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Antique Flutes

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Spring 1981

Supplement to the Fall Catalog of 1980, including Boehm,
Classical, and Irish flutes and mentioning some of the noteworthy
instruments sold through here this Winter.



Notice: These instruments, and several others, will be on display at the Boston Early Music Festival at the New England Conservatory during the week of May 27 through May 31. My booth will be in room #227 -- I hope to see you there!

Instruments from many of the major makers and covering most of the periods in the development of the flute are described in their full historical context in the catalog and commentary issued in the Fall of 1980, to which these pages are a supplement. Rather than cover the same ground again, this issue describes the instruments on hand this spring from the point of view of the modern player, with some indication of how the instruments of the past might be a valuable part of music making now.

The Boehm System

Most players today have grown up with flutes based on the French instruments of Louis Lot, as modified by William Haynes in the early 20th century. Haynes' biggest modification was to make the flute thicker and heavier, giving it a more powerful and deeper sound. The Haynes model flute has been adopted by most flute players in France and America, England to a large degree, and the international orchestras in Germany. It will come as a surprise to most flute players, but the Haynes-type flute was extremely unpopular in most of the Western world, thrown out of many orchestras in favor of wooden flutes, and begrudgingly accepted in the end largely because it is so loud and can drown out most other instruments, not to mention every other type of flute ever made. Another interesting point is that in the long run it is considerably easier and cheaper to make a flute of silver than it is to make one of wood, which never seems to behave properly.

Musicians and listeners throughout the lives of every composer up to 1915 were treated with the pleasure of variety in the sounds from flute players. An evening of flute music might be heard on instruments of just about any material, from ivory to compressed rubber, and from many different fingering systems, each one with its own character. Nowhere did one style so predominate that no other would be heard.

Many of the instruments made for professional flute players before the first world war were handcrafted with such skill that modern flutes of equivalent quality are just about impossible to find. The quality of sound from these old instruments is a true pleasure to hear, for the player and the listener. The only compelling reason today's professional players have for using modern instruments exclusively is the ponderous and heavy sound necessary for accompanying a full orchestra, where the modern flute is at its best. Outside of the pit, why not use wood, thin silver, or some of the popular fingering systems of the 19th century that require some mostly pleasurable practice time to learn?

The following flutes can either be played instantly by modern players with no change in fingering, or are close enough that an open G# or some other surmountable factor must be catered to or learned by the player. In many cases with older instruments pitches either higher or lower than modern concert pitch may limit occasions a flute may be used, and these are noted.

Closed G#, A=440

The following flute is built in the same system and pitched the same as a modern concert flute.

(#254) Rudall, Carte & Co. #4920 c. 1912 Cocus wood body, German Silver Keys, Headjoint with a full-length solid(?) silver lining. A=440. Closed G#. \$1,750.

The headjoint has had extra care in the making of this very playable instrument, with the evidently solid silver lining to focus and brighten the sound, and an ebonite insert around the embouchure to protect the lips from cocus oil and harden the edge of the blow hole. This results in a useful and fine sounding flute, even though the keywork is not of the firm's highest class. In excellent condition.

Closed G#, A=435

The following flutes are also built exactly as a modern concert flute, but pitched low at A=435. Players who tend to blow sharp use these instruments at concert pitch when the flutes are warm and at their sharpest. Using these flutes at concert pitch is possible but less desirable than playing them flat, where they were intended to be played.

(#286) George Haynes, New York c.1910 Blackwood with silver keys. Closed G# A=435. \$1,750.

William Haynes' brother George built this flute, and it clearly shows the fine craftsmanship for which this family is renowned. The headjoint is unlined except for a short tuning slide at the base. This is a very fine, very playable flute that any modern flute player could play instantly. Players with a tendency to play flat should choose a different instrument, since this flute warms up to concert pitch, being built a little below it.

(#192) George Haynes, New York c.1910. \$1,750. Very similar to the flute above.

Both of these flutes are in excellent condition. Both have restored tenons, since the old ones were cracked or broken.

(#207) Ritterhausen, Berlin. c.1910? Blackwood with silver keys. Closed G#. Silver(?) lined headjoint. A=435. \$1,000.

