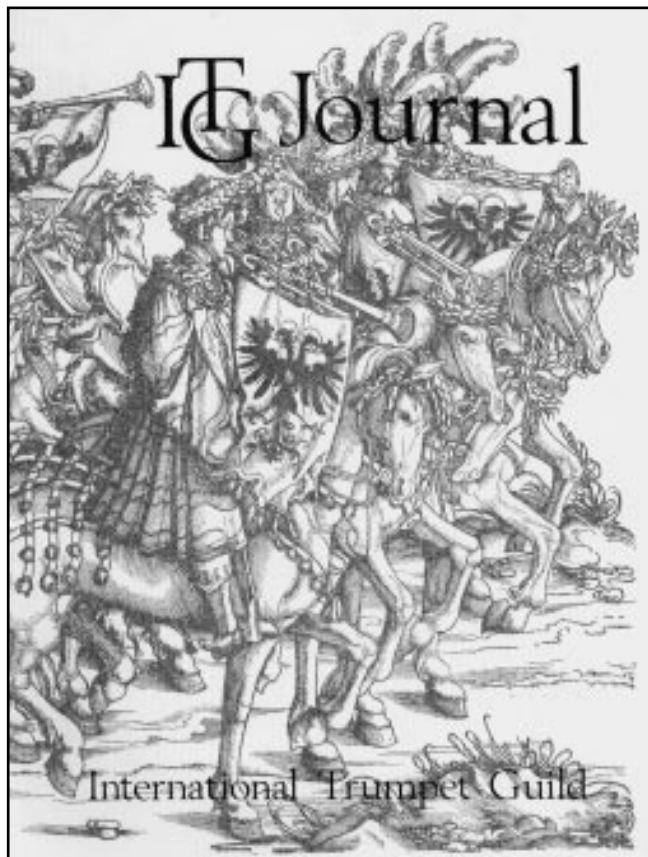


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**Robert M. Hazen – Parisian Cornet Solos of the 1830s and 1840s:  
The Earliest Solo Literature for Valved Brass and Piano (May95)**



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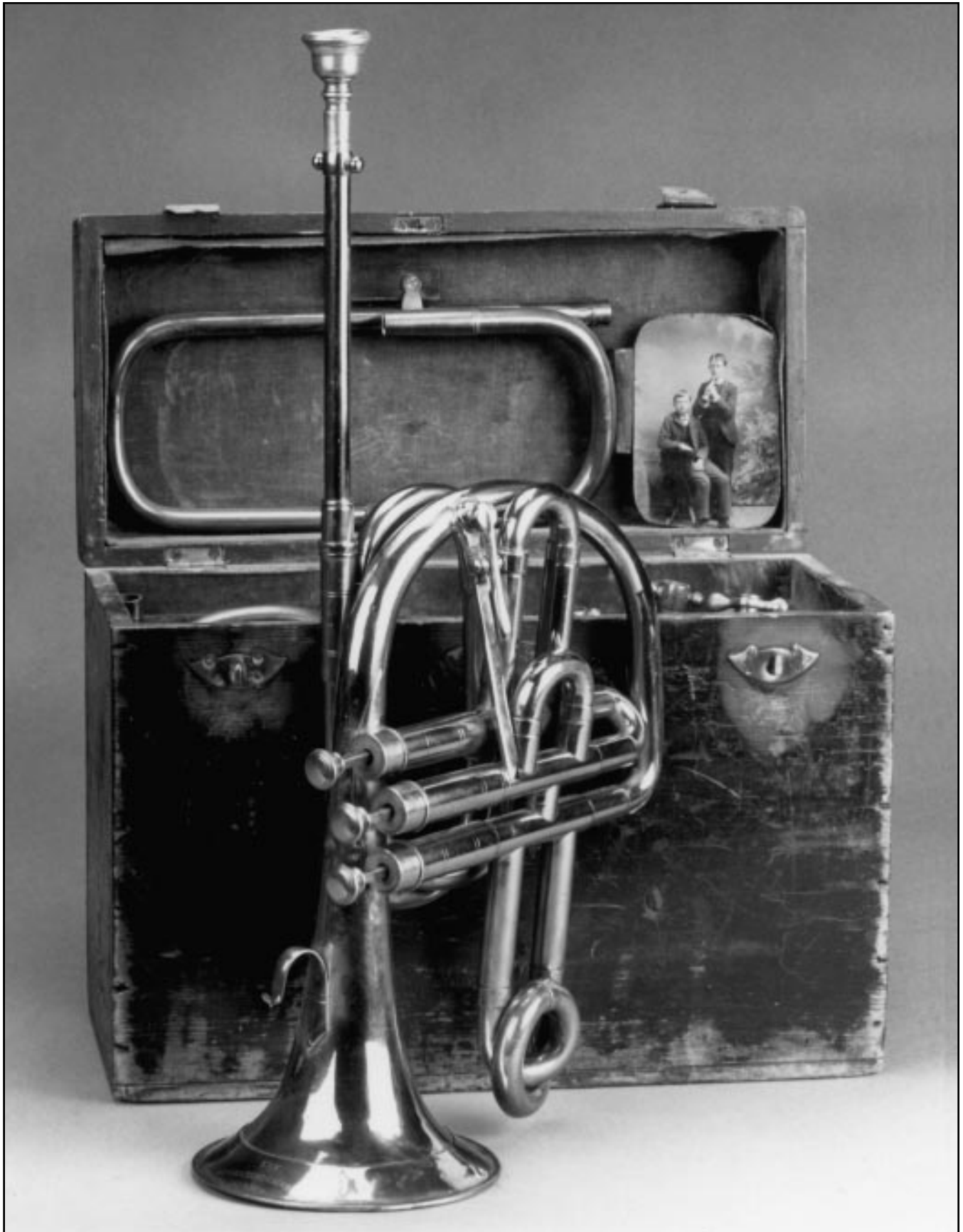
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Cornopean by Key / 20 Charing-Cross / London, ca.1845  
Courtesy of the Streitwiesser Foundation Trumpet Museum.

