

**START SOME OTHER WAY: EDGAR HUNT'S CAREER JOURNEY  
THROUGH AND BEYOND THE 1930s,  
MAINLY AVOIDING HASLEMERE**

ANDREW PINNOCK

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**Abstract**

Edgar Hunt is remembered and deservedly admired for work he did to promote the revival of the recorder in mid twentieth-century Britain, especially its use in schools. He and Arnold Dolmetsch's son Carl were close contemporaries, building careers as recorder advocates and expert players at the same time. Since Dolmetsch was a family name synonymous with 'early music', and Dolmetsch recorders were the best in the world, Carl enjoyed advantages that Edgar had to manage without. (Though along with the advantages went heavy responsibility, for the livelihoods of Dolmetsch workshop employees and for maintaining traditions that Hunt was free to subvert.) Never at home in Dolmetsch circles, Hunt looked for opportunities elsewhere, and proved remarkably adept at both finding and exploiting them.

'Start Some Other Way' follows Hunt on his career journey through the 1930s, on through the Second World War (when military service interrupted it), and out the other side. It sheds new light on episodes omitted from Hunt's later autobiographical accounts, on lines of development connecting different types of recorder featured in the story, and on Hunt's role as a design influencer. The British school recorder movement instigated by Hunt massively expanded the market for all makes of instrument. Even Dolmetsch had to adapt their designs and manufacturing methods to keep up with demand.

Prior research by Alexandra Williams and Robert Ehrlich is gratefully acknowledged. To tackle questions not so far resolved, this article introduces new evidence – some of it recently unearthed by Professor Ehrlich, and with his permission published here for the first time.

**Keywords**

Edgar Hunt – Arnold Dolmetsch – Carl Dolmetsch – recorder revival – Wilhelm Herwig – Schott & Co.

## START SOME OTHER WAY: EDGAR HUNT'S CAREER JOURNEY THROUGH AND BEYOND THE 1930s, MAINLY AVOIDING HASLEMERE

ANDREW PINNOCK

### Opening acknowledgements

*My two fairly recent articles on early Dolmetsch recorders left threads of a different but related story, centred on Edgar Hunt, deliberately loose.<sup>1</sup> This one tries to tie them up. I want at the outset to acknowledge my heavy debt to Alexandra Williams, whose 2005 PhD dissertation contains a wealth of Hunt-related information not available elsewhere;<sup>2</sup> and to Robert Ehrlich, a far more competent interpreter of German-language source material than I can ever hope to be. Professor Ehrlich is very kindly allowing me to publish some of his own research findings for the first time here.*

*No-one now alive has a better understanding of the context in which Edgar Hunt made early career decisions than Marguerite Dolmetsch and Brian Blood. Their willingness to share insights greatly enriched mine. I am glad of an opportunity to thank them in *The Consort* – house journal of the Dolmetsch Foundation, in which clues to a parting of ways that Hunt could have taken first appeared nearly a century ago.*

**I**ssue 2 of *The Consort*, dated December 1931, carried this announcement, meant to flush baroque flute-playing talent out into the open or at least persuade a promising newcomer to give the instrument a try:

*A member of the Dolmetsch Foundation wishes it to be known that he is prepared to lend an early one-keyed ivory transverse flute to a member who desires to undertake seriously the study of this instrument. If the progress made is satisfactory, the owner will present the flute to the player. Full details can be obtained from the Secretary.<sup>3</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Pinnock, 'Boring for Britain: The Design, Development and Mass Deployment of Dolmetsch Recorders, 1920-1980', *The Galpin Society Journal* 76 (2023), pp. 32-66; Andrew Pinnock, 'Boring for Britain (Dolmetsch Recorders 1920-1980): Six Brief Addenda', *The Galpin Society Journal* 77 (2024), pp. 83-95. Both available for free download here: <https://gs.galpinsociety.org/open%20access.htm> .

<sup>2</sup> Alexandra Williams, 'The Dodo was Really a Phoenix: The Renaissance and Revival of the Recorder in England 1879-1941', PhD diss., University of Melbourne, 2005. Available online here: <https://hdl.handle.net/11343/36930> . Williams conducted several interviews with Hunt near the end of his life, checking his verbal testimony against published accounts, against unpublished memoirs that Hunt let her read, and against unpublished notes on recorder manufacture that he had gifted to the Bate Collection, University of Oxford. I had no means of access to these notes while working on the present article: the Bate was closed to visitors at the time. I hope to look through them personally when it re-opens, and to write a short follow-up piece for *The Consort* if any fresh discoveries need reporting.

