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Serpents in Boston: The Museum of Fine Arts and Boston Symphony Orchestra Collections

Obscured by the pretensions and frivolous nicknames with which it is associated – ‘Athens of America,’ ‘Hub of the Universe’ and ‘Bean Town’ – is the fact that Boston, Massachusetts is a city rich in cultural history and assets. Although only the twenty-second largest city in America,¹ it boasts two cultural institutions that are among the most renowned in the world: the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (MFA) and the Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO), each of which has a significant collection of historical musical instruments including many serpents and related instruments. In addition, the core of each collection is associated with a notable collector and performer: for the MFA, Canon Francis W. Galpin (1858–1945), and for the BSO, Henri Casadesus (1879–1947).

CANON FRANCIS W. GALPIN, WILLIAM LINDSEY AND THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS (BOSTON)

The musical, literary and organological pursuits of Canon Francis W. Galpin (Figure 1) have been well documented,² and the Society that honours his work and bears his name was founded in October 1946, shortly after his death.³ While at Trinity College in 1877, Galpin began collecting musical instruments. A serpent was his first acquisition⁴ and he taught himself to play it well enough to perform at Trinity Great Court.⁵ After his ordination in 1883, he continued to devote himself to writing about, collecting and performing on a wide variety of musical instruments and organized his celebrated ‘Paraffin Concerts’ for the benefit of the Hatfield

¹ 2010 United States Census.

² F. Geoffrey Rendall, ‘F.W.G. 1858–1945’, *The Galpin Society Journal* I (1948), pp.3–8.

³ Gerald Hayes, ‘The Galpin Society’, *The Musical Times* 93/1318 (December 1952), pp.545–47; reprinted in *The Galpin Society Journal* VI (1953), pp.3–6.

⁴ Dotted Crotchet, ‘Private Musical Collections. II. The Rev. F. W. Galpin’s Musical Instruments’, *The Musical Times* 47/762 (August 1906), p.528.

⁵ Graham Melville-Mason, ‘21 Years of Organology’, *The Musical Times* 109/1507 (September 1968), p.810.



(above) Figure 2. *William Lindsey (1858–1922)*, courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

(left) Figure 1. *Canon Francis W. Galpin (1858–1945)* shown with his *tromba marina (trumpet marine)*, France, c1700. Museum of Fine Arts, Leslie Lindsey Mason Collection (ex. Francis W. Galpin), acc. 17.1733a.

Broad Oak lighting fund.⁶ Among his many books were *Old English Instruments of Music* (1910)⁷ and *A Textbook of European Musical Instruments* (1937).⁸ Galpin's collection was the subject of other texts, notably William Lynd's *Ancient Musical Instruments* (1897),⁹ and Nicholas Bessaraboff's *Ancient European Musical Instruments* (1941),¹⁰ to which the Canon contributed a Foreword.

In the autumn of 1916, Canon Galpin sold 560 instruments from his collection to William Lindsey (Figure 2), a Boston industrialist, who subsequently donated the collection to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, in memory of his daughter, Leslie Lindsey Mason (Figure 3). She and her husband, Stewart Southam Mason of Sproughton, Ipswich, perished in the sinking of *RMS Lusitania* on 7 May 1915.¹¹

⁶ Stanley Godman, 'Francis William Galpin: Music Maker', *The Galpin Society Journal* XII (1959), pp.8–16.

⁷ Francis W. Galpin, *Old English Instruments of Music: Their History and Character* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1910).

⁸ Francis W. Galpin, *A Textbook of European Musical Instruments: Their Origin, History, and Character* (London: Williams & Norgate Ltd., 1937).

⁹ William Lynd, *A Popular Account of Ancient Musical Instruments and Their Development, as Illustrated by Typical Examples in The Galpin Collection, at Hatfield, Broad Oak, Essex* (London: James Clarke & Co, 1897).

¹⁰ Nicholas Bessaraboff, *Ancient European Musical Instruments: An Organological Study of the Musical Instruments in the Leslie Lindsey Mason Collection at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Museum of Fine Arts/Harvard University Press, 1941).

¹¹ 'Mrs. Stewart Southam Mason (Leslie Hawthorne Lindsey), Saloon Class Passenger', *The Lusitania Resource*, www.rmslusitania.info/pages/saloon_class/mason_ihl.html, consulted 15 February 2011. See also 'Boston Woman on Wedding Trip', *The New York Times*, 8 May 1915.



Figure 3. *Leslie Hawthorne Lindsey Mason (1886–1915). Collection of Béatrice Mosca; courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.*

William Lindsey met Canon Galpin on one of his many trips to Britain although what initially brought them together is unknown. While living in England during the period 1900–1904, Lindsey established the Mills Equipment Company that manufactured an innovative woven ammunition cartridge belt that was used in the Boer War.¹² Its success allowed him to retire and devote himself to philanthropic and literary pursuits; his novel, *The Severed Mantle*, was published in 1909.¹³ Galpin and Lindsey had frequent conversations and correspondence regarding the potential sale of Galpin’s musical instruments. In a letter to Lindsey dated 15 December 1915, Galpin pressed the issue of the sale of his collection,

Dear Mr. Lindsay [sic].
You will remember me as Vicar of Hatfield Broad Oak and the man “with the musical instruments”.

Last month we moved our home to Witham Vicarage and a much larger parish.

I was wondering whether any of your Boston friends would now like to buy my evolutionary series of instruments for their Technical School or Institute. Owing to our moving, many of them are already packed and could easily be put on rail here. You will remember I offered to sell at £3000, but I would consider any reasonable proposal if you wished to purchase.

With the kindest remembrances,
Very truly,

Francis W. Galpin

I may say that I have been approached by a new UK firm for a deal - so an early reply would oblige.¹⁴

The price William Lindsey paid for Canon Galpin’s collection is not known, but the £3000 initial demand gives us an indication.¹⁵ Lindsey first proposed his purchase and subsequent gifting of Galpin’s Collection to the Museum of Fine Arts Trustees on 15 October 1916; his offer was accepted and by 5 January 1917, two-thirds of Galpin’s collection – aboard the Steamer St. Paul – arrived in Boston with the remainder arriving in February of the same year. European instruments from the Collection, by then named the Leslie Lindsey Mason Collection, first went on display at the MFA on 8 November 1917, and Galpin’s instruments continue to form the core of the Museum’s musical instrument collection.¹⁶

The exit of Canon Galpin’s collection from Britain was not without controversy. Galpin lamented the absence of a National Collection of musical instruments; he hoped his collection might form its nucleus and in 1910, he called the lack of such a collection, ‘a cause of much humiliation.’¹⁷ Despite his bargaining tactic with Lindsey – that he had been approached, ‘by a new UK firm for a deal’ – Galpin found no suitor in Britain to purchase his instruments. Nearly 40 years after Galpin’s call for a National Collection, Eric Halfpenny took up the cause, using the loss of Galpin’s instruments to Boston as a point of national dishonour: ‘That this collection, which, prior to its departure, had been offered to certain public institutions here

¹² Personal communication with Béatrice Mosca (granddaughter of William Lindsey), 31 January 2011.