# Parisian Cornet Solos of the 1830s and 1840s: The Earliest Solo Literature for Valved Brass and Piano

ROBERT M. HAZEN

Trumpet recitalists have long been frustrated by the lack of a significant body of original solo works from the first half of the nineteenth century. With the exception of the famous keyed trumpet concerti of Haydn and Hummel, the pivotal period in Western music from 1800 to the mid-1850s has seemed devoid of solo repertoire for soprano brasswind instruments. Recent discovery of an apparently forgotten solo literature for cornet and piano written for the salons of Paris in the 1830s and 1840s will partially fill that void.

In 1988 I acquired two bound volumes containing numerous duets for two cornets in manuscript and several original works scored for cornet à pistons and piano, five of them published in Paris between about 1835 and 1845. Subsequent investigation of these solos and their composers has revealed the existence of a vast literature of more than one hundred published compositions – the earliest known solos for cornet and piano. This article presents the music for one of these works and briefly traces the intriguing history and distinctive characteristics of this long-lost repertoire.

## The Music

The cornet solos, contained in two volumes bound with marbled papers typical of the 1840s, were purchased from an antiquarian dealer in New York. One of the volumes, inscribed “Goetz Philippe, Trompette au 1er Regt de Dragons. 3e Escadron,” contains 200 finely-penned manuscript pages of duets for cornets à pistons or natural horns. Fourteen collections of duets, totaling more than 120 individual pieces, are included. While no dates are recorded on the music, the inclusion of numerous duets based on themes from popular Parisian operas and ballets of Adam, Bellini, Donizetti, Gide, Halevy, Meyerbeer, and Rossini suggests a possible date c.1840 to 1845, when these Paris Opera composers were at the height of their popularity. Most of the duets are brief works, lasting less than two minutes. The *Six Grande Duos par Schiltz de L’Academie Royale de Musique*, however, are more substantial three-movement compositions.

The other volume, which includes several pages of manuscript in the same hand as the duet volume, contains piano parts for eight different compositions.