<sup>3</sup> *The Consort* 2, December 1931, Foreword (signed G.R.H. = Gerald R. Hayes), unpaginated, last

In a 1931 Haslemere Festival concert shortly before, Edgar Hunt had played ‘the one-keyed *traversa* for Arnold Dolmetsch in Bach’s *Peasant Cantata*’ on ‘a beautiful ivory flute with a gold key, in its original case with two *corps de rechange*’.<sup>4</sup> Hunt had the instrument on loan from Arnold Dolmetsch, as he thought.<sup>5</sup> One of two ivory flutes in the Dolmetsch Collection of Musical Instruments now in the Horniman Museum has a gold key and *corps de rechange* exactly as described by Hunt.<sup>6</sup> Whether it formally belonged to Dolmetsch in 1931 or to a Dolmetsch Foundation member willing to lend it to Dolmetsch to lend to Hunt for this public audition (an open question at present), the upshot is clear enough: Hunt was not asked back.<sup>7</sup> What could have been his moment for adoption into Dolmetsch’s extended musical family came and went, leaving Hunt to make independent headway as a professional ‘early musician’ from then on. Few if any others were trying to do that without Dolmetsch patronage in 1930s Britain. Doggedness, ingenuity and opportunism carried him through, together with a fair dose of luck, and useful family connections of his own.

Hunt never made recorders, but did advise others on aspects of design and did register a number of patents protecting designs in which he had had a hand. The instruments resulting met very real needs – for cheap, well tuned school recorders before the Second World War (imported from Germany at Hunt’s instigation); for musically viable recorders of any description during the war (few emerged from the Dolmetsch workshop while staff there were busy making aircraft parts); and for quieter classroom instruments after the war (not as shrill as plastic descants tended to be in beginners’ hands). This article has a strongly organological slant. It discusses types of recorder that owed their existence to Hunt along with possibilities for music-making opened up or kept open by the instruments’ availability, and some of the ways

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paragraph.

<sup>4</sup> Hunt, *The Recorder and its Music* (London: Herbert Jenkins, 1962), p. 135; Williams, ‘The Dodo’, p. 100.

<sup>5</sup> Arnold Dolmetsch posted the flute to Edgar with a letter urging him not to arrive in Haslemere with any fixed ideas about how to play Bach on it: ‘I am not sending the part, I prefer you should have the first impression of it *from me*. This will save trouble’. For the full text of the letter see Margaret Campbell, *Dolmetsch: The Man and his Work* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1975), p. 245.

<sup>6</sup> Frances Palmer, *The Dolmetsch Collection of Musical Instruments* [Catalogue] (London: Horniman Museum, 1981). The relevant entry reads: ‘V: 15 [A] / One keyed flute / c 1760 / Inscribed: London. / The flute is made of ivory and is fitted with a single gilt key. The touchpiece is decorated with floral scrolls and the slightly irregular square cover is decorated with bagpipes. / The three *corps de rechange* are intended to enable the player to adjust to different pitches. / The original embouchure has been plugged and a new one cut in the head. / The instrument retains its fitted case covered with tooled leather.’ Since re-numbered M20-1983. Image available here: <https://www.horniman.ac.uk/object/M20-1983/> [accessed 31 July 2025].

<sup>7</sup> Despite a favourable review in *The Musical Times* by E. van der Straeten, his viol teacher at the time, an old family friend and mentor with little interest in finding fault: ‘Mr. Edgar Hunt distinguished himself by his brilliant playing of the flute obbligato on the very difficult obsolete one-keyed flute for which Bach wrote it’ (*The Musical Times* 72/No.1063 (September 1931), p. 845). In later festivals, when a transverse flute part needed covering Carl Dolmetsch played it on a voice flute (alto in D).

in which Dolmetsch responded to competitive pressure when Hunt and his business partners brought it to bear. It does not present very much new biographical information or archival evidence. Instead it asks how instruments mentioned in rapid passing by others writing about recorder revival history actually behaved, and considers the effects of widening consumer choice in the British market for recorders, as makers other than Dolmetsch entered and re-shaped it.

Hunt was born into a musical and musically well networked family.<sup>8</sup> His father Hubert, Organist and Master of the Choristers at Bristol Cathedral from 1901 to 1945, directed the old-established Bristol Madrigal Society from 1915 and was highly active on the city's chamber music scene through more than four decades in residence there. He played violin to a professional standard, as well as keyboards. Madrigal Society soirées programmed by Hubert included plenty of seventeenth-century English repertoire, little of it familiar to audiences at the time, so providing a context in which Hubert and those of his friends who owned antique instruments could try them out in public. Much later, Edgar remembered guest appearances by Eric Marshall Johnson and E.H. Fellowes playing lutes, Sir Walford Davies on clavichord and spinet, and Hubert himself playing the spinet and virginals.<sup>9</sup> Instruments were borrowed as necessary: 'the Jacobus White virginal of 1656 belonging to Dr Temple-Bourne', a near neighbour of the Hunts in Bristol (this instrument is now in the London Museum);<sup>10</sup> 'a Longman and Broderip spinet which had belonged to Sir Walter Parratt (whose pupil my father had been at Windsor) and was lent by Lady Parratt his widow'; and 'a small gebunden clavichord ... belong[ing] to Dr (later Sir) Walford Davies, a life-long friend of father's. This clavichord was often at home on long periods of loan and was much played. It was given to father after Sir Walford's death in 1941 and is now in the Russell Collection at Edinburgh'.<sup>11</sup> Edgar grew up surrounded by early music, in other words.<sup>12</sup>