A top line Rittershausen flute, built very well and in excellent condition. The headjoint has a repaired crack on the underside, which is a very minor aesthetic drawback but insures the safety of the embouchure hole. This is a fine instrument and could be used professionally wherever it is possible to use a flute at this pitch. This flute has been played in concerts at A=440, but, as I say, the higher pitch is pushing the flute a bit unless the player tends to play sharp.

Closed G#, A=452

The following flute is built in the same system as a modern instrument but was made to play at a higher pitch than that used today. By pulling out the headjoint about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch the instrument plays at modern pitch, although players will find that the flute is being stretched to its lowest limit and then some. Naturally, players tending to play flat would find this flute more suitable than those who play sharp, or solo players for whom pitch can vary.

(#178) Rudall Carte & Co. London #3759 c.1904. Dark rosewood body, silver keys.

Thinned headjoint, silver lined. Closed G#. A=452. \$1,475.

This is an excellent professional quality flute. The thinned headjoint was Carte's best design, giving response and brightness to the playing of the flute. The silver lining augments this and was second only to a gold-lined thinned wall headjoint. The keywork and wood are beautiful. There is a repaired crack running up the base of the headjoint, the only disfigurement on this flute.

Open G#. A=440.

The following flutes require the open G# fingering, which Boehm and many others have felt to be superior acoustically and technically. Personally, I would say the open G# is worth learning as much if not more for the number of extraordinary flutes made this way than for the acoustics.

(#258) Rudall Rose Carte & Co. London #100 c.1860. Solid silver body and keys.

Gold pad washers. Barell embouchure. Open holes and open G#. A=440. \$5,100.

This flute is indescribably beautiful. Every aspect of its construction is not only flawless but is the epitome of the highest art of flutemaking. The craftsmanship expressed in this instrument is clearly English, but is based on the style of the then newly designed French flutes of Louis Lot, with 4 open hole keys. The silver tube is considerably thinner than a modern flute. The thin tube and the exquisite workmanship give this flute a tone and playability that

is really unsurpassed by just about any other flute. Every flute player would benefit from the experience of playing on an instrument like this, to hear and feel one of the finest English silver flutes ever made. Presently in the care of Charlie Roberts for a complete overhaul.

(#201) Wm. R. Meinell, New York. c.1880 Silver body and keys. Ebonite headjoint. Open G#. Reversed Bb. Thumb crutch. A=440. \$1,350.

This flute is one of the early American made Boehm flutes, when the work of Theobald Boehm was greatly respected over here. This instrument is based entirely on Boehm's design, with the open G#, the reversed Bb, the thumb crutch, a finger rest for the left forefinger, and the thin silver tube. The ebonite headjoint gives a warm and responsive tone without the danger of cracking. In excellent condition and a very fine concert-playing flute.

Open G# A=452

(#232) Rudall Carte & Co #858. London, c.1879 Rockstro's Model (large tone holes) cocus wood with silver keys. Open G#. A=452. \$2,000.

This is another of the Rudall Carte flutes that surpasses ordinary flute making. Fortunately this instrument is virtually unused, with the original bright finish completely intact. The keywork and woodwork are exquisite. The design is completely English, with closed holes and a sturdy elegance about the flute. This instrument is important historically as well as musically, since it is an early Rudall Carte flute in virtual mint condition. As a playing instrument, it easily comes down to A=440 with the tuning slide and has an excellent and loud sound; a very fine flute under almost any conditions.

Open G#. A=438

(#222) Carl Bonnet, New York, c.1890. Dark cocus wood body. Silver keys. Gold springs. Headjoint unlined except for tuning slide. Open G#, Reversed Bb.

Carl Bonnet, cont.

Thumb crutch. A=438. As is. \$700.

Another early American Boehm flute, copied from Boehm's own work. This is a beautiful flute from a very rare maker. The instrument is very well made and has an excellent tone even now. The flute needs a complete overhaul including some minor solder work on the high C# touchpiece and the footjoint rod, which is a bit bent. Nonetheless this will make an excellent flute, which will easily play at A=440 when it is warmed up.

