

The Schnitzer Family of Nuremberg and a Newly Rediscovered Trombone

Markus Raquet and Klaus Martius

It is not every day that one “rediscovers” a sixteenth-century trombone in a provincial museum (Figure 1), let alone an instrument by Anton Schnitzer the elder, a member of one of the most illustrious families of Nuremberg brass instrument makers. Even more remarkable about our “find” is that this trombone has been openly on display in the southern Bavarian town of Altötting for over a century.¹ Besides presenting this “new” old trombone, we would like to take this opportunity to review the available information concerning the Schnitzer family as well as to place the Altötting trombone into the context of the surviving instruments by Anton Schnitzer.

The Schnitzer Family

The Schnitzer family ranks among the most famous dynasties of musical instrument-makers of the sixteenth century.² Members of this wide-ranging family were musicians, woodwind makers, and trumpet and trombone makers. Fritz Jahn identified two families with this name, without being able to establish a connection between them.³ More recent research by Ekkehard Nickel has uncovered a possible link between what are very likely two branches of the same family: one branch consisting of town musicians and woodwind makers, and the other made up of brass-instrument makers.⁴

The founder of the dynasty was Albrecht Schnitzer the elder (d. 1524/25), a town musician and woodwind maker in Munich. Of Albrecht’s six sons, four settled in Nuremberg: Sigmund the elder as a town musician in 1503, Hans the elder as a town musician in 1506, Mathes as a town musician in 1522, and Albrecht the younger as a drummer (*Trommelschläger*) in 1521; Albrecht’s sons Anton and Arsazius remained in Munich, where



Figure 1
The Altötting Schnitzer trombone.

they too were employed as town musicians. Sigmund the elder, Hans the elder, Mathes, and Arsazius were also active as woodwind makers.⁵

Anton Schnitzer the elder first appears in the documents in 1558, when he was given Nuremberg citizenship. Unequivocal evidence concerning his relationship to the family of Albrecht the elder has yet to come to light. Nevertheless, Nickel has suggested the following scenario: Anton the Elder was the son of Albrecht's son Anton. After Anton's death (ca. 1530) his widow Anna moved with their son Anton (the elder) from Munich to Nuremberg and married the brass instrument maker Georg (Jörg) Stengel, called Neuschel.⁶ The young Anton apprenticed to his stepfather, succeeded him in 1557, and became master in 1562.

A letter from the Nuremberg town council to Emperor Maximilian II, dated 18 June 1568, would seem to support this supposition. The letter contains the request that Anton Schnitzer be granted permission to use a crown as his maker's mark, and also states that "his deceased forefathers were for many years trumpet makers here and always employed



Figure 2

Anton Schnitzer's gravestone in Nuremberg. Photo by Sabine Klaus.

a crown as a mark on their trumpets, like that still used by the supplicant.⁷⁷ The right to use a crown as maker's mark had previously been held by the Neuschels, whom Schnitzer obviously considered to be his forebears. Anton's workshop, which he inherited from Neuschel, was located in Nuremberg's St. Lorenz district, in the Grasersgasse, which today coincidentally runs alongside the Germanisches Nationalmuseum. It was also in Anton's house in the Grasersgasse that the former *Stadtpeiffer* and flute maker Hans Schnitzer the elder was residing at the time of his death in 1565, surely an indication that the two Schnitzer families had more in common than just their name.

Anton the elder died in 1608,⁸ an honored and well-to-do citizen, and was buried in the St. Rochus Cemetery, where his gravestone can still be seen⁹ (Figure 2). Whereas the headstones of most Nuremberg craftsmen depict the tools of their trade, Anton Schnitzer's, which is cast in bronze, resembles those of the town's nobility. Under a helmet is an impressive display of heraldic emblems: the half-eagle (of Prussia, Brandenburg, Hohenzollern, and imperial Poland), the lion (of Bavaria and Bohemia), the fleur-de-lys (of the Bourbons), and the crossbow (of the Habsburgs), the regalia of Schnitzer's illustrious customers from all over Europe.