If Edgar 'had always wanted to play a wind instrument' partly to escape the long, dauntingly expert keyboard and string shadows cast by Hubert,<sup>13</sup> he nevertheless

<sup>8</sup> (Auto)biographical information in this and later paragraphs mainly assembled from Hunt, *The Recorder and its Music*; Williams, 'The Dodo'; and Anne Pimlott Baker's 2010 article 'Hunt, Edgar Hubert' in the online *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [ODNB], here: <https://www.oxforddnb.com/display/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-98414?rskey=TrLflH&result=1> [accessed 31 July 2025]. Other sources checked in an effort to resolve discrepancies are cited as necessary. Hunt shared early career recollections with a number of interviewers over the years. The published accounts resulting cover headline events in a broadly consistent way but do differ in detail.

<sup>9</sup> Williams, 'The Dodo', p. 95.

<sup>10</sup> Image and description here: <https://www.londonmuseum.org.uk/collections/v/object-119445/james-white-virginals/> [accessed 31 July 2025].

<sup>11</sup> Edgar Hunt, 'A Harpsichord Odyssey (I)', *The English Harpsichord Magazine* 2/8 (April 1981), p. 190.

<sup>12</sup> Though not to the exclusion of others sorts, as seems to have been the experience of Dolmetsch children more or less his age.

<sup>13</sup> Hunt, *The Recorder and its Music*, p. 133. See J.M. Thomson, *Recorder Profiles* (London: Schott, 1972), p. 38 for Edgar's likely reason for choosing the flute.

started on the flute with full parental approval. Hubert accompanied his first public flute recital.<sup>14</sup> Another active member of the Bristol [Gentlemen's] Musical Club, Dr C.W. Pearce, made flute-and-piano arrangements of eighteenth-century sonatas so that Edgar could explore them. Pearce owned early editions, was a skilled organist well used to figured bass realization, and had recently (1924) retired as Director of Studies at Trinity College of Music, London.<sup>15</sup> With Pearce one of his mentors, and Walford Davies together with Hubert Hunt helping him prepare for audition,<sup>16</sup> Edgar was well placed to compete for London conservatoire flute scholarships. He won one at Trinity, and started there in summer 1927.<sup>17</sup>

Pearce's successor as Director of Studies at Trinity, Joseph Cox Bridge, not unnaturally took Edgar under his wing. Bridge had been Organist and Master of the Choristers at Chester Cathedral for 48 years before retiring from that role and moving to London. He died not long after (1929), but his short period of overlap with Edgar sparked recorder-related conversations that would not otherwise have happened.<sup>18</sup> Bridge invited Edgar to his home, showed him several eighteenth-century recorders, and told him about the Bressan set in Chester.<sup>19</sup> Bridge had been shown these now-famous instruments soon after their re-discovery in 1886, in a Chester Archaeological Society storeroom. In 1901 he brought them to London to illustrate a lecture on 'The Chester "Recorders"', and recorders more generally: this was delivered at a meeting of The Musical Association (now Royal Musical Association), and duly printed in the Association's Proceedings.<sup>20</sup> Bridge gave Hunt a garbled account of the Bressan demonstration that he and three other recorder-playing neophytes had managed to get together on that occasion, along with pointers to further reading. Hunt bought a copy of Christopher Welch's *Six Lectures on the Recorder* perhaps on Bridge's recommendation, writing the date on which he had acquired it inside: his eighteenth birthday, 28 June 1927.<sup>21</sup> Hunt was well prepared for his first in-person concert encounter with recorders, therefore. On 1 October 1928 'The German Singers', on a tour round England organized by Rolf Gardiner (John Eliot's father), gave a Bristol concert that Edgar managed to attend. Some of the singers played recorders too, early

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<sup>14</sup> Williams, 'The Dodo', p. 94.

<sup>15</sup> Williams, 'The Dodo', p. 95. *The Musical Times* 66/No. 987 (May 1925), p. 446 noted Pearce's then-recent retirement from Trinity.

<sup>16</sup> Williams, 'The Dodo', p. 96.

<sup>17</sup> Hunt's scholarship award was announced in *The Musical Times* 68/No.1011 (May 1927), p. 452: 'As a result of the recent open competition, a scholarship for one year, with a possible renewal, has been awarded to Ethel M. Jones, for singing, and Edgar H. Hunt, for flute playing'.

<sup>18</sup> For an overview of Bridge's career, see his obituary in *The Musical Times* 70/No.1035 (May 1929), p. 463.

<sup>19</sup> Williams, 'The Dodo', p. 51.

