinets': one is forced to ask which instruments he is talking about. An admittedly incomplete checklist of extant Baroque clarinets appears in A. Rice, *The Baroque clarinet* (Oxford, 1992), pp.162–5; Rice lists 31 two-keyed and 13 three-keyed instruments. The latter are mainly late and the apparently early three-keyed clarinet by 'I.C.DENNER' in Berkeley is certainly by Johann David Denner (1704–64), a son of the famous Johann Christoph Denner and obviously the last successor of the celebrated 'I. C. Denner' workshop, which continued after the death of Johann Christoph in 1707. The pair of two-keyed 'I. C. Denner' clarinets, formerly in the Germanisches Nationalmuseum (MI 196, 197) and which disappeared in 1945, were bought from a church near Nuremberg in 1754 (see M. Kirnbauer, *Verzeichnis der Europäischen Musikinstrumente im Germanischen Nationalmuseum Nürnberg*, ii: *Flöten- und Rohrblattinstrumente bis 1750* (Wilhelmshaven, 1994), and H. Heyde, 'Makers' marks on wind instruments', *New Langwill index*, ed. W. Waterhouse (London,

1993), pp.xiii–xxviii, esp. p.xviii). Therefore the clarinet in Berkeley by the same maker is really evidence for the coexistence of both types as Hoeplich states in another context, but at a much later date.

Looking at the panels by Gabriel Weiss in the Pfarrkirche of Bad Schussenried, I wonder about the similarity of the depicted instruments to an engraving by Christoph Melchior Roth of Nuremberg, which is used for the title-page of *PHILOMENA CISTERCIENSIS EX VALLE BERNARDINA RAITTENHASLACENSIS ...* printed by Johann Jacob Luzenberger at Burghausen in 1743, one or two years before the paintings by Weiss (see illustration above). The similarity consists not only in the instruments depicted (clarinets, recorders, bassoon, trumpets and timpani) but also to the corresponding playing positions of the instruments in the panels and the engraving. Only the transverse flute in the painting is of a hopelessly antiquated model, whereas the engraving shows a much more appropriate type. Roth's engraving need not have been Weiss's model, but a similar illustration could well have served as a copy. This does, though, strengthen Hoeplich's presumption that the represented instruments originated in Nuremberg.

Although some other points in the article could be corrected, one can agree with Hoeplich's view that 'the use of iconography is perhaps one of the most pleasant and compelling aspects of any organological study', but it is also an entangled one.

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*Eric Hoeplich replies:*

I should like to thank Dr Downey for his observation that the instruments on the far right panel are meant to be trombones. And I must agree that one must take iconographical material with a grain of salt—something I too point out, particularly with reference to the clarinet, which, after all, is the subject of my article. Although he does not say so, I certainly hope that Dr Downey found it interesting and enjoyable seeing trombones so beautifully rendered, albeit with what he states is a common misdepiction of their exact shape. One frequently encounters art in various forms that is less than perfect. And yet incautiously straying from the hard facts does not necessarily diminish its usefulness, its resonance or its beauty.

Regarding Mr Kirnbauer's last remark about iconography being an 'entangled' aspect in organology, I hasten to add that it need not be. Certainly my observations about the paintings were presented as conjecture, and it was never the intention of the article to address subjects like

the Berkeley Denner clarinet. In the final analysis there is little about these pictures that the academic could consider 'hard' information. I just wanted anyone who was interested to see them and possibly enjoy them as much as I have. Nonetheless I am left with the task of addressing Mr Kirnbauer's remarks.

My reference to the 'early date' of many three-key clarinets refers, naturally, to instruments that could have been made before 1744–5 (the date of the painting). Mr Kirnbauer's use of the words 'late' and 'much later' seems only to confuse the issue. Again, what is of interest would be three-key clarinets possibly made before the date of the painting, which describes the three-key clarinets I refer to in the article.

The Roth engraving is certainly a very interesting piece of iconography which I did not know about (nor, I believe, did many others), and Mr Kirnbauer is to be thanked for sharing it. His suggestion that Weiss used it is appealing, but would be difficult to be sure of. And if there is such a 'similar illustration' as Mr Kirnbauer implies, perhaps he would be good enough to share it as well! (The alert reader notes that Mr Kirnbauer also does not list 'trombone' among the instruments in both the engraving and painting, although it is indisputably there.)

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