

## THE OPHICLEIDE IN SPAIN, WITH AN APPENDIX ON SOME 19th-CENTURY BRASS TUTORS IN SPAIN

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The French word *ophicléide* is guaranteed to cause the average Spaniard problems of pronunciation and spelling. One early form of the word used shortly after the instrument first appeared in Spain was *ofixlier*. The name was finally hispanicized to *ofigle*, more frequently apocopated to *figle*, the name by which it is now known.

According to a Spanish music dictionary published in 1859,<sup>1</sup> the ophicleide (*figli*) was introduced to Spain in 1828. Since another 19th-century author stated that the valved cornet was first brought to Spain from Paris by Pedro Broca for the royal bodyguard, Broca may also have been responsible for bringing the ophicleide to Madrid.<sup>2</sup> A print by Buonaventura Planella (Biblioteca Nacional, Madrid) of a gala procession (*máscara*) held in Barcelona on January 6, 1828, however, shows a small band headed by what look like an ophicleide and a buccin. The earliest contemporary record of its use in Spain known to the author is to be found in a Royal Chapel document dated 28 December 1830, in which the ecclesiastical head of the chapel informed the chapelmaster that the king approved the engagement of two musicians not attached to the chapel—a second bassoon and an *ofixlier*—for the funeral service for the King of Naples.<sup>3</sup> A plan for the placing of the Royal Chapel instrumentalists during a memorial service for the Spanish King Fernando VII held in 1834 shows that on that occasion the back row of the orchestra consisted of two clarinets, two *ofigles*, the timpani, two buccins, two French horns, and two trumpets.<sup>4</sup>

Another early piece of evidence is a MS copy, partly translated into Spanish, of excerpts from Part VI of A. Gobert's instrumental tutor, published by Halary around 1823, which deals with the bass ophicleide. This is to be found in the old music archive of the Sanctuary of Aránzazu (MSS 1033 and 1035), which also contains the MS draft of a waltz for brass band that includes buccins and ophicleides (MS 985).<sup>5</sup> The instruction works for brass instruments preserved in the old Aránzazu archive are described in the Appendix to this article. As far as is known no ophicleide tutor was published in Spain, but Kastner's tutor also seems to have been known there, to judge by the fact that there is a copy in the Biblioteca de Catalunya (Barcelona). There is no record of an ophicleide teacher at the Madrid Conservatory, founded in 1830, but it is possible that because of the traditional association of the ophicleide with the trombones the trombone teacher also taught the ophicleide, just as today (or until very recently) trombone teachers in Spain sometimes teach the tuba as well as the trombone. Certainly the Madrid Conservatory's earliest trombone teacher, Domingo Broca, was an ophicleide player as well as a trombonist. In Barcelona, on the other hand, two ophicleide players are listed in 1842 in a guide to the city, the *Guía de foresters de Barcelona*, under the heading of leading professional instrumentalists (players and teachers), and there is a reference to the ophicleide class in the Barcelona conserva-

tory as late as 1882, when teachers of the clarinet, bassoon, French horn, trombone, and ophicleide were being recruited by examination.

Unfortunately no data are available on the use of ophicleides in Spanish bands, but it seems that they were being replaced by valved instruments in the 1850s and 1860s, somewhat earlier than in the orchestras. A catalogue issued in 1857 by the Madrid dealer Carrafa, which presented Moritz's rotary-valve instruments, commented that the *bombardino* was a modern invention and had replaced the ophicleide, while the bass tuba had a nobler sound than the ophicleides, *bombardones*, and *serpentones*. Nevertheless the same dealer was offering for sale ophicleides made by Gautrot with nine, ten, eleven, or twelve keys and a crook with a tuning slide. A Moritz *bombardino* (tenor tuba in C or B $\flat$ ) cost about three times as much as an ophicleide, so it is probable that only superior bands were buying them at that time. A *bombardino* of unspecified make with three Berlin-type valves, however, cost about the same as a Gautrot twelve-key ophicleide. Antonio Romero did not include the ophicleide in his publications for bands in the 1860s, while Hilarión Eslava, in his *Escuela de Composición* (part IV on instrumentation), published in 1870 and revised in 1883, commented that the ophicleide was rarely used in bands. He did, however, discuss in some detail its use in the orchestra, asserting that Berlioz exaggerated the roughness of its tone. It was agile in its second and third octaves but not in the lowest octave, and could play fast staccato only with difficulty. Although he admitted that it did usually have a rough sound, he pointed out that it had a greater compass than the trombone and its low notes were much fuller and mellower. For this reason it was used to reinforce the trombones, in unison or at an octave below. The usual combination was three trombones and one ophicleide. In parenthesis it may be mentioned that the orchestra of the Teatro Real in Madrid had three trombones and two ophicleides in 1850.<sup>6</sup> The ophicleide, according to Eslava, rarely went above the top line of the bass staff. If necessary in smaller orchestras it could act as the bass to the French horns and trumpets instead of the trombone, and as a reinforcement to the bass in tutti passages.