<sup>20</sup> Joseph Cox Bridge, 'The Chester "Recorders"', *Proceedings of the Musical Association* 27th Session (1900-1901), pp. 109-120.

<sup>21</sup> Hunt, *The Recorder and its Music*, p. 133. The book thus acquired was Christopher Welch, *Six Lectures on the Recorder and Other Flutes in Relation to Literature* (London: Oxford University Press, 1911).

Peter Harlan models which were by then available in SATB consort sets.<sup>22</sup>

Hubert Hunt visited the Haslemere Festival in August 1929. His positive report back to Edgar was easily corroborated. In *The Musical Times* (October 1929) E. van der Straeten praised Carl Dolmetsch and Miles Tomalin for their virtuoso playing, while also noting the breadth of repertoire available to them: Handel orchestral music in which recorders featured, a Handel sonata, concertos for one and two recorders by Robert Woodcock, ‘difficult divisions, for two recorders and lute, by Nicola Mattei, c.1670’, and ‘an excellent Pavana for recorders, viols, and lute’ (sixteenth-century Spanish, by Luis Milan).<sup>23</sup>

To experience it for himself Edgar spent 1930’s festival fortnight in Haslemere.<sup>24</sup> He ordered his first ever recorder while there, probably, not from Dolmetsch but from Oskar Dawson; Dawson promising quick delivery so that Edgar could play it in Bristol Madrigal Society’s January 1931 Ladies’ Night concert. This marked his public debut on the instrument.<sup>25</sup>

A Madrigal Society member aware of Edgar’s new interest lent and later gifted him four eighteenth-century recorders, heirlooms which the donor valued but never played. With access to these, to his Dawson treble and to a Bärenreiter-branded treble bought from Germany Edgar was able to compare alternative fingering systems – common eighteenth century (now usually referred to as ‘Hotteterre’), ‘Dolmetsch’ (favoured by Dawson, who had worked for Dolmetsch before setting up on his own) and ‘Harlan’ (wished on Bärenreiter by Peter Harlan, the firm’s recorder design consultant) – and to form a strong preference for Dolmetsch’s.<sup>26</sup> Hunt knew from the beginning how Dolmetsch fingerings differed from the common eighteenth-century type, and could have explained these differences more clearly than he did in later writings on recorder technique. The stark ‘English’ vs ‘German’ divide on which he insisted pushed real historical fingering variety to the margins of most players’ consciousness. He could have explained more clearly, too, that cheaply printed eighteenth-century recorder tutors frequently contain defective charts. The Appendix to this article explores fingering issues in more detail than would be helpful here.

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<sup>22</sup> Edgar Hunt, ‘The Recorder and its Music’, *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association 75th Session* (1948-1949), p. 49.

<sup>23</sup> E. van der Straeten, ‘Haslemere Festival of Chamber Music’, *The Musical Times* 70/No.1040 (October 1929), p. 933.

<sup>24</sup> Hunt, *The Recorder and its Music*, p. 134; Williams, ‘The Dodo’, p. 98.

<sup>25</sup> Hunt, *The Recorder and its Music*, p. 134. In unpublished memoirs written decades later Hunt recalled his Dawson treble arriving by post in December 1929, and moved his recorder-playing debut forward to January 1930 (see Williams, ‘The Dodo’, pp. 97-98 & n.277). Madrigal Society Ladies’ Nights were annual events. 1931 seems more likely. Hunt’s 1962 published testimony points to it; and rapid fulfilment of orders for hand-made instruments more often happens when makers and their customers have first established a personal relationship.

<sup>26</sup> Hunt, *The Recorder and its Music*, pp. 134-135.

## *The Consort*

Edgar graduated from Trinity in 1930 but stayed on for three more years, still having flute lessons, giving some himself, following the college's part time teacher training course and (as the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* bluntly puts it) 'unsuccessfully attempting a MusB degree of Durham University'.<sup>27</sup> In 1933 he started work with Novello & Co. as assistant to the firm's chief music reader H.A. Chambers, leaving in 1937 to join the staff of Schott & Co.<sup>28</sup> From Chambers and from others encountered during his stint with Novello Edgar picked up valuable inside knowledge of music publishing trade practices, learning in particular how music editors and arrangers could turn their efforts to royalty-earning account.

Emil Brauer, a new friend made in Haslemere on his first (1930) visit, kept Edgar up to date with developments in Germany and, as one of the activists driving it, was able to tell Edgar how Germany's youth recorder movement was managing to grow at such an extraordinary pace.<sup>29</sup> Brauer gave Edgar blueprints for success in England, should he decide to launch a similar movement on home turf. Most steps along the way described by Edgar in 'The Revival of the Recorder' – Chapter 7 in *The Recorder and its Music* (1962) – and by Edgar in other publications, never-published notes and interviews, followed German precedent, adapted just as much as necessary to ensure that opportunities specific to the English scene could be seized and that obstacles with potential to block his progress in England could be circumvented. Hunt brought Germany's early 1930s 'Recorder Circus' to the UK, essentially, on a smaller scale but replicating all the main features caricatured by German lute-revivalist Hans Neemann in 1932:

*[T]he fashion for the recorder has reached dimensions of which Arnold Dolmetsch ... could surely not have dreamed ...*

*Nearly monopolistic traders deliver the instruments, government authorities give their support, and now methods and editions of mostly unsuitable music for recorder*

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<sup>27</sup> ODNB. See n.8.

