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## Some Light on the Chalumeau

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In our student days we learned that the clarinet was invented by a certain Denner of Nürnberg in 1690, when he added a speaker key to an earlier instrument called the chalumeau, in order that it should overblow at the twelfth and thereby extend its compass. Later, this Denner became two Denners, J. C. the father, and J. the son, each of whom had a hand in the clarinet's development. By subtracting from the clarinet the modifications which the Denners made, one is left with a single-reed instrument with seven fingerholes, a thumb hole and one key - this then was the chalumeau.

Such a straightforward image has since then become so blurred in a fog of discussion and doubts, that one turns to the authority of Canon Galpin himself to have one's faith restored. What he writes in *A Textbook of European Musical Instruments* (p. 186) is perfectly clear: "Throughout the Middle Ages the single-beating reed appears to have been chiefly confined to peasant folk. It is still commonly found on the hornpipes and bagpipe "chanters" of the Greek islands. ... In Italy it appears in the popular "trumpets" made at Florentine fairs, and in France it was known as the *Chalumeau*, a word derived from the Latin *calamellus*, "a little reed", or from the Greek *calamaulos*, "a pipe of reed". As a folk instrument it has been confused with the *Chalemie*, a conical pipe with a double-beating reed. ..."

This takes care of the folk element in the ancestry of the chalumeau. The 'popular "trumpets" ' correspond to Thurston Dart's 'Mock Trumpet' (GSJ VI, p. 35) - a novelty instrument from the eighteenth-century toy shop. It is obvious that there was bound to be confusion about the name *Chalumeau*: anything so similar to *Schalmei* and *Shawm* was asking for trouble. But the name of a thing is what people call it; not something decided by a committee. My interest in the chalumeau was focused some ten years ago on a Suite for three chalumeaux by Christoph Graupner (1683-1760). This had been published in Germany in an arrangement for three recorders, and Dr. Walter Bergmann had managed to get hold of a copy which he lent to me.<sup>1</sup> I tried to see how it might be reconstructed as a trio for three clarinets. It looked as if the whole work would fit perfectly if transposed down a fourth as the parts would then range from *g* (lowest note in the third clarinet part) to *c'''* (highest note for clarinet I). This experiment led me to think that the Suite might have been transposed for recorders, and that the original might have been for three clarinets (chalumeaux in Gluck's sense). At this stage I was eager to see what in fact Graupner had done, and eventually obtained microfilms of the original MS (MUS 464/43 & 73, Darmstadt) through the good offices of Herr Heinz Kaestner of B. Schotts Söhne, Mainz.

When these arrived it was obvious that the parts were for three true chalumeaux of different sizes, not three equal clarinets. Also there were not one, but two Suites - the one I already knew from the recorder arrangement and another for the same instrumentation.

The fact that these Suites were for chalumeaux of different sizes led me to the paragraph on the instruments in Majer's *Museum Musicum* (1732) which mentions the discant, alto or quart chalumeau, tenor and bass:

Man hat sonst *Discant*, Alt- oder *Quart-Chalumeaux*, wie auch *Tenor- und Bass-Chalumeaux*, theils mit dem Französischen / theils mit Teutschem Ton / und sind absonderlich *ratione* des schwehren Ansatzes / sehr hart zu blasen / die *Application* darauf *correspondiret* meistens mit denen Flöthen; Allein deren *Ambitus* erstreckt sich nicht viel über eine *Octav*. Wird derhalben vor unnöthig erachtet / weitläufiger hievon zu melden / zumalen / wann man eine Flöthen blasen kan / wird man auch hier *praestanda praestiren Können*.



This suffices for the first part in the Graupner Suites; and I am at the moment constructing similar instrument in appropriate sizes for the two other parts. The next question is: Are the second and third parts to be regarded as for alto and tenor chalumeaux, or for tenor and bass? I am inclined to think the latter would be correct, and that the members of Majer's family were discant in C (like my modern one), quart or alto in G, tenor in F (like the chalumeau register of a clarinet in C - Majer describes his clarinet as going 'von dem *Tenor f.* bis zum gestrichenen<sup>2</sup> a. auch zuweilen ins 3. gestrichene c.') and bass in C, an octave below the discant. In this case Graupner does not use the quart or alto member of the family. The tenor of the family corresponds to the one referred to by Galpin as the prototype of the clarinet.

Graupner's two Suites will shortly be published in my transposed arrangement for three equal clarinets (by Schott & Co., London). It would have been putting the clock back to confine players to the chalumeau registers of, say, basset horn and bass clarinet, but anyone who has followed my argument will easily be able to reconstitute Graupner's original from this edition.

### Notes

1. This was in the Rieter Biedermann edition which appeared before the same work came out in Peters Edition. (For an earlier discussion of Graupner's works for chalumeaux, see Oskar Kroll, 'Das Chalumeau', *Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft*, 15 (1934), p. 374 ff. -ED)

2. Is this a misprint for *ein gestrichenen f.*, or are all the other notes described an octave too high?