One field in which use of the ophicleide is well documented is the church. There is a wealth of cathedral chapter records and scores from the late 1830s onwards in which the *figle* appears as part of the instrumental ensemble. The first players to be recruited seem to have come from the ranks of the army. Twenty-three-year-old Mariano Tafall, for example, a regimental musician who applied for the post of dulcian player in Burgos cathedral in 1836, claimed to play the bassoon, ophicleide, clarinet, flute, and violin, while in 1843 the first ophicleide player of the garrison in Tuy asked for employment in the cathedral and was accepted.<sup>7</sup> The Tuy cathedral chapter records show that in 1846 it was formally decided that the ophicleide could replace the *bajón* (dulcian), but by 1876 a *bombardino* had been acquired. When Valladolid cathedral's group of musicians was reorganized in 1843 it was decided to give the post of second organist to the first dulcian player, who would have the obligation to play the dulcian, the ophicleide, or the violin, as well as the organ. A funeral march in the cathedral's archives, composed by Joaquín Piña in 1851, includes an ophicleide as well as buccins in the score. It may come as a surprise to learn that the buccin form of trombone was quite commonly found in Spanish cathedrals. Its

more muted sound (due to the shape of the bell) may have been considered more suitable for sacred music, particularly when voices were involved, so the church would be prepared to tolerate the serpent-head bell with its diabolical or pagan connotations. The popularity of the buccin in Spain may be measured by the relatively large number preserved in the Barcelona Museu de la Música (a dozen) and in collections abroad (eight). At least eight different makers/dealers were producing/importing buccins in Spain.

The 19th-century reference to dulcians may also puzzle some readers. Their long life in Spain has already been examined,<sup>8</sup> but briefly it may be said that by the mid-19th century the dulcian's role was confined almost entirely to reinforcing the bass voices of the choir and playing in the wind ensemble used in processions. The ophicleide shared these functions with the dulcian or replaced it entirely. In 1850 the chapelmaster of Segovia cathedral was empowered to determine on which days the dulcian and the ophicleide should be played, but after 1854 there is no further mention of the dulcian.<sup>9</sup> In 1859, in order to make the services as impressive as possible during the visit of a special preacher, it was decided that the two best choirboys should sing from one of the organ balconies accompanied by the ophicleides and the organ. Similarly, music was provided by voices, ophicleide, and one or two organs on a number of solemn occasions in the following year. When King Alfonso XII ascended the throne in 1875 the cathedral decided, for financial reasons, not to hire outside musicians to form an orchestra for the thanksgiving service but to have the *Te Deum* sung accompanied only by the ophicleides. In 1899 the Segovia cathedral chapter decided that the vacant post of ophicleide player should be filled. A player must have been found as the music archives contain a *Veni Creator* with an ophicleide part composed in 1907 by Celestino Vila. On 11 June 1908 the chapter of Palencia cathedral gave permission for the purchase of a four- or five-key *fagot* (bassoon!) if the person to whom it was assigned could learn to play it, otherwise an ophicleide should be acquired.<sup>10</sup> As late as 1920 the current chapelmaster of Palencia cathedral, Gonzalo Castrillo Hernández, composed some Easter music that included a *figle*. However, this was not the latest piece of church music to include a part for the ophicleide. That honor may well belong to a *Vidi aquam* for three voices (SAT) and ophicleide composed in 1922 by B. Aguilera Gil, which is to be found in the archives of Burgo de Osma cathedral.<sup>11</sup> Even the Royal Chapel included an ophicleide in the orchestra at the turn of the century. Its archive houses a Mass composed by Pablo Hernández in 1900. In this work the ophicleide part mostly, but not always, duplicates that of the second bassoon in unison or, particularly at cadences, at the lower octave. Curiously enough a *Salve Regina* composed in 1986 by the chapelmaster of Huesca cathedral, Juan José de Mur, contains a part for *figle*. The composer, however, has explained to me that the word *figle* was used to indicate any bass brass instrument and that the ophicleide was not currently played in Huesca. The ophicleide also seems to have dragged out a sporadic existence in the secular orchestra in the last decade of the 19th century. The archive of the Sociedad de Conciertos de Madrid contains a (possibly unperformed) manuscript piece composed by Luís Mariani as late as 1899 for an orchestra that included an ophicleide.<sup>12</sup>