<sup>28</sup> ODNB's Hunt article, compiled after his death with help from private informants (most likely family members), is unambiguous on this point: 'In 1933 he was apprenticed to the music reader in the music printing factory of Novellos, and remained there for a year after finishing his apprenticeship in 1936 ... In 1937 Hunt began to work for Schott & Co., the music publisher'. See also Thomson, *Recorder Profiles*, pp. 36-38. In conversation with Thomson as his profile took shape, Hunt had identified H.A. Chambers by name.

<sup>29</sup> Hunt and Brauer both appear in Jenny Uglov's joint biography of the artist couple Sybil Andrews and Cyril Power, as early music experts on an otherwise amateur but surprisingly ambitious London early music scene. Hunt had regular playing friends including Andrews and Power, and while Brauer was over for the 1934 Haslemere Festival took him along to meet them. See Jenny Uglov, *Sybil and Cyril: Cutting Through Time* (London: Faber & Faber, 2021), Chapter 26: 'Pipes and Viols', with notes on pp. 368-370. Hunt's pre-war friendship circle was far more colourfully Bohemian than he let on to interviewers in later life.

... appear. There has to be a recorder magazine (!), and other like-minded periodicals set up recorder corners, instrument agencies, and advice centres. Courses and lectures ... conferences and meetings ... [p]romotional concerts and radio programmes with recorders do the rest.<sup>30</sup>

Edgar started teaching recorder evening classes at Trinity in 1935.<sup>31</sup> For students wanting to take grade exams, he had Trinity's full recorder syllabus ready by 1940.<sup>32</sup> Britain's Society of Recorder Players launched in October 1937. Urged to cooperate by mutual friends, against their instincts at the time, Carl Dolmetsch and Edgar Hunt agreed to serve as its joint musical directors under Arnold Dolmetsch's honorific presidency. The German music publisher Schott & Co. turned its London showroom into Britain's 'Centre for Recorder Players': Hunt ran that side of Schott's operation for nearly four decades.<sup>33</sup>

By 1934 Hunt was writing on recorders for *The Amateur Musician*, a recent magazine start-up. He married its founder in 1938.<sup>34</sup> The Society of Recorder Players produced a members' bulletin called *The Recorder News*, to which Hunt as co-editor contributed extensively. In 1940 he self-published five issues of *Edgar Hunt's Recorder News-Letter* ('obtainable by direct subscription only, three shillings per annum, from Edgar Hunt'), before the project fizzled out.<sup>35</sup>

Membership associations and special interest publications of all sorts flourished in 1930s Britain, to be fair. The Dolmetsch Foundation, The Incorporated Society of Organists, The English Folk Dance and Song Society and The Pipers' Guild of Great

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<sup>30</sup> Quoted from Robert Ehrlich, 'The Recorder in the Twentieth Century', in David Lasocki and Robert Ehrlich, *The Recorder* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2022), p. 244. Ehrlich's translation. One phrase omitted. When Neemann mocked 'the pious flock ... follow[ing] its false prophets' he was aiming not at Hunt or either Dolmetsch but at German targets.

<sup>31</sup> Announced in *The Musical Times* 76/No.1110 (August 1935), p. 740: 'The lecture on Recorders given at the College earlier in the summer term aroused so much interest that it has been decided to hold classes for the study and practice of this old English instrument. The classes will be conducted by Mr. Edgar H. Hunt, and will provide, in addition to individual instruction, opportunity for taking part in an ensemble (or to give it the old term, a "consort") of recorders'.

<sup>32</sup> See Williams, 'The Dodo', pp. 245-247 and Appendix 14 (pp. 449-453).

<sup>33</sup> See Manuel Jacobs [writing as 'Terpander'] in *The Musical Times* 79/No.1147 (September 1938), p. 656: 'anybody interested should get hold of Schott's new catalogue of recorder music, where the wealth of material disclosed is almost embarrassing'. Hunt had positioned Schott's London showroom as 'The Centre for Recorder Players' by the outbreak of war, clearly, even if formal adoption of that strapline came later.

<sup>34</sup> Williams, 'The Dodo', p. 191; p. 13 n.47 for their year of marriage.

<sup>35</sup> 'PRINTED BY EDGAR AND ELIZABETH HUNT, LONDON': Hunt and his wife had set up a private press in their Fleet Street flat to produce the newsletters. Far more work went into printing them than writing them, as subscribers must have realized after reading the first few. When Alexandra Williams interviewed him in 2002, Hunt 'recalled only that "it probably died"' ('The Dodo', p. 200).

