Modern scholarship about Renaissance instrumental music has suffered from a scarcity of musical sources. Consequently current research efforts often seem to operate in the manner of archaeological excavations; at times it is only as one layer is painstakingly uncovered that the configurations of another are revealed. This was certainly the experience of this contribution, which began as an investigation into late fifteenth-century Italian instrumental practices. The early phases of the Italian study involved sifting through many archival documents, and one initial miscellaneous impression was that German players frequently appeared in Italian ensembles. Pursuit of this almost casual observation led first to an awareness that German presence in Italy was substantial, then, further, to the fact that the *oltramontani* dominated aspects of instrumental music. This knowledge of the German contribution led, in turn, to a substantial reappraisal of the formative stages of ensemble performance practices.

* Narrative flow is difficult to maintain in a study which draws on an extensive base of archival data. As much documentation as possible will be placed in the notes, abbreviated as far as seems reasonable. The sources in most cases are housed in city archives, especially those of Augsburg, Munich, Nördlingen, Nuremberg, Regensburg and Ulm. Of these, only studies of Regensburg have been published, by Raimund Sterl. His work has been so thorough, however, that all references to documents in that city come via his published works. Other cities provide important supplementary information, some resulting from my own visits to archives (Cologne, Dortmund and Essen), others from an unfortunately small group of cities for which accounts have been published (Aachen, Wesel and Deventer). In the notes that follow, the most common sets of documents mentioned are *Stadtrechnungen* (SR), city financial accounts, but many cities have their own terminology for such accounts. In these cases SR will be followed by an abbreviation for the local term in parentheses. For cities with published accounts, it will be followed by an abbreviation for the publication. Any study of this nature is dependent on the efforts of its author’s predecessors. Especially valuable here is the work of Gerhard Pietzsch, Franz Krautwurst, Walter Salmen and Raimund Sterl. A valuable resource
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Recognition of the northern contribution to Renaissance music is partially inhibited by our knowledge of the brilliant musical activity which was channelled in an axis which ran from Italy to the northwest (i.e. from Italy via Lyons to Paris, and from there to the Low Countries and England). Certainly vocal music and composition were dominated by Franco-Flemish musicians active primarily on the north-western-oriented corridor. However, another musical axis developed for instrumental music in the fourteenth century, one which ran directly north from Italy, and which centred in the German cities just beyond the Alps. These cities form a crescent that is now available in the collected papers of Gerhard Pietzsch (the Nachlass), which since his death have been housed in the library of the Musikwissenschaftliches Institut of the University of Cologne. My thanks to Dr Kümmerling and Professor Niemöller for their hospitality and assistance in working with this remarkable collection in May 1986.

Abbreviations used are as follows:


Augsburg: SR (BB) In the Stadtarchiv, the accounts are called Baumeister Bücher. Accounts begin in 1320, with extensive gaps in the fourteenth century; they are almost complete in the fifteenth century.

Cologne: SR, K My study in the Stadtarchiv produced nothing not already available in R. Knipping, Die Kölner Stadtrechnungen (Bonn, 1897 and 1898), 2 vols.; for convenience, reference is to this source. Accounts are fragmentary; books for 1370–80, 1466, 1468 and 1476 survive.

Deventer (Netherlands): SR (CR), D or SR (CR), M The first refers to J. van Doorninck, De Cameraars-Rekeningen (Deventer, 1885–1914), 7 vols., the second to G. M. De Meyer, De Stadsrekeningen van Deventer, 1: 1394–1400, Teksten en Documenten 7 (Groningen, 1968). Accounts begin in 1337.

Dortmund: DC Few accounts survive; the source here is A. Fahne, Die Dortmunder Chronik (Cologne and Bonn, 1854).

Essen: SR Accounts begin in 1350, with extensive gaps in the fourteenth century; they are more complete in the fifteenth.

Hamburg: SR (KK), K The extensive accounts, the Kammerrechnungen, were edited by K. Koppman, Kammerrechnungen der Stadt Hamburg 1350–1562 (Hamburg, 1869–94), 7 vols. Accounts begin in 1350.

Munich: SR (KR) In the Stadtarchiv, the title of the city accounts is Kammerrechnungen. Accounts begin in 1360.

Nördlingen: SR (KR) The same term is used in the Stadtarchiv here. Accounts begin in 1399 and continue with very few gaps.

Nuremberg: SR (KIR) or SR (GR) The city accounts are housed in the Bayerisches Staatsarchiv (not the Stadtarchiv), where some are in the ‘Small Registers’ (KIR), others in the ‘Large Registers’. For the Small Registers an inventory number is also given. The Staatsarchiv has yet another series of accounts, the ‘Year Registers’, but these are not cited here. Accounts begin in 1377, with few gaps.

Regensburg: SR, S References to music are drawn primarily from the archival work published in R. Sterl, Musik und Musikpflege in Regensburg bis um 1600 (Regensburg, 1971). Accounts begin in 1388.

Ulm: SR Only four accounts from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries survive in the Stadtarchiv, those of 1388, 1398, 1414 and 1415.

Wesel: SR, G The accounts were edited by F. Gorissen, Regesten zur politischen Geschichte des Niederrhein. Stadtrechnungen von Wesel (Bonn, 1963–8), 5 vols. Accounts begin in 1359.
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roughly includes Cologne in the north-west, Strasbourg and Basle to the south, then, bending eastward, Constance, Ulm and Augsburg, and finally, rising to the north, Nuremberg and Regensburg.

All Renaissance cities attached a prominent role to instrumental music in their social worlds, but this was nowhere more true than in the German urban centres. Here music was valued not only for its own sake but was woven into the fabric of daily life. The pervasive quality of music is illustrated by the curious wording of a political document in sixteenth-century Nuremberg. In that city, as elsewhere, social mobility had slowed down as the class structure solidified in the course of the fifteenth century. The upper levels of society strengthened their hold on the city’s power structure in 1521 by restricting the numbers of those eligible to participate in political decisions. This elite was defined by statute as ‘those families who used to dance in the Rathaus in the olden days, and who still dance there’.

The dance, of course, demanded instrumental participation, and this serves as a vivid example of the potent interlacing of music and social ritual so characteristic of that time and region. Nurtured by a supportive local culture, German lutenists, organists and wind players reached high levels of international prestige. The emphasis of this study is the wind players and their role in the period 1350 to 1500.

Urban society supported music in a variety of ways: some through the mechanism of direct subsidy, some through indirect but institutionalised subsidy, some through individual support of all manner of music. The focus here is on direct subsidy, but this focus should be understood as an attempt to profile only one level of musical activity. Indirect subsidy was mostly devoted to sacred music, and in Germany became increasingly important only later in the fifteenth century. Individual support, and the activities of individual, i.e. freelance, musicians, are subjects which are difficult to approach because of the very poor documentation that remains of such activity. Tantalising fragments from such sources as tax records and chronicles, however, underline the fact that music patronised through direct expenditure of municipal funds was only one part of a broad base of music making.

1 G. Strauss, Nuremberg in the Sixteenth Century (Bloomington, Ind., 1976), p. 79.
Direct patronage, in German centres, was concentrated on ensemble performers of wind instruments. Less commonly, though the music involved was apparently of high quality, some cities included performers on the organ, lute and viol in their payrolls. Most also maintained a corps of watchmen on the walls and towers, some of whom were equipped with various kinds of 'horn'. In southern German towns these watchmen were individuals, and were not organised into ensembles. The watchmen played simple signal instruments, and they were not musicians in any important sense. Scribes in Augsburg and Nuremberg, for example, were particularly careful in referring to these instruments as horns and not trumpets. In cities in Flanders some civic ensembles developed as an outgrowth of watchmen groups. This was not the pattern in German cities, especially in the south.3

Other recipients of direct payment from municipal funds were what were termed warenden leuten: travelling or, more accurately, visiting, players. The accounts listing 'travellers' record visits of musicians from courts and from other cities. Court records themselves, sadly, have almost totally vanished, and in some instances the accounts of visitors record activities of city musicians where town records themselves have also not survived. This category of expenditure provides an invaluable mirror of a musical world which would otherwise be lost to us.

