

1906 POCKET (PARLOUR) CORNET BY JÉRÔME THIBOUILLE-LAMY & CIE

DR COLIN BLOCH

2021 revised 2024

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HISTORICAL INSTRUMENTS WINDOW

SABINE K. KLAUS, COLUMN EDITOR



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Pocket cornet in B-flat, A, and C by Jérôme Thibouville-Lamy & Cie., Paris, ca. 1900 – 1905, no serial number. Engraved on the bell *J.T.L. / HORS CONCOURS / PARIS / 1878 - 1889 - 1900 / 1 REQTE / JEROME THIBOUVILLE-LAMY / 10 CHARTERHOUSE STREET E.C. / LONDON / MADE IN PARIS*. Brass, silver-plated. Two contemporary silver-plated brass mouthpieces, one with a grooved throat, stamped *MBOUCHURE [sic] RAYEE GUILBAUT*.

Originally sold to play in high pitch (Old Philharmonic pitch $a^1 = 453$ Hz) with a B-flat shank, an A crook, and a C attachment, it now has a slide, shank, crook, and C attachment for modern pitch.

Jérôme Thibouville-Lamy (1833 – 1902) registered the trademark *J.T.L.* with lyre and aureole in 1866 after opening a factory for brasswind instruments in Paris-Grenelle in 1861. Thibouville-Lamy was a maker and distributor of all kinds of musical instruments, in addition to brass, manufactured in large factories in Mirecourt (strings) and La Couture (woodwinds) in France. From 1880, Thibouville-Lamy entertained a branch in London at 10 Charterhouse Street (Holborn Circus).

Pocket cornets, sometimes called “parlour cornets,” were popular from about 1870 to 1915, especially for domestic music making. Although of a similar tube length to the modern B-flat trumpet, pocket cornets were compactly wrapped, up to four times around, and advertised for women, children, and tourists. In England, they were said to be small enough to be taken underground in a miner’s lunchbox. The minimal bell flare is common and contributes further to the small size.

This pocket cornet was previously owned by Robert Jenner, emeritus principal trumpeter of the Royal Scottish National Orchestra from 1961 to 1980 and one of the UK’s most distinguished players. The instrument was restored by McQueens of Manchester in 2019 and by Smith Brass Services of Bolton (Greater Manchester) in 2020. It is now in the care of Colin Bloch, London, UK, who submitted this article and its photographs.



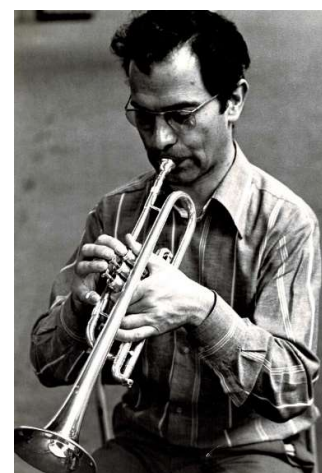
This pocket cornet has a jewel-like quality as it nestles in the palm of a hand. These instruments were at their most popular from 1870 to 1915. It can only be described as ‘cute’ but was made small for practical reasons. There are references to it as a **preacher’s cornet**, reflecting an instrument that street-corner preachers would use to draw crowds and accompany hymns. It is also known as a **pit cornet**, or a **miner’s cornet**, with miners taking them underground for recreation during their lunch breaks: it is said to have fitted into a miner’s lunch box. As a **parlour cornet** it would be used to accompany singers, usually with the ensemble of a piano, a singer and a melody instrument being particularly popular in Victorian times.

J.T.L. was formed in the mid-19th century, based in Mirecourt, France. Thibouville, a founder, claimed descent from a line dating back to the 16th century of makers of woodwind and brass instruments but he became a maker and distributor of all instruments, especially stringed instruments. This pocket cornet was originally sold for £5.00 through the J.T.L. shop at 10 Charterhouse, Barbican, London.