These works are:

1. *Fantasie Brillante pour Cornet à Pistons et Piano oblige*, by J. Forestier & Mlle. J. Luce. (Paris: Collinet, c.1840)
2. *24e Fantasie sur l’Opera La Favorite de G. Donizetti pour Cornet à 2 ou à 3 Pistons*, Op. 101, by Schiltz (Paris: Maurice Schlesinger, c.1840)
3. *Variations Pour le Cornet à Pistons avec accompagnement d’Orchestre ou de Piano sur un motif favori de La Chaste Suzanne*, Op. 18, by Stanislas Verronst (Paris: Richault, c.1840)
4. *Fantasie pour Piano et Cornet à Pistons sur les motifs de La Part du Diable, Opera de D. F. G. Auber* by A. Fessy et Schiltz (Paris: E. Troupenas, c.1843)
5. *Fantasie sur les beaux motifs d’Opera D’Adolphe Adam pour Cornet à Pistons*, by Schiltz. (Paris: Chabal, c.1845)
6. Untitled fantasy for cornet and piano based on themes by Auber. (Anon, in manuscript)
7. *Duo pour 2 Cornets à Pistons et Piano* (Anon, in manuscript)
8. *Air du Barbier de Seville* (Anon, in manuscript)

With the exception of the work by Verronst, the cornet parts are included with the piano score. All but the composition by Forestier and Luce adapt themes from the operas and ballets performed at the Paris Opera of l’Academie Royale de Musique or l’Opera Comique.<sup>1</sup> The Paris Opera was an important center of society life, and the works of Bellini, Donizetti, Meyerbeer, Rossini, and others achieved immense popularity, on a par with present-day Broadway musicals. The latest “hits” were transcribed for vocal or instrumental soloists and were featured entertainments at the legendary Parisian soirées of the time. Perhaps the best known of the instrumental solo repertoire of this period are the florid flute works by Mercadante.<sup>2</sup> Solos for cornet and piano represent another part of that tradition.

Innovation and spectacle were hallmarks of the Paris Opera. The sophisticated Parisian audiences demanded, and got, a lot for their money. In 1830,

Opera Director Dr. Louis-Desire Veron commanded a huge budget of 800,000 Francs with which he maintained an orchestra of 80 musicians, 60 choristers, and a corps de ballet of 70 dancers.<sup>3</sup> Each year the organization produced a new grand opera, a new grand ballet, plus four other major works. In this dynamic setting new instruments and instrumental techniques were encouraged, and a pair of cornets was introduced almost immediately upon their invention in about 1828.<sup>4</sup> Rossini's *William Tell* (1829), Auber's *Le Dieu et la Bayadere* (1830), and Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable* (1831) all used valved cornets in the orchestra.<sup>5</sup>

### The Composers and their Other Works

None of the four composers of these Parisian cornet solos is well known, but all may have been associated with l'Academie Royale de Musique, which oversaw the Paris Opera. While only five printed works are included in this collection, the extent of the pre-1850 Parisian repertoire is evident by searching for other publications by these composers in Pazdirek's *Universal-Handbuch der Musikliteratur*, perhaps the most extensive (though by no means complete) record of nineteenth-century published music.<sup>6</sup>

Joseph Forestier (1815-1867), co-composer of the *Fantasie Brillante*, played for the Paris Opera between 1827 and 1851, at first as a horn player, but later primarily as cornetist.<sup>7</sup> He also taught cornet at the Paris Conservatory, trumpet at the Gymnase Musical Militaire, and authored a cornet method in 1844. Pazdirek does not list the *Fantasie Brillante* but does record more than 20 other of his cornet solos and duets with piano accompaniment, as well as works for flute and piano and an intriguing series of 12 duets for cornet and ophicleide (a tenor keyed-brass instrument). Forestier's co-composer, Mademoiselle J. Luce, collaborated in two other works with Forestier for cornet and piano, and also composed the comic opera *Le Maestro ou la Renommée* – an unusual accomplishment for a woman at that time.<sup>8</sup>

Forestier and Luce's three-movement *Fantasie Brillante*, a completely original composition for valved cornet in G and piano, is reproduced here in the original piano score. This work was given its American premiere at the author's recital with the late Dale Anthony, pianist, at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, on January 25, 1991.