¹³ William Lindsey, *The Severed Mantle* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1909).

¹⁴ Letter from Francis W. Galpin to William Lindsey, 17 December 1915. Collection of Béatrice Mosca.

¹⁵ Using the Retail Price Index, £3000 in 1915 would be approximately £178,000 in 2009 (\$280,000). Currency comparison calculator (‘Five Ways to Compute the Relative Value of a UK Pound Amount, 1830 to Present,’) at www.measuringworth.com/ukcompare/.

¹⁶ Personal communication with Darcy Kuronen, 15 February 2011.

¹⁷ Galpin, *Old English Instruments*, pp.ix–x.

and refused, was ever allowed to leave the country is nothing short of calamitous'.¹⁸ Galpin, however, retained a number of instruments that did not go to Boston, 46 of which were, after his death, sold at auction by Puttick and Simpson (72 New Bond Street, London).¹⁹

Canon Galpin's reported motivation in selling the bulk of his collection to William Lindsey in 1916 – having failed to find a buyer in England – is given in a contemporary Boston news account,

The second interesting private view of the week was one at the Museum of Fine Arts of the collection of musical instruments given to the museum by William Lindsey in memory of his daughter, Leslie Lindsey Mason who was lost on the *Lusitania*, hardly 10 days after her marriage to Stewart Mason, a young Englishman. There are nearly 600 pieces in the collection, which was almost the life-work of an English clergyman, Rev. Francis W. Galpin, who had put a large part of his wife's fortune and his own into it. Now he wishes to give all that he can for war work, and when Mr. Lindsey heard of his desire to sell his wonderful collection, it seemed to him the most fitting memorial for his daughter, who was not only young and attractive, but proficient in music.²⁰

Yet Britain's loss was Boston's gain. George Kinsky summed up the importance of Galpin's collection among American museums,

A large number of rarities are contained in the Galpin Collection, which is now lost to Europe. Through the possession of the collection, now known as, 'The Leslie Lindsey Mason Collection of Musical Instruments', the Boston Museum has moved up to fourth position in the ranking of American musical instrument collections. The first three positions are occupied by the 'Crosby Brown Collection' in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York (undoubtedly the most extensive collection in the world!), the state-run collection in the National

Museum [Smithsonian Museum] in Washington, and the Stearns Collection of the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.²¹

As mentioned above, Canon Galpin had a particular interest in the serpent. A 1937 article from *The Richmond and Twickenham Times* speaks of Galpin and the serpent,

How many of you have walked along Kew-road with a serpent over your shoulder? On Monday night, writes a *Richmond and Twickenham Times* representative, I had that experience when I assisted Canon Francis W. Galpin, D. Litt., in the somewhat awkward task of transporting the serpent from Christ Church to the Canon's house. The serpent, you see, belonged to him.

As Canon Galpin, who is one of the greatest living authorities on ancient musical instruments – he has more than a hundred, all playable, in his home – had illustrated in a lecture to the Christ Church fellowship earlier in the evening, the serpent was invented in 1580 [sic: 1590] by Canon Guillaum[e], of Auxerre. It is shaped like a snake and is the bass complement of a smaller instrument, made of wood and leather, called the cornett. The serpent, a most odd-looking instrument which when blown produces an even odder sound, took a prominent part in the Roman Catholic services held abroad in those days. It did not find its way to England until the 18th century when it began to be used in church bands.

After telling us that George III took a great interest in the instrument – he ordered the tube at the end to be turned out for better note production! – the Canon gave a practical demonstration of how the serpent used to be played. This, he said, was one of the very few playable specimens. He himself had played it in Mendelssohn's oratorio, 'St. Paul,' which had a part specially written for the instrument.²²

Stanley Godman notes that Canon Galpin also played the serpent in performances of Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, notwithstanding the fact there is no part for

¹⁸ Eric Halfpenny, 'A National Collection of Instruments of Music', *The Musical Times* 87/1238 (April 1946), p.106.

¹⁹ The sale of Galpin's instruments was originally scheduled for 11 April 1946 (P&S catalogue 767) but his lots (numbers 1–46) were withdrawn; the auction was subsequently rescheduled for 1 August 1946 (P&S catalogue 791, collection of Dr. Graham Wells). See James Coover, *Music at Auction: Puttick and Simpson (of London), 1794–1971* (Warren, Michigan: Harmonie Park Press, 1988), p.419. Note: the auction of 1 August 1946 does not appear in Coover's book because the catalogue is missing from the collection of Puttick and Simpson catalogues in the British Library.

²⁰ Fragment of a newspaper clipping (no date, no source). Collection of Béatrice Mosca.

²¹ George Kinsky, 'Notices', *Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft* III/11/12 (August/September 1921, double issue), pp.639–40. Translation by Howard Weiner.

²² 'Ancient Instruments: Delightful Lecture and Demonstration by Canon Galpin', *The Richmond and Twickenham Times*, 16 October 1937.

the instrument in the score.²³ While Galpin may well have played serpent in *Elijah*, it is possible that Godman mixed up his Biblical Testaments and confused *Elijah* for *St. Paul*, the latter oratorio indeed having a part for serpent.

William Lynd dangles the possibility that a recording of Canon Galpin playing serpent may exist:

I was so impressed with the instruments and their owner, that I conceived the idea of recording, by means of an Edison-Bell Phonograph, the tones of a large number of ancient instruments. Mr. Galpin seemed pleased with the idea, and offered to arrange the instruments in families. The records of Mr. Galpin's performances were successfully made.²⁴

These recordings were presumably made around the time of publication of Lynd's book (1897), but unfortunately they have not surfaced in modern times.

Canon Galpin's ownership of three serpents can be traced by connecting the dots in several sources. In a checklist of his collection that was compiled between 1881 and 1890, he lists two serpents,

9. Serpent. Wood covered with canvas & leather. Mounted with brass, & ivory mouthpiece. With six finger-holes & four keys. English. Late 18th or early 19th Cent. L. 8 feet 10 inches.
10. Serpent. Wood covered with canvas & leather. Brass mounted. Ivory mouthpiece. With fourteen keys. By Key. English. Early 19th Cent. L. 8 feet 7 inches.²⁵

These serpents were loaned to the Royal Military Exhibition (London, 1890) where they were among the 15 serpents on display.²⁶

Brian Galpin notes that the first of these instruments was not sold to the Museum of Fine Arts. Rather, it was retained by Canon Galpin and it 'passed into the possession after Canon Galpin's death first of Robert Donington, then of Anthony Baines'. Donington was the buyer at the Puttick and Simpson auction of 1 August 1946 where, 'A serpent with ivory mouth-piece', sold for £10.²⁷ Baines obtained it shortly thereafter and it was displayed at the Galpin Society's Exhibition in 1951.²⁸ He subsequently sold this instrument at Puttick and Simpson in 1961 to a purchaser, 'Todhunter', for £22.²⁹ Its whereabouts today are not known. A photograph of this serpent may be found in Galpin's *Old English Instruments of Music* (1910),³⁰ his *A Textbook of European Instruments* (1937),³¹ a photo essay about the Society's Exhibition in *The Illustrated London News* (1951 – Baines is shown playing the instrument),³² Baines' *Woodwind Instruments and Their History* (1957 – the image is reversed),³³ and in situ hanging on a wall in Galpin's rectory at Hatfield Broad Oak in Dotted Crochet's article (1906).³⁴

According to Brian Galpin, the second serpent in Canon Galpin's checklist – by Thomas Key – was sold between 1895 and 1904 to Mrs. John Crosby Brown, who subsequently gave it to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York where it is part of the Crosby Brown Collection (acc. 89.4.1643).³⁵

A third serpent owned by Canon Galpin is listed

²³ Godman, 'Francis William Galpin: Music Maker', pp.10–11.