Britain all took legally-constituted shape between 1928 and 1932:<sup>36</sup> all still exist, and are still publishing journals and newsletters. Hunt had joined the London Flute Society in 1929 and from that gained ‘invaluable experience in how societies were run, as well as an understanding of the expectations of amateur members’.<sup>37</sup> He looked to Germany not so much for organizational models, more for business openings and for opportunities to build a professional profile in parts of the fast-expanding recorder universe far enough away from Haslemere to allow him to escape its gravitational pull.

Robert Ehrlich spotted this advertisement for Herwiga-Rex recorders in September 1933’s issue of the German early music magazine *Collegium Musicum*, rather unexpectedly including lengthy quotation from a letter of endorsement written by Hunt. In English translation the advertisement reads as follows:

*The Herwiga-Rex recorders, offered in the spring of 1933 by the Wilhelm Herwig-Markneukirchen company for the benefit of German wind players, have unfortunately not always received the critical acclaim they deserve. However, a review by the distinguished recorder teacher and expert on Dolmetsch recorders, Edgar H. Hunt, acknowledges the valuable work that has been done here. Mr. Hunt writes to the Herwig company, unsolicited, out of sheer delight at the advantages of the Herwiga-Rex recorders: (translated from English [and here back-translated from German])*

I have just received one of your new Herwiga-Rex alto recorders, which I ordered through my friend ..., and I feel compelled to write to you immediately and congratulate you on your success in producing such a fine instrument. I have thoroughly examined the instrument and find it flawless in intonation, reliable in tone, and beautifully neat in appearance.

I confidently believe that your attempt to introduce the traditional English fingering in Germany will be the beginning of a new chapter in the history of recorder playing in your country, and I foresee the time coming when the new fingering will be generally accepted.

It will be a great pleasure for me to be able to order more recorders from you, and I will certainly recommend them to my recorder students.

EDGAR H. HUNT F.T.C.L., L.R.A.M., M.R.S.T.  
Teacher of Recorder, Lecturer and Soloist

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<sup>36</sup> 1928, c.1930, 1932, 1932 respectively.

<sup>37</sup> Williams, ‘The Dodo’, p. 199.

*These new recorders are built with German and English fingering, saving the player the trouble of relearning. Only the finest, sound and beautiful wood is used, which is also treated with oil to make cracking of the head completely impossible.*

*Despite all contrary assertions, the reasons for which are clear enough, HERWIGA-REX RECORDERS remain the instruments of choice for serious, technically mature musicians.<sup>38</sup>*

Herwig was an instrument dealer, not a maker, and a relatively late entrant into the German recorder market. To capture market share he needed a distinctive angle; and from the pages of *Collegium Musicum* one very tempting possibility jumped out. Erwin Walter's lengthy review of the 1932 Haslemere Festival confirmed rumours that had been circulating in German recorder circles for some time:

*Even a brief report on Haslemere must also take into account the special interests of recorder players. Those who cannot make the long journey to southern England – one should not overestimate these difficulties! – will ask themselves all the more insistently: What do Dolmetsch's recorders sound like? And are they really as expensive as people say? Well, they sound good, have excellent carrying power, and respond wonderfully easily, so that Carl, who leads four recorder groups, can "playfully" dash off 2½ octave runs whenever requested. They are, however, "expensive" by German standards, partly because the drilling, done in the old-fashioned way, requires more hours of work, but above all because the master, whose intellectual roots lie in the Fabian Society, is a staunch opponent of the "sweating system".<sup>39</sup>*

The Dolmetsch recorder qualities most admired by Walter, and by other German enthusiasts who heard them or had a chance to play them, were precisely those with which German-made instruments of contemporaneous date were least associated. If Herwig could source recorders matching the range and agility for which Dolmetsches were celebrated, and sell them at prices well below Dolmetsch's almost unaffordable, then customers would snap them up: that was a reasonable assumption.

Since he had no recorder-retailing skin in the game prior to 1933, Herwig (unlike his main competitors) could launch Dolmetsch-derived models without implicitly

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<sup>38</sup> *Collegium Musicum: Blätter zur Pflege der Haus- und Kammermusik* [Kassel: Bärenreiter] 2/4 (1933), unpaginated back matter. Robert Ehrlich's translation. The German original is accessible here: [https://www.kasseler-musiktage.de/files/556-rythm/bilder-content/kmt\\_Archiv/kmt\\_Archiv\\_Programmvorschau/kmt\\_1933.pdf](https://www.kasseler-musiktage.de/files/556-rythm/bilder-content/kmt_Archiv/kmt_Archiv_Programmvorschau/kmt_1933.pdf) [accessed 31 July 2025]. Without quoting from it, Peter Thalheimer cited this advertisement in his book *Die Blockflöte in Deutschland 1920-1945: Instrumentenbau und Aspekte zur Spielpraxis* (Tutzing: Hans Schneider, 2010), p. 146, also noting Herwig's slightly earlier use of the same Hunt letter of endorsement in an advertising brochure.