Schiltz, composer of three cornet-piano works as well as the set of six of grand duets in this collection, appears from Pazdirek's *Handbuch* to have been among the most prolific of the early Paris cornetists. All his compositions, as well as personnel records of the Paris Opera where he was employed from 1831 to 1854, list him simply as Schiltz without a given name.<sup>9</sup>

Most of his 90 listed publications are fantasies for cornet and piano based on operas and ballets. Those based on Rossini's *William Tell* (premiered in August of 1829) and Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable* (premiered November, 1831) are probably among the first cornet solos ever published. Schiltz was evidently a teacher of several brass instruments, for his numerous publications include method books for ophicleide, trombone, cavalry (i.e., natural) trumpet, and the complete range of saxhorns from soprano E-flat to contrabass B-flat, as well as cornet à pistons.

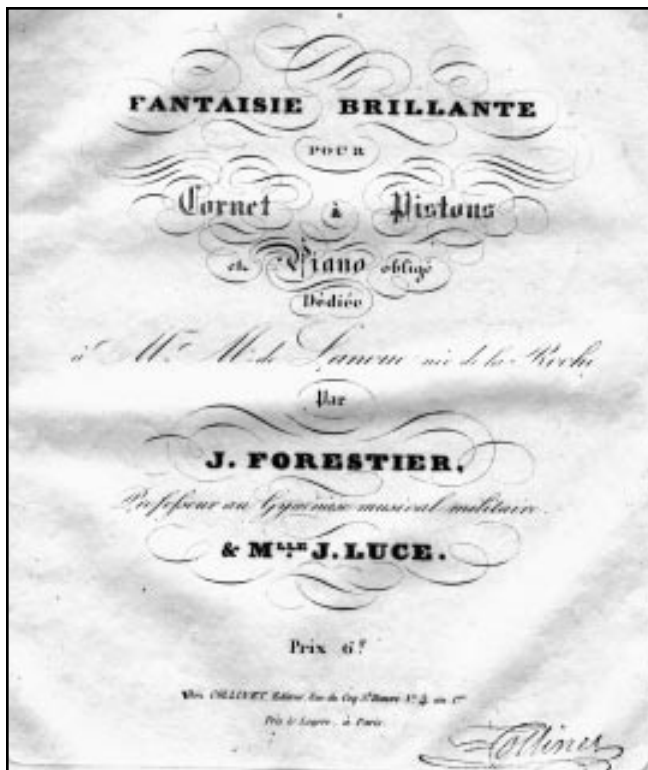
Stanislas Verronst, composer of the variations on a theme from *La Chaste Suzanne*, was a Paris Opera employee during 1847 to 1853. The opera *La Chaste Suzanne* by Hippolyte Monpou received its premiere in 1840 and enjoyed a brief success at the Opera Comique in Paris, suggesting a c.1840 date for this set of variations. Of special interest is the work's dedication to the famous cornetist Hermann Koenig (who is also listed in Pazdirek's *Handbuch* as composer of a number of Paris-published solos with piano). About mid-century Koenig left Paris to become the featured cornet soloist at Jullien's famous Promenade Concerts in London.<sup>10</sup> His tenure at the Promenade Concerts was followed by that of the renown soloist Jules Levy.

Charles-Alexandre Fessy (1804-1856), who co-composed the *Part le Diable* fantasy with Schiltz, contributed more than 100 publications to the Parisian scene, including half a dozen cornet fantasies, plus numerous other solo works for clarinet, oboe, violin, and piano.<sup>11</sup> Fessy co-composed two cornet and piano works with Forestier – a collaboration that reveals the close ties among the many composer/musicians of the time. The fantasy by Fessy and Schiltz is based on themes from Meyerbeer's *Part le Diable*, which premiered at the Paris Opera in 1843.

All told, these four composers – Forestier, Schiltz, Verronst, and Fessy – identified by the chance grouping of their works in one bound volume, contributed more than 100 published works before 1850 for solo cornet and piano. In-depth research will no doubt reveal other active Parisian cornetists and composers from this period.<sup>12</sup>

### The Instrument and its Performers

These early solos are scored for cornet à pistons, or corneopean as it came to be known in England and North America.<sup>13</sup> The first cornet à pistons is believed to have been the invention of Paris maker Jean Louis Halary-Antoine, who introduced it to the vibrant Paris scene in about 1828. By the early 1830s several prominent Parisian craftsmen, including Guichard, Courtois, and Roue, were offering their own models. Most instruments were designed to play



Title page from *Fantasie Brillante* by J. Forestier and J. Luce.