In view of the fact that the ophicleide was still being played at the beginning of the 20th century one would have expected a fair number to survive. Unfortunately I have been

able to locate only eight examples in public or church institutions, although there may be others in private hands. All except one are nine-key instruments and where the crook still exists it is elliptical in shape. An eleven-key instrument in the Museo de la Música (Barcelona) bears the mark of Limonaire from Bayonne, a French town near the Spanish border. Limonaire was possibly a dealer and may have been related to the Limonaire from Paris who made mechanical organs and exported them to Spain. The Spaniard Pedro Bolla from Vitoria whose name appears on one of three instruments in Tarazona cathedral may also have been a dealer since no record of Bolla as a maker has appeared. There are two Guichard ophicleides in Spain, one in Tarazona stamped *Guichard Breveté à Paris*, the other in the Barcelona Museum inscribed *Guichard y hermano en Madrid*, i.e. Guichard and brother in Madrid. The brother may, in fact, have been A.G. Guichard's brother-in-law (*hermano político*), P.L. Gautrot, in which case a branch of the Guichard firm could have been established in Madrid at some date between 1835 and 1845.

This does not mean that no Spaniards made ophicleides. In 1851 José Ramis was listed as a maker of bugles, trumpets, ophicleides, cornets, trombones, etc.<sup>13</sup> The previous year he had exhibited a number of brass instruments in an industrial exhibition in Madrid, including two models of ophicleide, each with a tuning slide in the crook: an ordinary model that cost 320 *reales* and a model in white metal that cost 600 *reales*, almost double. In the second half of the century, apart from Gautrot, as already mentioned, the French firm of François, Maître et Compagnie was exporting instruments, including ophicleides, to Spain, according to an advertisement published in Madrid in 1887. In 1912 Péliesson, Guinot et Blanchon produced a catalogue that included a Spanish translation of the text, so one may assume they had Spanish customers. Ophicleides were among the instruments they offered.

To conclude, mention may be made of the use of the ophicleide and the buccin in mid-19th-century paintings showing scenes of everyday life with a slightly humorous undertone. Among these are a circus scene with musical clowns painted by José García Ramos, who died in 1912, which was on sale in the annual Madrid antique fair *Feriarte* in 1990, and another picture called *La Murga* (Street musicians) painted by José Jiménez Aranda in 1876, which is reproduced in an old Spanish history of music.<sup>14</sup>