The primary urban ensemble was a wind band. The normal instrumentation was one of two shawms, bombard and trombone. The players, however, were normally called pfeifer,shawmists, no matter what they played. In any case, as professional ensemble musicians, they were expected to master a variety of instruments. It is essential to understand that the term 'pfeifer' could be both specific and general, like the modern term 'horn' (for present-day players horn can mean quite specifically the French horn, or, especially for jazz musicians, almost anything that will produce a musical sound). Ulrich Schubinger the younger was a pfeifer with

3 For mention of horns for the towers in Nuremberg see Nuremberg SR (GR), 1381, fol. 14 ('von eine horn'); 1385, fol. 173; 1391, fol. 449. For posaune as a different instrument see SR (GR), 1388, fol. 323; 1389, fol. 335. See below, note 11. For a discussion of Flemish development see K. Polk, 'Wind Bands of Medieval Flemish Cities', Brass and Woodwind Quarterly, 1 (1968), pp. 102–9. In Basle (and perhaps in some nearby cities) there may have been a closer relationship between watchmen groups and pfeifer bands than was the case in Bavaria; see F. Ernst, 'Die Spieleute im Dienst der Stadt Basel im ausgehenden Mittelalter', Basler Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Altertumskunde, 44 (1945), pp. 138–45.
the Augsburg civic ensemble from 1482 to 1502. He subsequently joined the court ensemble of Maximilian I, where he was designated a *posauner* (trombonist). After the death of Maximilian, he was engaged by the Bishop of Salzburg, where he was described as a player of ‘viol, trombone, shawm, lute and other instruments’. The range of meanings of *pfeifer* was so widely understood by musicians and scribes alike that the need for specific designation was superfluous and needlessly troublesome. Such references as the hiring of a ‘pfeifer, schalmeyer’ (as in Munich in 1434) or the designation of Georg Plaicher (also in Munich, in 1500) as a ‘pfeifer, posauner’ were quite unusual.

One of my underlying arguments is that modern scholarship has not adequately understood either the general or, paradoxically, the specific nature of the terminology of that time, with the result that the impressive range and influence of German instrumental music has not been well understood. Also at issue is an awareness of chronological development. The evidence presented here, one presumes, should show that in some instances vital changes took place within a span of thirty years. Vastly different material conditions faced musicians in 1450 from those that had prevailed in 1380. Musical demands of 1500 were far from those made of musicians in 1400. Lack of adequate chronological focus has been a flaw of much modern scholarship.

A first stage here, then, is to deal with two related prominent

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4 For Ulrich in Augsburg see Augsburg SR (BB), 1482, fol. 62'; for service with Maximilian I, also in Augsburg SR (BB), 1505, fol. 27; for service with the Bishop of Salzburg see A. Layer, ‘Augsburger Musikkultur der Renaissance’, Musik in der Reichsstadt Augsburg, ed. L. Wegele (Augsburg, 1965), p. 63. The comments of Gerhard Pietzsch, ‘Von der Zuverlässigkeit literarischer und archivalischer Quellen der Spät-Mittelalter’, *Musicae Scientiae Collectanea: Festschrift Karl Gustav Fellerer zum siebzigsten Geburtstag*, ed. H. Hüschén (Cologne, 1973), pp. 441–50, in which he points out ‘errors’ of scribes (in that the same musician was sometimes associated with different instruments in different accounts) should be read with some caution; these different terms may sometimes have been deliberate. Caspar Egkern was called a trombonist in Augsburg in 1509 (SR (BB), fol. 24), a *pfeifer* in 1510 (SR (BB), fol. 28), and a *geyger* in 1515 (SR (BB), fol. 28). These terms, I believe, were not errors; after about 1515 Egkern was consistently registered as a string player, before that a wind player.

5 For Munich in 1434 see Munich SR (KR), fol. 36; for 1500, SR (KR), fol. 66.

6 Such scholars as Gerhard Pietzsch, Franz Krautwurst and Raimund Sterl have understood the chronology quite well. S. Zak, *Musik als 'Ehr und Zier'* (Neuss, 1979), p. 108, on the other hand, compares instrumentalists from Parma in 1321 and from Siena in 1536 as though similar conditions would have been in effect for both dates. It must be added, however, that Zak’s discussion of patronage and the notion of magnificence, and the discussion of music from the thirteenth century, are among the best informed in the field.
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questions. One concerns the origins of the instrumental ensemble tradition; the other concerns the inception of the trombone. As will be shown, sophisticated ensemble traditions were developed much earlier than has been realised, and the trombone, when seen in the light of the documentation of urban Germany, is more ancient than had been thought.

1350–1380: Origins of Urban Ensembles

Of the ensemble wind instruments, the shawm evolved first, and was a fully developed instrument well before 1350. The tenor-sized shawm, the bombard, seems to have developed some time during the first half of the fourteenth century. This instrument was characterised by the addition of a key mechanism which permitted the player to cover the farthest extension, the seventh hole. It was probably the development of this instrument, and the resulting refinement of performance techniques in both the treble and tenor instruments, which led to the comment in Tielmann Ehnen von Wolfhagen’s Limburger Chronik (1360): ‘the manner of shawm playing, which was previously not so good, has been changed and improved. Thus, one who was considered a good player in this area just five or six years ago doesn’t amount to a hill of beans now’.

The exact sizes of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century instruments are impossible for us to determine. No instruments survive, and we have only inexact iconographical sources. Illustrations do suggest that players then worked with two general sizes: a small one, a soprano, and a larger one, a tenor, pitched about a fourth below the soprano. Iconography and archival sources indicate that these two sizes were sufficient until about 1500. A few illustrations suggest that other sizes may have been known but were unusual. Tastes changed in the sixteenth century, however, and a full consort did then develop. In any case, by about 1350 the double-reed components of the wind band were developed mechanically and had evidently

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7 Cited in C. Valentin, Geschichte der Musik in Frankfurt-am-Main (Frankfurt, 1906), p. 18. Dr Edmund Bowles brought this passage to my attention (the translation is his). The original text reads: ‘Auch hat ez sich also vurwandelt mit den pifens unde pifenspel unde hat ufgestegen in der museken, unde ni also gut waren bit her, als nu in ist anegangen. Dan wer vur fünf oder ses jaren ein gut pifer was geheissen in dem ganzen lander, der endauc itzunt net eine flige.’ See H. Maschek, Deutsche Chroniken (Darmstadt, 1964), p. 101.
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reached a considerable level of sophistication in terms of performance practices.\(^8\)

Shortly after about 1350 the notion of civic ensembles blossomed in German cities, and spread quite rapidly. Ensembles of two players seem to have been the more common grouping, as was the case in Osnabrück in 1358, in Wesel and Munich in 1360 and in Frankfurt in 1361. Ensembles of three players were recorded in Hamburg in 1350 and in Dortmund in 1363. These were all in various kinds of salary payments, although such payments were not yet consistent. Quasi-official bands were associated with civic events in Augsburg and Nuremberg (in 1373 and 1377 respectively, the years when city accounts begin in those towns) – ‘official’ in that the units were referred to as ‘our musicians’ and livery could be provided, although it is not clear that they were on any salary rolls. It is unfortunate that records do not survive for Ulm, Regensburg or Nördlingen until slightly later, as all probably had musicians in one category or the other at this time.\(^9\)