Variations on the modern Boehm SystemThe 1832 System

This system, the first that Boehm invented, is characterised by a conical bore and ring keys. The tone of these flutes resembles that of the old simple system instruments, with the facility and volume of the Boehm mechanism. Many players in the 19th century preferred this system to the cylindrical bore because of the warmth of the tone, and this same reason is making these flutes popular again today.

1832 System, Closed G#. A=452.

(#240) Anonymous, Strassbourg style, c.1870?. Cocus wood, German Silver keys, no cracks or blemishes. \$580.

A student model flute that features somewhat idiosyncratic tuning which will offer a challenge to the musician that chooses this instrument for its excellent warm and loud tone. A tuning slide in the headjoint enables this flute to be played at A=440, which offers no advantages for the tuning.

1832 System, Dorus (closed) G#, A=425.

(#257) Buffet-Crampon, Paris. #102. Cocus wood body, silver keys. Unlined head-joint. Dorus G#. A=425. \$4,800.

My pride and joy for this catalog from an historical perspective. This beautiful flute is one of the very first instruments made after Boehm toured in the 1830's to introduce his design. Probably made in 1839, this is one of the earliest existing Boehm flutes in the world, preceded only by Boehm's own 1832 instruments and a possible two or three instruments in world collections. This flute is presently being overhauled by Charlie Roberts of Orange, MA. Other than the need for an overhaul this flute is basically in perfect condition. A full historical description will accompany this instrument.

Simple System flutes

This title is somewhat misleading, since some of the later so called simple system flutes became so complex no one could repair them, much less play them. In the early days of the flute the instrument definitely was simple, so we will start from there.

One Keyed Flutes

Most musicians have either heard one keyed flutes or played on them. These are the instruments used from about 1680 to about 1810, by which time they were fairly completely superseded by the 6 and 8 keyed flutes. During the 130 years of one keyed popularity much of the flute music played today was written. This time span starts with the very early French Baroque and composers like Hotteterre and includes everyone between them and the middle of Beethoven's life.

Pitch is an important matter when considering buying an old flute for playing. The popular pitches throughout the 18th century varied considerably. The A on an organ in Lille, France as taken by Delezenne around 1700 was 376.3.

At about the same time in Hamburg, Germany the organ in St. Jacobs church was pitched at A=489.2. Handel's own tuning fork in 1751 was at A=422.5.

Instruments from every country during the 18th century exist at numerous different pitches. In our present day climate of standardized pitch we have suggested that common Baroque pitch was A=415, exactly one half tone lower than today's A=440. The convenience of a standard pitch, especially at a half tone difference, caused many replica makers and harpsichord tuners to pick the A=415 pitch. Already this standard is relaxing, and many players are using pitches higher and lower than A=415.

One Key. A=440 (modern concert pitch)

(#281) Christopher Gerock, London. c.1810. Boxwood with ivory rings and cap and one silver key. A=440. \$1,300.

This flute is in very nearly mint condition. The embouchure is oval, a characteristic of the later one key flutes. The boxwood used in this instrument is very handsome, as is the silver key. An above average 19th century instrument, this flute features power over nuance.

One Key. A=425

(#284) A. Bland & Weller, London. c. 1790 Boxwood, ivory rings and cap and one replaced brass key. A=425. \$1,250.

Possibly made by James Wood, the outstanding flutemaker who supplied Bland and Weller and other dealers at this time, this is a nice flute with no cracks or blemishes but featuring a slight warp. The embouchure is extremely small and round, a feature of early 18th century flutes.

Early 19th century keyed flutes

The addition of single keys for the accidental notes of the one keyed flute gave a much clearer and easy to play scale. The important notes and the first

keys to be added were the Fnat., the G#, and the Bb. As soon as these were added the English extended the footjoint down to C, adding two keys to play the C# and the Cnat. These six keyed flutes formed the basis of much of the professional and amateur playing that took place, especially in England, shortly after 1800.

Six keys, A=440 Solid Ivory

(#236) Goulding & Co., London, c.1810 James Wood Fecit. Solid ivory body and headjoint. Headjoint lined with a silver-plated brass tube. A=440. Six silver pewter-plug keys. \$1,900.