Anton's sons Anton the younger, Hans, and Jobst, as well as his grandson Eberhard (Anton the younger's son) also became brass instrument makers. There is no evidence that the Nuremberg trumpet and trombone maker Erasmus Schnitzer was related to the Schnitzer families under discussion here.

The Altötting Schnitzer trombone

Provenance

Altötting is a small town in Bavaria, located approximately ninety kilometers east of Munich, near the Austrian border. With its *Gnadenkapelle* (Chapel of the Miraculous Image), Altötting has been a popular place of pilgrimage since the end of the fifteenth century. Among the buildings surrounding the Gnadenkapelle on the central Kapellplatz is the late-Gothic *Stiftskirche* (collegiate church), which was built between 1499 and 1511. It was in the *Stiftskirche* that the Schnitzer trombone was discovered—inside the case of the organ, which dates from 1725, when it was dismantled in 1903.¹⁰ The trombone was initially placed on display in the church's *Schatzkammer* (treasure chamber) and later in the *Wallfahrt- und Heimatmuseum* (Museum of Pilgrimage and Local History), also located on Kapellplatz, where it can be viewed today.

Description

The narrow, conical bell of the Altötting trombone displays the characteristic features of a Renaissance instrument. The inscription on the garland reads (from the player's position): "MACHT ANTONI SCHNITZER [crown] A MDLXXVI" (Figures 3, 4). Engraved in upper-case letters on an obliquely hatched background, the inscription was probably done by a specialized engraver called a *Posaunenstecher*, who was likely also responsible for the

ornaments on the flat bell stay. Like the comparable instruments in Verona, Edinburgh, and Nice, the Altötting instrument is a tenor trombone.



Figure 3
Crown (maker's mark) on garland.



Figure 4
Schnitzer's name on garland.

Measurements:

Length (without mouthpiece)	2608 mm
Diameter of the bell:	97-98 mm
Pitch:	probably B \flat (a=440Hz) ¹¹

The bell seam exhibits small square tabs cut at equal distance, and as customary was made using silver solder. The bell bow has a ring soldered to a heart-shaped brass saddle with a zigzag pattern along its edge. The bell stay is flat, and is engraved with floral ornaments (Figure 5) similar those on the Edinburgh instrument from twenty years later;¹² the ornamentation on both instruments seems to have been done by the same engraver. Both the inner and outer slides have round stays (Figure 6), decorated with a floral pattern that appears to have been stamped, or more likely, embossed.

The ferrules covering the loose tube connections, with the exception of those at the bow of the slide, display the fish-scale pattern characteristic of Nuremberg brass instruments of the period. The fish-scale pattern is framed by a lathe-turned, banded edge on one side and a crown-like motif on the other (Figure 7). As on the bell, the seams are clearly visible. The punch-work fish scales were executed using at least three tools: a semicircular punch and two punches with different sets of parallel lines.¹³

The slide bow is reinforced with a brass cap. A loop or ring is lacking on the slide bow and there is no trace of solder where it would have been attached. A mouthpiece, probably dating from the eighteenth century, is currently inserted in the instrument (Figure 6).



Figure 5
Flat bell brace.



Figure 6
Round slide brace and mouthpiece.



Figure 7
Ferrule.

A particularly beautiful iconographical confirmation for the design of this instrument is the painting *Il paradiso* by Lodovico Carracci, dated ca.1616, which is preserved in the church of S. Paolo in Bologna (Figure 8).¹⁴ The bass trombone illustrated here not only clearly illustrates the flat stays with the ornamental lion-head hooks, but also the orientation and organization of the ferrules. In this painting it is even possible to recognize engraving on the mouthpiece that appears to be similar to that on the mouthpiece of the Schnitzer instrument in Nice.¹⁵ Judging from the realistic depiction, it seems likely that the artist had at his disposal an actual instrument as a model, and indeed an instrument from Nuremberg.