The performances of the ensembles were for important civic ceremonies, especially at receptions of official guests, in processions, and at dances, banquets and weddings. Their presence very soon became a requisite at all important ritual events. The tie between the image of dignity and prosperity of the city and ceremonial music was a critical link in the establishment of a basis for the support of professional musicians in urban society.\(^10\)

The depth of the tradition in German cities by 1360 is remarkable. In Flanders, city groups were still tied to watchmen functions, and most often played *tromps*, which would seem to have been more a kind of signal instrument. In Italy, too, signal instruments were on the scene by the beginning of the fourteenth century. The wind bands, the *pifferi*, did not appear there until nearer 1400.\(^11\)

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\(^10\) See W. Salmen, *Der Spielmann im Mittelalter* (Innsbruck, 1983), pp. 86–9, and Zak, *Musik*, p. 108. The views on the poverty and lowly status of musicians of both Salmen and Zak may be reconsidered on the basis of the more ample documentation now available, especially in relation to the fifteenth century. See below, note 36.

\(^11\) For Flemish groups see Polk, ‘Wind Bands’; the focus of this effort, however, was on the
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1380–1420: dispersal of the ensemble tradition

By 1390 all substantial German towns patronised pfeifer ensembles. Salary lists for Nuremberg (1381), Augsburg (c. 1385, 1388 at the latest), Regensburg (1383) and Ulm (1388, the first year for which we have accounts) all include musicians. The ensemble at this time generally comprised three players (as in Nuremberg, Augsburg and Ulm), but two could suffice. The identification with the city was explicit. Livery and medallions (bearing the city coat of arms) were to be worn by the musicians. When they performed, they represented the city.¹²

The financial commitment by the cities was crucial for the development of professional ensemble traditions. It was during this period that the underpinning for the subsequent financial prosperity was laid. Musicians, however, did not fare well consistently throughout this time. The Swabian city league suffered a series of setbacks in battles, culminating in 1389. The losses of this round of conflicts were apparently more purely financial than any real losses in political or economic freedom of activity. But the costs were nonetheless substantial, and expenditure on music in Augsburg was cut back after 1389. Salaried musicians vanished from the salary rolls for a few years. This was, however, only a temporary ripple. The cities quickly recovered and were soon more active than before on all fronts. In Augsburg the damage had been repaired by shortly after 1400, and musicians reappeared in the accounts.¹³ By 1400 the beginnings of accelerated growth are unmistakable, with an outburst of creative energy that was to continue unchecked until the ravages of the Thirty Years War. Conditions were not favourable in

¹² For Nuremberg see SR (GR), 1381, fol. 20; Augsburg, SR (BB), 1388, fol. 35; Ulm, SR, 1388, fol. 83. For medallion payments see, for example, Augsburg SR (BB), 1390, fol. 62'. German cities for which we have evidence of subsidised pfeifer ensembles by about 1390 include Aachen, Augsburg, Basle, Cologne, Constance, Dinkelsbühl, Donauwörth, Essen, Hamburg, Memmingen, Munich, Nördlingen, Nuremberg, Regensburg, Rothenberg, Straubing, Ulm and Wesel.

¹³ Augsburg SR (BB), 1402, fol. 66; pfeifers did not return to the payroll lists in Munich until 1413: Munich, SR (KR), fol. 44.

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all cities at all times, but the vigour of the cultivation of music was not challenged for two centuries.

THE INCEPTION OF THE TROMBONE: 1350–1420

To approach the early history of the trombone is to enter a terminological quagmire. Names for the instrument varied from century to century, from country to country and, in German lands, from region to region. Iconographical sources, useful in other ways, are not helpful, especially in this early period. Musical documentation is, of course, extremely sparse."14

A first step would be to establish an understanding concerning modern terminology. The definitive feature of the trombone was, and still is, the slide mechanism, which most scholars have agreed seems to have developed in three stages: (1) an S-shaped instrument, with a single slide positioned immediately after the mouthpiece (before this stage a single slide may well been applied to a straight instrument); (2) a ‘folded trumpet’, with a similarly placed single slide; and (3) the double slide, more or less the modern form of the instrument.15 A dissenting explanation to this was presented recently by Peter Downey. He agreed generally with the chronology of the shapes of the instruments. On the basis of the characteristics of the musical repertory and the lack of iconographical support (‘iconography cannot prove the existence of a slide trumpet’) he believed, however, that neither the S-shaped instrument nor the folded trumpet incorporated a slide. The trombone, he suggested, developed out of the folded trumpet, but independently, which could have happened ‘early in the fifteenth century’. That is, Downey

14 See E. Bowles, ‘Iconography as a Tool for Examining the Loud Consort in the Fifteenth Century’, Journal of the American Instrument Society, 2 (1977), pp. 100–21, and Polk, ‘Ensemble Performance’. The scholarly efforts and standards in iconography of Dr Bowles are simply splendid. His concentration on illustrations, and lack of familiarity with primary archival sources, lead him to be rather too conservative on the issue of the trombone. He also applies terminology to ensembles (especially in the use of the term ‘buisne’) which is not concordant with literally thousands of archival and financial accounts of Flanders, Germany and Italy, particularly in the period 1380 to 1450.

believed that the trombone was exclusively an instrument with a double slide, and that the single-slide mechanism, i.e. the slide trumpet, was unknown in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.\textsuperscript{16}

Downey argues well, and it will be necessary to consider his views at some length. Previous research has established that wind bands in Flanders, Italy, France and Germany from about 1400 onwards included shawms and some form of trombone. This is simply undeniable, proven by cross-references through thousands of archival documents. At the same time, we have well over a hundred reliable illustrations of these wind bands, also from throughout the fifteenth century, the majority of which include a brass instrument. Only a handful of these, about five per cent, show an instrument with a double slide. In at least a hundred illustrations, shawms are shown playing with either S-shaped or ‘folded’ trumpets. There is no doubt that most of the illustrations are unquestionably of shawm bands, and the brass instruments shown must be some form of trombone. The artists of the time were generally (though not always) reliable in details; the fontanelles of the bombardes, for example, are drawn with some care. No other interpretation appears possible. The artists were drawing what they saw, and what they saw in scores of cases, again, throughout the fifteenth century, was some form of single slide, that is, some form of slide trumpet. Not only did trombonists then perform with single slides, they seem to have clung to this form for several decades after the double slide had developed.\textsuperscript{17}

To return to the problem of modern terminology, I prefer to use the term ‘trombone’ for English-language presentation for all instruments which incorporated a slide. This was the term used by Italian scribes at the time, as in Ferrara in 1439 and in Florence in 1446 and thereafter.\textsuperscript{18} This term also underscores the consistency of the presence of a slide instrument in ensembles of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Furthermore, documents of the time generally


\textsuperscript{18} For the trombone in Ferrara see L. F. Valdrighi, ‘Capelle, concerti e musiche de casa d’Este’, \textit{Atti e memorie delle Regie Deputazione di Storia patria per le Provincie modenese e parmensi}, ser. iii, 2 (1883), p. 417. The Florentine documents can be found in the Archivio di Stato in Florence, \textit{Provvisioni Registri}, no. 94, 1443 (n.s. 1444), fol. 173, and \textit{Notario de Camera}, no. 4, 1446, fol. 52.
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make no distinction at all between forms of the instrument. The German term *posaune*, as we shall see, was applied to the instrument in the fourteenth century, and continued through the fifteenth century (and is still in use today), whatever the shape of the instrument. The English ‘sackbut’ offers no special advantage; the term came into use later than trombone or *posaune*, and seems most appropriate when applied in connection with music of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Previous research concerning the history of the trombone has suggested that a likely date for its inception was just before 1400. A new and key piece of evidence, however, has come to light. As Craig Wright reported recently, a German bishop visited the court of Burgundy in 1386. In the retinue of the bishop was a musician, who played a *trompette des ménestrels*. The Burgundian court scribes were unusually consistent in their terminology. This was the term which a few years later was the one which designated the trombonists in the duke’s wind band.

