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The *Cimbasso* and Related Instruments in 19th-Century Italy

TRANSLATED BY WILLIAM WATERHOUSE

FOR a long time it has not been possible to identify precisely the instrument to which Verdi, following a well-established Italian tradition, entrusted the lowest part of the brass from *Oberto* to *Aida*. This instrument, today replaced by bass tuba or contrabass trombone, is referred to in the autograph scores as *'cimbasso'*, a term which has given rise to differences of opinion and often to misunderstanding.

While a few sporadic attempts have been made in recent years to shed light on the origins and circumstances of this member of the orchestra in Italy, because of an apparent lack of information no comprehensive analysis of its history and evolution has yet been undertaken. The task is hindered by the various meanings of the word *'cimbasso'* which, having signified for many years an actual instrument, continued to be used in the jargon of composers and musicians to refer to the deepest member of the brass family. This survival of terminology was probably encouraged by the presence of the term in frequently performed scores, coupled with the continued introduction into the orchestra of newly improved instruments whose use was left to the discretion of the performer as well as to local requirements and availability.

To analyse this ambiguous state of affairs it was necessary to study in detail the history of all the low-register brass instruments in use during the nineteenth century in Italy, identifying their corresponding periods and areas of use. To do this, contemporary treatises and tutors, many unknown even to specialists, had to be studied. It was equally important to consult the many scores, both manuscript and printed, in which the cimbasso was used, in addition to those (mainly by Verdi) already known. Thanks to this new information it is also possible to suggest – when an original is not available – to which of those instruments in current use this singular part should be entrusted.

'CIMBASSO' or *'CORNO BASSO'*

The earliest Italian treatise of orchestration, a concise and little-known handbook by Francesco Mirecki (1791-1862), a Polish musician resident

for some years in Italy, was published by Ricordi in Milan in 1824.[1] Here (D18, p.15)[2] the ancient *serpentone* (i.e. serpent) is still considered the effective bass of the brass family;[3] this was also the opinion of the composer Simone Mayr, according to a contemporary pamphlet by him (D17).

Shortly afterwards however, notice was taken in Italy of new bass instruments that were making their appearance north of the Alps. Another text by Mayr (D16)[4] dating probably from early 1825, an adaptation in Italian of an article originally published in German,[5] deals with the English bass horn:

> [. . .] another type of *serpentone* was invented a few years ago by a certain Frichot and built by G. Astor in London,[6] which is called *corno di basso*. In shape and technique it is similar to the bassoon, but it is made entirely of brass; it has nine holes, of which two are covered by keys producing F♯s and C♯s, and one operated by the left hand thumb. In other respects it does not differ from the *serpentone*, either in range, tone quality, or in fingering, having a similar mouthpiece; while its bass register notes are weaker, the high ones are superior, almost resembling those of the flute.

A little later Pietro Lichtenthal (D15, vol.I, p.213, *s.v.* 'Corno basso') wrote:

> [. . .] a brass instrument, believed to have been invented by the Englishman Frichot, which is nothing more than a *serpentone* with the shape of a bassoon. It has six holes, two of which have keys for little-finger and thumb.[7] In Germany they are made of ebony and mahogany, giving a brighter and more even tone.

This is one of the earliest Italian sources relating to the wooden *corno basso*, then becoming also known in this country as *cimbasso*.[8] There can be no doubt that the terms *'corno basso'* and *'cimbasso'* were synonymous.

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[1] For the dating of Ricordi publications until 1846 see Agostina Zecca Laterza, *Il catalogo numerico Ricordi 1857 con date e indici*, vol.I (all so far published), Roma, 1984. I wish to thank Ms Laterza for her valuable contributions to my research, and her staff in the library of the Milan Conservatorio for having facilitated my work there.

[2] Sigla used in the text refer to items listed in the Bibliography; it is divided into sections indicated by letters, with a progressive number referring to each item.

[3] Mirecki (pp.14-15) also considers the bass trombone to be a useful alternative, but he erroneously gives the compass of this instrument as being $E-f'$, i.e. that of the tenor trombone.

[4] I wish to thank Gabriele Rocchetti for this reference.

[5] G. [Ernest Ludwig Gerber], 'Nachschrift', *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* VI (1803), cols. 24-25.

[6] For full information on wind-instrument makers and surviving specimens see Lyndesay G. Langwill (A5) and William Waterhouse (A6).

[7] Here Lichtenthal has forgotten that the two holes covered by keys are in addition to the six already mentioned (a total of eight holes).

[8] Vessella (D27, p.348) also mentions *cimbassi* made of copper: however no instruments of Italian manufacture survive made entirely of metal.

However the difference rested in a distinction of terminology: while *corno basso* was academic, found only in treatises and theoretical works, *cimbasso* was everyday musicians' jargon used in scores and tutors. I wish to advance here the theory that the term *cimbasso* derives from an abbreviated form of *corno basso* (or perhaps *corno in basso*) originally written *c. basso* or *c. in basso*, whence *cimbasso*.[9] This is indirectly confirmed by the lack of consistency in spelling, which varies from *cimbasso* (most frequent) to *simbasso* and *gimbasso*, with abbreviations such as *gibas* found in manuscript scores and documents (see also notes 12 & 17).

While it is not easy to determine precisely when and where in Italy the instrument was first used, we may suppose this to have been around 1815 at the Teatro alla Scala in Milan,[10] appearing soon afterwards in other orchestras[11] and bands.[12] Its introduction was probably due to its use in stage bands recruited from the military.[13]

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[9] To the author this seems a much more likely explanation than that proposed by Baines (B1: *'basso scimia'* or *'scimbasso'*, 'monkey bass'), or by Francis Irving Travis, *Verdi's orchestration* (Zürich, 1956), p.50: from *'cimba* or *cymba*, which was a name once applied to a special kind of small metal boat, and more freely, to something else similarly concave'. (!)

[10] Louis Spohr reported seeing one in use here in 1816 (*Lebenserinnerungen*, ed. by Folker Göthel, Tutzing, 1968, vol.I, p.245). The original source of this evidence has been found after the publication of the Italian version of this article; it corrects Bevan (B2, p.54), where Spontini instead of Spohr is quoted without any further reference.

[11] See Michele Girardi, 'Tabelle di organici orchestrali dall'Ottocento a oggi', in Marcello Conati and Marcello Pavarani (eds.), *Orchestre in Emilia-Romagna nell' Ottocento e Novecento* (Parma, 1982), pp.33-5, with reference to those in Emilia and Romagna.

[12] As far as South Italy is concerned, a player of the *'gibasso'* was already listed in 1828 in the Banda Comunale of Barletta (document reproduced in Dinko Fabris, *Il fondo musicale 'Gallo' della Biblioteca comunale di Barletta*, Barletta, 1983, pp.32-3). The *'gibbas'* (*'gibas'*, *'gibasso'* etc.) was taught since 1831 in Reggio Calabria at the local music school (see Teresa Chirico, 'La scuola di musica del Real Orfanotrofio Provinciale di Reggio Calabria e le istituzioni musicali napoletane', *Nuova Rivista Musicale Italiana* XXII (1988), pp.462-91). For information on Italian bands in the first half of the nineteenth century see: Alessandro Vessella, *La banda* (Milano, 1935), and James Wesley Herbert, 'The Wind Band of Nineteenth Century: its Origins and Transformation from the Late 1700's to Mid-Century' (diss., Columbia University, 1966; Ann Arbor: UMI, 1987), in particular pp.100 and 107.

[13] The diffusion of the *Baßhorn* is well-documented for the Austrian military bands (see Eugen Brixel – Gunther Martin – Gottfried Pils, *Das ist Österreichs Militärmusik*, Graz-Wien-Köln, 1982, especially Ills. 120 (= 116) and 145), and consequently for Lombardy and Veneto, then under Austrian rule. In addition, note that the *contre-basson autrichien* shown by Kastner (see Fig.3, no.9) was identified by Vessella (D27, p.349) as a proper *cimbasso*. Finally, the use of Austrian soldiers for the stage band at La Scala at least from around 1830 is documented in local archives (e.g. I-Mt, fondo 'Spettacoli Pubblici', 5).

Its characteristics may be deduced from tutors and the few original specimens preserved in museums. The earliest and most significant printed source is Asioli's *Transunto* of 1825, in which a *cimbasso* is illustrated together with details of its fingering (C2: see Fig.1). Firm evidence is also offered by a similar fingering chart, of uncertain date and hitherto completely unknown (C28: see Fig.2), the unique copy of which is contained in a miscellaneous volume of similar charts for wind instruments preserved in the Ricordi archives in Milan:[14] this engraving was evidently designed to illustrate a text that was never published.[15] A teaching manual by Auguste Bertini printed 1830 in London is doubtless also Italian in origin (C4 = B5, p.135).[16] This gives the range and fingering of various orchestral instruments, including the *cimbasso*: although there is no illustration, he describes a three-keyed instrument similar to that shown in Fig.2.

Other sources also help to identify precisely the *cimbasso* or *corno basso*. Two short texts are by the Florentine theorist and guitar-player Luigi Picchianti (1785-1864), one printed in 1834 (D20) and another somewhat earlier in manuscript (D19). In the first (p.183) the *simbasso*[17] is listed by the author among the 'woodwind instruments', and in the second (p.41) he remarks that 'the *simbasso* is a kind of serpent but of different shape, having a similar range and able to play in all keys. Music for these two instruments is notated in the bass clef and their use is like that of the *controfagotto*.'[18] Another description is found in the *Manuale di musica* by Alibrandi (D1, p.202): 'the *corno basso inglese*[19] [English bass horn] and the *serpentone* are little used in the modern orchestra but were in general use at the beginning of the century'; also regarding the former:

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[14] I wish to thank Gabriele Dotto for this reference and for his help at various stages of this research.

[15] The miscellaneous volume in I-Mr bears the date 1884 inscribed on p.1 and an autograph dedication by Augusto Panizza to Maestro Igino Mancini labelled '*Frascati, nel gennaio 1910*'. The earlier date and the types of instrument shown here might suggest material intended for (but not included in) the first edition of the band instrumentation treatise of Vessella published by Ricordi in 1897 (D27). However, the order and numbering of the charts do not match that of Vessella's text, while many typographic details seem also questionable in this regard.