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## APPENDIX

**Instructional works for brass instruments in the old music archive of the Sanctuary of Aránzazu (Spain)**

The Franciscan monastery of Aránzazu was burned down in 1834 by the queen's troops during the Carlist civil war. It was not fully reestablished until 1878. The "old" music archive contains the works belonging to the chapel before the monastery's destruction. It is a mystery how the music came to be saved, but Jon Bagües (see note 5) suggests that it may have been stored in the belfry, which was the only part of the monastery left standing. The music was "rediscovered" on shelves in the belfry staircase at the beginning of the 20th century. It is tempting, therefore, to date all the manuscripts in the archive to 1834 or earlier. Indeed, this would seem to be valid for all but a few debatable cases, among which is the tutor for three-valve cornet (MS 1032). On the basis of the handwriting, J. Bagües believes the manuscript was copied by the Franciscan monk, organist, and composer Fr. José Ignacio Larramendi (1786-1855). Larramendi made his vows at Aránzazu in 1803, but after 1810 held the position of organist and choirmaster in various other churches and monasteries in the Basque region. His works are to be found in many Basque archives and there are eighty-five, including a few draft scores of band music, in Aránzazu. The same hand (Larramendi's?) that copied the cornet tutor was also responsible for copying the ophicleide exercises (MS 1033) and ff. 2-4 of the trombone charts (MS 1034). As regards the other brass instruction works in the archive, although some of the diagrams, headings, and music examples are in different hands, all bear annotations—some long and some short—by Larramendi(?). One possibility that may be envisaged is that on Larramendi's death his music papers became the property of the Franciscan order and were incorporated into the old Aránzazu archives. This could account for the presence of "draft" scores, some of which, furthermore, use a serpent and a bass drum, instruments not found in the Aránzazu monastery (although outside musicians may have been employed for processions on special feast days). According to an 1827 inventory the brass instruments then owned by the monastery were: a pair of [natural] trumpets with a tuning slide and crooks; two very good French horns, each with a tuning slide, all the crooks, duplicate mouthpieces and the instrument cases; and two old-fashioned horns in moderate condition but without crooks. There was also a French horn tutor from the Conservatorio. The two horns with a tuning slide had been bought in 1805 but there is no record in the accounts for 1827-34 of the acquisition of other brass instruments. The deadline of 1834 cannot, therefore, be unreservedly applied to all the tutors listed below.

MS 1029. *Escala de clarín de siete llaves—Tablature des trompettes à clefs en Si, Ut et Mi bémol, par Halary. Rue Mazarine, N° 37, A Paris. Facteur d'instruments en cuivre de la Maison du Roi, breveté pour l'invention et perfectionnement de ses instruments à clefs.*

Two-page fingering chart and diagram for the seven-key bugle with French and Spanish titles and Spanish annotations. Although the keyed bugle was usually known in Spain as the *corneta* (or *trompeta*) *de llaves* the Spanish translator has here rendered the French *trompette* by the term for an orchestral trumpet (*clarín*). The compass of the fingering chart is b to c''', chromatic with sharps. Curiously enough the original fingerings for a# and d# were later assigned to b $\flat$ ' and e $\flat$ '', while different fingerings were inserted for a# and d#'', suggesting that equal temperament was not practiced by the amender. Among the annotations there is a passing reference to the valved cornet and the valved trumpet.

MS 1030. *Adornos p[ar]a clarín de siete llaves.*

One-page explanation of ornaments for seven-key bugle.

MS 1031. *Adornos y caracteres de expresión p[ar]a el clarín de siete llaves.*

One page of ornaments and tonguing for seven-key bugle.

MS 1032. *Méthode raisonnée de cornet à trois pistons, dédiée à M. Charles Pelet par N. Grubert. Professeur.*

Excerpt from Grubert's tutor for the three-valve cornet comprising the title page, three pages of text in French and one page of exercises. On the title page Grubert emphasized the usefulness of the third piston valve (which he called "a new combination") to composers as it gave them complete freedom to modulate without the need to adjust the theme or the harmonic sequences. Until then only two valves had been used ("jusqu'à ce jour, on n'avait employé que deux pistons"). The instrument's compass is shown as f# below the treble staff to c''' above.

According to information kindly provided by Friedrich Anzenberger, Napoléon Grubert's *Méthode raisonnée* [op. 6] was printed in Paris by A. Petit and published prior to 1838. (This would make it one of the earliest French tutors for the three-valve cornet.) The plate number suggests a date of 1836-37.