The reference suggested that a sifting of German documents from the late fourteenth century was in order, with the idea that further information might surface to support the notion of the inception of the trombone well before 1400. The geographic focus appears additionally appropriate because of the contemporary opinion that new ideas in the making of instruments were emanating from Germany. The fourteenth-century Italian poet Folgore da San Gimignano praised

> music to greet the morning
> and amorous girls to sing
> to new instruments from Germany

and commanded

> call fair maidens to your side
> Palfreys and Spanish steeds begin to ride
> and imitate the French in every way
> as in Provence, sing, too, each rondelay
> with instruments that are the German’s pride.20

In a search through archival documents, the methodology may be narrowly defined. Almost all the sources which refer to the trombone

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19 C. Wright, *Music at the Court of Burgundy* (Henryville, Ottawa and Binningen, 1979), pp. 41–2.
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in the early fifteenth century make it clear that its early history was inseparably bound with the development of the shawm band. Thus we are looking for documents which mention the trombone under two conditions. (1) The instrument must be shown to be performing with shawms. (2) The instrument must be a brass instrument, but not a signal instrument – that is, it must be one for a musician, not for a watchman.

In Nuremberg, beginning in 1380, a band of *stadt pfeifer* appears in the quarterly lists of municipal employees. In 1388 one of the players died. The subsequent payment was to two pfeifer and to a new musician. He was called a *posauner*. His identification with the pfeifer ensemble is unmistakable. He was paid at the same rate as the pfeifers, and as is clear from the following pay lists, the two pfeifers and posaune were considered a unit (they were listed together). After three such payments, the scribal inconvenience of the special mention of the trombone was dropped, and the posaunist was lumped together under the heading *stadt pfeifer* in following payments. No further special mention is made of the trombone for about half a century in Nuremberg.21

In Augsburg, scribal practice yielded an even briefer specific glimpse of the activity of trombonists. Throughout the 1360s an ensemble of pfeifers, usually three, had been engaged for various ceremonial occasions, usually being termed simply pfeifers. In 1368, however, for one such occasion the payment was to two pfeifers and a ‘passran’ (posaune). Just as fleeting was the scribal situation in Cologne. There, where the accounts were generally in Latin, the wind band appeared throughout the 1370s, and the players were called *fistulatores*. One entry in Cologne, however, gives a precious scrap of detail: a payment on 14 April 1372 to ‘Johannis trumpenario et fistulatoribus’. The association of the brass instrument with shawms seems clear. In addition, the Cologne scribes usually referred to a signal instrument as a ‘horn’, *cornu*, or some related term.22 Slightly later, but valuable because they reinforce the consistency of such accounts, were payments made in 1403 and 1405 in Braunschweig to ‘two pfeifers and one posauner’.23

21 Nuremberg, SR (GR), 1388, fol. 323'; 1389, fol. 335, 365'.
22 Augsburg, SR (BB), 1368, fol. 22'; Cologne, SR, K, p. 79.
More specific is the description in a Dortmund chronicle of the inception of the stadt pfeifer in that city in 1363. This ensemble was, according to the chronicler, composed of two pfeifers and a posaunist. The trombonist was to be paid six marks, the others five marks each. That they played together is supported in that the same livery was provided for all, of brown fabric with stripes on the sleeves. Just as specific, although slightly later and further afield, was the accounting in Deventer in 1390 of a payment to ‘Master Claus, with his trumpet, and two other pipers who came to our council banquet’ (‘Meyster Clawes mit dem drumpen ende twee andern pipers die tot onser scepent maeltyt quamen’). The scribe considered Claus to be a musician, a piper (with the other pipers), and also a master – a term on occasion applied to wind musicians, but never at this time to signal trumpet players. Deventer lay in a language area between the more German usage of Cologne and the Flemish of Bruges and Ghent, where trompe or trompette were the common terms for the trombone. Also on the Flemish side of Cologne was Aachen, where in 1385 we find a pairing of payments: first, ‘for the pipers’ horses, there were four’ (‘van den piffer perden, der was 4’), followed by ‘to the two pipers, our [city] pipers, 7 g. each’ (‘den piiferen zwen, unsern pifferen, manlich 7 g.’) and to ‘the two trumpets [trombones], each 7 g.’ (‘den zwen trumperen manlich 7 g.’). The scribe (with his language much closer to Flemish than is the case of the language of Aachen today) considered the brass players as part of the piper ensemble, as is clear from their payment for horses. Also, they were all paid at the same rate. Therefore, we have here what was quite probably an ensemble of two shawms and two trombones.24

These references are well spread throughout the German network: Dortmund (1363), Augsburg (1368), Cologne (1372), Aachen (1385) and Deventer (1390, now, of course, a Dutch city), but the musician’s network was not geographically restricted, and further testimony to the presence of the trombone in the fourteenth century comes from Florence. A band of three pifferi (shawms) had been

24 Dortmund, DC, p. 52; Deventer, SR (CR), D, vii/2, p. 19; Aachen, SR, L, p. 292. Another special event which probably involved the performance of the city pfeifers with trombone in Dortmund occurred during a visit of the Emperor Charles iv in 1377. The emperor had entered St Reynold’s church for mass, where during the service ‘while singers sang joyously, the shawms and trombone(?) sounded’ (‘tunc inter cantancium clericorum jubilacionem tubarum fistularumque clangor resonabat . . ’); G. Fietzsch, Nachlass, II, p. 159.
instituted there in 1383, and in 1386, in a very rare instance, the constitution of the band was described exactly as players of *cornamusa* (either a treble shawm or perhaps a bagpipe), *bombarda* and *cornecti*. The Florentine scribe was writing in Latin, in the *Provvisioni Registri* of the city, and was clearly awkwardly translating or, more accurately, fabricating a term for an instrument which seems to have been outside his normal experience. What he seems to have been trying to describe with the term ‘cornecti’ was an early version of the trombone.\(^\text{25}\)

Thus, a brass instrument was known by about 1350, one which was not a signal instrument. This was an instrument which was played by a musician, and which was combined with shawms. Yet the critical question remains, was it a slide instrument? I believe so, for the terminology is surprisingly consistent, once one sorts out regional scribal practices. ‘Posaune’ was not used in southern Germany in contexts where it could be confused with a signal instrument.\(^\text{26}\) This was the case from the fourteenth century to the end of the fifteenth century. From the sixteenth century onwards, of course, the term posaune has been the standard one for the trombone. The Italian term ‘trombone’ began somewhat later, but once introduced has been just as consistent. The French term *trompette des ménestrels* was similarly specific, although it was replaced late in the fifteenth century by the term *sacqueboute*. The trombone was, to be sure, often simply called a ‘trumpet’ in all language areas in the fifteenth century (especially so in Flanders). Scribes, however, had more specific terms when they needed them.

Finally, that a sliding mechanism could have developed by 1350 is supported by the curious description by the Florentine chronicler Filippo Villani of the technical military apparatus of the English mercenary companies in February 1363: ‘They have ladders, the main section of which is in three parts, with one part fitting into the other in the manner of a [?] trombone.’\(^\text{27}\) Also, there is the startling detail of a performance of three trombones at the Council of


\(^{26}\) See above, note 3. For a discussion of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century terminology for the trombone in Flemish, German and Italian sources, see Polk, ‘The Trombone in Archival Documents’.