²⁴ Lynd, *Ancient Musical Instruments*, pp.5–6.

²⁵ Brian Galpin, 'Canon Galpin's Check Lists', *The Galpin Society Journal* XXV (1972), pp.15–16.

²⁶ *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Musical Instruments Recently Exhibited at the Royal Military Exhibition, London, 1890* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1891), p.162 (entry 335) and p.164 (entry 341, with photograph, Plate VII).

²⁷ Puttick and Simpson catalogue 791, 1 August 1946.

²⁸ *The Galpin Society: British Musical Instruments August 7–30, 1951*, exhibition catalogue (London: The Galpin Society, 1951), p.21. The entry reads, '253 Serpent. Leather-covered wood with brass mounts and four brass keys. Military model with bell turned outwards. Anon: c. 1810: Ex Galpin Coll. Lent by A.C. Baines, Esq.'

²⁹ Puttick and Simpson catalogue 2384, 27 July 1961 (annotated). Collection of Dr. Graham Wells.

³⁰ Galpin, *Old English Instruments of Music*, plate facing p.196.

³¹ Galpin, *A Textbook of European Musical Instruments*, plate X. The plate is the same as one reproduced in *Old English Instruments of Music*.

³² 'Some Interesting Examples from the Galpin Society's Exhibition', *The Illustrated London News*, 15 August 1951, p.255.

³³ Anthony Baines, *Woodwind Instruments and Their History* (London: Faber & Faber, 1957), plate xxxi.

³⁴ Crochet, 'The Rev. F. W. Galpin's Musical Instruments', p.528.

³⁵ Herbert Heyde, 'The Brass Instrument Collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York', *Historic Brass Society Journal* 11 (1999), p.117. A history of the Crosby Brown Collection including Mrs. Crosby Brown's friendship with Francis W. Galpin, is found in, Emanuel Winternitz, 'The Crosby Brown Collection of Musical Instruments: Its Origin and Development', *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 3 (1970), pp.337–56.

in a typewritten list of his instruments dated 1911.³⁶ It is listed,

34. SERPENT, by Baudoin [sic: Baudouin]. C. 1800. Belgium.

Further, in a catalogue compiled by Canon Galpin in 1916 as a comprehensive list of instruments in his collection that he intended to sell,³⁷ this same Baudouin serpent is listed again, although with a date 100 years earlier than indicated in his previous list,

144. Serpent. Early 18th Century.³⁸

Since a line drawing (after a photograph) of this instrument appears in William Lynd's 1897 book,³⁹ we know Canon Galpin acquired it between 1890 and 1897, and his Baudouin serpent was one sold to William Lindsey in 1916 and is now part of the MFA Collection. A photograph of Galpin's Baudouin serpent appears in the *Museum of Fine Arts Bulletin* (1917),⁴⁰ Bessaraboff's *Ancient European Musical Instruments* (1941),⁴¹ and Darcy Kuronen's *MFA Highlights: Musical Instruments* (2004).⁴²

Of the six serpents and related instruments owned by the MFA, four are part of the Leslie Lindsey Mason Collection (ex. Galpin) and two were a gift of Joseph R. Coolidge (in memory of his wife, Peggy Stuart Coolidge).

HENRI CASADESUS, SERGE KOUSSEVITZY AND THE BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
When Major Henry Lee Higginson (1834–1919) founded the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1881, he engaged George Henschel – the celebrated singer and conductor from Breslau who made his reputation in England – as its first music director.⁴³

After Henschel's departure from Boston in 1884, Higginson continued to turn to central European conductors, most notably Wilhelm Gericke, Arthur Nikisch, and Karl Muck. Muck had the misfortune of being in Boston during World War I, and he was famously arrested on 25 March 1918 (the night before he was to lead Bach's *St Matthew Passion* with the Boston Symphony) as an alleged German sympathizer and sent to an internment camp at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia. Muck was a Swiss citizen but had been born in Germany and had most of his professional success there. During a raid on his residence, Boston Police and Justice Department agents absurdly suspected that markings in his *St Matthew Passion* score were in fact coded messages indicative of pro-German activities.⁴⁴ The anti-German hysteria of the time ushered in an era of French music directors and musicians during the years 1918–1962 with the tenures of Henri Rabaud, Pierre Monteux, Serge Koussevitzky and Charles Munch.

Serge Koussevitzky, while born in Russia, made his early reputation in Paris both as a conductor and performer on the double bass. His arrival in Boston in 1924 accelerated the wave of French musicians entering the Boston Symphony; in 1925, 14 French musicians joined the orchestra including four principal players, notably oboist Ferdinand Gillet and trombonist Joannés Rochut. By 1950, more than one-quarter of Boston Symphony players were originally from France or from French families.

While in Paris, Serge Koussevitzky met Henri Casadesus (Figure 4), who, along with Camille Saint-Saëns, founded the Société des Instruments Anciens in 1901.⁴⁵ A celebrated photograph from 1906 (Figure 5) shows a veritable 'Who's Who' of French and Russian musical personalities gathered

³⁶ Francis W. Galpin, *List of a Collection of Musical Instruments Formed By The Rev. F. W. Galpin, M.A.; F.L.S. (Hatfield Vicarage, Harlow, Essex.) England, 1911*; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, Archives.

³⁷ Francis W. Galpin, *Galpin Collection of Old Musical Instruments: A Hand Catalogue with Notes, 1916*. Collection of Béatrice Mosca.

³⁸ Nicholas Bessaraboff continued the misattribution of the date of Baudouin's activity, citing it as, 'Belgium, early 18th century'. See Bessaraboff, *Ancient European Musical Instruments*, p.162.

³⁹ Lynd, *Ancient Musical Instruments*, plate facing page 40.

⁴⁰ Florence Virginia Paul, 'The Leslie Lindsey Mason Collection of Musical Instruments', *Museum of Fine Arts [Boston] Bulletin XV/ 91* (October 1917), pp.47–63.

⁴¹ Bessaraboff, *Ancient European Musical Instruments*, plate IV.

⁴² Darcy Kuronen, *MFA Highlights: Musical Instruments* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 2004), p.86.

⁴³ While in Boston, Henschel used the name 'Georg Henschel'; he was knighted in 1914.

⁴⁴ Edmund A. Bowles, 'Karl Muck and his Compatriots: German Conductors in America during World War I', *American Music* 25/ 4 (Winter 2007), pp.405–40, particularly note 41, pp.433–34.

