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Ring Keys on a French Bassoon

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had single solid black purfling on their bellies. He also knows of an English bass viol with single purfling, and cannot accept the assumption I made in my article that double or single purfling of black/white/black style is a reliable characteristic in identifying English viols.

Also mentioned was a bass viol sold at Sotheby's in November 1986 which had body length and stop almost the same as Talbot's Consort or Single Bass Viol. Heale's report of seeing a label by Barak Norman stating that he had converted the instrument from a treble viol to a tenor violin started my train of thought that resulted in the Note that appears earlier in this Journal (see p.204).

EPHRAIM SEGERMAN

TO THE EDITOR:

*Ring keys on a French bassoon*

I would be interested to learn about the history of the ring key mechanism on a French bassoon from the late nineteenth century which I found at the flea market in Paris. The instrument can be ascribed confidently to P. L. Gautrot and the period from 1881 to 1888, for the following reasons:

(1) It bears the stamp: BREVETÉ/(tower with 4 merlons)/TRIEBERT/A PARIS, which was used by the successors of F. Triébert (1813 to 1878), i.e. Gautrot from 1881 to 1883, Gautrot & Couesnon from 1883 to 1888, Couesnon et Cie. from 1888 on.

(2) The bulge of the wing extends down to the butt. This feature is characteristic of the bassoons of Gautrot.<sup>1</sup>

(3) The key posts are mounted on small plates which are fixed to the body of the instrument using two screws each. With bassoons from Couesnon the posts are screwed directly into the wood.<sup>2</sup>

Compared with the standard French key system, the bassoon described here has additionally three rings, see Fig.1. Precisely this ring arrangement is described in a 'Certificat d'addition', dated 1857, which Gautrot added to his patent no.29431 of 1856.<sup>3</sup> One ring surrounds the second finger hole on the wing and operates a key close to the lower end of the wing. This key is open when L2 is lifted. Its function is apparently to improve *e* (L1) and possibly *d*<sup>#</sup> (L1, L3).

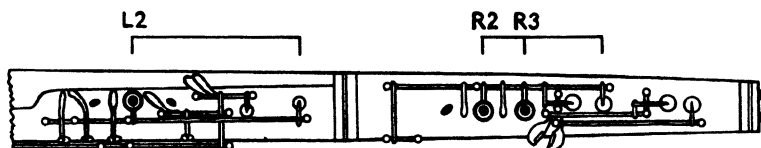


FIG. 1. Keys on a late 19th-century Triébert/Gautrot bassoon.

The second and third rings are located at the 5th and 6th finger holes on the butt, respectively. They are rigidly connected to each other and to a flap which is placed about 3 cm below the B $\flat$  key. This flap opens when R2 and R3 are lifted simultaneously, i.e. when B natural is played, closing the 4th finger hole (R1). Evidently the aim of this ring arrangement is to improve the intonation of B natural.

This ring mechanism is also found on a bassoon from the former Jansen collection which is now in the Germanisches Nationalmuseum Nürnberg.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, some parts of the keywork of this bassoon are missing, including also the rings and related keys.

A similar arrangement of rings for L2, R2, and R3 is also found with a bassoon made by Gautrot in the De Wit collection.<sup>5</sup> A bassoon in the Bate Collection<sup>6</sup> with rings for L2, R2, and R3 for the same purpose is listed with the name of Triébert. According to P. T. Young<sup>7</sup> this instrument has the stamp with the 4-merlon tower. It should therefore be attributed to one of his successors. Unfortunately no photographs of this bassoon are available. Rings for R2 and R3 only are employed in another Gautrot instrument from the Royal College of Music Collection<sup>8</sup> to operate a key between the 5th and 6th finger hole.

Are there many other bassoons of this type in public or private collections? I would also be interested to learn more about the history of the particular instrument described above. A hint might come from the serial number '2050' which is affixed below the stamp on the butt. Perhaps some reader of the *GJS* has known the bassoon's former owner or has owned it himself.

KLAUS GILLESSEN

#### REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> See W. Waterhouse: *The Proud Bassoon*, Edinburgh, 1983, instrument no.22. See also notes 2 to 5 below.

<sup>2</sup> R. W. Abel, private communication.

<sup>3</sup> This *Certificat d'addition* is shown as Fig.211 in vol.V of W. Jansen: *The Bassoon*, Buren: Frits Knuf, 1978.

<sup>4</sup> Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nürnberg, Germany, instrument no.MIJ33.

<sup>5</sup> E. Langefeld: *Exhibition of bassoons* (Collection De Wit), Amsterdam, 1992, instrument no.16.

<sup>6</sup> *The Bate Collection of Historical Wind Instruments*, Oxford, 1976, instrument no.328.

<sup>7</sup> P. T. Young, *4900 Historical Woodwind Instruments*, London: Tony Bingham, 1993, instrument no.Y3 under 'Triébert with 4-merlon tower'.

<sup>8</sup> E. A. K. Ridley, *European Wind Instruments* (The Royal College of Music, Museum of Instruments, Catalogue, Part I), London, 1982, instrument no.361.