\(^{27}\) ‘scale avevano artificiose, che il maggiore pezzo prendea l’altro a modo della trombe’; F. Villani, *Cronica de Matteo e Filippo Villani*, Biblioteca Enciclopedica Italiana 30 (Milan, 1834), p. 390.
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Constance in 1416–17; the posaunen played ‘together in three parts, as one ordinarily sings’. Which is to say that by 1410, or perhaps 1400, a sophisticated performance practice of ensemble polyphony was current, one which presumably reflected a development which had taken place over several decades.28

If the documentary evidence is substantial, the iconographic evidence is less so. Very few illustrations of shawm ensembles have survived from 1350 to 1400, the period that is critical here. One fairly well-known illustration from about 1400 (Basel, Öffentliche Bibliothek der Universität, MS A.n.I.4, fol. 135v) depicts a pfeifer and a player of a straight trumpet.29 This instrument can hardly be any version of trombone, for the player is holding the instrument with one hand, palm up, an impossible position for the manipulation of a slide. Iconography does suggest, however, as Peter Downey has observed, that the S-shaped instrument had developed by the last quarter of the fourteenth century. Given the weight of the archival documentation, and the specific description by Villani, Downey’s observations, although in a different context, may provide the most

28 M. Schuler, ‘Die Musik in Konstanz während des Konzils 1414–1418’, Acta Musicologica, 38 (1966), p. 165. A few other instances of what might be ensembles which included trombones have been cited in the literature. Höfler, ‘Der “Trompete de Menestrels”’, p. 94, cites, for instance, ensembles with trombones in Essen in 1380 and in Dordrecht in 1398. Both are problematic (and are drawn from secondary sources). In Essen, a volume of accounts (Stadtrechnungen) for 1380 has not, in fact, survived; the account volume from 1381 lists only two pipers and no posaune (Essen, SR, 1381, fol. 7v). The source for the citation, via mentions in several other works, can be traced back to F. Feldens, Musik und Musiker in der Stadt Essen (Essen, 1936), p. 23, who suggested only that the town had two pipers resident in the city, as well as a trumpet maker (a trompensmet). We music historians apparently garbled this to be an ensemble. Essen might have had a trombonist, but I found no record of this in the few surviving accounts. The mention in Dordrecht is similarly not reliable, because the town had engaged both a shawm band and watchmen who played signal instruments. When one looks at the original accounts (not secondary sources) it appears obvious that the accounts are ambiguous. In Dordrecht it was not explicit that the ‘trompete’ mentioned is a musical (rather than a signal) instrument, nor is it clear whether the scribe intended to describe an ensemble of shawms and trombone. He may have been describing two separate units, one a shawm band, the other the one of two watchmen playing signal instruments. The situation there is further complicated by the practice in southern Holland of interchanging the terms pijper and tromper. A trombone may have been present in Dordrecht (and also in an ensemble in Leiden in 1399 which Höfler also cites). I am, in fact, inclined to believe that this was the case, but the evidence is not sufficient to be reasonably certain.

29 Reproduced in C. Page, ‘German Musicians and their Instruments: A 14th-century Account by Konrad of Megenberg’, Early Music, 10 (1982), p. 198. Konrad was, apparently, more concerned with a display of command of ancient authority and thought on music than with a lucid description of the ‘vulgar’ realities of professional instrumental music of his own time. His discussion of wind instruments, at any rate, is so garbled that his direct familiarity with shawm technique appears highly questionable.
plausible interpretation for the history of the trombone. That is, from about 1350 to 1380 the trumpet was most often a straight instrument, which may have incorporated a simple slide. Such a slide would have been rudimentary. By about 1370 instrument makers developed an S-shaped instrument, which could have incorporated a more sophisticated slide. By about 1400 or shortly after, the folded shape developed, allowing significant expansion into the lower register. Soon thereafter, by about 1430, the double slide developed, but this improvement did not find general acceptance for several decades. The history of the trombone then fits roughly into the chronology suggested for the civic ensembles. The instrument, and band, developed about 1350, and for the next three decades the concepts of the instrument and ensemble firmed and spread throughout the German-speaking urban network. By about 1380 the ensemble and the trombone were well known, and performance techniques had become increasingly sophisticated. By 1420 the instrument and ensemble were ubiquitous. Urban ceremony, ritual and festival demanded their presence everywhere.

Wind instruments were hardly the exclusive interest of the cities in the period 1380 to 1420, for subsidy was also directed to other musicians. In Nuremberg a lutenist appeared in the accounts of 1427 who was soon joined by another musician who played both lute and viol. In the 1430s this developed into a combination of chamber organ (a portatiefer) and a lutenist, and the subsidies continue throughout the remainder of the fifteenth century. Conrad Paumann held the post of organist from 1447 to 1450. Augsburg, oddly, seems not to have followed the lead of Nuremberg, possibly because such players were backed by private patronage. Nördlingen, a distinctly smaller city, supported an organist, and provided funds for the construction of an organ. Support for organists, especially later in the fifteenth century, was not unusual in German cities. Nonetheless, regular support of players of bas instruments seems to have been more a court than an urban concern, for it was the courts that consistently maintained stables of lutenists, ‘sprechers’, viol ensembles and, in some cases, organists. Concern here is with ‘official’ disbursements of funds, as tax lists reveal that even if not on subsidy, performers of soft instruments were resident, and professionally active, in the cities.\(^{30}\)

\(^{30}\) Nuremberg SR (GR), no. 7, 1427, fol. 74′; that one player was a string player, the ‘stadt
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One other instrument, the kettledrum (*pauke*), had a brief but unmistakable vogue in the late fourteenth century. Between about 1370 and 1390, in Augsburg, Nuremberg and Ulm, for example, a *pauker* was often paid for playing with the wind ensemble. After about 1390 this instrument became increasingly associated with trumpet ensembles, and after about 1420 this was exclusively the case.\(^{31}\)

The extraordinary vigour of German instrumental music is reflected in the appeal of German players in foreign lands. Spanish courts were among the first to leave accounts of the spreading appreciation of the quality of German instruments and players. Aragonese court musicians journeyed to Germany in 1391, both to purchase instruments and to recruit players for their ensemble.\(^{32}\) The attendance at the Lenten-time schools for performers adds further evidence of the stature of German instrumental music. Burgundian court musicians were sent regularly 'en allemagne', and we have records of Savoyard, Spanish and Flemish players whose patrons sent them to these assemblies.

Italy, however, commanded an unparalleled place in the artistic traffic. A player from Nuremberg was active in Lucca in 1383. The first recorded intrusion of German players in Florence, in 1384, was hardly a success. In that year a group of foreign shawmists which included three Germans was warned, then jailed, because of violations of directives from city authorities forbidding them to perform.


\(^{31}\) For *pauken* in Augsburg, SR (BB), 1368, fol. 36; 1378, fol. 283; in Nuremberg SR (GR), 1385, fol. 180; 1389, fol. 323; in Ulm, SR, 1388, fol. 83 and 157; 1398, fol. 89. The bagpipe was another instrument which had occasional spurts of popularity as an ensemble instrument. One such period was during the mid-fourteenth century, another was in the last two or three decades of the fifteenth century. Usually the bagpipe (alone or in ensembles of two or three) was an instrument of the country folk, more tied to peasant festivals than to cultivated art music. Perhaps the periodic vogues of the bagpipe, that of about 1480 for example, were a reflection of a self-conscious rustic atmosphere – which may have been the case especially in relation to dance music.