Figure 8

Lodovico Carracci, *Il paradiso* (ca. 1616)

With the kind permission of the Ministero per i
Beni e le Attività culturali – Soprintendenza PSAE – Bologna.

Alterations

The year 1576 engraved on the garland of the Altötting trombone would seemingly make it the earliest dated instrument by Anton Schnitzer, and indeed the third oldest signed trombone. It should be kept in mind, however, that most surviving early brass instruments have been extensively repaired and/or altered over the years. The Altötting Schnitzer trombone is no exception, although the intact patina over its whole surface suggests that it has not been tampered with in the recent past.

Stays

The most obvious alteration is that of the slide stays. At the time the instrument was built only flat stays were employed—secured by hooks that usually have the form of lions' heads.¹⁶ The round stays on the slide of the Altötting trombone are most likely replacements from the seventeenth or eighteenth century.¹⁷

Ferrules

The ferrules too have clearly been altered. While it can be assumed that the ferrules were originally of the same design throughout the instrument, four different ferrule forms can be identified here (Figure 9). The two ferrules between the bell and bell bow (A) are most

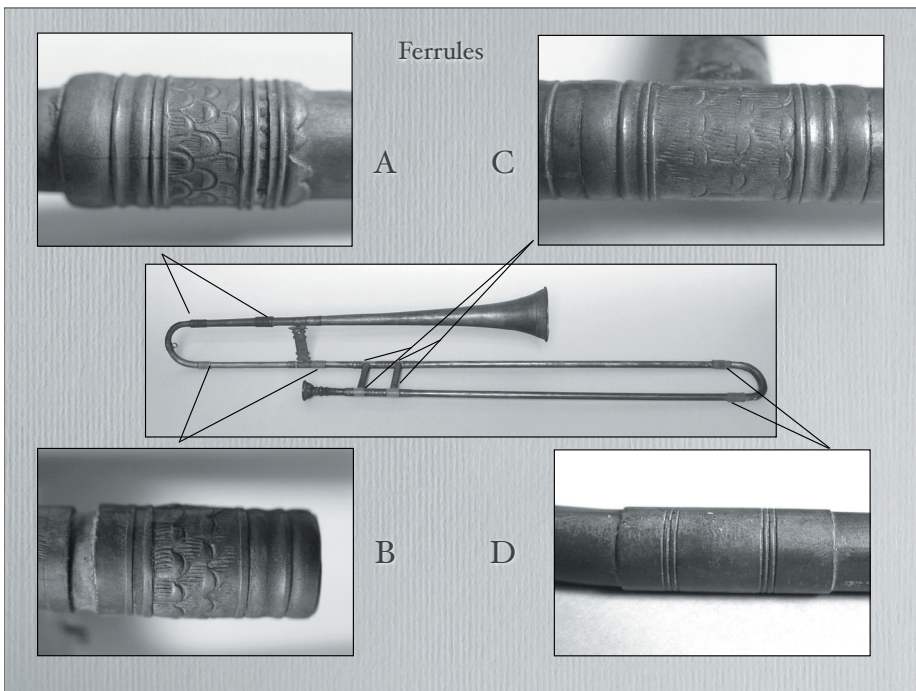


Figure 9
Ferrules.

likely original, since they are practically identical to those on the Schnitzer trombones from 1581 (Nice) and 1594 (Edinburgh). The small deviations in the ornaments can easily be explained by a substitution of punches as tools became worn out. The ferrules at the slide end of the bell section (B1) and the bell bow (B2) display a similar fish-scale pattern and have been shortened slightly. A different fish-scale pattern is found on the ferrules of the slide stays (C). Finally, the ferrules at the slide bow (D) are of an entirely different type; these date from the nineteenth century, as do the bow itself and the protective brass cap, which is embossed with floral motifs. It is not yet possible to ascribe the ferrules B, C, and D to a known maker.

Bell

A sleeve has been attached below the bell stay to stabilize a damaged area on the bell. The original bezel or rim (Figure 3) is missing from the Altötting instrument, like those on most of the other trombones by Schnitzer, and has been replaced. Because of earlier repair work, the edge of the garland, which was originally bent back over the rim of the bell, is no longer present; this crimped edge was apparently cut off before the garland was reattached. Apart from this, the bell seems to be original.