The absence of a bell end-flare is common to what is sometimes known as a French bell. Model 2690, was advertised at the time as the ‘superior’ version with optional ‘German silver valves’. One of the mouthpieces included is the rare Guilbaut Rayee no.3 mouthpiece with a grooved throat, patented by Couesnon to improve accuracy.

Provenance

This instrument was the first instrument of **Robert ‘Bob’ Jenner** (1937 – 2021), shown here, born in Tonbridge, Kent and the son of a trombonist. Bob was to have a successful career as one of Britain’s leading professional orchestral trumpeters, playing with most of the London orchestras, with the celebrated and pioneering Philip Jones Brass Ensemble, and as principal trumpet of the (later ‘Royal’) Scottish National Orchestra from 1960 (aged just 23) to 1980. He then moved south to teach and freelance, based initially in Cheltenham. Bob was principal trumpet of the Philharmonia of Bristol throughout its existence from 1995 to 2002 where the author and current custodian of the instrument played second trumpet to him. In 2018 Bob began to dispose of his instruments from his home in Chilcompton, Somerset, and this instrument was acquired by Colin Bloch.



Restoration

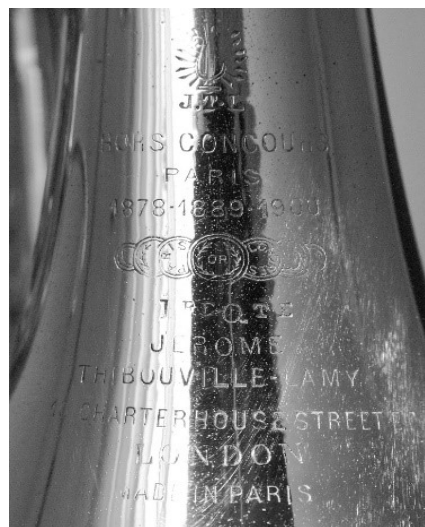
Restoration was undertaken in early 2019 by **McQueens Musical Instruments** of Salford. The work included disassembly, repairs to dents, re-assembly, re-corking valves, stripping and re-plating, at a cost of £540.00.

Subsequent work was undertaken in 2020 during the coronavirus pandemic by **Smith Brass Service** of Bolton, to improve the valves, including surface treatment, alignment, and replacement of springs, corks and felts, at a cost of £66.20.



Finally, the valve action was finessed by **Will Spencer** in 2022.

J.T.L
HORS CONCOURS PARIS 1878
· 1889 · 1900
1 REQTE
JEROME THIBOUVILLE-LAMY
10 CHARTERHOUSE STREET E.C
LONDON
MADE IN PARIS



The Outfit

The pocket cornet is in its original lined wooden case with brass fittings. The complete outfit comprises the cornet and case, with six tuning slides or shanks, and three mouthpieces. It is not known which if any of the mouthpieces came with the instrument but the four apertures in the case to hold mouthpieces are an early indicator of mouthpiece anxiety.

A Straight shank 143mm with studs with brass ferrule + 20mm insert



B Straight shank 83mm + one 17mm insert, with studs



C Pigtail shank 165mm exposed + one 16.5mm inserted into leadpipe



D Main slide Original main slide 125mm + two 52mm inserts



- E B flat 166mm + two inserts each
main 54mm (a modern B-flat slide
slide made for Robert Jenner by Phil
Parker



- F C main 374mm + two 52mm inserts
slide (one is a dummy) Plus a
secondary screw-clamped
shank extending the C slide by
up to 44mm, with studs



Mouthpieces

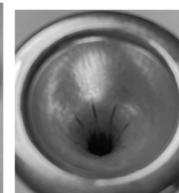
Unmarked mouthpiece. 51g. 55mm.
Unusually large shank. Possibly a bugle
mouthpiece.



Unmarked mouthpiece. 47g. 58mm. V-cup,
semi-flat rim.