<sup>39</sup> Translated from Erwin Walter, 'Das Achte Arnold Dolmetsch-Musikfest', *Collegium Musicum* 1/5 (1932), pp. 93-97. The German original keeps Fabian Society and »sweating system« in English.

repudiating non-historical designs already in his catalogue. His competitors fought back via brand ambassadors, often also the authors of tutor books for Harlan-fingered recorders embracing these instruments' limitations, by withholding praise that Herwig thought he deserved. He may have approached Hunt for more objective English 'Dolmetsch expert' testimony. Support from Arnold or Carl Dolmetsch would have been too much to hope for when they had instruments of their own to sell and (from 1932) a German agent in place to handle imports from Haslemere. If Hunt's testimonial really was sent to Herwig unsolicited, he nevertheless had a motive other than sheer delight in the quality of the product for wishing to see it in print. Along with Herwiga-Rex recorders it advertised his availability for recitals and pedagogical consultancy: German players finding that 'new chapter in the history of recorder playing in [their] country' hard to negotiate would know who to ask for help. Hunt's article 'A Short History of the Recorder and Recorder-Playing in England' made a similarly deft self-promotional point when it appeared in the German magazine *Der Blockflötenspiegel*, also in 1933.<sup>40</sup>

Hunt travelled to Germany in September 1934, to attend the Kasseler Musiktage ('music days' or music festival, Germany's answer to Haslemere), join Emil Brauer in a fringe playing session, and tour the trade exhibition running concurrently. With Brauer translating, Hunt asked a number of German dealers about their potential willingness to supply 'recorders with the English [Dolmetsch] fingering, to [his] design, for the English market'.<sup>41</sup>

Herwig turned out to be the only dealer open to the idea. He had by then – as Hunt was well aware – been selling Herwiga-Rex recorders for well over a year, in Dolmetsch- and Harlan-fingered variant forms so that German customers reluctant to switch from one system to the other could avoid doing so. Hunt went into their meeting not (despite some of his later claims) as a Dolmetsch-fingering evangelist preaching news that Herwig had never heard before, but as a would-be sales partner wanting to represent Herwig on a UK sole agency basis. Herwig agreed. So did Ammer Brothers (harpsichord makers) and Hans Jordan (lutes and viols), with whom Hunt struck similar deals.<sup>42</sup> He meant to import and sell German-made alternatives to most types of early instrument available from Dolmetsch, clearly; abandoning the plan when market research revealed next to no demand for keyboards and strings of non-Dolmetsch origin, and more demand for recorders than he could hope to meet unaided. Arrangements with the Ammers and Jordan lapsed. After a year or so wrestling with cashflow difficulties, and because of them only managing to import

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<sup>40</sup> Edgar Hunt, 'A Short History of the Recorder and Recorder Playing in England' ('Kurzgefaßte Geschichte der Blockflöte und des Blockflötenspiels in England'), *Der Blockflötenspiegel* 3 (1933), p. 1 ff. and p. 33 ff.

<sup>41</sup> Hunt, *The Recorder and its Music*, p. 136.

<sup>42</sup> Williams, 'The Dodo', p. 139.

recorders in small numbers,<sup>43</sup> Hunt passed the Herwiga agency onto Rushworth & Dreaper in Liverpool, well established music and musical instrument retailers with the staff capacity and credit rating needed to make a success of it.<sup>44</sup> From then (sometime in 1935)<sup>45</sup> until the start of the Second World War Herwiga-branded recorders reached British customers through Rushworth & Dreaper's distribution network, letting Hunt off the financial hook and leaving him 'free to do more teaching, lecturing and editing'.<sup>46</sup>

Formal MRST accreditation – Membership of the Royal Society of Teachers, for which Trinity College music education diploma holders were eligible to apply – raised Hunt's stock in music education circles. He formed a group to give demonstration concerts in schools,<sup>47</sup> and from 1935 to 1939 was doing that 'up and down the country, up as far as Newcastle ... hardly a week went past when we didn't have something'.<sup>48</sup> Two very energetic school music inspectors working for the UK government's Board of Education, John Horton and Cyril Wynn, seem to have issued invites on behalf of participating schools and may have funded the programme from a central budget. The concerts were meant to support music teaching in public elementary [primary] schools, and inspire teachers to make creative classroom use of instruments that were easy to learn and cheap to buy. As Alexandra Williams noted and as Hunt himself was certainly aware, his turn toward music education, editing and publishing involved 'commodifying the recorder' along German revival lines, selling instruments and related merchandise for a commercial return.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Different accounts of Hunt's recorder importing activity give very different estimates of turnover. 'I imported a number of Herwig recorders for my pupils and others; but when it came to supplying the larger wholesalers, I had not the capital to finance the customs duty as well as their quarterly accounts' (Hunt, *The Recorder and its Music*, p. 136); 'Edgar Hunt became an importer, and Herwig recorders ... began to flow into England, twenty five to a hundred at a time' (Thomson, *Recorder Profiles*, p. 37); 'growing demand left his flat overflowing with recorders' (Uglow, *Cutting Through Time*, p. 240). Exaggeration made for a better story, no doubt, but Hunt reined things in when Alexandra Williams interviewed him in 2001: 'he later remembered that given his financial struggles he would have only imported about ten or so instruments in any one shipment, as they were required' (Williams, 'The Dodo', pp. 139-140). Williams took Hunt at his last word on the subject. I follow Williams here.