in B-flat or C with a short shank, but a longer A shank and a set of as many as seven crooks down to low D-flat were usually provided. In fact, the second valve slide in these early instruments is too long for the instrument to have been used effectively in pitches higher than about A-flat. Beautifully crafted examples with hand-painted bells, ivory mouthpieces, and graceful felt-lined wooden cases may be seen in many museum collections.<sup>14</sup>

The first models had only two piston valves of the Stoezel design, in which air flows through the bottom of the valves, allowing a simpler piston construction than in modern instruments.<sup>15</sup> An optional third valve was soon added – a feature reflected in Schiltz’s *Fantasie sur l’Opera La Favorite* which is scored for “cornet à 2 ou à 3 pistons.” Schiltz provides alternate cornet melody lines for the two different instruments; the 2-valve version avoids G-sharp and D-sharp, which are accessible on the fully chromatic 3-valve model. This scoring reveals that 2-valve models were still being sold in the 1840s (Donizetti’s *La Favorite* premiered in 1840). Furthermore, the use of the less sophisticated instrument suggests that these publications were purchased, at least in part, by amateur players.

Parisian cornepeans of the 1830s and 1840s differed from the modern cornet in several key respects. Perhaps most importantly, these earliest valved cornets were usually played by hornists (as the name cornet implies), not trumpeters. Paris Opera records

of 1830, for example, reveal that Monsieur Dufresne, a member of the horn section, played cornet solos at ballet performances. The Opera’s principal hornist, Frédéric Antoine Schlotmann, also soloed on cornet, while Joseph Forestier began his career as a horn player before switching to cornet (and later trumpet in the Opera, as well). Early cornepean mouthpieces are thus narrow-rimmed with a deep conical cup, while leadpipes possess the narrow bore typical of horns. The solo music also reflects the heritage of horn playing. Most of the works are written in alto F or G, and the instrument was to be crooked down to that key, yielding an instrument half the length of the usual horn. Thus, the cornet à pistons in alto F bore a relationship to the horn somewhat analogous to that of the modern piccolo B-flat trumpet to the standard B-flat trumpet.

The early cornepean’s distinctive mouthpiece, bore, and tubing length contributed to a timbre that was much darker than that of modern cornets. Forestier’s tutor of 1844, for example, describes his preference for a “round, velvety tone.” The solos of the 1830s and 1840s thus emphasize the lyric and expressive quality of the instrument, and rely less on the extreme technical demands explored by the next generation of players. The range of these solos does not extend above g, and rapid articulation is seldom required in these early works.

By the second half of the nineteenth century, gifted French soloists and teachers, notably J. Jean-Baptiste Arban (1825-1889) whose famous cornet method appeared in 1864, embraced the instrument in B-flat without crooks, and championed mouthpiece and instrument designs that produced a brighter sound and sharper attack.<sup>16</sup> Arban’s bravura style, achieved with a shallower-cupped mouthpiece and higher-pitched instrument, created a sensation. This success may have contributed to the subsequent decline and modern neglect of the original Parisian cornet music, as well as the abandonment of its distinctive style.

## Conclusions

The forgotten Parisian cornet repertoire of the 1830s and 1840s deserves a new hearing. Not only do these compositions fill a significant gap in the history of our solo literature, but also they possess a distinctive charm and lyricism that befits their transitional role between the repertoire of the horn and trumpet. It is hoped that Forestier and Luce’s elegant *Fantasie Brillante*, republished here for the first time in a century and a half, will inspire efforts to seek out this lost heritage.

Much research on the composers and their music remains to be done. Hundreds of works may lie waiting to be discovered in the Bibliotheque Nationale

and other Paris repositories. The Paris works may have inspired related compositions in other cities, including Vienna, Berlin, Munich, and London, where early experiments with valved brass instruments were taking place. Of equal interest is the untold story of how an instrument designed for and championed by horn players, so quickly became the domain of trumpeters. This shift, perhaps more than any other, led to the phenomenal rise of the brass band movement and has thus profoundly influenced all subsequent generations of brass players.<sup>17</sup>