Guilbaut mouthpiece. Rare and unusual.
39g. 62mm
See below

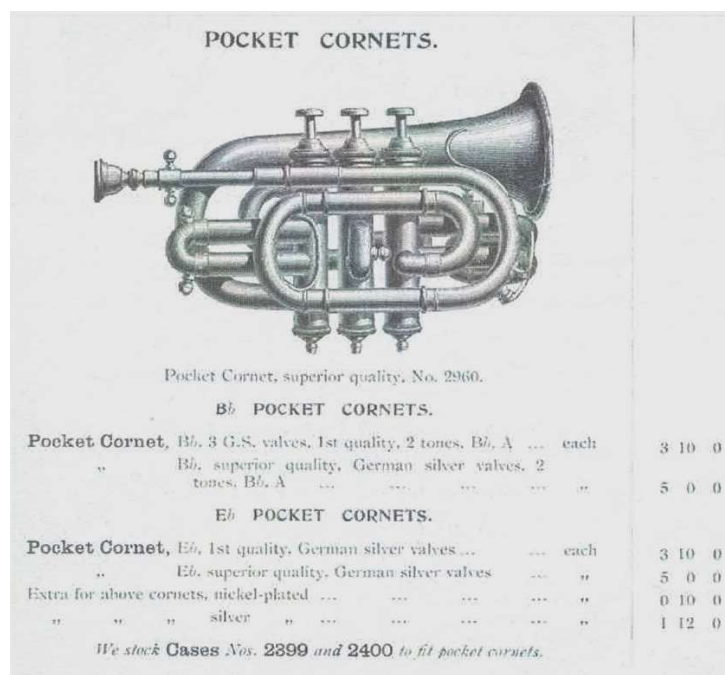


It takes some experimentation with combinations of shanks because this was originally made to play at a higher pitch (A = 450 to 457) which was the standard for brass band instruments in the UK and USA until after the First World War². Pitch is surprisingly sensitive to the mouthpiece, and the player, and may require some lipping. perhaps because of the shortened bell, but it can be experimentally tried at modern pitch A = 440 using the following combinations:

- In A slide D (pulled 20-25mm) with shank A
 slide D (pulled 35mm) with shank C
 slide E (pushed in) with shank A
 slide E (pulled 25mm) with shank C
- In B flat slide D (pulled 20-25mm) with shank B
 slide D (pulled 35mm) with shank C
 slide E (pushed in) with shank B
 slide E with shank A (the author's standard set-up for modern B-flat)

The C slide is less successful, but might play in B.

This instrument has been used in orchestral concerts to great effect, not least because its appearance attracts interest, in Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake Danse Napolitaine cornet solo, Berlioz's cornet obbligato in Symphonie Fantastique, Prokofieff's Lieutenant Kije Suite and Jenkins' Armad Man.



From the English catalogue

The Guilbaut Mouthpiece

This mouthpiece has a flared, grooved throat. It can't be said to make any difference to performance, although that would have been the intention, but it plays very well indeed, and suits the instrument. The design intention was to direct air through the mouthpiece rather than swirling around in the cup, but this betrays a misunderstanding of mouthpiece physics and probably just attracts a build-up of muck. In 2024 these were selling for £200 on the Internet, perhaps opportunistically.



Engraved on the exterior of the cup

Engraved on the shank

EMBOUCHURE RAYÉE
GUILBAUT
RTE 5 G.D.G

GISBORNE
37 SUFFOLK STREET 3
BIRMINGHAM

From <https://sites.duke.edu/dumic/2020/11/30/guilbauts-embouchure-rayee-in-paris/>

E. Guilbaut is somewhat of an historical enigma. Despite his high-profile accomplishments at the turn of the twentieth century—named President of the “Association des Cornettistes de Paris” and the inventor of the “embouchure rayée,” or groove-throated mouthpiece—little else is known of his history. Guilbaut developed his mouthpiece at Couesnon & Cie, considered the most famous musical instrument company in the Western world by the end of the nineteenth century. An entry from a surviving Couesnon catalog (shown above) promotes the grooved mouthpiece as a new and fundamentally improved tool for any brass player of any skill level. Curiously, this revolutionary adaptation disappears entirely in Couesnon catalogs from 1910 and is never featured again, though groove-throated mouthpieces have continued to be developed by other instrument makers (even in the present day). Guilbaut’s name vanishes as quickly as the grooves themselves, and thus the Couesnon cornet mouthpiece in the DUMIC collection can be dated ca. 1900–1910.