Although a ring is present on the bell bow, it is not original. If the saddle were original, we would expect it to be engraved and asymmetrical in form. The present heart-shaped saddle, with zigzag pattern, represents a typical nineteenth-century design. In this context it should be noted that the Altötting collection also has three brass instruments made by Saurle of Munich.¹⁸ It is conceivable that during the nineteenth century this famous Munich family of instrument makers was responsible for the maintenance of Altötting's brass instruments, including the venerable Nuremberg trombone.

Surviving instruments of Anton Schnitzer

The following list identifies the surviving instruments ascribed to Anton Schnitzer. Since Anton "the Elder" and Anton "the Younger" both employed the same maker's mark, a crown, instruments dated after 1591, the year in which Anton the Younger became master, are attributable to either.¹⁹

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Tenor trombone, 1576 | MACHT ANTONI SCHNITZER [crown] A. MDLXXVI.
Altötting, Wallfahrt- und Heimatmuseum. |
| Tenor trombone, 1578 ²⁰ | MACHT. ANTHONI. SCHNICZER. ZV. NVRNBERG
[crown] M.D.LXXVIII.
Verona, Accademia Filarmonica, no. 13301. |
| Tenor trombone, 1581 ²¹ | MACHT ANTONI SCHNITZER A[NNO] MDLXXXI
[device].
Nice, Palais Lascaris (formerly in the Conservatoire National
du Région de Nice). |

- Trumpet, 1581²² MACHT. ANTON. SCHNITZER [crown] A. MDLXXXI.
Silver, partly gilded, engraved.
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, no. 248 (A 258).
- Trumpet, 1585²³ MACHT ANTON SCHNICZER ZV NVRMBE [crown]
MDLXXXV.
Verona, Accademia Filarmonica, no. 13303.
- Bass trombone 1593²⁴ MACHT ANTON SCHNITZE[R] MDLXXXIII.
Kassel, Staatliche Museen/Hessisches Landesmuseum,
no.1905/161.
- Tenor trombone, 1594²⁵ MACHT ANTONI SCHNITZE [crown] MDLXXXIII.
Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Collection of Historic
Musical Instruments, no. 2695.
- Trumpet, 1598²⁶ MACHT ANTONI SCHNITZER IN NVRMBERG 1598.
brass, gilded.
Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, no. GdM 181.
- Bass trombone, 1598²⁷ MACHT ANTONI SCHNITZ [crown] MDLXXXVIII.
Ingolstadt, Bayerisches Armeemuseum, no. 10 699.
- Trumpet, 1599²⁸ ANTONI SCHNITZER A: MDLXXXIX
Paris. Musée la Musique, no. 519²⁹

Parts of trombones presumed to be by Schnitzer:

- Outer slide³⁰ unsigned.
Hamburg, Museum für Hamburgische Geschichte.
- Inner slide³¹ + stay of outer slide parts of an instrument otherwise by Anton
Drewelweck.
Nuremberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, no. MI 167

Instruments in written documents

- Trombone, before 1575
Cited in an inventory of the Nuremberg Frauenkirche: "Item ein kurze Toppel

Posaunen ist Ao. 87 dem Anthoni Schnitzer, dem sie gehören, wider gegeben worden. Stuckh 1:" ("Further, a short double-trombone was returned in 1587 to Anton Schnitzer, to whom it belongs. One piece.")³²

Trombone, 1579

Formerly in the Innsbruck *Musikkammer* of Archduke Ferdinand. "Macht Antoni Schnitzer zu Nurnberg 1579." This instrument is first cited in an inventory compiled after the death of the Archduke in 1596, and is described as "ain kupferne pusaun, die absecz vergult" ("a copper trombone, with gilded ferrules"). In a later inventory dated 1788, the instrument is again cited—here with the above inscription. An inventory compiled in 1806 no longer lists this instrument, and its current location is unknown.³³