Still, the group must have been professionally active, otherwise Florentine musicians would not have agitated to have this irksome source of competition scrubbed from the local scene. In 1401, however, Florence hired a piffero, Niccolò de Alamagna, to join the city ensemble, and from then on through the rest of the century German-speaking musicians were a constant presence in Florence. Their abilities were so highly regarded that the city council enacted a statute in 1445 which specified that the town pifferi would henceforth be foreign (which in this case meant German, because the band at that time was exclusively German-speaking, with players from Cologne, Basle, Constance and Augsburg). It was not only pifferi who appealed to the Italian taste. Florence, whose musical establishment was already considerable, added a lutenist in 1427 and also a viol player in 1425. Both of these players were German.33

The international appeal was quite remarkable, especially in relation to wind players. Careers of wind players everywhere were characterised by a high degree of local mobility, but for Flemish, French and Italian musicians this was usually within a limited range. German players, on the other hand, were scattered to the far corners of Europe, although it was their presence in Italy and Flanders which probably had the greatest impact on subsequent musical developments.

1420–1500: the maturation of the ensemble tradition

The momentum generated between 1380 and 1420 continued in the following decades. By about 1430 even relatively small towns were fielding ensembles. The map given in Figure 1 underscores the astonishing depth of professional activity. More than twenty-five Swabian and Bavarian towns within about a hundred miles of Augsburg and Munich supported professional ensembles with municipal subsidies between the years 1380 and 1450. In the

33 For the player in Lucca see Krautwurst in Nürnberg, p. 213. For the jailing of the German players see Zippel, I suonatori, pp. 13–14; for the hiring of Niccolò, see Zippel, p. 15. For the players in 1445 see Zippel, pp. 23–4, which is based on information from the series of records Provvisioni Registri in the Archivio di Stato in Florence. Additional information is available in the series Notario de Camera, which Zippel evidently was unable to consult. See, for example, no. 6 (1446–9), fol. 52, for a complete listing of personnel. For the lute and viol, see Polk, ‘Civic Patronage’, Appendix ii.
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Figure 1 Map: South German Free Cities about 1500, from T. A. Brady, *Turning Swiss* (Cambridge, 1985)

Cultivation of artistic vocal polyphony, especially at the end of the fourteenth century, the situation in this region was similar to that in Italy. As Nino Pirrotta observed, vocal polyphony accounted for only a very thin layer of activity in Italy at that time. In southern Germany, too, the number of professional polyphonic choirs was small.34 Only in the second half of the fifteenth century did German vocal musicians and composers begin to match their instrumental colleagues in international stature.

Beginning about 1430 the tradition of compensation for visiting ensembles became so deeply entrenched that cities began to provide separate accounts devoted to payments to ‘travelling players’. These accounts, especially those of Augsburg, Nuremberg, Nördlingen and Regensburg, provide valuable documentation for cities and courts for which accounts have not survived. The almost total loss of court records is a sad phenomenon indeed, for the fragments mirrored in city records reveal a lavish backing of instrumental and vocal music in courts connected with Swabia and Bavaria. The harsh realities of

power politics dictated frequent travel for ambitious noble houses. Necessity, or the perceived necessity of maintaining an image of ‘magnificence’, demanded travelling with a retinue, which almost invariably included musicians. Bavaria was criss-crossed with constant aristocratic traffic. The emperor, the Kings of Poland, Bohemia and Hungary, the various Dukes of Bavaria (who usually numbered three in the fifteenth century, with residences in Ingolstadt, Landshut and Munich, respectively) and the Duke of Austria represented one echelon. Another powerful group of nobles included the Margraves (or Landgraves, and so forth) of Baden, Braunschweig, Brandenburg, the Palatinate, Saxony and Württemberg. Bishops, too, were important nobles. Almost always drawn from aristocratic families, these men also maintained court establishments which involved players as well as singers. In terms of musical contacts with Bavaria the most important were the Bishops of Augsburg, Cologne, Constance, Eichstätt, Mainz, Magdeburg, Salzburg, Trier and Würzburg.

The musical traffic varied from year to year, but was often considerable. In Augsburg in 1437, to choose a typical busy year, visitors included musicians of all the Dukes of Bavaria, the Duke of Austria, the lords of Württemberg, the Palatinate and Brandenburg, the Bishop of Cologne, and from the cities of Ulm and Nuremberg. The practical implications of the constant interaction can hardly be overestimated. This represented, clearly, a network for the interchange of musical techniques and repertory. New ideas (in improvisation, for example), new instrumental developments (e.g. the double slide on the trombone) and new pieces could be rapidly dispersed through these communication links.

The travelling nature of these musicians should not be misunderstood. These musicians were hardly disreputable vagabonds, as has been suggested by modern discussions. On the contrary, they were quite respectable. They were constrained to be so, for they were official representatives of a noble or institution. They wore livery and large medallions, pendants which carried quite literally a seal of authority. They were also extremely well paid.

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The question of prosperity of musicians has been badly misinterpreted, particularly regarding conditions in the fifteenth century. The situation has been difficult to approach, however, because official salaries, in themselves often substantial, represented only a portion of a musician’s income. Most musicians supplemented their salaries from ‘freelance’ sources. Furthermore, civic musicians were often granted special privileges which included exemptions from taxes. Thus they were often not included in the tax rolls, which give tax rates based on assessments of wealth, and thus provide a basis for comparative analysis. The bureaucratic machinery of Augsburg produced a marvellously complete set of records of taxation, however, and for several decades after about 1440 musicians there were subject to assessment. The results are quite startling. On an average, the town musicians were in the top 15% of the wealth of the city. One player, Claus von Sulgen, reached the top 4% of the income levels of the town. He was a wealthy man, paying more in taxes than some members of the wealthy families of the city, such as the Fuggers. He was exceptionally wealthy, but it is also clear that his income as a musician probably formed the base of his wealth. He started his career paying little in taxes (which were based on total holdings), and the amounts paid gradually increased until his affluence was clearly substantial. He was exceptional, but all his colleagues were in comfortable circumstances, to say the least. More remarkable was that during the years in which Claus was in the service of the city, several town musicians chose to leave the city for court employment elsewhere, from which we may presume that salaries in courts were higher than those of the cities.36 In sum, it

36 For Claus von Sulgen see Augsburg Stadtarchiv, Steuer Bücher, tax books (SB), for 1146, fol. 6a, no tax; 1449, fol. 6d, tax of 6 gr.; 1454, fol. 6b, 35 d.; 1455, fol. 6b, 8 d.; 1458, fol. 7d, 6 guldin, 26 d.; and 1462, 17 guldin. In 1462 a payment of about 1 guldin or above placed one in the top 14.8% of income levels; only 3.7% declared wealth taxed at 10 guldin or above. See J. Jahn, ‘Die Augsburger Sozialstruktur im 15. Jahrhundert’, Geschichte der Stadt Augsburg, pp. 188–90. Jorg Walch, a colleague of Claus, paid a tax of 1 guldin in 1472 (SB, fol. 12b) and 1477 (fol. 11c); Ulrich Schubinger, his other colleague, also paid 1 guldin in 1477 (fol. 11d) and in 1478 (fol. 12a). Among those who chose to leave were Ulrich Schubinger senior, who was absent from 1471 to 1477, and all three of his musical sons; see below, note 38. For a general survey of the social status of musicians, see the essays by Walter Salmen and Heinrich Schwab in The Social Status of the Professional Musician from the Middle Ages to the 19th Century (New York, 1983), pp. 1–19 and 31–59. Salmen’s focus is on the earlier Middle Ages, when the social and economic status of musicians were quite different from what they had been in the fifteenth century. Schwab provides a useful general survey of town musicians in German cities from the fourteenth century to the eighteenth. Schwab’s documentation is particularly substantial for the sixteenth and
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appears quite likely (contrary to modern popular belief) that one of the reasons that German urban centres produced so many fine performers was the possibility of substantial rewards. From the perspective of the talented youngster of the lower social echelons of society, a musical career either in cities or at court must have offered seductive promise of wealth, prestige and high social station.