⁴⁵ *Historique de la Société des instruments Anciens Fondée par Henri Casadesus en 1901* (Paris: M. Surugue, no date); Boston Symphony Archives.



Figure 4. *Henri Casadesus (1879–1947) with his daughter, Gisèle (1914–), c1920; courtesy Boston Symphony Orchestra Archives.*

in Paris at Casadesus' invitation: Henri Casadesus is standing, at centre, with Serge Rachmaninoff looking over Casadesus' shoulder; to Casadesus' right is Serge Koussevitzky. Saint-Saëns is seated, right of centre, looking to his right; Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, with his characteristic long beard, is seated next to Saint-Saëns.

An accomplished viola player and composer,⁴⁶ Casadesus began collecting historical instruments around 1896. His Société gave concerts in Europe, Britain, and Russia (where Koussevitzky joined the group) as well as in Boston's Symphony Hall in 1918.

In 1926, Koussevitzky lobbied for Casadesus' instruments to come to Boston,

Our great orchestra leader, Serge Koussevitzky, the intimate friend of Henri Casadesus, knew for a long time these artistic riches and it is upon his initiative and discerning counsel that the committee was formed which has acquired this collection.⁴⁷

A group of Boston Symphony supporters subsequently purchased 145 instruments from Casadesus' collection and donated them to the Boston Symphony Orchestra. The group's spokesman, N. Penrose Hallowell, made the proposal to Frederick P. Cabot, President of the Boston Symphony Board of Trustees, on 10 March 1926,

Certain individuals have agreed to buy what is known as the Henri Casadesus collection of musical instruments. It comprises between 110 and 120 [recte: 145] pieces and is considered by experts to be an unusually fine collection.

These individuals, together with others who will be asked to subscribe, are glad to offer this collection to the Trustees of the Boston Symphony Orchestra in memory of Major Henry L. Higginson on the understanding that the Trustees will give suitable space for it in Symphony Hall and will take measures to make it as easy as possible for music lovers to view the collection.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Casadesus was in fact the composer of the celebrated *Concerto* in D major for viola (subsequently arranged for orchestra by Maximilian Steinberg) attributed to C.P.E. Bach; the *Concerto* was recorded under Bach's name by the Boston Symphony under Koussevitzky's direction on 22 December 1937 (released June 1939), RCA M-559.

⁴⁷ *A Rare Collection of Old Musical Instruments: The Casadesus Collection, Given by Friends to the Boston Symphony Orchestra in Loving Memory of its Founder, Henry Lee Higginson* (Boston: Symphony Hall, 13 November 1926), p.7.

⁴⁸ Letter from N. Penrose Hallowell to Frederick P. Cabot, 10 March 1926. Boston Symphony Archives.



Figure 5. *Réception des plus célèbres musiciens Russes, reçus pour la première fois à Paris en 1907, par Camille Saint-Saëns et la Société des Instruments Anciens d'Henri Casadesus à la Salle Pleyel / Reception of the most celebrated Russian musicians, received for the first time in Paris, in 1907, by Camille Saint-Saëns and the Society of Ancient Instruments of Henri Casadesus, at the Salle Pleyel; courtesy Boston Symphony Orchestra Archives.*

The donation was accepted and the instruments shipped to Boston.⁴⁹ No record has been found detailing the price paid for the instruments but an appraisal of the Collection that apparently was done at the time they arrived in Boston estimated their value at \$37,965.⁵⁰ On 23 October 1926, Casadesus' instruments, having been installed in cases in a room off the first balcony of Symphony Hall (the location of the current Management Office) were displayed to the public. With characteristic hyperbole of the period, the *Boston Sunday Post* reported the opening of the display,

A group of Boston citizens, yesterday morning, presented to the Boston Symphony Orchestra in memory of its founder, Major Henry L. Higginson, a collection of old musical instruments, which is generally considered the finest exhibit of its kind in existence.

These rare instruments were acquired from Henri Casadesus, celebrated French musician, who has

devoted many years of his life to gathering together musical instruments of former times.

M. Casadesus visited this country in 1918 with his Society of Ancient Instruments, and performed early chamber music at Symphony Hall and elsewhere. Mr. Koussevitzky has for many years been a close friend of the collector. In fact, it was on the Russian conductor's recommendation that this exhibit was acquired last spring.

The collection, mounted in glass cases, has been placed in a room especially constructed for this purpose in the corridor of the first balcony of Symphony Hall. It will be open to inspection by all concert audiences.⁵¹

In the decades following, the Collection was moved from its initial installation to a room out of public view off stage right and subsequently into storage. In 1990, with the renovation of a then recently acquired building adjacent to Symphony Hall, the majority of instruments from the Casadesus

⁴⁹ A carnet or customs license prepared for shipping the instruments, dated 12 April 1926, indicates that 12 crates were used to transport the Collection. *Monsieur Casadessus* [sic]: *Emballage d'Instruments de Musique – Contenu par Caisse*, 12 April 1926. Boston Symphony Archives.

⁵⁰ *Collection Henri Casadesus: Estimation*, no date (c1926); Boston Symphony Archives. Using the Consumer Price Index, \$37,965 in 1926 would be approximately \$460,000 in 2009. Currency comparison calculator ('Seven Ways to Compute the Relative Value of a U.S. Dollar Amount, 1774 to Present') at www.measuringworth.com/uscompare/.

⁵¹ *Boston Sunday Post*, 24 October 1926.



Figure 6. School children with instruments of the Casadesus Collection of Old Instruments, Symphony Hall, Boston, c1955; courtesy Boston Symphony Orchestra Archives.

Collection were installed in five new display cases in Symphony Hall's 'Cohen Wing'. A further two cases were installed with Casadesus' instruments in 2010 and now, nearly all instruments in the Casadesus Collection are on public display at Symphony Hall. Since the gift of the Casadesus Collection in 1926, other historical instruments have been donated to the Boston Symphony and some are on display, including the Barnett Collection (comprised of mostly Asian instruments) and several instruments that were collected on various Boston Symphony tours. Three instruments from the Casadesus Collection are on loan to and on display at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Instruments from the Casadesus Collection have not been used in Boston Symphony performances, but owing to the fact that many of them are in playable condition, they have been used by BSO players and staff in various contexts. In the 1950s, three members of the Orchestra (Roger Voisin, Harold Meek and Joseph

Orosz) recorded selected instruments from the Collection on the long-playing record set, *Spotlight on Brass*.⁵² BSO staff member Laning Humphrey and life-long volunteer Patricia Crandall enthusiastically displayed and discussed instruments for audiences of both adults and children in association with Boston Symphony Youth Concerts, and Orchestra members Josef Orosz, William Gibson, George Humphrey and I have demonstrated instruments from the Collection as part of the Symphony's educational activities (Figure 6). In this, the instruments of the Casadesus Collection continue to fulfill the words of the Boston Symphony Trustees at the dedication ceremony of the Collection on 23 October 1926,

The sounds of that earlier time are stilled. But the art they embodied finds constant utterance in old strains re-awakened, in new rhythms breaking the silence of the future.⁵³

SERPENTS IN THE MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS COLLECTION

Two of the Museum of Fine Arts' six serpents and related instruments are currently on display in the Museum's musical instrument gallery (Figure 7): Canon Galpin's Baudouin serpent and his English bass horn by Thomas Key.⁵⁴ Four other serpents are in off-site storage. The collection includes two church serpents (serpent d'église), two English bass horns, a serpent Forveille and an upright serpent.