[16] Myers (B5, p.134) reasonably supposes this to be an English version of an earlier Italian text. However nothing similar has yet been traced in Italian nineteenth-century treatises.

[17] Picchianti uses a spelling of the instrument common in texts written in Florence (D26, p.67; E6, p.15, nos.288 and 289) and in Bologna (D21, p.31), but very rare in those from Milan (D5, p.74).

[18] The fact that the contrabassoon has a different compass is irrelevant here: it is the style of writing, rather than the range, that is being referred to.

[19] The adjective *inglese* rarely appears in the sources.

it is a kind of *fagotto* with double tube of wood and brass bell pointing upwards played with a mouthpiece of ivory or of horn similar to that of the trumpet. It has finger-holes and keys and a range from *C* or *B'* to *g'* ['da DO o SI al *sol*. . .'].[20] It is also called the *fagotto russo*.[21]

A later description by Alessandro Vessella (1860-1929)[22] is in similar vein; he writes (D26, pp.348-9) that

this instrument, no longer in use today, was made of wood, occasionally of copper [see note 8], in shape almost like that of a bassoon, with six fingerholes and two keys, metal bell, and crook with a mouthpiece slightly larger than that of a trombone: its chromatic range was from *C* to *g'* ['da Do1 a Sol3. . .'] at actual pitch. Kastner shows it engraved in his *Manuel de musique militaire* under the name *contrebasson autrichien* [see Fig.3, no.9].

Vittorio Ricci, translator of Prout's treatise (D22) and himself the author of a useful manual on orchestration, may finally be quoted (D23, p.353):[23]

The *corno basso* [. . .] had a cup-shaped mouthpiece, a wooden body, mouthpipe[24] and a bell of brass, besides having both finger-holes and keys like the ophicleide, to which it corresponds both in tone and use. Its range of four octaves[25] extended from B flat or C below the staff [see note 20] up to B flat or C between the lines of the treble clef, and possessed a pure and robust tone. It was used by Spohr in his *Nocturne for Wind Instruments* (op.34) and *9th symphony*, and by Mendelssohn in his *Overture* for wind-band (op.24) and *Funeral March* (op.103).

No less significant are the instruments preserved in museums both in Italy and abroad, one of which is shown in Fig.4. Seven are by makers

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[20] In early sources and instruments the lowest pitch is always *C* and not *B'*. It could be that Alibrandi refers here either to a special model, or to the possible use of a 'loose-lipping' performing technique.

[21] This Italianized form of the French name *'basson russe'* normally appears in translated texts (D7 and D11), one of which – the first Italian version of the *Traité* of Berlioz (D7, p.243) published as early as 1846-7 (!) – contains a note from the translator Alberto Mazzucato, who openly confesses ignorance of such an instrument. It may also be observed that the disposition of keys on French models differed from that used in Italy; neither was the dragon bell known here. In this latter respect the *cimbasso* made by the brothers Garignani, now at Yale University (see note 26), is suspect.

[22] Vessella is known to have possessed a copy of Asioli (C2) in his library (now at I-Ria).

[23] Ricci makes a clear distinction between this *corno basso* and the *cimbasso*; in fact, writing in 1920 he was forced, as we shall see later on, to employ the latter term to signify the contrabass trombone.

[24] Here the Italian text has *'ritorto'*, a word that gives rise to a certain ambiguity. It may either mean 'folded on itself' (with reference to the body), or, better, 'crook', in this case the initial tube section of the instrument.

[25] This is evidently a slip: in fact the range he describes immediately afterwards is one of three octaves, slightly larger than that given by other authorities.

active in Lombardy and in Emilia;[26] there are at least two others that are anonymous.[27] While the Italian ones are all similar in construction, those made abroad show differences both of manufacture and of nomenclature which make it difficult to correlate models cited in the literature with actual specimens.[28]

KEYED AND VALVE OPHICLEIDES

The use of the wooden *cimbasso* in the orchestra lasted for about two decades.[29] Meanwhile another low-register instrument entirely of metal made its appearance, which in turn it was soon to replace. This was the ophicleide, of which two versions were developed. The earlier model, invented in Paris in 1817 by Jean-Hilaire Asté, had a keyed mechanism; a later and less known model with valves was developed around 1835 both by Guichard in Paris and by L. Uhlmann in Vienna. The keyed or valved mechanism did not, unlike the usage of today, distinguish two different instruments at that time; it was evidently the basic affinity in bore and tone of the two models that was of greater significance. Therefore, the name *'oficleide'* was applied to both models.

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[26] 'FRATELLI GARIGNANI / MILANO' (New Haven, Yale University Collection of Musical Instruments, Acc. no. 3659.60);
'MAGAZARI / BOLOGNA' (Washington, U.S. National Museum, no.219.091);
'P. PIANA / A MILANO' (Vermillion, The Shrine to Music Museum, no.1275): see Fig.4;
'P. PIANA / A MILANO / 2' (Milan, priv. coll. G. Bizzi);
'U. LUVONI / [star] / A MILANO' (Brussels, Musée Instrumental du Conservatoire Royal de Musique, no.1239);
'C. CERUTI / CREMONA' (Rome, Museo Nazionale degli Strumenti Musicali, no.612);
'PAPALINI / CHIARAVALLE' (Rome, Museo Nazionale degli Strumenti Musicali, no. 609, incomplete).

I wish to thank the above-mentioned institutions for providing detailed information on these instruments.

[27] Rome, Museo Nazionale degli Strumenti Musicali, nos. 611 and 781 (former 476, incomplete). Two further examples from the Kraus collection in Florence (E6, nos.288 and 289) were destroyed in Leipzig in 1945 (E5, nos.1593 and 1597). A surviving invoice of 1835 by the Neapolitan maker Panormo itemizes (also with detailed prices) the separate components of a *'gibasso'* in maple, with bone mouthpiece, brass crook, wing joint, long joint, bell and butt joint (Archivio di Stato di Reggio Calabria, Inventario 29, Fascio 156, N. 167, 'Spese Varie' anno 1835).

[28] I am unaware of any modern study dedicated to non-Italian models; thus it is difficult to compare surviving specimens. For an introduction to these problems of identification see Heyde (E5, p.76 ff).

[29] Regarding the problems of intonation and fingering that probably led to its demise, see Gottfried Weber, 'Ueber Instrumentalbässe bey vollstimmigen Tonstücken', *Allgemeine Musikalische Zeitung* XVIII (1816), cols. 700–1 and 709.

The keyed ophicleide is not mentioned by Mirecki or Mayr, nor even by Lichtenthal in his dictionary. It is referred to however in Asioli's *Transunto* (C2: see Figs. 5 and 6) which, dating from 1825, constitutes the earliest Italian source. Some years later the keyed ophicleide is listed beside the *cimbasso* in Bertini's manual (C4), while a further source may be found in a *Scala cromatica* (C23) anonymously printed by Ricordi in 1832, of which no copy survives.[30] Its non-Italian spelling, which is found in all the texts cited, would appear to confirm the as yet rare distribution of the instrument, the use of which in the orchestra at that time can only be surmised in a few cases: e.g. in two symphonies by Cesare Pugni (1802-70) published 1831-32, and recently reprinted by Garland Publ. Co.; here the *cimbasso* part repeatedly descends to *B´*, a note normally considered out of the range of the earlier wooden instrument,[31] but easily obtainable on the ophicleide.

Whatever the case, a brief but documented presence in the orchestra was established by both the keyed and valved model of this instrument, which musicians began in turn calling by the old name *'cimbasso'*. Clear evidence for this is to be found in Balbi's *Grammatica ragionata della musica* which appeared in 1845, where the two terms are used synonymously (D3, p.143): 'the *oficleide* or *gimbasso* is an instrument with a deep and penetrating tone'.[32]

The keyed ophicleide enjoyed a certain success in northern Italy, while it may be that in Florence it was never used,[33] and in Rome it had only a modest distribution (see D2, p.43); in Naples it seems to have been introduced later, but lasted longer,[34] due probably to its use in bands. This however came to an end at the beginning of the 1850s.[35]

Back in the north – perhaps because of the close relations between Milan and Vienna – Uhlmann's valved model was an immediate success. Herbert Heyde's book on valved brass instruments (A3) sheds light on certain historical aspects of this hitherto underestimated instrument. He devotes a valuable section to the valved ophicleide (pp.225-7), where the features of Uhlmann's model are made clear and a prospectus of his

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[30] A print of this *Scala cromatica*, as well as one for the *bombardone* (see later on) was formerly in the library of the Milan Conservatorio, but is now lost.

[31] Note that the 'loose-lipping' technique (see note 20) would show itself as inappropriate in managing the numerous fast passages encountered in both these compositions.

[32] Balbi also mentions the *bombardone*, that will be discussed presently.

[33] The instrument is not mentioned by Picchianti (D19, D20), nor by Tosoroni (D26), both authors from Florence.

[34] Hitherland (D13, p.145), writing as late as 1846, considered it the sole bass of the brass family other than the *serpentone*.

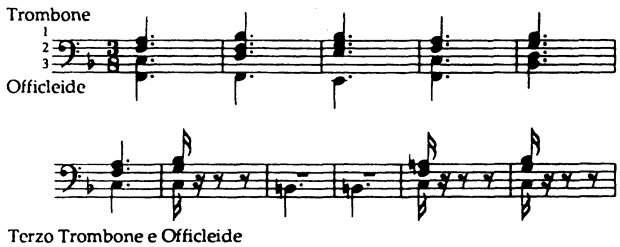
[35] See Vessella (D27, p.348). Gandolfi (D12, p.11) considered this due to problems of sonority and intonation.

instruments with captions in both German and Italian is reproduced (see Fig.7). It is thus possible to assign with certainty the name of *oficleide a macchina* (valved ophicleide) to some museum instruments: e.g. two preserved in the Museo Civico of Modena (see Figs.8 and 9), the first by Uhlmann himself and the second dated 1841 by Antonio Apparuti of Modena. These valved instruments help to clarify the remarks of Fermo Bellini, who in his manual of 1844 (D5, pp.73-4) treats the ophicleide as the true bass of the brass family, describing it as

[. . .] a brass wind instrument with nine keys or three pistons, which with its deep and powerful voice fulfils the role of contrabass in the wind choir, and also reinforces everything (even the trumpet) with its upper register.