The following documents from the Munich Court show that Anton Schnitzer not only took over Georg (Jörg) Neuschel's workshop, but also continued to deliver instruments to his customers:

1554

138a Item den 27isten Nouembris bezalt Jörg Neischl Trumettenmacher zw Nürnberg vmb 10 groß welsch Trumetten vnnd ein Possthorn 142 fl. 6 β. (Further: the 27th November, Jörg Neischl trumpet maker of Nuremberg was paid 142 fl 6 s for 10 large Italian trumpets and one posthorn.)

1567

357a. Anthonien Schnizer Trumettenmacher In Niernberg vmb 12 Trumetten für iede 10 thaler Mer für Zerung 12 fl. Vnnd Allhie Auflosung 6 fl. 17 d. thuet in Allem 155 fl. 1 β. 17 d. (Anton Schnitzer trumpet maker in Nuremberg received 10 thalers each for 12 trumpets. An additional 12 fl for delivery, and 6 fl. 17d. for attendant costs, making in total 155 fl. 1 s. 17d.)

1576

357a. Anthonien Schnitzer von Nurinberg Per Zwo Pusaunen für Ir f. gn. Instrumentisten Laut der Zetl bezalt fl. 24. (Anton Schnitzer for two trombones for Your Grace's instrumentalists, paid according to the invoice 24 fl.)

1590

427a. Anthonien Schnitzer Hanndlsmann Zu Nürnberg bezallt Ich Per alheer geschickhte 24 Neue Trommetten lauth der vnderscribnen Zetl fl. 35. (I paid Anton Schnitzer, tradesman from Nuremberg, 35 fl., according to the signed invoice, for the 24 new trumpets sent here.)

1592

461a. Item bezalt dem Cesaro Bendinellj vmb er Inn Nürnberg vonn Ant. Schnizer 18 Neuen trometen erkhaufft vnnd Laut einer vnnterschribnen Zetell ... fl. 152. (Further: paid to Cesare Bendinelli for the 18 new trumpets he bought from Anton Schnitzer, according to a signed invoice... 152 fl.)³⁴

Conclusion

Although the Altötting Schnitzer trombone has been subjected to various alterations over the centuries, the oldest parts—i.e. the bell, the garland (and the signature on it), as well as a pair of ferrules (A)—can be regarded as original and were thus made by Anton Schnitzer the Elder. The original flat slide stays may have been replaced by round stays relatively soon after the instrument was made, possibly in the seventeenth century. Later alterations and repairs appear to date from the beginning of the nineteenth century (Figure 10), which could be an indication that this instrument remained in use over a period of some 250 years.

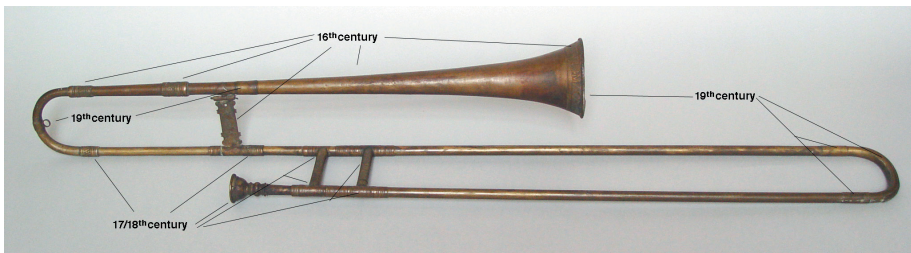


Figure 10
Alterations and original parts.

All photos by the authors, except as noted.

Klaus Martius, who studied with Friedemann Hellwig, is conservator of musical instruments at the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg. He is the author of several publications on the technology of historical instruments, particularly bowed and plucked strings, the conservation of musical instruments, and documentation techniques.

Markus Raquet is a conservator of metal objects and musical instruments at the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg. He has published articles on conservation techniques and technical studies of historical instruments. He is also maker of historical brass instruments.