A beautiful playing instrument, this flute was made by one of the finest flutemakers, James Wood. The headjoint is cracked through on the far side from the embouchure. The crack has been filled with a white glue. The barell is also cracked and repaired. All of the tone producing elements are sound and in excellent condition. This is a fine performing instrument, is very handsome, and is a lot of fun to play on as the crowds go wild over an ivory flute.

Six keys, boxwood A=415

(#229) G. Astor & Co. London c.1810 Boxwood and ivory with six silver pewter-plug keys. Original ivory embouchure insert. A=415. \$1,300.

A superb flute in mint condition with no cracks or blemishes. This instrument plays very easily with a loud and warm sound (for the period) and even plays clearly down to low C. Recommended without qualification as a performing instrument.

Early 19th century 8 Keyed Flutes

Just at the turn of the 19th century two more keys were added to the flute, without changing the rest of the instrument in terms of bore, embouchure, and tone hole size. Less popular at the time than the six keyed flutes, these instruments are not that common.

Eight keys, small tone holes, A=440.

(#33) G. Astor & Co. London, c.1810. Cocuswood with ivory mounts and 8 silver pewter plug keys. A=440. \$675.

This flute is considerably heavier than the previous boxwood Astor, although it is similar in acoustic construction. The tone is different than that of the boxwood flute, being somewhat more focused. This is a very fine playing flute with the full sound of the dark wood. The headjoint is cracked through the embouchure and barell and is restored to fine playing condition, although embouchure cracks often seem to make the highest notes harder to reach.

French Flutes c.1830

The French liked the softer sound of the small hole wooden flutes and built their instruments accordingly throughout the 19th century.

Six keys, Foot to D. Unlined headjoint. Cocus wood. A=420-415.

(#275) Bellisent, a Paris c.1830. Cocus wood, silver fittings and six silver pillar mounted keys (to D). Gold stamped name, ornamental Alabaster cap piece. Unlined head joint with tuning slide at base of head. A=420-415. \$825.

This extraordinary and beautiful flute was built by the flute maker for Tulou, the famous French flautist. This instrument is in absolute mint condition, with a red velvet lined darkwood case. A superb flute and a work of art. Unbeatable for performance or investment, this flute would be well served by careful storage to be unveiled in such perfect condition for a future generation.

English large holed 8 keyed Flutes--The best for Irish Music.

The most popular use of old flutes today is in Irish and other traditional music making. These 8 keyed flutes, generally made between 1830 and 1860 in London, are very sought after and therefore constantly coming and going from here. Flutes are often returned as their owners upgrade to better instruments. I am very interested in seeing that Irish musicians get instruments that they believe in, and will do everything I can to help match instruments to players. Since there are only a very few sources of old flutes for Irish musicians I will always lend an ear to unusual suggestions for payment if necessary. In short, please do not hesitate to call if you are looking for an Irish flute.

Irish Flutes

Anon Meyer (Sears & Roebuck model) blackwood with 8 German-Silver keys. c.1870 \$125.00. These flutes drive me crazy with their terrible dead sound, but some people swear by them.

(#282) Bilton, London c.1850. One of the better flutes from Alexander Liddle's shop, sold under Bilton's stamp (Liddle's initials are under the D# key). Cocus wood, 8 German silver keys. Headjoint is cracked through Embouchure and repaired with a long-lasting flexible adhesive. A nice playing flute with small tone holes but capable of playing fairly loudly. \$425.00.

(#287) T.P. Monzani, New York. c.1845 A beautiful flute that is a pleasure to play. Cocus wood with 8 German silver keys. Practically unused, but pre-cracked through the far side of the headjoint and barell joint. \$525.00.

(#220) Henry Wylde, marked Binkes, London, c.1860. Cocus wood with nine silver keys (foot to B). An unusual flute beautifully handcrafted, with wide ornamental silver bands and flawless keys. Evidently made on special order due to the ornaments and extended foot, probably for an amateur since it was ordered through

a dealer. This instrument has an excellent response and key action, if somewhat lacking in power. \$600.00.