1. Serpent in C by C. Baudouin (active c1812–36). France, c1820. No keys. Leslie Lindsey Mason Collection, 1917 (ex. Francis W. Galpin), acc. 17.1954.

Baudouin was one of the few makers of serpents d'église to stamp his name on his instruments and therefore numerous examples of his craft have been identified.⁵⁵ Canon Galpin's serpent (Figure 8) – apart from the fact that the bocal is not original – is in excellent playing condition⁵⁶ It should be

⁵² *Spotlight on Brass*, VOX LP DL-300. Ward Botsford, Producer and Director; George Humphrey, Musical Direction. Accompanying book commentary by R. D. Darrell.

⁵³ *In Acceptance of a Gift of Musical Instruments, Symphony Hall, 23 October 1926*; Boston Symphony Archives.

⁵⁴ Photographs and information about all of the MFA musical instruments (including those not currently on display) may be found on the Museum's website, www.mfa.org.

⁵⁵ In addition to those at the Museum of Fine Arts, Baudouin serpents are located at the National Music Museum (Vermillion: University of South Dakota, Utley Collection, NMM 7123, no keys), Musée Royal de l'Armée et d'Histoire Militaire (Brussels, Titeca Collection, I/792, no keys), Musée de la Musique (Paris, E1432, three keys), Edinburgh University (Edinburgh, no.3606, ex. Christopher Monk, no keys), Horniman Museum (London, 14.5.47/145, ex. Adam Carse, three keys), Stiftung Kloster Michaelstein (Michaelstein, SM 394, ex. Michel Godard, no keys), and the author's own collection (two keys).

⁵⁶ The author appears on the Museum's audio guide speaking about the instrument and playing *Étude 8* (Allegretto) from Jean-Baptiste Métoyen, *Méthode de serpent, premier ouvrage fait pour cet instrument* (Paris, c1792–95), p. 24.



Figure 7. Left to right: buccin by Tabard (Lyon, c1830, Leslie Lindsey Mason Collection, ex. Francis W. Galpin, acc. 17.2012); serpent by Baudouin; English bass horn by Thomas Key; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (2011); photo by Douglas Yeo.

understood, however, that this serpent – like all such instruments that are on display in museums and collections that are not played regularly – has playing characteristics that differ significantly from a newly made instrument or an historical specimen that has been oiled and otherwise treated to bring it close to its original construction and playing condition. Adam Carse's words bear repeating before making conclusions regarding sound properties of historical serpents,

It is hardly possible now to describe the tone of the serpent, partly because the instrument, adequately played, is no longer to be heard, and partly because there is no wind instrument now in use with which it may in fairness be compared. When anyone now picks up an old serpent, which has been out of use for perhaps a hundred years or more, which is dried up, brittle, and quite possibly in a leaky condition, and blows into its dusty interior, the sounds issuing from it will most likely provoke either laughter or else amazement that such a contrivance could ever have been used for musical purposes; when the player is

not used to the instrument, does not understand the necessary lip-technique, knows nothing about its tone-character, and perhaps expects it to sound like a tuba or a trombone, the serpent is all the less likely to do itself justice. A test under such conditions is quite useless and very unfair; any modern instrument, after being neglected and out of use for a long period, if tried under the same conditions, would probably fare no better! In order to get a fair idea of the tone and the possibilities of the serpent, the instrument would have to be reconditioned and restored to its original condition, and the player would have to take as much trouble, and devote as much time to learning how to play it, as he would require to master any wind-instrument of the present day. A different lip-technique and a strange finger-technique would have to be acquired, and the ear would have to be readjusted to appreciate a shade of tone-colour which is neither that of any brass instrument nor of any wood-wind instrument now in use.⁵⁷

Recordings using Baudouin serpents played by contemporary serpent players⁵⁸ provide a useful

⁵⁷ Adam Carse, *Musical Wind Instruments: A History of the Wind Instruments Used in European Orchestras and Wind-Bands From the Later Middle Ages Up To the Present Time* (London: Macmillan, 1939), pp.274–5.

⁵⁸ For example, recordings with Michel Godard, serpent (*Repons*, Studio SM D2490; *Messe des Jesuites de Pekin*, Astré E 8642; *Une Messe pour la Saint-Michel & tous les saints anges*, Alpha 514) and Douglas Yeo (*Le Monde du Serpent*, Berlioz Historical Brass BHB 101).



Figure 8. *Serpent in C* by C. Baudouin; photo © 2012 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

means of comparing instruments: one will notice that the ‘bloom’ and depth of the sound of an instrument that has been oiled is markedly better than a serpent that has not had the benefit of modern care.

2. Serpent in C by C. Baudouin. France, c1820. No keys. Gift of Joseph R. Coolidge in memory of his wife, Peggy Stuart Coolidge, 1981, acc. 1981.760.

This serpent by Baudouin (Figure 9 in the colour section) has several distinctive features: the leather has been painted dark green with black decoration around the bell to simulate reptile scales; and the six holes all have ivory finger hole bushings.⁵⁹ The bocal receiver has also been modified with an additional external brass sleeve added to repair extensive internal damage to the wood past the bocal insertion point (compare Figure 8 with Figure 9 in the colour section) which has the effect of lengthening the instrument, and an additional internal brass sleeve has also been added to the first four inches of the receiver. However, this instrument displays several other curiosities when compared to other serpents by Baudouin. The brass bocal receiver has a very different look than that on other Baudouin serpents (note, particularly, the scoring of four sets of double lines) and the maker’s mark inside the bell is both slightly larger and at the bottom of a half section of the bell rather than near a seam of two sections. There also appears to be another stamp inside the bell (indecipherable) and the second and fifth finger holes have slightly different alignments. Received wisdom holds that Baudouin’s serpents were made of pearwood,⁶⁰ but scientific analysis of the wood in this particular specimen by John Koster (Conservator, National Music Museum, University of South Dakota) has shown it to be made of walnut.⁶¹ While these unusual features do not necessarily lead to the conclusion that the instrument is not by Baudouin, they do, at least, raise questions concerning Baudouin’s manufacturing technique that require further exploration.

3. English bass horn in C. Unsigned. England, c1800. Four keys. Leslie Lindsey Mason Collection, 1917 (ex. Francis W. Galpin), acc. 17.1956.

The English bass horn was invented in England by a Frenchman, Alexandre Fricot, as early as 1799.⁶² Popularized by Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, who used it in a number of works (including the original version of his *Overture to Ein Sommernachstraum*), its folded shape with bell at the top of the instrument made it the first of many serpents to take on this basic

⁵⁹ While rare, there are other extant serpents d’église with ivory finger hole bushings. See, for instance, the unsigned serpent in D/E preserved at the Musikinstrumenten-Museum, Statliches Institut für Musikforschung PK, Berlin, catalogue no. 4165 and an unsigned serpent in C/D (three keys) at the Yale Collection of Musical Instruments, New Haven, acc. 3676.