NOTES

¹ The Altötting trombone came to our attention in the exhibition catalogue *Grenzenlos – Geschichte der Menschen am Inn: Katalog der 1. Bayerisch-Oberösterreichischen Landesausstellung 2004*, ed. Egon Boshof, Max Brunner, and Elisabeth Vavra (Regensburg: Pustet, 2004), 371. References to the Altötting trombone can also be found in Max Moesmang, *Geschichte der Altöttinger Stifts- und Kapellenmusik: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Kirchenmusik in Bayern* (Altötting: St. Antoniusbuchhandlung, n.d.), 37; and in Hans Albert, “Leben und Werke des Komponisten und Dirigenten Abraham Megerle (1607-1680)” (Ph.D. diss., University of Munich, 1927), 40, n. 133. The authors would like to thank Dr. Konrad Ruhland, Niederaltaich, for the reference to Moesmang, and Stewart Carter for the reference to Albert.

² Willi Wörthmüller, “Die Nürnberger Trompeten- und Posaunenmacher des 17. und 18. Jh.,” *Mitteilungen des Vereins für Geschichte der Stadt Nürnberg* 45 (1954): 208-325, here 261.

³ Fritz Jahn, “Trompeten- und Posaunenmacher im 16. Jahrhundert: Beiträge zur Geschichte des Nürnberger Musikinstrumentenbaues” (Ph.D. diss., University of Erlangen, 1925), 12-15 (also published as “Die Nürnberger Trompeten- und Posaunenmacher im 16. Jahrhundert,” *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft* 7 [1925]: 23-52).

⁴ Ekkehard Nickel, *Der Holzblasinstrumentenbau in der Freien Reichsstadt Nürnberg*, Schriften zur Musik, vol. 8, (Munich: Katzschneider, 1971), 50-52.

⁵ Ibid. See also William Waterhouse, *The New Langwill Index* (London: Tony Bingham, 1993), 358-60.

⁶ Nickel has surmised that Georg [Jörg] Stengel was the adoptive son, and possibly also the nephew, of Hans Neuschel the younger (*d* 1533); Stengel officially assumed the name Neuschel in 1537. See Nickel, *Holzblasinstrumentenbau*, 54-55.

⁷ Vienna, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Document No. 11875; cited in Nickel, *Holzblasinstrumentenbau*, 51.

⁸ Waterhouse, *New Langwill*, 360.

⁹ Peter Zahn, *Die Inschriften der Friedhöfe St. Johannis, St. Rochus und Wöhrd zu Nürnberg* (Munich: Druckenmüller, 1972), 2938. “Anno 1608 den 15 tag Martij Jst in Gott seliglich Verschi://den Der Erbar Anthony Schnitzer der Elter Dru-/ methenmacher, Vnd Fraw Katharina sein Ehe”/ wirtin Ein Geporne Negelin vnd Jhrer Beder leibs”// Erben vnd nachkomen begrebnis Denen Gott der // Almechtig ein Fröliche vferstehung Verleiyhe. Amen.”

¹⁰ Moesmang, *Geschichte der Altöttinger Stifts- und Kapellenmusik*, 37.

¹¹ The pitch was estimated from the total length of the instrument. We did not actually play the Altötting trombone. It should be noted that B \flat would not have been the nominal pitch of the instrument when it was built.

¹² *Historic Musical Instruments in the Edinburgh University Collection: Catalogue of the Edinburgh University Collection of Historic Musical Instruments*, ed. Arnold Myers, vol. 1 “The Printed Illustrations” (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Collection of Historic Musical Instruments, 1990), 144; idem, “The Descriptions,” vol. 2, part H, fasc. iii, “Trumpets and trombones” (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Collection of Historic Musical Instruments, 1993), 38.

¹³ On other instruments there occasionally is evidence of the use of yet an additional punching tool to fill the empty space above the upper area of ornaments.