- (#279) A. Binyon, London c.1845. Cocus wood with 8 fine German silver keys. This is an ideal flute for Irish music, having a loud powerful sound and playing well in tune. There are wide German silver bands with fancy ornamental lathework on the head and foot and all the sockets. The flute is in very nearly flawless condition. \$750.00.
- (#285) Dawkins & Co. A trade model patterned after the Pratten flutes below. Plenty of volume but not quite the tone and intonation of the original Prattens. \$385.
- (#277) Boosey & Co. R.S. Pratten Perfected. Cocus wood with 8 German Silver keys. Another ideal flute, very loud and well in tune. The tone quality and responsiveness are superb, although the workmanship is sturdier than elegant. A hairline crack into the top of the embouchure and two stiff springs are the only flaws on this instrument. \$750.00. (With original case.)
- (#276) Another Boosey & Co. Pratten Flute. Identical to the previous one except there is no crack in the headjoint, and the springs are all fine. This flute has a repaired crack in the barell joint. The original case accompanies the flute, with a signed certificate from Pratten guaranteeing the tuning and quality of the instrument. \$800.00.
- (#278) Tom Prowse, London. C. Nicholsons Improved. Cocus with 8 silver keys. A superb instrument, among the best of Prowse's work. This flute is decorated with an engraved fancy lip plate, an ivory-bushed embouchure, ivory rings under the silver rings (for strength?) an insert for the left forefinger, and flattened wood on the heartpiece for the right hand fingers. The finest Irish instrument here now. \$925.00.

New Owners of Important Flutes

Over the Winter several very important flutes passed through here. I feel that musicians, collectors, and other flute historians might very well want to know about some of these instruments, so I am listing them below with their new owners names. I would be very surprised if any of these people would be anything but extremely cordial to inquirers after these instruments.

The most important flutes that I get are frequently purchased by the musical wife and husband, Helen and Charles Valenza of 81 Glenridge Lane, Rochester, New York. Their extraordinary collection is available for visits from musicians and researchers alike by arrangement with the Valenzas. The highly unusual instruments from me that were passed on to the Valenzas this winter are:

Claude Laurent, Paris 1821. Clear Glass with 8 silver keys. One of the only remaining glass flutes outside of a museum, and one of the very few that has not been broken or chipped yet.

Rudall & Rose, London c. 1845. Boehm's 1832 system, cocus wood. Open G#. A very rare and important flute from England's finest makers and patentees of Boehm's system.

Rudall & Rose, London c. 1845. Patent Headjoint model. Boxwood with silver mounts and 8 silver keys. Nicholson tone holes. A perfect example of the patent headjoint which adjusted the tuning slide and the cork position simultaneously. The type of flute used by George Rudall himself, and for a while Richard Carte as well.

Two other fine Rudall & Rose Patent headjoint flutes were sold through here this winter, both of dark cocus wood. These two instruments went to fine Irish musicians:

Frankie Gavin, Villa Maria, Galway City, Ireland
and Frank Claudy, Baltimore, Maryland.

These instruments just mentioned are the most important flutes that sold through here before being placed in the catalog this Spring. The whereabouts of any instruments in the catalogs will be gladly divulged to any inquirer.

In Conclusion

If you are considering buying a flute from here for any purpose, the best step to take is to call me, and I will be very happy to help you decide if you are doing the right thing.

Terms

All flutes sold C.O.B. (cash on barrelhead) by preference, otherwise by necessity. All flutes guaranteed for one year (new policy) from date of purchase unless manhandled, sat upon, or otherwise disfigured. After one year I will do my best to continue the guarantee. All instruments can be returned for a full refund during the guarantee period.

Cranberry Island

Everyone is welcome to come and visit and see the flute collection. The island is two miles off of Northeast Harbor, where mail boats leave regularly. To reach Northeast Harbor, go south from Ellsworth onto Mt. Desert Island and follow the signs.

This business takes me away from the Island regularly, so advance notice of any visit is necessary if you want anybody to be here when you arrive.

Thanks very much,

David Shorey
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