He gives its range as $B\flat' - c''$, and adds:

[. . .] the modern custom, adopted by some composers, of forming a quartet consisting of three trombones and an ophicleide does not seem very sensible, given that the tone colour of the trombones, so dominant and in high relief, is very different from that of the ophicleide; it would be better for this instrument to double the bottom line, or else to find some way to give the trombones a good cantabile bass whenever they are on their own.[36] For example:



These remarks of Fermo Bellini therefore confirm that the instrument then in normal use in Italy was the ophicleide,[37] and that – even if hard and fast evidence is lacking – we are justified in supposing that a valved model of the type preserved at Modena (see Figs.8 and 9) was used in the earliest Verdi performances (that of his first opera *Oberto* was given in 1839) to play the *cimbasso* part.[38]

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[36] Verdi, in fact, usually uses the *cimbasso* to double the third trombone or to reinforce the bass line on its own.

[37] A report regarding the La Scala orchestra in March 1846 specifically mentions the *oficleide* (I-Mt, fondo 'Spettacoli Pubblici', 85, letter of 24 March 1846).

[38] The not-too-distant date of the instrument by Apparuti, 1841, would appear to confirm this, as well as the close political relations existing at this time between northern Italy and Vienna, where the instrument had originated.

The arrival of the ophicleide in Italy was followed shortly afterwards by that of another bass instrument of German origin, the *bombardone* (bombardon). This instrument also was originally operated by keys and only fitted with valves at a later stage.[39]

The earliest record of its use in Italy dates from 1836 and is to be found in the manual of orchestration by Giuseppe Pilotti (D21), as well as in an anonymous *Scala cromatica per bombardone* (now lost) published by Ricordi in the same year (C24; see note 30). Pilotti's text gives no explanatory details of the instrument (p.31): *'Serpentone, simbasso, bombardone*, and other instruments of different shape and of different name all have the same range: [*B♭´* to *g´*]'. However the publishing by Ricordi of a new fingering chart different from that for the ophicleide (presumably with keys) that was already in their catalogue leads us to suppose that, from the time of its introduction in Italy, the term *bombardone* signified a valved instrument.

Successive reports relating to the instrument in Italy faithfully reflect contemporary developments in Austria. Here we can verify the gradual assimilation of valved ophicleide and bombardon, whose respective differences in construction merged to the point of disappearing altogether (see A3, p.266). However while in Austria the term *'Bombardon'* was soon to become predominant, in Italy both terms continued to be used even after the complete assimilation of the two instruments. This was probably due to the persistence of the name *oficleide* in central and southern Italy, and particularly in Tuscany, where the instrument was also called the *ofleide* (see note 42). This led to a strange and persistent synonymous use of both terms found, for example, in certain tutors for 'ophicleide or bombardon' (see Bibliography).[40]

Two documents illustrate clearly the beginning and end of this process of assimilation of the two instruments. The first is *Filosofia della musica* by Boucheron (1842), whose laconic description marks the first emergence of the bombardon (D9, p.64), when the name 'ophicleide' was still related to that of *corno basso* (= *cimbasso*): *'bombardone*, recently improved

[39] In Germany a specimen identical to that on the right in Fig.6 was still being described thus in 1833, while already by 1829 the term was used indifferently in Austria for a model either with keys or with valves (A3, fig.6a and p.222). See also A2, p.204.

[40] In the *Metodo progressivo* by Paoli (C22: see Fig.11), who at the time of publication (1866) was teaching at the Istituto Musicale in Florence, the *bombardone* is only mentioned in the title, while in the lengthy preface only the ophicleide is mentioned. On the other hand, in the two tutors by Bonini of Parma (C6, C7) the ophicleide is described as being a keyed instrument now obsolete, the method being entirely devoted to the bombardon in F.

model of *serpentone* or *corno basso* (*ophikleid*)'.[41] The second, more explicit and exhaustive, is the description given by the composer Luigi Felice Rossi (1805-1863) that appeared in the *Dizionario della lingua italiana* by Tommaseo and Bellini (Turin, 1861-1879). Here, besides recording the fusing together of the two instruments that had recently taken place, he describes how this had occurred (vol.V, p.581): 'the *oficleide*,[42] developed from the *cimbasso*, which had supplanted the serpent, gave origin to the modern *bombardo* [i.e. bombardon]' and in addition (vol.II, p.1736): *'corni segnali* [bugles][43] alto, bass and contrabass are known under the name of *oficleide*. Systems of pistons and cylinders have also been applied to these instruments, and from these, suitably modified, have originated the *bombardino*[44] and the *bombardone*'. Finally, with regard to this latter instrument (vol.II, p.1004):

[. . .] today this is an instrument of the family of the modern *bombardi*, with three or even four pistons or cylinders, or with *macchina*:[45] it is the bass of the family and is built in low F or E flat, that is in its natural key it sounds the notes of the chord of F, but by using the said pistons or valves can extend to about two and a half octaves, including all the chromatic notes, beginning from B below the staff.

However, the gradual take-over of the bombardon did not prevent the continued everyday jargon use of the anachronistic term *'cimbasso'*, which soon became applied to the new instrument as well. This is also confirmed by an indirect Verdi source that indicates to which instrument the composer was referring when using the name *'cimbasso'* from the mid 1840s onwards. This occurs in the correspondence between Emanuele Muzio (Verdi's only student) and Antonio Barezzi (Verdi's father-in-law and one of his staunchest supporters) relating to compositions of the former sent to the latter in 1845:[46]

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[41] See the next quotations for a clarification of the models referred to here. The same instruments are listed in the text of Bellini mentioned earlier (D5, p.74): 'the *officleide*, the *serpentone*, the *simbasso* and the *bombardone* are instruments that differ in shape and in name, but all have approximately the same compass'.

[42] In the appendix to the *Dizionario* by Tommaseo and Bellini (vol. VII, p.197) is also found the variant *ofleide*, here described as 'a large musical instrument of brass with a very deep tone, and which is very useful in the band and in the orchestra'.

[43] The term '*corno segnale*' – ignored today by organologists – is that commonly applied in the last century Italy to the natural or keyed model of the bugle, from which the ophicleide is basically derived.

[44] To this day the *bombardino* is an instrument used primarily in bands and pitched in $B\flat'$, a fourth above the *bombardone*.

[45] In nineteenth-century Northern Italy the term '*macchina*', today used to describe either the piston or the rotary valve mechanism, referred to the 'Vienna valve', the double piston system invented in 1823 by J. Kail and J. Riedl and improved in 1830 by L. Uhlmann.

[46] See Luigi Agostino Garibaldi, *Giuseppe Verdi nelle lettere di Emanuele Muzio ad Antonio Barezzi*, Milan, 1931, p.184.

[. . .] bear in mind that an *oficleide* is insufficient for all these instruments; you should find someone who can play *bombardone* or *cimbasso* to match the other brass instruments; the Maestro [i.e. Verdi] has said this too.[47]

Thus ophicleide and bombardon were still distinguishable from each other at this time, while the latter instrument – which evidently had now taken over from it in the orchestra, was in turn being called *'cimbasso'* in current orchestral jargon. Verdi's own use of the term as synonymous with 'bombardon' is confirmed when we compare the autograph scores of *Ernani* (1844) and *Rigoletto* (1851), where a *cimbasso* is prescribed, with the actual instruments that were used at the first performances, where the bombardon was employed.[48] Also significant is a variant reading on a sheet added to the autograph score of *Il corsaro* (1848), just before Gulnara's cabaletta, 'Ah conforto' (I-Mr, vol.II, f. 87r): here is written *'bombardone'*, rather than *'cimbasso'* found elsewhere throughout. Furthermore Fermo Bellini, who in his *Teoriche musicali* of 1844 (D5) gave *oficleide* as the main bass instrument of the brass family, in his later *Manuale della musica* of 1850, besides noting the range of the alto ophicleide (*e-g‴*) and of the bass ophicleide (*B´-c″*),[49] gives to the *'serpentone o cimbasso'* a range of *A´- d″* (D6, table 2),[50] which only makes sense by understanding these two last names as being synonymous with the E flat bombardon.[51]

While many sources confirm the dominant role achieved by the bombardon in the orchestra, others testify to its final identification with the ophicleide, and consequently to the indiscriminate use of both terms. For example, the *Trattato pratico di orchestrazione* by the Florentine horn player Tosoroni (D26, pp.64-5) describes the 'bass ophicleide in F or bombardon with rotary valves' and immediately afterwards – evidently remembering the jargon use of the term *cimbasso* – notes that 'these

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[47] The hypothesis that Muzio, who composed under the direct control of his teacher Verdi, would have requested a wooden bass horn (B1) is not supported by any evidence.

[48] See the critical editions of *Ernani* by Claudio Gallico (*WGV*, vol.5, p.LI) and of *Rigoletto* by Martin Chusid (*WGV*, vol.17, pp.LIII-LIV).

[49] Comparing this with the range of the ophicleide given by Bellini in his previous work of 1844 (see above in the main text), we see that the *B♭'* has now been omitted. This note was only obtainable on the keyed model, evidently no longer in use.

[50] The long survival of the term *'serpentone'*, even more anachronistic than *'cimbasso'*, is reported as late as 1846 in the listings of players serving at the Teatro alla Scala. See the author's article 'Osservazioni del M.° Francesco Antonio Biscottini sull'orchestra scaligera del 1846', *Il flauto dolce* 17-18 (1987/1988), pp.41-4, in particular p.43.