⁶⁰ Bessaraboff, *Ancient European Musical Instruments*, p.162.

⁶¹ Personal communication, John Koster to Darcy Kuronen, 18 March 2011.

⁶² David Lasocki, ‘New Light on Eighteenth-Century English Woodwind Makers from Newspaper Advertisements’, *The Galpin Society Journal* LXIII (2010), pp.118–20.



Figure 10. *Unsigned English bass horn in C; photo © 2012 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.*

form.⁶³ Canon Galpin's instrument (Figure 10) has the English bass horn's typical copper construction, narrow bore, finger holes with chimneys, and long, swan-shaped bocal (or crook) that created an ergonomic design requiring the player to aim the bell forward. Taken together, these features contribute to clarity of sound the wooden serpent d'église lacks.

4. English bass horn in C. Thomas Key (active 1805–1858). London, England, c1807–53. Three keys. Leslie Lindsey Mason Collection, 1917

(ex. Francis W. Galpin), acc. 17.1955.

Thomas Key's bass horn design (Figure 11 in the colour section) is notable for the lack of finger hole chimneys (the holes are instead bushed with ivory in the manner of an English military serpent), its primary construction in wood rather than completely in metal, and for the unusual oval (rather than circular) shape of the bell. The accession card associated with this instrument indicates that Canon Galpin noted it was 'once used in a Shropshire church.' The oval brass bell is indicative of the maker's predilection for radical experimentation; his 14-keyed serpents⁶⁴ represent the zenith (or nadir, if one looks upon the addition of so many keys as a futile, last-gasp attempt to stave off the relentless march of keyed and valved bass brasses) of serpentine-shaped serpent construction.

5. Upright serpent (Russian bassoon) in C. Unsigned. Belgium, c1820. Four keys. Leslie Lindsey Mason Collection, 1917 (ex. Francis W. Galpin), acc. 17.1957.

Bassoon-shaped serpents (a type of bass horn with two parallel columns, a long bocal, and bell at the top) were one of many attempts to improve both ergonomically and aurally on the traditional, serpentine-shaped serpent d'église. As such, they were particularly popular with military bands (see Figure 12). The so-called *basson russe* or Russian bassoon⁶⁵ appeared in a variety of configurations, but the name is most frequently associated with upright serpents that feature zoomorphic bells. The finger holes on such instruments vary greatly in size. As is the case with Canon Galpin's specimen (Figure 13), some have finger holes that are considerably smaller than those found on the typical French church and English military serpents. Further, fingering the instrument presents challenges owing to the fact that the fifth open hole from the top (right hand, middle finger) is drilled through both the bell and bocal sections. Holes one, two and three are drilled through the bocal section, while holes four and six

⁶³ Guilbaut's assertion that two upright serpents with zoomorphic bells were, 'du temps de Lulli [Lully] (1672)', has not been supported. See E. Guilbaut, édité, *Guide Pratique des Sociétés Musicales et des Chefs de Musique* (Paris: L'Instrumental, 1895), reprinted in, *Larigot* ('Bulletin de l'Association des Collectionneurs d'Instruments à Vent') 46 (Decembre 2010), p.27.

⁶⁴ Examples of Thomas Key's multi-keyed serpents are held by, among others, St. Fagans National History Museum (Cardiff), The Royal College of Music Museum of Instruments, London (RCM no.461) and the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, ex. Galpin, acc. 89.4.1643). Philip Bate's attempt to restore a 12-keyed serpent (Bate Collection, Oxford, acc. 517) – thought to be by Thomas Key – is documented in Philip Bate, 'Some Further Notes on Serpent Technology', *The Galpin Society Journal XXI* (1979), pp.124–29.

⁶⁵ The etymology of the name is unclear, but it may refer to the popularity of such instruments with Prussian military bands, hence, a corruption of 'basson prusse'.



Figure 12. Hersteller: *Baßhornbläser*, from *Zwölf österreichische Militärmusiker aus der Zeit um 1815 in Uniformen zum Teil verschiedener Regimenter, mit Instrumenten*. Courtesy Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz/Art Resource, NY.



Figure 13. *Unsigned upright serpent (Russian bassoon) in C*; photo © 2012 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

are drilled into the bell section.⁶⁶ The open holes are then, in order from the top, 1, 2, 3, 6, 5/4, 4. The narrow bore of this instrument, undercut finger

holes, thick wooden stock, and metal bell with *krantz* were innovations designed to provide a clearer sound than the traditional serpentine-shaped serpent.

⁶⁶ Craig Kridel, 'Bass Horn', in Laurence Libin ed., *The New Grove Dictionary of Musical Instruments*, second edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, in press).



(left) Figure 14. *Unsigned serpent Forveille in C, possibly by Forveille; photo © 2012 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.*

(below) Figure 16. *Serpent in C by Pellegrino de'Azzi (active 1797–1835); photo by Michael J. Lutch; courtesy Boston Symphony Orchestra.*



6. Serpent Forveille in C. Unsigned but possibly by Forveille (active 1823–1839). France, about 1830. Three keys. Gift of Joseph R. Coolidge in memory of his wife, Peggy Stuart Coolidge, 1981, acc. 1981.767.

First displayed at the 1823 Paris Exposition de l'industrie,⁶⁷ the serpent Forveille differs from other upright serpents by its typically large finger holes and

long wooden bell. Right hand fingering is reversed as if one is playing an English military serpent with the right hand 'palm up' (the open holes are therefore numbered 1, 2, 3, 6, 5, 4). Hermenge's method for the serpent Forveille⁶⁸ contains an astonishing array of technical exercises – many in the high register – indicative of the instrument's most distinctive features: flexible technical facility created by tight 'slotting' of notes, and superb tone clarity. This is confirmed by playing the instrument; in many ways, the serpent Forveille may have represented the high point of serpent sound and design. Forveille's design (which was copied by other makers) produced an instrument that – as is the case in Canon Galpin's example (Figure 14) – has qualities as close as any

⁶⁷ Clifford Bevan, *The Tuba Family*, second edition (Winchester: Piccolo Press, 2000), p.82.

⁶⁸ C. Hermenge, *Méthode élémentaire pour le Serpent-Fourveille* [sic], Paris, c1835.



Figure 15. *Serpents in situ*, Symphony Hall, Boston (2011); photo by Douglas Yeo.

serpent came to that of the ophicleide in terms of evenness and clarity of tone.

SERPENTS IN THE BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA COLLECTION

The seven serpents in the Boston Symphony Orchestra's collection are currently on display in Symphony Hall, Boston (Figure 15). The collection consists of two serpents d'eglise, a serpent militaire, three upright serpents and a serpent Forveille.

1. Serpent in C by Pellegrino de'Azzi (active 1797–1835). Venice, probably late eighteenth century. No keys. Casadesus Collection of Old Musical Instruments (ex. Henri Casadesus), No. 64.