Most urban ensembles numbered three players about 1420. By about 1450 many had expanded to four or five players (court ensembles had apparently enlarged two or three decades earlier). Similar expansion took place in city groups in Flanders and Italy (with one difference, in that Flemish and Italian groups evidently favoured a four-part group of two shawms, bombard and trombone, while German groups more often combined two shawms and two trombones in four-part ensembles). Accounts also suggest that German wind players exercised an ever wider choice of instrumental doubling, although this subject is difficult to follow because of the general competence inherent in the term *pfeifer*. Crumhorns became increasingly a factor in connection with city *pfeifer* groups after 1450. The *zinck* also blossomed in popularity, after about 1470.37

String players and string ensembles were noted consistently throughout the fifteenth century in German sources. In the first half of the century the ensembles were almost exclusively associated with courts (the presence of a ‘city fiddler’ in Nuremberg in 1430 was clearly exceptional), and the players appear to have been exclusively

seventeenth centuries. Since completion of the initial draft of the present article I have completed another which discusses the social and economic conditions of musicians in more detail. See K. Polk, ‘Music for Peace and War in Renaissance Europe: Patronage and Creativity in Urban Society’, *Essays on Ensemble Music*.  

37 For crumhorns see Nördlingen, SR (KR), 1428, fol. 38 (see also W. Salmen, *Quellen*, p. 478). For Regensburg in 1467 see R. Sterl, ‘Die Regensburger Stadtrechnungen des 15. Jahrhunderts als Quellen für fahrende und hofische Spielleute’, *Studien zur Musikgeschichte der Stadt Regensburg*, 1, ed. H. Beck, Regensburger Beiträge zur Musikwissenschaft 6 (Regensburg, 1979), p. 282; in Augsburg in 1482 see SR (BB), 1482, fol. 20’. For the *zinck* see the same page in Augsburg in 1482, for 1483 see W. Senn, *Musik und Theater am Hof zu Innsbruck* (Innsbruck, 1954), p. 16; in Nuremberg in 1487 see SR (KR), no. 20, fol. 219’. Another expansion was the apparent use of mutes with trombones to allow more effective combination with soft instruments, as the instance of a ‘gedempten drompten’ with a lute (‘mit einer luten zu discantiren’) in Frankfurt in 1467 (R. Froning, *Frankfurter Chroniken* (Frankfurt am Main, 1884, p. 216). Yet another expansion of timbres was the common acceptance of professional women singers in the course of the fifteenth century; Regensburg, Stadtrechnungen, 1429, fol. 18’ (‘von maincz singerin’); Nördlingen, SR (KR), 1464, fol. 64; 1490, fol. 40’. For notices of the death of Anna Nuserin of Nuremberg, the king’s ‘singerin’ (Conrad Celtis celebrated her skills in two epigrams), see G. Pietzsch, *Nachlass*, iv, p. 568. She had appeared in Augsburg in 1490, SR (BB), fol. 17’.
specialists on string or bas instruments. By about 1500, though, the situation had changed. Some of the best-known players had either previously been pfeifer, or were wind players who continued to switch back and forth (as was the case with Ulrich Schubinger, noted earlier). The best of the fixed ensembles were still associated with courts, but many of the players were drawn from the urban performing groups. Both Michel Schubinger (a famous player of shawm and string instruments at the Ferrarese court, known there as Michele Tedesco) and his brother Ulrich had started their careers in Augsburg. Note that the German tradition was consistently one that involved ensembles, which probably called for at least two sizes of bowed instruments. Virdung, in his description of two kinds of string instrument (the small one, the rebec; the larger one a viol), was probably dealing with a performance practice that reached back at least as far as the early years of the fifteenth century. The obvious vigour of this German tradition suggests that we should substantially modify Ian Woodfield’s recent thesis of Spanish primacy in the development of the viol.38

The wider choice of instrumental doubling, especially of zinck and string instruments (which included both viols and lute) reflected deeper and far-reaching changes in ensemble performance practice. It is at this time that we first find indications of instrumentalists taking part consistently in performance of liturgical music, and the first sure evidence of wind players regularly performing in ensembles with singers. What appears to have taken place was a breakdown of the medieval conception of haut and bas categories of instruments along with a fundamental change in performance practices inherent in the haut/bas distinction – and clearly German performers were at the forefront of these changes.39

The fame of German players abroad reached new heights during

38 Woodfield’s thesis is most conveniently available in the article ‘Viol’ in The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, ed. S. Sadie, 20 vols. (London, 1980), xix, pp. 791–808. For string ensembles that appeared in German cities see, for example, Munich, SR (KR), 1407, fol. 58′; 1436, fol. 58; Nördlingen, SR (KR), 1431, fol. 41′; 1469, fol. 38′; Augsburg, SR (BB), 1436, fol. 49; 1447, fol. 46. For Ulrich Schubinger, see note 4 above. That Michel was a Schubinger is shown by a payment in 1477, Augsburg, SR (BB), fol. 92′, where his full name is given as his departure from the city was noted. He is the Michele Tedesco who appeared in Ferrara in the accounts of 1479, L. Lockwood, Music in Renaissance Ferrara (Cambridge, Mass., 1984), p. 321. See also K. Polk, ‘Vedel und Geige – Fiddle and Viol: German String Traditions in the 15th Century’, Essays on Ensemble Music.

39 For a more extended discussion of these changes see Polk, ‘Solo and Ensemble Performance Practice’, pp. 7–8.
this period; that of trombonists reached especially high levels. Beginning in 1444 and continuing through the rest of the century the trombonist in the Florentine band was German, and to ensure the performance quality of the player the position was accorded a higher salary than the other musicians. Among the Florentine trombonists probably the most renowned was Augustein Schubinger (brother of Michel and Ulrich the younger), who was in the city from 1489 to 1493. The trombonists active in Italian cities and courts were not exclusively German (Tromboncino was an outstanding example of a successful Italian trombonist – he was a trombonist, at any rate, early in his career), but again it was the Germans who set the standard. German predominance extended beyond Italy. In the Low Countries Hans Nagel carved out a distinguished career for himself. He had been a member of the Leipzig town band in 1479 with his father and brother and probably left for the Low Countries about 1483. He appeared in various ensembles there, finishing his career in Antwerp, where he died in 1532. His successor in Antwerp was probably the most famous of all German trombonists, Tylman Susato. This German musician, from Cologne, began his career in Antwerp as a member of the town wind band. A final example, illustrating a slightly different facet of activity, was the Neuschel family of Nuremberg. This family of trombonists and instrument makers evidently instituted changes in the construction, and probably the playing style, of the trombone which found wide influence and acceptance.