[51] Only the bombardon in E♭ could obtain the lowest note of the range reported by Bellini.

instruments are both still called *corni bassi'*.[52] There are in addition two charts showing the range of instruments currently used in the orchestra and band by Servadio dating from 1860 (D25) and by Bernardi from shortly after 1865 (D8): the former gives ophicleide in F as the bass of the brass family[53] (range from *B´* to *a´*), while the latter assigns the same role to the bombardon in F (range from *B´* to *f´*). But the clearest and most authoritative evidence of all is probably found in the *Trattato teorico-pratico* by Dacci (1880) (D10, p.13): 'there are two kinds of ophicleide: the alto, now called *bombardino* (also euphonium), and the bass called *bombardone* or *cimbasso*'.

The changes of terminology found between 1850 and 1880 naturally correspond to the notable alteration in design of the instruments used. For the earlier period we may cite Palazzi's *Metodo per bombardone servibile anche per l'officleide, pelittone, contrabbasso e basso d'armonia in do* [Tutor for bombardon, useful also for . . .], published around 1853 but certainly written a few years earlier.[54] Here is shown an F bombardon (see Fig.10) that more or less corresponds to one of the instruments shown on Uhlmann's contemporary price-list (see Fig.7); here it is described in Italian as *'corno basso in fa a pistoni, con ritorte in mi, mib, re'* [F piston *corno basso* in F, with crooks for E, E♭, D] and in German *'Basshorn'*, a survival of nomenclature surprisingly similar in both languages.[55] Other instruments depicted on Uhlmann's list and referred to in Palazzi's tutor include the valved ophicleide, keyed ophicleide (Palazzi's *'basso d'armonia'*; see D13, p.145) and reed contrabass (*'contrabbasso d'armonia'*, also called *flarmonica* or *controfagotto d'ottone*; see D26, p.66), while the *pelittone* (discussed below) does not appear.

Here is not the place to discuss the technical improvements made to the bombardon after the mid-1850s; however, it is necessary to point to the main trend of development – that is, the progressive widening of

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[52] Remember that *corno basso* (pl. *corni bassi*) was an academic synonym of *cimbasso*.

It was also in Florence that a notable success was enjoyed by the *bimbonifono*, a kind of bass trombone invented by Gioacchino Bimboni (1800-95) (D26, p.61; D12, pp.9-10). Examples survive in the Horniman museum, London, and in the Museum of the Florence Conservatorio (E3, pp.230-33).

[53] The key in which the instrument is pitched (*F´*) is easily deducible, the harmonic series having been written with values longer than the other notes. In addition, a caption says: 'there are *oficleidi* with three crooks [*accordature*] which put the instrument down one semitone, one tone, one tone and half; however, they are not used'.

[54] An unassailable argument in this sense is given by the detailed list of instruments reported in the title, some of them being already obsolete at the time of publication.

[55] See Heyde (A3, pp.222 ff) for a study of instrument terminology in German lands.

bore and conicity in order to increase its range and power (see Fig.11). These improved bombardons included the *pelittone* instruments invented in 1845 by Giuseppe Pelitti senior (1811-1865), an important member of a family of Milanese makers also responsible for other relevant innovations.[56] In 1881 the *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano* referred to these instruments in the following terms (p.111):

[. . .] the first to avail themselves of these were the Germans who, having set up large-scale bands, recognised in the *pelittone* the bass instrument *par excellence*, the very 'caryatid' of the band[57] – and not only of this, but also of the orchestra, for which accordingly the *pelittone generale* in B flat has been designed [see Fig.12], being larger than the other [. . .]. Following the example of the Germans it has been adopted in every band and orchestra, and will remain to the lasting honour of Pelitti, because we believe that, where bass instruments are concerned, nothing more solemn, grandiose or robust can be imagined.

Comparing the synonymous use of the terms ophicleide and bombardon with the above quotation throws light on another remark by Verdi which has sometimes given rise to discussion. This is the letter Verdi sent to his publisher Giulio Ricordi shortly before the performance of *Aida* at La Scala (1872):[58]

I wish to insist once again on a fourth trombone. – That bombardon is not possible. – Talk to Faccio; he should consult maybe also with the principal trombonist in order to decide what should be done . . . I would prefer a *trombone basso* which is of the same family of the others; but if this turns out to be too much trouble and too difficult to play, then get again one of those ordinary ophicleides that go down to low B [= *B´*]. In a word whatever you like, but not that devilish *bombardone* which will not blend with the others.

In the light of what we now know we may conclude that, by referring to 'one of those ordinary ophicleides that go down to low B',[59] Verdi simply

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[56] Among his inventions, the *bombardino* (1835; see note 44), the *controfagotto d'ottone* (1839; a sort of reed contrabass), the *pelittifono* (or *pelittifero*, 1844; a part wood, part metal valved instrument), and the *duplex* (1847; a model with double tubing) may be mentioned. For a comprehensive survey of the Pelittis' activity, see the author's article, 'The Pelitti Firm: Makers of Brass Instruments in Nineteenth-century Milan', *Historic Brass Society Journal* VI (1994), pp.304-33.

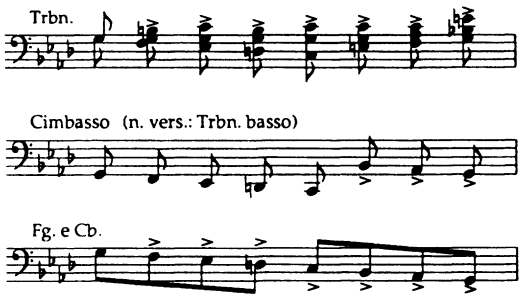
[57] It is unclear whether this is an exaggeration (the bass tuba having already been invented in Berlin by W. Wieprecht and J. G. Moritz in 1835), or an indication that several *pelittoni* had been acquired by German bands.

[58] Verdi to Giulio Ricordi, [Genoa], December 24 1871 (I-Mr, no.521; copy at I-PAi, 88/52).

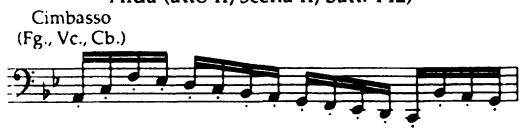
[59] In the score of *Aida* a low *B♭´* does appear once, thus seeming to contradict Verdi's own request. But in fact this exceptional note forms part of an insertion – clearly distinguishable in the autograph (I-Mr, vol.II, pp.174-81: the *B♭´* is found on pp.175r and 176r) – which was probably added later.

asked for a 'traditional' narrow bore ophicleide/bombardon in F,[60] thereby opposing the use of a 'new' giant bombardon like the *generale pelittone* (see Fig.12). In some cases, in fact, Verdi's *cimbasso* parts manifestly avoid going lower than *B´* even if this note was not beyond the range of the *pelittone* then available. Examples of this kind may be found, e.g. in *Macbeth* (1847) and *Aida* (1871):

Macbeth (atto I, preludio, batt. 37)



Aida (atto II, scena II, batt. 142)



The bass trombone that Verdi says that he prefers – and which he had already employed in the revised version of *Macbeth* (1865)[61] – evidently guaranteed a better balance in the brass department, preventing the dominance of the lowest member. On the other hand, if we exclude Verdi's first prescription of the 'ophicleide' (*Jérusalem*, 1847) – probably suggested by those with keys then in use in Paris[62] – when this term appears in the scores of much later operas (e.g. *Don Carlos* of 1867) it must denote the bombardon. By then, at least in Italy, the old keyed

[60] An instrument pitched in F of reduced proportions is in the Florence Conservatorio collection (E4, no.180), and was formerly catalogued as *oficleide* (E3, p.235).

[61] In this case it seems likely that Verdi was referring to the true 'bass' of the family, with the range *B´ – c˝*. However he later used the same term to mean the contrabass trombone, as shown by the range demanded in *Otello* (G♯' – *c*♯´) and in *Falstaff* (*E´ – e´*).

[62] Regarding the use of the keyed ophicleide in France during the 1840s, see for example the *Grand traité d'instrumentation* by Berlioz (Paris, 1844).

model had long since disappeared.[63] Finally, how is it otherwise possible to explain the fact that, the ophicleide having been prescribed for all the composers commissioned to contribute individual movements to the *Messa per Rossini*,[64] the works actually composed demand also for a *cimbasso* and a *bombardone*?[65]

The subsequent adventures of the word *'oficleide'* in Italy, which later came to assume a meaning as wide as that of *'cimbasso'*, also confirm this. See for example the imprecise definitions adopted in the catalogue of the 1881 Milan Exhibition, which listed an 'ophicleide in wood covered with leather played with mouthpiece' together with an 'ophicleide with 12 keys played with reed [!], all in brass'.[66] The term *'cimbasso'* had suffered a similar fate, as clarified by the *Errata-corrige* that Dacci added to his text of c.1880 (D10, [p.1]):[67] *'cimbasso* does not apply to the *pelittone, serpentone*,[68] or bass tuba but, somewhat loosely, to the *bombardone*; the *pelittone* could perfectly well be called a *serpentone* or bass tuba'. Dacci's punctiliousness was evidently aimed at checking the ever more vague use of the name *'cimbasso'* (see e.g. Barberi-Beretta, D4, vol.I, p.320: *'Cimbasso*, a term used by composers to indicate the deepest of the brass instruments'), which instead he would have reserved for the bombardon.

In any case, the extreme vagueness of terminology, so characteristic of this period, is most evident in the habit adopted by composers and copyists of changing in the course of the same work the name of the instrument called for, without making any change to the writing, the range or disposition of the part in question.[69]

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[63] While nine different types of bombardon and six of *pelittone* are shown in Pelitti's catalogue of 1873 (see Fig.12), there is no keyed ophicleide.

[64] The list of all prescribed instruments is given in the pamphlet *'Messa da Requiem'* [. . .] *in onore di Gioachino Rossini* (Milan: Ricordi, n.d. [May/June 1869]), copy in I-BRq, pp.20-1.

[65] The *oficleide* is scored for in the movements written by Buzzolla, Bazzini, Pedrotti, Ricci, Nini, Coccia, Gaspari, Platania, Mabellini and Verdi; the *cimbasso* in the movement by Cagnoni; the *bombardone* in that by Boucheron; Rossi does not employ a bass brass instrument.