### Notes

1. For a history of the l'Academie Royale de Musique, see Spire Pitou, *The Paris Opera: An Encyclopedia of Operas, Ballets, Composers, and Performers*. Greenwood Press, Westport, Connecticut, 1983. For the employment dates of Paris Opera musicians see Paris Opera, *Archives du Theatre National de l'Opera*. Archives Nationales, Paris, 1977; see also Emile Compardon, *L'Academie Royale de Musique au XVIII<sup>e</sup> Siecle*, 2 volumes, Da Capo Press, New York, 1971.
2. Stanley Sadie, editor, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, Macmillan, New York, 1980. For information on other early nineteenth-century Parisian flute soloists, including Eugene Walckiers (1793-1866), Antoine Farrenc (1794-1865), Paul Hippolyte Camus (1796-1850), Victor Jean Baptiste Coche (1806-1881), and Vincent Joseph Dorus (born 1812), see Richard S. Rockstro, *A Treatise on the Construction, the History and the Practice of the Flute*. Rudall, Carte, and Co., London, 1890.
3. Pitou, *Op. Cit.*, 47-48.
4. Richard P. Birkmeyer, "The History and Music of the Orchestral Trumpet of the Nineteenth Century," *ITG Journal* IX (February 1985), 22-39. See also Adam Carse, *Musical Wind Instruments*. Da Capo Press, New York, 1965.
5. Examples of cornet parts by Meyerbeer, Halevy, and Donizetti are included in Hermann Pietzsch, *Die Trompete als Orchester-Instrument und ihre Behandlung in den Verschiedenen Epochen der Musik*. The University Music Press, Ann Arbor, reprint of 1890 edition.
6. Fr. Pazdirek, *Universal-Handbuch der Musikliteratur aller Volker*. Pazdirek & Co., Vienna, 9 volumes, 1904-1910.
7. Joseph Forestier, *Method Complete de Cornet Chromatique à Pistons ou a Cylandre*. Paris, 1844.
8. J. Luce, *Le Maestro ou la Renommée, Opera Comique*. Paris, Richardt (publication No. 7654), c.1840.
9. The employment history of Schiltz, Stanislas

Verroust, and Charles-Alexandre Fessy are recorded in Paris Opera, *Archives du Theatre National de l'Opera*. Archives Nationales, Paris, 1977.

10. Hermann Koenig's solo career is reviewed under the topic "cornet" in Stanley Sadie, editor, *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. Macmillan, New York, 1980.
11. According to Pazdirek's *Universal Handbuch*, Charles-Alexandre Fessy's large output also features many organ compositions and liturgical works, including a magnificat and several masses.
12. While no copies of these Parisian solos have been found in the catalogs of North American libraries, the Bibliotheque Nationale and other Paris libraries are possible repositories for this literature.
13. Richard Lanshe, "The Cornet: Its Origin and Development," *Woodwind, Brass and Percussion* XVII (July-August 1978), 34-35, 42.
14. Fine examples of early Parisian cornopeans with original mouthpieces, shanks, and crooks are exhibited in many public collections. See illustrations in Herbert Heyde, *Das Ventilblasinstrument Seine Entwicklung im Deutschsprachigen Raum von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*. VEB Deutscher Verlag für Musik, Leipzig, 1987; Anthony Baines, *European and American Musical Instruments*. The Viking Press, New York, 1966; and Adam Carse, *Musical Wind Instruments*. Da Capo Press, New York, 1965.
15. Herbert Heyde, "On the Early History of Valves and Valve Instruments in Germany (1814-1833)," *Brass Bulletin* XXV (1979), 41-50; XXVI (1979), 69-82; XXVII (1979), 51-61. See also Reine Dahlqvist, "Some Notes on the Early Valve," *The Galpin Society Journal* XXXIII (March, 1980), 111-124.
16. Jean-Pierre Mathez, "Arban (1825-1889)," *Brass Bulletin* IX (1974), 13-14; X (1975), 13-14; XI (1975), 21-25. See also Glenn D. Bridges, "Pioneers in Brass (Part I)," *Journal of Band Research* VI (Spring, 1970), 13-18.
17. The influence of musical instrument development on the brass band movement has been surveyed by Margaret Hazen and Robert M. Hazen, *The Music Men: An Illustrated History of Brass Bands in America, 1800-1920*. Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, 1987.

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