German shawmists, trombonists and string players were active throughout northern Italy, and it would be labouring the point to enumerate in detail the locations where these musicians were active. Their presence at the courts in Milan, Ferrara and Mantua, as well as in Florence, should be underscored, however, for these were the trend-setting centres of activity (and also the contact points for interaction of German players with such northern composers as

40 Florence, Archivio di Stato, Notario di Camera, no. 505, vol. 20, fol. 7, for Augustein’s first appearance in the salary lists. He last appears in 1493, see the same volume, fol. 21. For a listing of German players, see K. Polk, ‘Civic Patronage in Renaissance Florence’, Appendix ii.
Josquin, Obrecht, Isaac, Agricola and Martini. This presence, in terms of polyphonic instrumental ensembles, began to be felt in Italy by about 1400, and was well established by 1450. The musicians improvised in ensemble performance, and left only scant traces of their presence in musical manuscripts before about 1460. In addition, the leading thinkers (i.e. the Italian humanists and those foreigners influenced by their intellectual style) tended to be indifferent to this kind of music. In any event, recognition of the vitality of fifteenth-century ensemble traditions, and of the contributions of Germans within these traditions, has been retarded. Recently a well-informed music historian surveying the scene in ensemble music in the mid-fifteenth century was troubled by 'a relative dearth of musical activity in Italy, particularly in the realm of sophisticated polyphony'. We can now lay these troubles to rest. Ensembles were a ubiquitous presence in Italy, both at the courts and in the cities. In these ensembles the leading players were German. Furthermore, I suspect that the German performers were prized not only for their instrumental technique per se, but for their skill in application of technique in the context of instrumental polyphonic improvisation. Tracking down specific features of this improvisatory tradition is a topic which now begs our attention.

Our knowledge of the instrumental repertory itself also remains frustratingly incomplete. Concerning the dance repertory we are reasonably well informed. We know a large corpus of dance tunes, and do have some knowledge of how these melodies would have been realised in improvised ensemble counterpoint. More vague are connections with other repertories, especially in the period preceding 1520. Still, with what we now know of the context of instrumental music-making of the time we can reconsider the manuscript sources.

Because players improvised, the influence of composers of the stature of Senfl and Isaac, with whom they were in constant contact, must have enriched their performing techniques. But this influence also must have been a two-way affair, and composers such as Isaac and Senfl in Bavaria, and Obrecht and Josquin while in Ferrara,


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could well have absorbed elements of a 'German' style. If one looks at the instrumental pieces of the Glogauer Liederbuch, for example, one is struck by the frequency of 'Spielfiguren', short motifs which may dart from part to part, or which may be repeated within a part in highly coherent sequences. The use of these 'instrumental' figures in German pieces appears to predate their use in the instrumental tricinia composed by Franco-Flemish composers. Such pieces were published, for example, in the Odhecaton collections of Petrucci just after the turn of the century. Much has been made of the Italian influences on northern composers who sojourned in Italy. Given the stature and skills of German players there, a concomitant influence of German instrumental techniques seems quite plausible. To put the matter in a broader context, such sources as the Buxheimer Orgelbuch, and the Schedelsches, Glogauer and Augsburg Liederbücher, reveal that German musicians were very much conversant with, and influenced by, a wide range of contemporary repertory, for these sources include Italian dances, French chansons and examples of Netherlandish polyphonic techniques, as well as a large repertory of a native music. Further study is needed to reveal what I suspect are substantial reciprocal influences, that is, influences of German instrumental practices on the contemporary scene. I believe that northern Italian centres, especially Ferrara, Milan and Florence, will be particularly fascinating in this regard. It was in these centres that we know German players were active at the time when the artistic traffic from the north-west included Dufay, Josquin, Obrecht, Agricola and Isaac. The rich fusion of artistic concepts of north and south which took place in Italy at that time has been much commented on in modern literature. Possible German contributions have hardly been explored.

We have seen, in summary, that musicians from the cities of southern Germany exercised decisive influence in the early stages of instrumental music of the Renaissance, both in the development of the instruments and, probably, in matters of instrumental style. Furthermore, German musicians continued to exert leadership from the early stages, around 1350, to beyond 1500. This does not challenge the notion of prominence of the north-west axis, Italy–Paris–the north, in vocal music and composition. If we wish to develop a more complete image of Renaissance musical life, however, we must also take into account a north–south corridor.
Instrumental music in Renaissance Germany

More accurately, we must recognise a northern locus of activity, a ring of cities from which radiated techniques and styles which influenced all major cultural centres of Europe.

Patronage of the arts and music has attracted distinguished scholarly efforts in recent years, but it has been courtly patronage and, to some extent, cathedral patronage that has provided the focus for musical research. Certainly urban phenomena in the north have attracted attention within the intellectual community, in the Renaissance as well as now. Machiavelli realised that the German towns were the ‘nerve centres’ of the empire,\(^{45}\) and Richard Vaughan has recently reminded us that Charles the Bold discovered the power of the northern cities on that grim day in December 1477 in front of Nancy. It was the enmity of the cities which engineered the final destruction of Charles, not the cunning machinations of Louis XI.\(^ {46}\) The German urban centres could muster power enough to bring down the brilliant Burgundian edifice: they were also vigorous enough to germinate a musical culture which demands our respect and more of our attention.

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**POSTSCRIPT**

Instrumental musicians of the fifteenth century improvised. As a result musical sources are scanty, and other kinds of evidence must carry a heavier burden than in most studies of music history. When we use other bodies of documentation – iconography and financial accounts, for example – we must bear in mind their peculiar characteristics, limitations and, perhaps, interrelations. The first-rank professional choruses of the mid-fifteenth century, for example, were usually listed with about sixteen members in accounts. Iconography suggests, however, that around ten was the usual size of such choirs in performance. Written accounts, especially, have their limitations, and demand special caution in their use. Peter Downey, for example, stated in 'The Renaissance Slide Trumpet', p. 26, that *baisins* was the common term for the trumpet in the fourteenth century. This was not the case for Flanders or for Germany. What we must realise is that scribal practice and language tended to be peculiar to one area and to one time. Flemish cities (including those also in Brabant), Holland (including Leiden, Amsterdam and Dordrecht), an area centred on Cologne, and Bavaria, for example, formed four reasonably distinct ‘zones’ of scribal practice in about 1400. Southern German scribes called shawmists (and wind players in general) *pfeifers*, and distinguished between civic signal instruments (‘horns’) and the more musical brass instrument (the *posaune*). Scribes in northern Germany, perhaps under the influence of Cologne, clung to Latin for longer than was the case in the south. *Fustulatoris* was their term for a wind player, and they preferred to form their term for trombone from the root *trump* or *trump* (*trumpenario*, for example). They preferred *cornu* for city watchmen’s instruments, although they were not as consistent as was the case in


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Nuremberg and Augsburg. Terminology in Holland was characteristically more fluid, with almost a free interchange between tromper and pijper for a wind player in such cities as Breda and Amsterdam. Flemish scribes consistently preferred pijper for wind player and trompette for trombone. The aristocratic signal instrument in all areas was called trompette, or something similar, and context usually made the matter clear (see Polk, 'Ensemble Instrumental Music in Flanders', pp. 16-17). When more specific terminology was necessary we encounter such terms as velt trumpet (field trumpet as in Augsburg and Antwerp) or the distinction between trompette de guerre and trompette des ménestrels (as at the Burgundian court). The four 'zones' (as well as others) each produced vast quantities of documentation on the activities of musicians. This documentation does furnish us with the most extensive base of data available concerning the conditions of music making of the time. When used with care, the terminology drawn from this base can be reliable. We can be fairly sure that some form of slide trumpet was known to German musicians in the late fourteenth century. We can be certain that this was the case, from terminology, from shortly after 1400 in Germany, Flanders and Italy and at French-speaking courts. Still, the terminology tells us little about the specific shape of the instruments, and even less about procedures involved in improvised performance practices. We can supplement the former with iconography, the second with theoretical treatises. Nevertheless, an understanding of contemporary terminology is necessary, and archival documentation, when used appropriately, provides an invaluable tool to assist in answering the questions we face concerning instrumental music of the Renaissance.