[66] *Esposizione musicale sotto il patrocinio di S.M. la Regina: catalogo: gruppi IV, V and VI* (Milan, 1881), p.[65]. These instruments are probably identifiable with a *pelittifono* and a *controfagotto d'ottone* (see note 56).

[67] Another generalized use of the term *'cimbasso'* is found in the sale catalogues of the dealer Franciolini, in which a keyed ophicleide and a reed contrabass are both called *'simbasso'* (see Edwin M. Ripin, *The Instrument Catalogs of L. Franciolini* (Hackensack, N.J., 1974), ills. D7 and F3).

[68] For a late example of the generalized use of the term *'serpentone'*, see the *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano*, 1881, p.408.

[69] This custom, which has long hindered these researches, becomes evident in the analysis of the scores and, to my knowledge, is unparallelled outside Italy.

Verdi's wishes as expressed to Giulio Ricordi regarding the use of *trombone basso* is indicative of a tendency which led to the adoption in the orchestra of what later came to be known as *trombone contrabbasso Verdi* (this, of course, meant a valved instrument, the model with a slide having been supplanted by now). The instrument did not come into immediate use. However, from the moment he included it in the score of *Otello* we may say that it achieved a stable role in the performances of Verdi's music, even in those of his earlier operas. This started a tradition that is in fact still in operation today; in certain Italian orchestras older conductors ask for the *cimbasso* part to be played on an instrument similar to that shown in Fig.13.[70] This tradition has been followed abroad, firstly with a model designed by Hans Kunitz,[71] and then with those by Max & Heinrich Thein of Bremen, Kalison of Milan, and others. Clifford Bevan has also made a plea that the contrabass trombone be employed to play *cimbasso* parts (B2, pp.214-15), so that an increasing number of conductors now demand this valved trombone, sometimes forgetting that it was invented only in 1881.

Let us now examine the documents relating to the conception of this instrument, verifying at the same time how far this reflected the composer's actual intentions. Our most important source is undoubtedly the *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano* of 4 September 1881 (p.319) in which there appeared an article entitled 'Visit by Verdi to the Pelitti factory', which is worth quoting at length:

> Verdi having, however, expressed certain wishes regarding the range of the *trombone basso*, Cav. Pelitti[72] undertook to build a new one for the following Thursday which would satisfy the Maestro's requirements. Verdi, accompanied by maestro Boito and signor Giulio Ricordi, went accordingly on that day to the Pelitti factory where repeated experiments were made with the new trombone in B flat pitched one octave lower than the tenor. The new instrument gave splendid results regarding range, timbre, sonority, power, ease and facility of execution, blending perfectly with the other trombones. Resulting from this, two B flat tenor trombones, a bass trombone in F and the new bass trombone in B flat

[70] This instrument is marked: '[Florentine lily] / PREMIATA FABBRICA / ISTR. MUSICALI / P. PUPESCHI & F.° / FIRENZE / [star]' and is dateable to the 1920s. A similar instrument made at the beginning of the century by Cazzani of Milan is still occasionally in use at the Rome Opera under the name of 'cimbasso', according to an unchanged tradition handed down through many generations of orchestral players (information given by Giovanni D'Ottavio, player of that very instrument there).

[71] The trombone of Kunitz (Deutsches Bundespatent 1 225 033, of September 15 1966) is described in detail in Robin Gregory, *The Trombone* (London, 1973), p.96.

[72] Here the reference is to Giuseppe (Clemente) Pelitti junior (1837-1905), the son of the Giuseppe Pelitti mentioned in note 56.

are necessary in order to achieve a trombone quartet that is perfect, homogeneous and effective without bringing into the orchestra a timbre from the band that would affect the instrumental blending of the various instruments.

Verdi's intention was thus to have an instrument that would prevent the spread of models which he considered unsuitable for orchestral use and which, according to the same article, might promote 'a perfect homogeneiety of timbre with the tenor trombones, making the chord complete without perverting the nature of the bottom note, as happens today with *oficleidi* and the like, all excellent for band use but entirely out of place in the orchestra'.

The contrabass trombone, perhaps because of the fame of its authoritative 'patron', asserted itself so remarkedly as to supplant – at least until the introduction of the bass tuba into Italy – almost everything hitherto in use. Thus Ettore Panizza, who edited a second revised and updated Italian edition of the *Traité* by Berlioz in 1912 (D7, Appendix, p.132) writes:

Berlioz does not mention the contrabass trombone. Its pitch corresponds to an octave below that of the tenor trombone. In Italy the introduction of a new instrument of this type was due to Giuseppe Verdi, and it adopted the name of this great musician. I refer to the 'trombone basso Verdi' in B flat. Its tone is fine, mellow and homogeneous, especially in its middle range, while being slightly weak in the bottom and high register. It is notated at concert pitch, that is the written note is the actual note sounded, in spite the instrument being pitched in B flat. Verdi who, as we have seen, had been its inspiration, wrote an important part for it in his *Otello* and later in *Falstaff*. Today this trombone has become very common in Italian orchestras, and almost all the parts for ophicleide or for tuba are played on the *trombone Verdi*. The instrument is chromatic, like all of those with valves; its range is as follows: [*E´-f´*].

This contrabass trombone was used for all Verdi's *cimbasso* parts, even those that had been originally intended for other instruments. Evidence for this is furnished by the manual of orchestration by Vittorio Ricci (1920) referred to above, where the author, although correctly describing the wooden *corno basso* (D23, pp.353-4), appears ignorant of the earlier history of the term *cimbasso* (p.328): 'in *Aida* Verdi uses the *cimbasso* (a kind of contrabass trombone) as the bass of the trombones'. To confirm the persistence of this new tradition in Italy, we may in conclusion cite a work as recent as the *Enciclopedia della musica Ricordi* (Milano, vol.I, 1963, p.64) in which, under 'Cimbasso' we read : 'Variety of contrabass trombone used by Verdi (*Aida, Un ballo in maschera* etc.) and his contemporaries, as bass instrument of the trombone family'.

BASS TUBA

In 1881 the bass tuba was still practically unknown in Italy. This is evident from the programme of the 'Congress of Italian musicians' held

on the occasion of the *Esposizione musicale* in that year in Milan: those present were asked about the feasibility of adopting in Italy the *'basso-tuba* or other instrument of this type to serve as the typical and sole bass of the brass family'.[73] In the volume of proceedings published that year, we may read an account of the experiments carried out, which included the demonstrating of different instruments:

> The Commission found the *gabusifono*[74] an instrument of many qualities, superior to the *bombardone*; its inventor earned high praise for tone quality and range in the low and high register. When compared with the *bass-tuba*, the latter was found more suited to the purpose, that is for obtaining the bottom notes with a timbre that was strong, noble and mellow, responding better to orchestral needs, even when used in pianissimo passages. The Commission voted accordingly for the adoption of the *bass-tuba*.

However the fact that the commission's resolution found little acceptance by musicians is well attested by the facts related above. As late as 1901, a footnote by Ricci in his translation of Prout's treatise (D22, p.141) confirms this when dealing with the bass tuba:

> [. . .] It is unfortunately to be deplored that in Italy this instrument has not only failed to supplant the ophicleide but is so little used that it may be considered almost unknown in the orchestra.[75]

Almost twenty years were to elapse – almost forty since the Commission had expressed its opinion on the matter – before the bass tuba was to become finally accepted in Italy: such a long delay must have been for sufficient and circumstantial reasons. One of these probably lay in the Italian preference for a matching of sound between the instruments of an orchestral family. To illustrate this, let us quote one source dating from 1893 (D2, p.43) which remarks that 'while on its own the bass tuba is an excellent orchestral instrument on account of its gentle voice, both agile and weighty, its dark sound is unpleasing to the ear when heard in conjunction with the clear tone of the trombones'. It is certain, moreover, that in the affirmation of the contrabass trombone at the expense of the bass tuba, Verdi played an active role which it is possible to document today in detail. In a letter to his publisher Giulio Ricordi (3 December 1881) he took issue with the resolutions taken at the Congress: 'I disapprove of the Committee's findings: 1) on the double bass, 2) on the horns, 3) on the trombones and – I would have plenty to say on other matters, but these mentioned above are of capital

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[73] See *Atti del Congresso dei musicisti italiani riunito in Milano dal 16 al 22 giugno 1881*, Milano, 1881, p.7. The passage quoted immediately after is on p.104.

[74] The instrument was invented by Giuseppe Gabusi of Bologna, possibly in collaboration with Gaetano Spada (A5 & A6, *s.v.* 'Gabusi').

[75] As far as I know, the first use of the bass tuba in an Italian score was in 1891, in Gaetano Luporini's opera *Marcella*.

importance and instead of correcting past wrongs, you have only added new ones'.[76] The letter which Giulio Ricordi sent in response the following day gave rise to a certain misunderstanding, so that on the 6th of December 1881 the latter, excusing himself for this unpleasant mishap, repeated his full support for the idea that the Scala orchestra adopt the improvements that Verdi considered necessary: 'and I repeat again that it will not be difficult, nor impossible, to introduce into the orchestra all the improvements you desire, because we will not encounter any difficulties'. That the Maestro's authority had greater weight than the findings of the Congress commission is borne out clearly by the *Gazzetta Musicale di Milano* of the 18th December 1881 (p.458), where an anonymous reporter (? Giulio Ricordi), apparently forgetting that the same congress had expressed itself in favour of adopting the bass tuba, asserted that: 'the members of the Scala orchestra are to be the first to carry out the wishes of the Milan musicians Congress. From now on we will have [. . .] the new bass trombone as substitute for the bombardon'. That Verdi's interest in the new instrument was not casual, or momentary, has been confirmed by the recent publication of his subsequent correspondence with G. Ricordi. See *Carteggio Verdi-Ricordi 1882-1885*, edited by Franca Cella, Madina Ricordi and Marisa Di Gregorio Casati (Parma, 1994), where there are further references to the contrabass trombone in letters dated 18 January, [before 8 February], 25 March 1882 (all from Ricordi), and in one by Verdi of 8 February (pp. 8, 14, 27 and 15 respectively).