¹⁴ Heinrich Bodmer, *Ludovico Carracci* (Burg bei Magdeburg: Hopfer, 1939), 28 (ill. no. 92). Note the hand grip. See also Keith McGowan, “The world of the early trombone player: flat or round?” *Early Music* 22, no. 3 (1994): 441-66.

¹⁵ Henry G. Fischer, "The Tenor Trombone of Anton Schnitzer the Elder in Nice," *Historic Brass Society Journal* 1 (1989): 65-74.

¹⁶ See McGowan, "The world of the early trombone player."

¹⁷ It would seem that round stays first appeared toward the middle of the seventeenth century, but this is a point that requires further research.

¹⁸ Two valve trumpets in F by Michael Saurle, Munich, dated 1862, of which one is left-handed, the other right-handed, with "catholic" fingering (one is in a contemporary case with several crooks); inventionshorn with ten crooks and its contemporary case, by Georg Saurle, Munich, nineteenth century.

¹⁹ For example, the "figure-eight" trumpet of the Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde, Vienna, dated 1598, is attributed by Stradner and Waterhouse to different generations. See Waterhouse, *New Langwill*, 360, and *Für Aug' und Ohr: Musik in Kunst- und Wunderkammern, Schloß Ambras, 7. Juli bis 31. Oktober 1999, eine Ausstellung des Kunsthistorischen Museums Wien*, ed. Wilfried Seipel (Vienna: Kunsthistorisches Museum; Milan: Skira, 1999), description of Cat. no. 38a (by Gerhard Stradner), 133 and 136-37.

²⁰ John Henry Van der Meer and Rainer Weber, *Catalogo degli Strumenti musicali dell'Accademia Filarmonica di Verona* (Verona: Accademia Filarmonica, 1982), 72-74.

²¹ Fischer, "The Tenor Trombone," 65-74.

²² *Für Aug' und Ohr*, Cat. no. 37, 132-33.

²³ This is the famous "figure-eight" trumpet that once belonged to the trumpeter Cesare Bendinelli. See Van der Meer and Weber, *Catalogo degli Strumenti*, 66-70.

²⁴ Heiner Borggreffe (ed.), *Moritz der Gelehrte: Ein Renaissancefürst in Europa* (Eurasburg: Minerva, 1997), no. 315, 292.

²⁵ See n. 12.

²⁶ Figure-eight trumpet. See n. 19.

²⁷ Wörthmüller, "Die Instrumente der Nürnberger Trompeten- und Posaunenmacher," *Mitteilungen des Vereins für Geschichte der Stadt Nürnberg* 46 (1955): 466. Wörthmüller lists the instrument as a tenor trombone, with an incorrect inventory number, 10 966. The damage mentioned in Wörthmüller has since been repaired.

²⁸ Wörthmüller, "Instrumente," 465-66, and Jahn, "Trompeten- und Posaunenmacher," 25.

²⁹ Inventory number according to Wörthmüller, "Nürnberger Trompeten- und Posaunenmacher." We were unable to confirm this number.

³⁰ Wörthmüller, "Instrumente," 405. Contrary to Wörthmüller, a comparison of the ornamentation on the ferrules, stays, and the engraved parts with that on Schnitzer instruments makes an attribution to Schnitzer more likely than to Drewelwecz. In particular, the fish-scale punch appears to be identical to that of the Nice trombone.

³¹ The ornamentation of the slide stay, in comparison to the outer stay of the trombone slide by Anton Drewelwecz in Hamburg, would appear to indicate that the slides of the trombones by Anton Drewelwecz und Sebastian Hainlein (GNM inv. no. MI 167 and MI 169) have been interchanged; see also Fischer, "Tenor Trombone," 67-68. Wörthmüller considers the engraved squirrels to be an argument for the attribution to Drewelwecz; see Wörthmüller, "Instrumente," 405.

³² Inventory from 1575 (Staatsarchiv Nürnberg, Rep. 2c Nr. 96, f. 1ff); cited after Nickel, *Holzblasinstrumentenbau*, 338.

³³ Jahn, "Trompeten- und Posaunenmacher," 26.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 23.