EMBOUCHURES RAYÉES GUILBAUT

HORS CONCOURS
PARIS 1900

Embranchure en cuivre pour Cornet, Bugle, Petit Bugle, Clairon.....	Fr.
— — — Cor, Alto, Trompette.....	2.50
— — — Baryton, Basse, Trombone.....	3.50
— — — Contrebasse en mi b.....	4.50
— — — Contrebasse en si b.....	5
Embranchure argentée pour Cornet, Bugle, Petit Bugle, Clairon.....	3.70
— — — Cor, Alto, Trompette.....	4.50
— — — Baryton, Basse, Trombone.....	6
— — — Contrebasse en mi b.....	7.50
— — — Contrebasse en si b.....	9
Augmentation pour embouchure rayée faite sur modèle.....	3

AVANTAGES DE L'EMBOUCHURE RAYÉE

Elle supprime toute résistance à la formation du son, toute déviation et toute déperdition du souffle. Elle donne au coup de langue une sûreté d'attaque précise, mathématique. Elle permet d'atteindre et de tenir sans effort les notes les plus aiguës aussi bien que les plus graves. Elle diminue considérablement la fatigue des lèvres. Elle donne à l'instrument une sonorité plus belle, plus pure, plus homogène et mieux timbrée.

Enfin, elle évite presque complètement les fâcheux accidents connus sous le nom de couacs.

Photographs

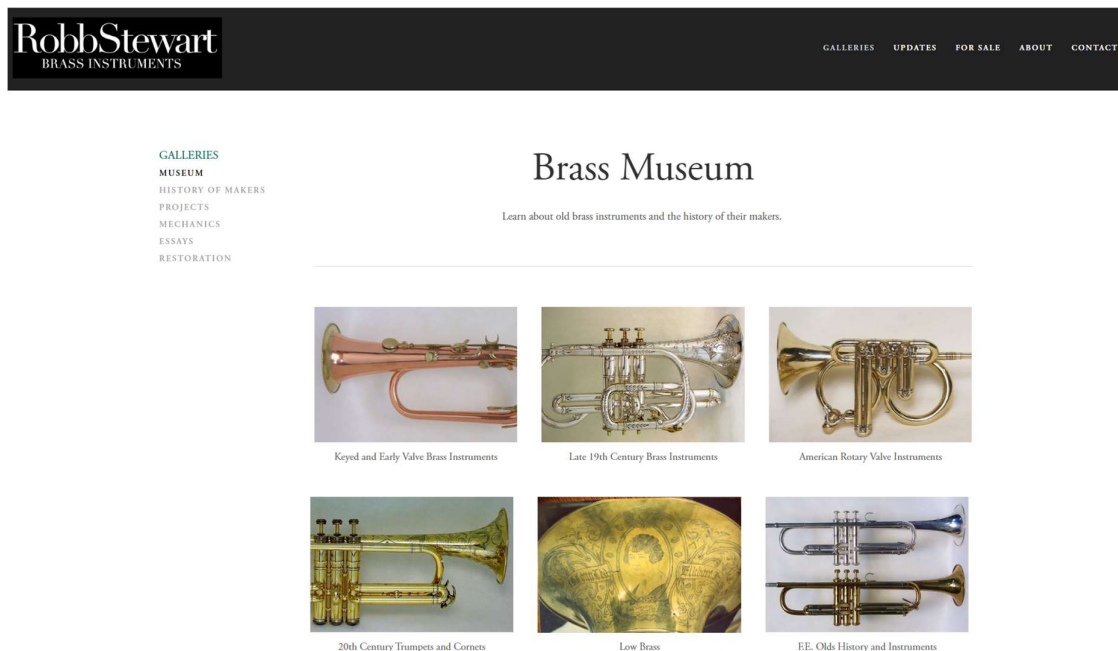




Collectors

There are two established experts on pocket cornets, each with excellent collections and websites:

Robb Stewart <https://www.robbstewart.com/museum>



Nick de Carlis: <https://www.pocketcornets.com>



Restoration Records


McQueens Musical Instruments

Black Horse Workshop
488 Bolton Road
Salford
Manchester M27 8UR

Sales Receipt

Tax Date	Sale No.
04/02/2019	2628

Sold To
COLIN BLOCH 10 BRISTOL ROAD WEST HARPTREE SOMERSET BS40 6HF

		Cheque No.	Payment Method	Project
			Visa	
Description	Qty	Rate	VAT	Amount
THIBOUVILLE-LAMY POCKET CORNET..COMPLETE OVERHAUL AND SILVER PLATE	1	395.00	S	395.00
CORNET MOUTHPIECE..POLISH AND SILVER PLATE	1	25.00	S	25.00
POSTAGE AND PACKAGING	1	30.00	S	30.00
VAT% VAT Amount			Subtotal £450.00	
Rate	VAT	NET	VAT Total £90.00	
S@20.0%	90.00	450.00	Total £540.00	
TOTALS	90.00	430.00		
Company VAT Number		451477346		

Smith Brass Services



Invoice

Pocket Cornet

Colin Bloch
21 Folly Close
Radlett
WD7 8DR

Invoice number
INV-0069

Date of supply
28th April 2020

Date of issue
28th May 2020

*Paid
Thank You*

Due by Wednesday 10th June 2020

£66.20

Please make a bank transfer with account number, sort code, and reference specified.

Account name	Sort code	Account number	Reference (invoice no)
Chris Smith	608371	00996191	INV-0069

Qty.	Description	Unit price	Total price
1	Valve Service/Alignment	£60.00	£60.00
1	Lubricants used: Ultra-Pure Professional Valve Oil, Ultra-Pure Regular Tuning Slide Lube (Main Tuning Slide), Ultra-Pure Heavy Tuning Slide Lube (Valve Slides)	£0.00	£0.00
1	Ultrasonic Dip (Degrease and Sterilise)	£0.00	£0.00
1	Postage	£6.20	£6.20
	Total		£66.20

Business address
9 Sharnford Close
BOLTON
BL2 1LG

Contact details
Name Chris Smith
Email chris@smithbrass.services
Phone 07828850416

Member of National Association
of Musical Instrument Repairers
(NAIMR)



www.smithbrass.services

9 Sharnford Close, Bolton, BL2 1LG
chris@smithbrass.services

07828850416



28/5/20

Hi Colin

Just a few things I forgot to mention on the phone.

Once I'd re-assembled the cornet, notes below the stave sounded very stuffy, almost as if there was a hole. I checked for any leaks but everything was good as it should. I think that it therefore may be a slight gap when the slides are inserted so I have used some heavy slide lube to ensure a seal is created. If you find it is too thick, wipe off some of the lubricant and add a drop of valve oil onto. Alternatively, you can use an alternative lubricant. I put the regular slide lube on the main tuning slide as a comparison.

With regards to the alignment, Valve top 2 has an extra felt in it and Valve 3 has two very small O-rings in the top of the cap to make the stem 'longer'. Every other material or part I tried was either too big or not strong enough to raise it the 1.5mm! If I find something better at any point I shall post it down to you and if they happen to break or get lost, let me know and I shall send some down to you.

I hope you enjoy the pocket cornet.

All the Best

Chris



DR COLIN BLOCH is a South African orchestral trumpeter, soloist and independent researcher who currently lives in Britain. He learned from **GEORGES FRANS** (of the Paris school) and from **CHUCK FEW** (of the Chicago school). www.colinbloch.com

- 1 Colin Bloch, *Pocket Cornet* by Jérôme Thibouville-Lamy & Cie, (ITG Journal January 2021), vl 45, no.2
- 2 There is a good explanation at <https://www.robbstewart.com/high-pitch-and-low-pitch>