THE PERFORMANCE OF *CIMBASSO* PARTS[77]

It is usual today to differentiate tubas not only by the key in which they are pitched, but rather according to the proportions and dimensions of the tubing and of the bell. Since today there exist very large bass tubas in F with robust and dark tone, as well as contrabass tubas in B flat with narrow bore and contained sound, it is impracticable to differentiate tone – and even shape – merely on the basis of the key in which they are pitched. The standard of description in general use today defines instead the different ratios or proportions of the internal bore, in which tubas are described as being 1/2 (= very narrow), graduating through 3/4, 4/4, 5/4 to 6/4 (= very wide). In consideration of this, when performing *cimbasso* parts dating from between the 1850s and 1920s a tuba of 1/2 or at most 3/4 might be recommended: using larger proportioned

[76] See *Carteggio Verdi-Ricordi 1880-1881*, edited by Pierluigi Petrobelli, Marisa Di Gregorio Casati and Carlo Matteo Mossa (Parma, 1988), p.195; the next quotation (letter of 6 December 1881) is on p.198.

[77] I wish to thank the tuba player Gregorio Mazzarese (Santa Cecilia Orchestra, Rome) for his expert help in the preparation of the following part of this work.

instruments would risk failing to achieve their object of being used in conjunction 'with trombones whilst serving as their bass' and above all that of blending with the other brass 'in order to avoid a sound that is harsh or too obtrusive'.[78] As regards which pitch of instrument to choose, that in F is clearly preferable, being that used in nineteenth-century Italian orchestras. The use of the (valved) contrabass trombone would be a valid alternative, but one to adopt bearing in mind that Verdi wrote for this instrument only in his last two works (as a reaction to the *pelittoni*), and that its increasing use later was due to the practices adopted by orchestras and conductors. For works composed between 1835 and 1850, it is advisable not to exceed a tuba of 1/2; alternatively, both for this period and that just following (until the 1860s), a bass trombone (in F) might be used, an instrument certainly documented in some orchestras of the period (see e.g. D26, p.56). Finally, for works scored for the wooden *cimbasso* (dating from 1820-35), as well as for any earlier composition scored for the *serpentone*, it is difficult indeed to make a suggestion neither too vague nor impracticable. For this repertory in fact, the adoption of a historical model cannot be logically separated from more general considerations of the performance practice of the period. For the moment we should trust to the good sense of the performer, who as far as possible should control any 'soloistic' instinct he might have, until someone be bold enough to try his hand with an authentic wooden one. Obviously to do this some bold maker needs to dust off a museum specimen and make a copy to allow for practical use. Which is what some enterprising maker may already have thought of doing . . . !

[78] Both of these quotations are taken from the *Trattato di strumentazione pratica* by Sandi (D24, p.115).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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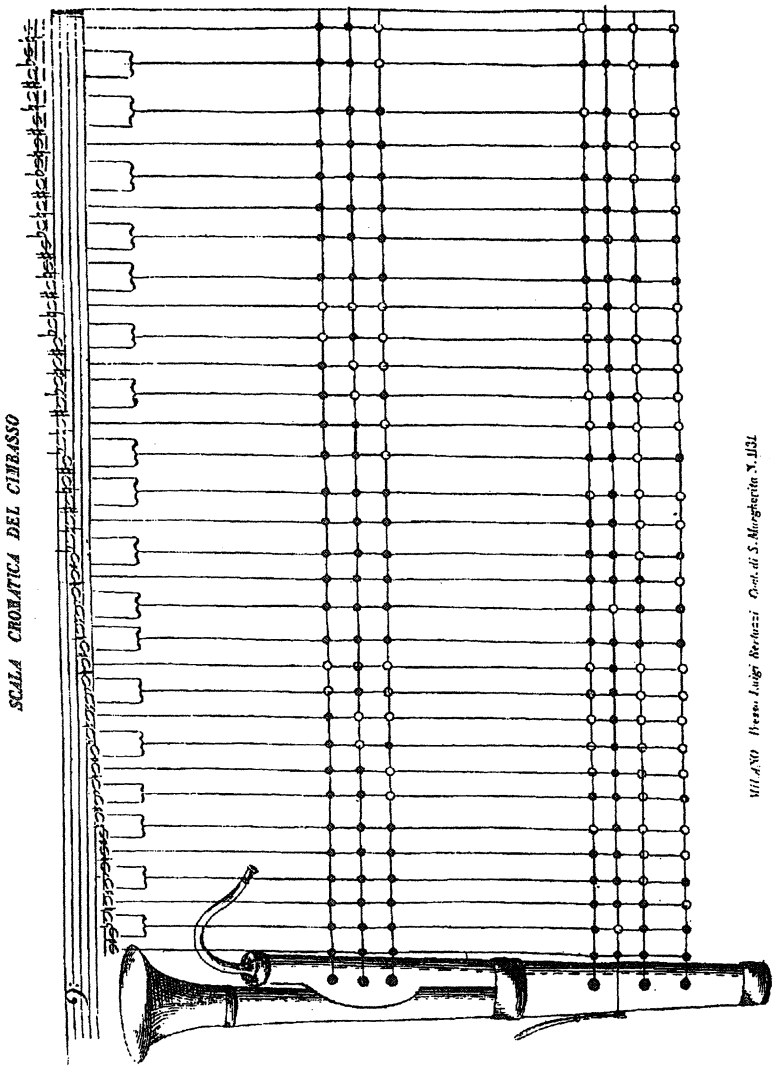


FIG. 1. *From* Transunto dei principj elementari compilati dal celebre M.° B. Asioli & breve metodo per ophicleide e cimbasso, *Milan: Bertuzzi, [1825].*

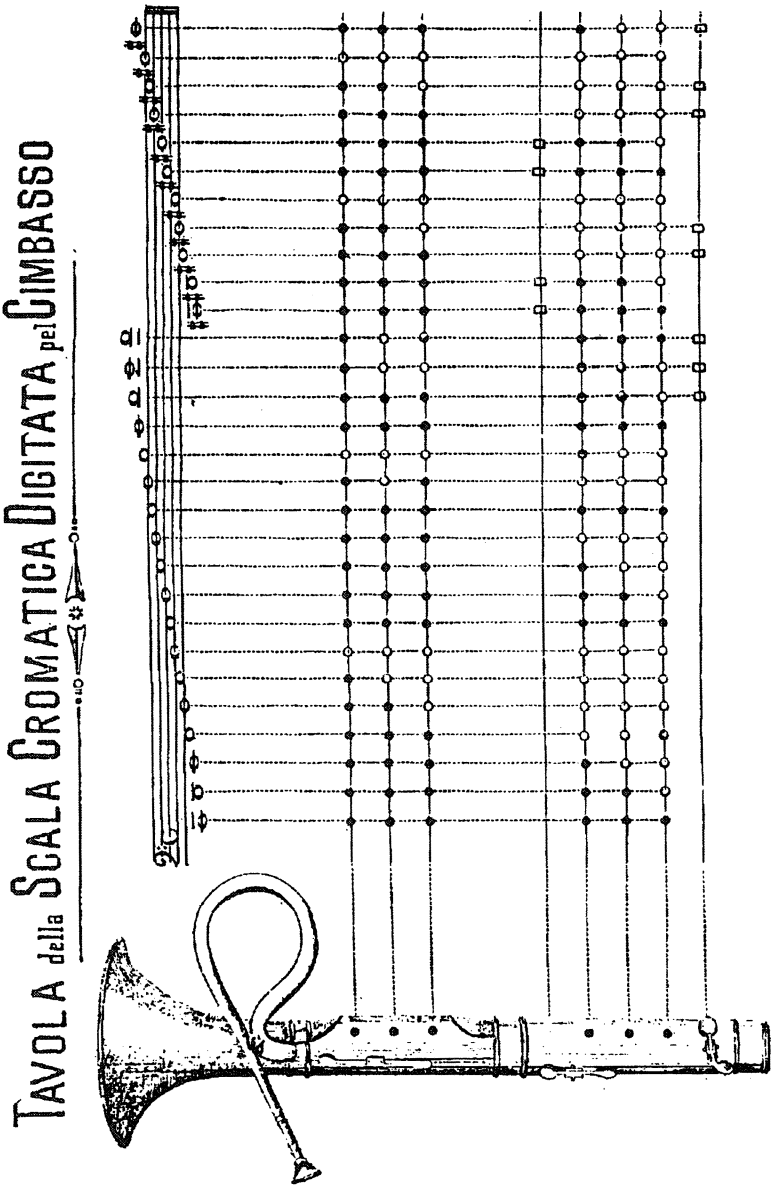
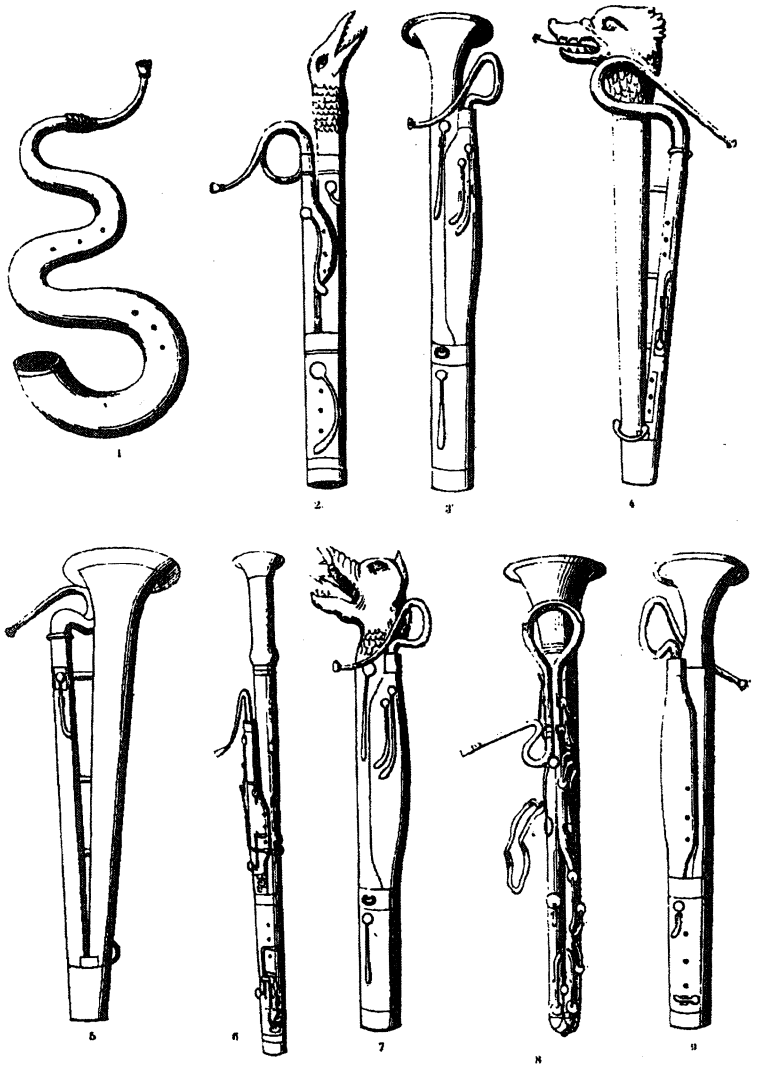


FIG. 2. *From* Tavole digitate per gli strumenti a fiato, *no place, no publ., [? 1830].*

INSTRUMENTS EMPLOYÉS DE NOS JOURS DANS LA MUSIQUE MILITAIRE

DES DIFFÉRENTS PEUPLES.