While France is usually given as the serpent's birthplace, this rare example of an Italian-made serpent is a reminder that some scholars argue for earlier, Italian origins.⁶⁹ De'Azzi's serpent (Figure 16) is remarkable for its sculpted bell (Figure 17 in the colour section). Small green/yellow crescents apparently meant to simulate reptile scales have been painted over the leather covering and 16 mythological characters – many of whom are playing

musical instruments, including one that plays a serpentine-shaped horn (Figure 18) – are attached to the surface, made of plaster or a similar material. The coat-of-arms of the Venetian Republic (a shield with six flowers above a winged lion) appears near the terminus and helps date the instrument to around 1797, the last year of the Republic. Now lost, a metal chain was attached to an iron ring around the body's second bend, and the bocal and associated ferrule are missing.

This serpent's uncharacteristically heavy weight is a result of the plaster appliqué and thickness of the body walls. The holes are unusually far apart; I have great difficulty covering all six holes with average size hands.

The story of Casadesus' acquisition of this instrument demonstrates the frustration, perils and delights that await the buyer at an instrument auction,

As long ago as 1894, while he was frequently visiting a celebrated collector, M. Savoy, attorney for the house of Erard, Henri Casadesus was struck by the beauty of this instrument. He did not contemplate

⁶⁹ Herbert Heyde, 'Zoomorphic and theatrical musical instruments in the late Italian Renaissance and Baroque eras', *Marvels of Sound and Beauty: Italian Baroque Musical Instruments* (Florence: Giunti Editore S.p.A., 2007), pp.86–87.

at this time the possibility of some day becoming the owner of it. However, he watched it lovingly until, after the death of M. Savoy, the heirs sold a large part of the collection, keeping back for better opportunities certain remarkable pieces, of which this was one. It was in 1923 that the sale of the last instruments took place in the Hôtel des Ventes in Paris. All the greatest collectors and buyers were assembled. Henri Casadesus followed the bidding with agony. He was at this sale not only on his own account but also to acquire several instruments which the Duchess of Grammont had requested him to buy for her palace in Venice. At the moment when the Venetian serpent was put up at auction, Henri Casadesus, in the measure of his means, sought it to his utmost, but he was outbid in such a manner by a young American lady that he was obliged to give it up. Broken hearted, he went to the home of the Duchesse de Grammont to carry her the instruments which he had bought for her, and was astonished to see the famous serpent in a glass case. The Duchesse de Grammont explained to him that one of her American friends had just made a present of it to her but she added that in spite of the decorative beauty of the instrument, she found it difficult to include in the grouping of the collection which she wished to make. Henri Casadesus then proposed an exchange, which was immediately concluded, and the famous serpent, so much longed for, took its place in his house beside the other serpents, which form a complete and rare collection.⁷⁰

2. Unsigned serpent in C. France or Belgium, c1820. No keys. Casadesus Collection of Old Musical Instruments (ex. Henri Casadesus), No. 63.

This instrument is a typical serpent d'église in every way, made of wood and covered with leather. A slightly longer length of the serpent's body makes up for the relative shortness of the bocal compared to bocals on other serpents of the same style. When played, it exhibits a clear and focused sound



Figure 18. *Detail of mythological character with serpentine-shaped horn. Serpent in C by Pellegrino de'Azzi; photo by Michael J. Lutch; courtesy Boston Symphony Orchestra.*

despite the dry condition of the wood. It reportedly belonged to the church of Bayeux (Calvados) and was found by Casadesus' father in 1875.⁷¹

3. Upright serpent in C (basson russe). Veuve Rust et Dubois (active 1828–1830). Lyon, c1830. Three keys. Casadesus Collection of Old Musical Instruments (ex. Henri Casadesus), No. 42.

Lyon seems to have been a centre for making brasswinds with metal zoomorphic bells. The basson russe and buccin (dragon belled trombone) share similar types of shaped bells, with examples by veuve Rust et Dubois (Figure 19),⁷² Dubois & Couturier (active 1834–1854),⁷³ Sautermeister (active 1809–1830),⁷⁴ and Tabard (active 1812–1848)⁷⁵ – all from Lyon – found in many collections. Casadesus reported that he found the instrument in 1904 in Lyon on the quay of the Celestins.⁷⁶ Its fingering system is like that of the serpent Forveille, with the open holes numbered 1, 2, 3, 6, 5, 4.

⁷⁰ *A Rare Collection of Old Musical Instruments*, pp.7–8.

⁷¹ *Catalogue of the Casadesus Collection of Old Musical Instruments* (Boston: Boston Symphony Orchestra, 23 October 1926), p.4.

⁷² Basson russe, Hamamatsu: Hamamatsu Museum of Musical Instruments, cat. L.104.0.

⁷³ Basson russe, Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, cat. 65.612; Liège: Musée de la Vie wallonne, No. 7996.

⁷⁴ Basson russe, Brussels: Musée des Instruments de Musique, cat. 1229; Vermillion: National Music Museum, No. 2998 (Sautermeister & Müller). Buccin, Boston: author's collection.

⁷⁵ Basson russe, Paris: Musée de la Musique, cat. E. 2207; Phoenix: Musical Instrument Museum, cat. T2008.15.59; Leipzig: Universität Leipzig, Musikinstrumenten-Museum, cat. 1591. Buccin, Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, Acc. 17.2012; Boston: New England Conservatory of Music, cat. 122.

⁷⁶ *Catalogue of the Casadesus Collection of Old Musical Instruments* (Boston: Boston Symphony Orchestra, 23 October 1926), p.3.



Figure 19. *Upright Serpent in C (basson Russe)* by *veuve Rust et Dubois* (active 1828–1830); photo by Michael J. Lutch; courtesy Boston Symphony Orchestra.

4. Unsigned upright serpent in C. France, c1830. Three keys. Casadesus Collection of Old Musical Instruments (ex. Henri Casadesus), No. 41.

As with Canon Galpin's upright serpent (Figure 13), this example is made of maple. The two instruments also have the same fingering arrangement and dual-boring of the fifth open hole into both the bell and bocal sections. Casadesus' specimen, however, has three rather than four keys, larger finger holes and a painted interior bell. Painted interior bells

were fashionable on horns but appear to be rare on upright serpents. Casadesus reported that he found this instrument in 1916 at the Gendarmery of Toul.⁷⁷

5. Upright serpent in C by Jeantet (active 1823–27). Lyon, c1825. Three keys. Casadesus Collection of Old Musical Instruments (ex. Henri Casadesus), No. 40.

Intuitively, the unique bulbous shape of the bell of this upright serpent would appear to disrupt the sound and pitch qualities of the instrument (Figure 20 in the colour section). However, playing the instrument reveals the opposite: it has an unusually clear and resonant sound. Unfortunately, it is not possible to say if the fluting on the lower part of the bell contributes to this sound clarity. This creative bell design shows that Lyon, while known for the manufacturing of zoomorphic bells, also had makers that experimented with other bell configurations. The painted interior bell is another unusual characteristic of this instrument. Casadesus reported he found the instrument in a cottage occupied by the gardener of the castle of Bures (Vallée de Chevreuse).⁷⁸ It also shares the typical dual-boring of the fifth finger hole but has a much shorter bocal than the similar examples discussed above. Casadesus misattributed this instrument to 'Dantes' owing to the slightly obscured maker's mark; all editions of the Langwill *Index* give this incorrect information that should now be revised.⁷⁹

6. Unsigned serpent Forveille in C. Possibly by Darché (active 1830–1865). France, c1835. Three keys. Casadesus Collection of Old Musical Instruments (ex. Henri Casadesus), No. 43.