MS 1033. *6<sup>me</sup> Partie. Méthode pour l'ophicleïde basse.*

Four pages of selected exercises from part VI of Gobert's tutor for various instruments published by Halary around 1823. In addition there is a one-page index (translated into Spanish) of parts III-VI of Gobert's tutor. (See also MS 1035.)

MS 1034 (i) *Tablature générale, par dièses, du trombone [sic] basse.*

One page of explanations in French (parts of the trombone, range, slide positions and lip tension) plus a diagram for the bass trombone, i.e. the B $\flat$  trombone with E as its lowest note.

(ii) *Tablature générale, par bémols, du trombone basse.* Chart similar to (i) using flats instead of sharps. Text in French.

(iii) *Tablature générale du trombone ténor.* Similar chart to (i) and (ii) but compiled for the "tenor" trombone, which is described as a bass trombone with a narrower mouthpiece,

giving greater facility for the high notes. Lowest note = B; notation in the tenor clef. Text in French.

(iv) *Tablature générale du trombone alto*. Similar chart to (i)-(iii). Instrument in Eb; notation in the alto clef; lowest note = e. Text in French.

MS 1035. *Escala del Ophideide [sic], ò sea bajo de armonía—Méthode pour l'ophidéide bass[e]. Par A. Gober[t]*.

One-page fingering chart with a faded diagram of a nine-key ophicleide and annotations in Spanish (including one stating that Sr. Halary is the inventor of the ophicleide).

## NOTES

- 1 C.J. Melcior, *Diccionario enciclopédico de la música* (Lérida, 1859). This work, however, is not entirely reliable.
- 2 Tomás García Coronel wrote a historical study of the trumpet and cornet in 1883 as part of his application for a teaching post at the Madrid Conservatory. The manuscript (S 4039) is still preserved in the Conservatory library. García stated that cornets with two piston valves were first known in Paris in 1824-26. They were first played in Spain in 1829 by the Royal Guards, having been brought from Paris by Pedro Broca. Since García also stated that the third valve was added in 1829 by Périnet, his source of information may not be accurate.
- 3 E-Mn MS 14.091
- 4 E-Mn MS 14.073<sup>13</sup>, reproduced in F.A. Barbieri, *Legado Barbieri II (Documentos sobre música española y epistolario)*, Madrid, 1988 (ed. E. Casares).
- 5 A catalogue of the archive has been published by Jon Bagües, *Catálogo del antiguo archivo musical del Santuario de Aránzazu* (Guipúzcoa, 1979).
- 6 According to Manuel Juan Diana, *Memoria histórico-artística del Teatro Real de Madrid* (Madrid, 1850).
- 7 J. Trillo and C. Villanueva, *La música en la catedral de Tui* (Santiago de Compostela, 1987).
- 8 B. Kenyon de Pascual, "A Brief Survey of the Late Spanish Bajón," *Galpin Society Journal* 37 (1984): 72-79; idem, "El bajón español y los tres ejemplares de la catedral de Jaca," *Nassarre* 2 (1986) no. 2: 109-33; idem, "The Dulcians (*Bajón* and *Bajoncillo*) in Spain: An Updated Review," paper presented at the Double Reed Symposium, Utrecht, 1994, shortly to be published in the symposium proceedings.
- 9 J. López-Calo, *Documentario musical de la catedral de Segovia*, vol. 1: *Actas capitulares* (Santiago de Compostela, 1990).
- 10 J. López-Calo, *La música en la catedral de Palencia*, vol. 2 (Palencia, 1981).
- 11 J.I. Palacios Sanz, *Tres siglos de música en la catedral de Burgo de Osma* (Soria, 1991).
- 12 R. Sobrino, "Catálogo de las obras españolas del archivo de la Sociedad de Conciertos de Madrid," *Anuario Musical* 45 (1990): 235-95.
- 13 *Repertorio general ó índice alfabético de los principales habitantes de Madrid* (Madrid, 1851).
- 14 J. Subirá, *Historia de la música*. In the 3rd edition (Barcelona, 1958) the illustration is to be found on p. 1147 of vol. 3.