1 Serpent.
2 Serpent droit, Serpent Basson, ou Ophibaryton.
3 Serpent (autre espèce, en forme de basson) à six clefs.
4 Basson russe.
5 Basson russe (autre espèce.)
6 Basse d'harmonie (instrument autrichien), remplaçant avec avantage le Contre-basson.
7 Serpent à six clefs (autre espèce.)
8 Serpent à six clefs (autre espèce.)
9 Contre-basson autrichien.

FIG. 3. *From G. Kastner,* Manuel général de musique militaire, *Paris: Didot, 1848.*

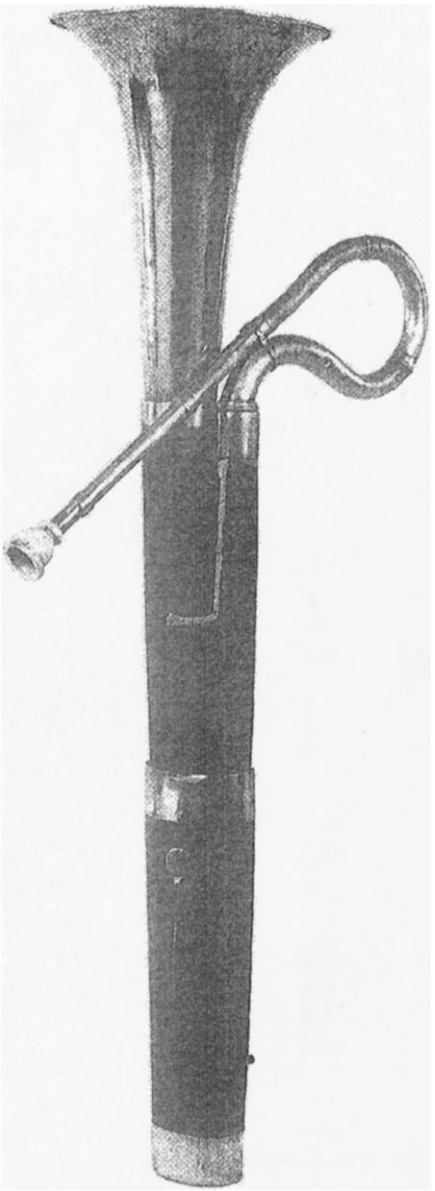


FIG. 4. *Cimbasso by P. Piana (courtesy of The Shrine to Music Museum, Vermillion, SD).*

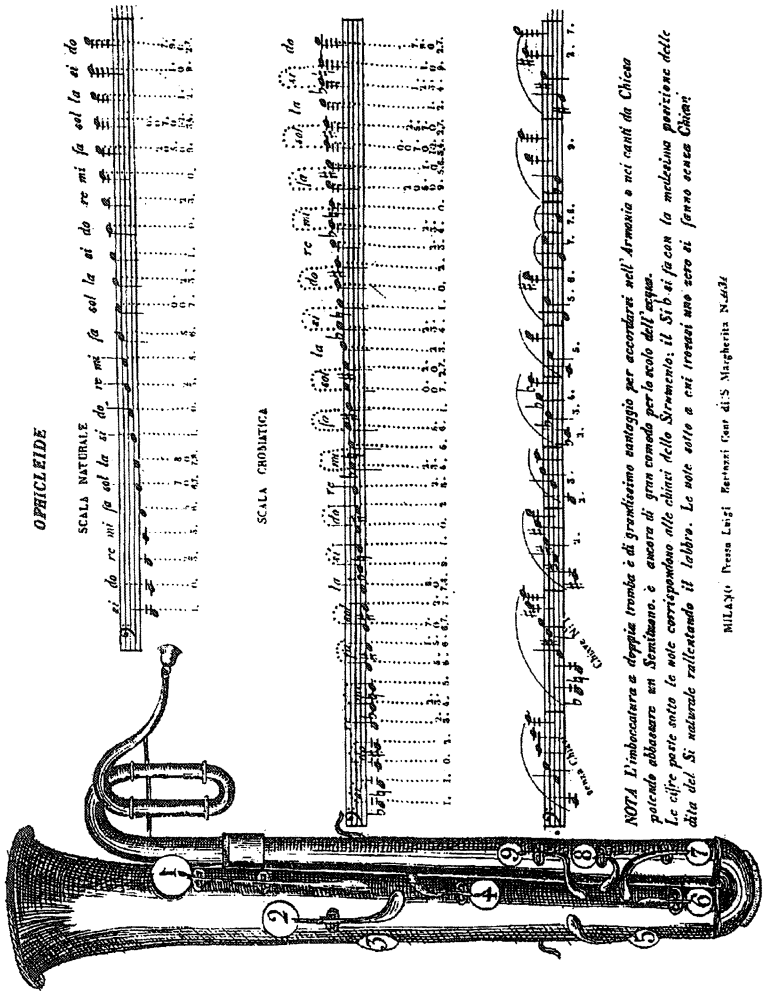


FIG. 5. *From* Transunto dei principj elementari di musica compilati dal celebre m.° B. Asioli & breve metodo per ophicleide e cimbasso, *Milan: Bertuzzi, [1825].*

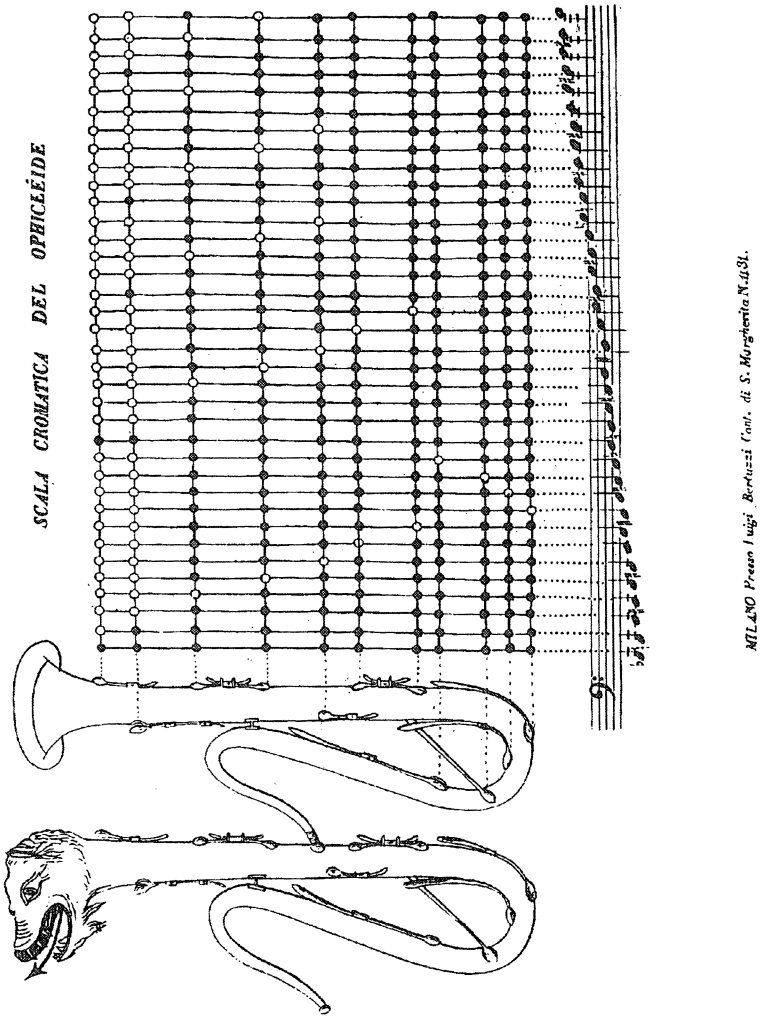


FIG. 6. *From* Transunto dei principj elementari di musica compilati dal celebre m.° B. Asioli & breve metodo per ophicleide e cimbasso, *Milan: Bertuzzi, [1825].*