Like its counterpart in the MFA, this serpent Forveille has an extraordinary clear sound despite its historical, unrestored condition. Slight variations in design (notably a metal ring on the bell) point to a maker other than Forveille. It is missing the characteristic ball used to collect condensation that is ordinarily affixed to the lowest bend of the metal section and suffers from several cracks, making it unsurprising that Casadesus purchased this instrument in 1898 at an auction of the Savoy Collection in what would have been a sale of less desirable instruments.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Loc. cit.

⁷⁸ Loc. cit.

⁷⁹ Lyndesay G. Langwill, *An Index of Musical Wind-Instrument Makers* (Edinburgh: Lorimer & Chalmers, Ltd., 1960), p.24; William Waterhouse, *The New Langwill Index* (London: Tony Bingham, 1993), p.80.

⁸⁰ *Catalogue of the Casadesus Collection of Old Musical Instruments* (Boston: Boston Symphony Orchestra, 23 October 1926), p.3.



Figure 21. Unsigned serpent militaire in C; photo by Michael J. Lutch; courtesy Boston Symphony Orchestra.

7. Unsigned serpent militaire in C. France, c1815. Casadesus Collection of Old Musical Instruments (ex. Henri Casadesus), No. 62.

The long march of serpent evolution in France – which purpose was to create instruments with more comfortable ergonomic features and better, more even sound qualities and intonation – led to the invention, in 1806, of a newly shaped serpent made in Paris by Piffault.⁸¹ Jean-Baptiste Métoyen (1733–

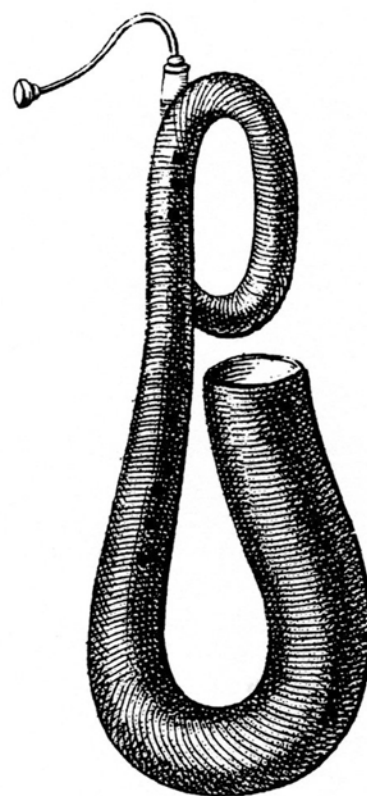


Figure 22. *Serpent militaire* by Piffault, from *Méthode de serpent adoptée par le Conservatoire Impérial de Musique Pour le Service du Culte et le Service* (1812).

1822) included two illustrations and a description of this form of serpent in the second part, *Étude du serpent*, of his *Méthode pour l'Éducation du Serpent* (see facing page).

Métoyen's description was co-opted and modified by Gossec, Roze, Ozi and Rogat when they issued their official method for serpent for the Paris Conservatoire in 1812, and a drawing was also included (Figure 22).⁸³

Piffault's design was a successful solution for the awkward playing position of the serpentine shaped serpent d'église. It is comfortable to hold, easy to finger, and presents no difficulties when used while standing or marching.

The serpent militaire acquired by Casadesus in

⁸¹ An example thought to be by Piffault is at the Musée de la Musique, Paris, E. 239.

⁸² Jean-Baptiste Métoyen, *Étude du serpent* (Paris: 1807–1810), pp.54–56. Modern reprint, Jean-Baptiste Métoyen, *Ouvrage Complet pour l'Éducation du Serpent*, ed. Benny Sluchin [introduction by Cécile Davy- Rigaux and Florence Gétreau] (Paris: Editions Musicales Europeennes, 2002), pp.116–117; English translation on p. xxix.

⁸³ [Gossec, Roze, Ozi, Rogat], *Méthode de serpent adoptée par le Conservatoire Impérial de Musique Pour le Service du Culte et le Service Militaire* (Paris, 1812), p.7.

Serpent d'une nouvelle forme	A new type of serpent
<p>Inventé au commencement de l'an 1806 Par Piffault, luthier rue Bourtibourg à Paris. Cette nouvelle forme donne le moyen de jouer cet instrument bien plus facilement dans les marches militaires que la forme de l'ancien parce que la partie inférieure se trouve sur le côté droit ainsi que le basson, en conséquence de ce qu'il est d'une plus grande facilité à jouer dans les troupes, on peut lui donner le nom de serpent militaire. Cet instrument nouveau a toutes les qualités de l'ancien; le même doigté, le son est meme plus brillant en ce qu'il n'est pas couvert de peau comme les serpents de l'ancienne forme, cependant ces derniers devront toujours rester conservés pour les Eglises.</p>	<p>Invented in early 1806 by Piffault, a violin-maker on rue Bourtibourg in Paris. This new configuration makes it possible to play this instrument much more easily in military marches than the old form because the lower part is on the right side as in the bassoon; as it is therefore easier to play among troops, it may be called military serpent. This new instrument has all the qualities of the old one and the fingering is the same; the sound is even brighter since it is not covered with skin like the old-style serpents; the latter, however, should still be retained in churches.⁸²</p>

1895 (Figure 21) was used for services at the church of Brou [Bresse] and obtained from the concierge of the cloister.⁸⁴ While unsigned, it has a more elegant shape than Piffault's original configuration. It is notable that the circular first bend in Piffault's design turns counterclockwise (from the bocal) whereas the Casadesus instrument has the same bend wound clockwise. The later design was an improvement and, compared to Piffault's model, is easier to hold and finger when standing. This design is also more successful than other Piffault copies, such as the example at the Royal College of Music.⁸⁵ Métoyen's description of serpents in Piffault's design is confirmed by playing this instrument; the sound is clear and bright, and unlike other forms of upright serpents, the advantage of maintaining the

traditional fingering sequence of the serpent d'église cannot be overstated.

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⁸⁴ *Catalogue of the Casadesus Collection of Old Musical Instruments* (Boston: Boston Symphony Orchestra, October 23, 1926), p. 3.

⁸⁵ London: Royal College of Music, *Serpent militaire*. Unsigned (? Belgian, German or English, early nineteenth century), catalogue 195.

DOUGLAS YEO

Serpents in Boston: The Museum of Fine Arts and Boston Symphony Orchestra Collections



Figure 9. *Serpent in C* by C. Baudouin, France; photo © 2012 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



Figure 11. *English bass horn in C* by Thomas Key; photo © 2012 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



Figure 17. *Detail of serpent in C* by Pellegrino de'Azzi; photo by Michael J. Lutch; courtesy Boston Symphony Orchestra.



Figure 20. *Upright serpent in C* by Jeantet; photo by Michael J. Lutch; courtesy Boston Symphony Orchestra.