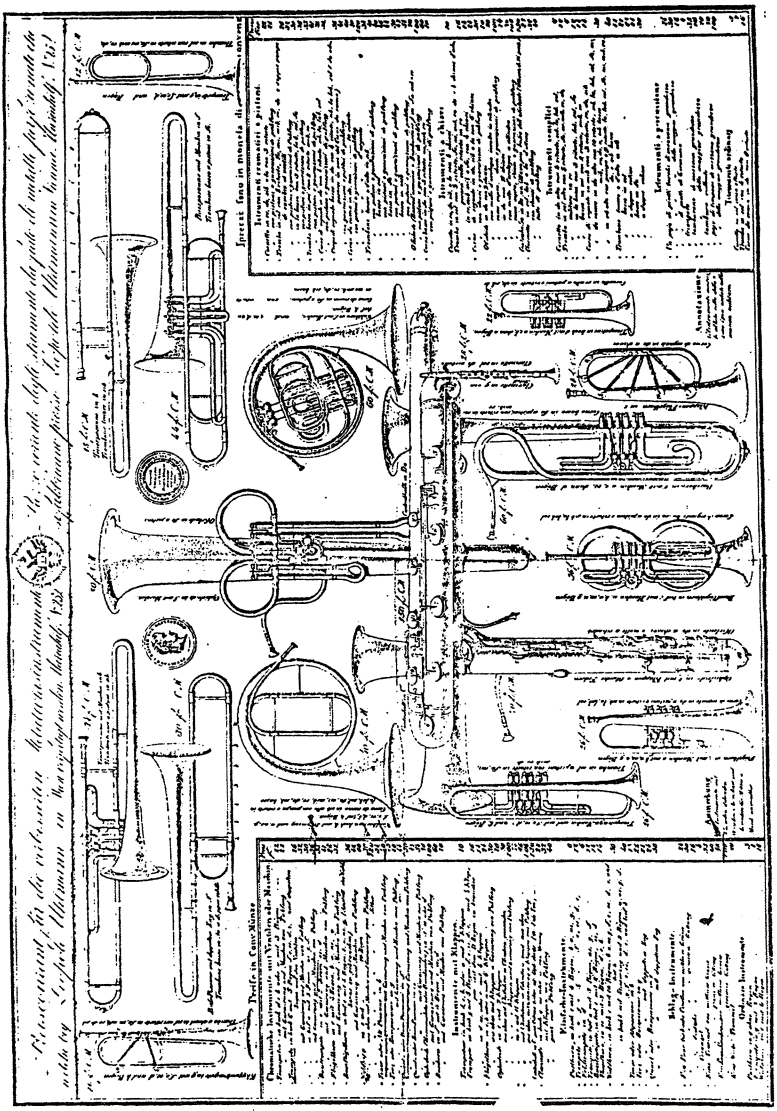


FIG. 7. *Price list (before 1848) of L. Uhlmann (photocopy in Salzburg: Museum Carolino Augusteum; original is lost).*

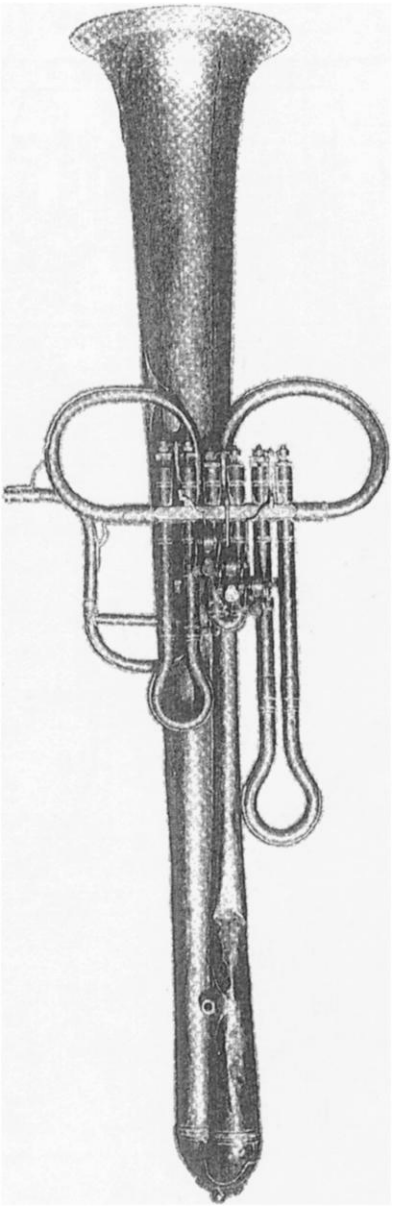


FIG. 8. *Valved ophicleide by L. Uhlmann (courtesy of the Museo Civico, Modena).*

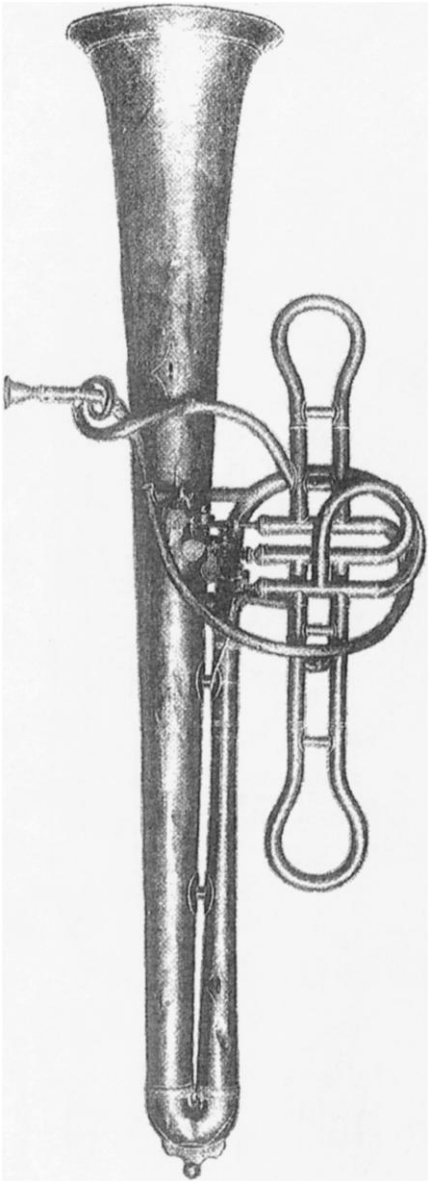
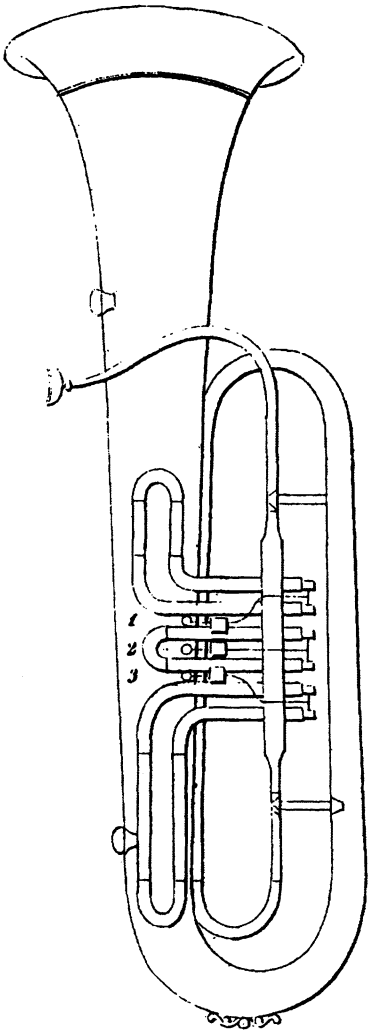


FIG. 9. *Valved ophicleide by A. Apparuti, 1841 (courtesy of the Museo Civico, Modena).*



Bombardone in Fa

FIG. 10. *From E. Palazzi*, Metodo per bombardone servibile anche per l'officleide, pelittone, contrabbasso e basso-d'armonia in do, *Milan: F. Lucca, [1853].*

FIG. 11. *From F. Paoli*, Metodo progressivo per oficleide o bombardone, *Milan: F. Lucca, [1866].*

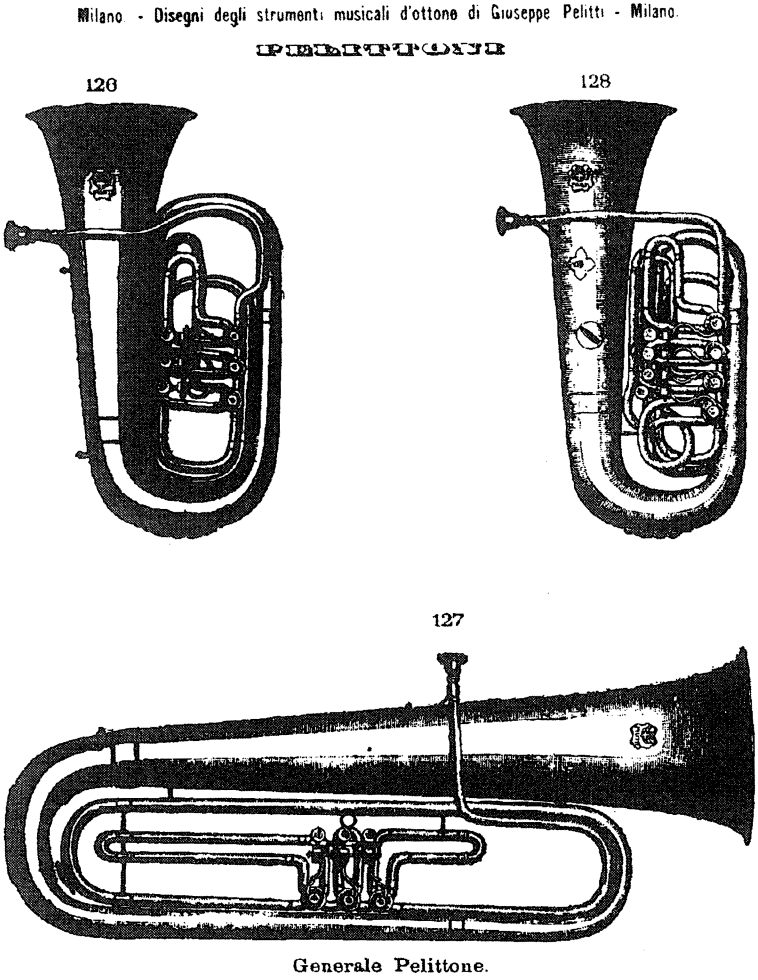


FIG. 12. *From* Disegni della fabbrica-strumenti musicali G. Pelitti, *Milan: Tip. del Commercio, 1873 (I-Rsc.: busta 133.23).*

FIG. 13. *Prof. G. Mazzarese with contrabass trombone by P. Pupeschi.*