<sup>44</sup> For much more on Rushworth & Dreaper, though no mention of recorders, see Nicholas Wong, 'The Rushworths of Liverpool: A Family Business. Commerce, Culture and the City' (PhD diss., University of Liverpool, 2016). Hunt knew Maynard Rushworth, a member of the family dynasty running Rushworth & Dreaper (and curator of the firm's in-store antique musical instruments museum), well enough to approach him with a proposition.

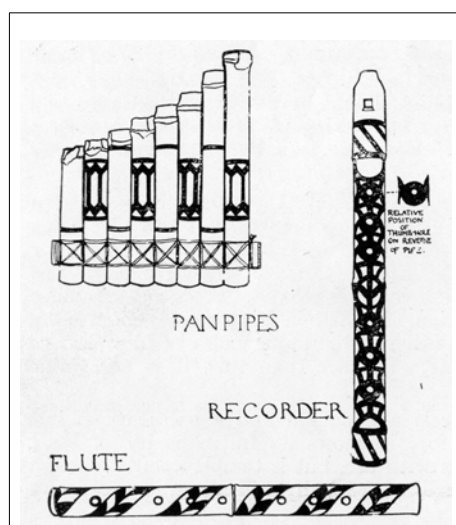
<sup>45</sup> Date from Williams, 'The Dodo', p. 140.

<sup>46</sup> Hunt, *The Recorder and its Music*, p. 136.

<sup>47</sup> 'Old Music with Old Instruments'. Its other members were Cecily Arnold (voice and virginals) and Eric Marshall Johnson (lutes and viols). See Williams, 'The Dodo', p. 129.

<sup>48</sup> Williams, 'The Dodo', p. 129.

<sup>49</sup> Williams, 'The Dodo', p. 154.



Illus. 1: Three different types of bamboo pipe, pictured in *The Pipers' Guild Handbook*, 1932 (p. 21). 'The bamboo recorder is a beautiful and a subtle pipe, but it must be practised before it shows its full capacity of tone ... A happy specimen, with a little cross-fingering, will play two octaves, but few directions can be given, since the fingering varies, and must be found by the individual maker' (p. 22).

The Pipers' Guild of Great Britain took a completely different approach, as far removed from commodification as could be imagined. The Guild's founder Margaret James enjoyed Board of Education support, like Hunt, and also enjoyed a head start: she had been promoting the use of bamboo pipes in schools since 1926, alongside single-string square-box 'viols'.<sup>50</sup> Pupils learned pipe- and viol-making skills first: this was an essential part of James's programme. Guild initiates pledged never to buy instruments from others, and never to sell their own. Whole-class 'orchestras' were the goal. Their practice sessions could not begin in earnest until everyone had an instrument working properly.

Pipemaking went into retreat as Britain's school recorder movement gained momentum.<sup>51</sup> Recorders promised much quicker, more predictable results. Yet Guild activity in the early 1930s, just as Hunt was starting out, pulled the lower-bound prices for recorder-like instruments usable in schools down to practically nothing (see Illus. 1). He did have to acknowledge Margaret James's influence in that respect. 'Having spent less than five shillings on tools, we may make any number of pipes for twopence or threepence each'.<sup>52</sup> At one shilling and

sixpence, a single copy of Hunt's 1934 pamphlet *Duets and Trios for Bamboo Pipes*, published by Novello, cost more than the full set of pipes needed to play them. Frustration with 'the modest capabilities of these instruments' very clearly came across in the Note with which Hunt prefaced *Duets and Trios*. He was willing to test the market for early music transcriptions playable on pipes but quickly realized its limited potential for growth.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Margaret James, *The Pipers' Guild Handbook* (London: J.B. Cramer & Co., 1932), p. 5.

<sup>51</sup> Retreat but not terminal decline. 'In its perfected form', as Margaret James had predicted, 'pipe-making and playing is essentially an art for grown-up people' (*The Pipers' Guild Handbook*, p. 9). See here for news of recent international activity, including the release of a CD on which all the bamboo pipe pieces written by Ralph Vaughan Williams are brought together: <https://www.flanders-recorder-duo.be/en/bamboeen/> [accessed 31 July 2025].

<sup>52</sup> James 1932, *The Pipers' Guild Handbook*, p. 4.

<sup>53</sup> Edgar Hunt (arr.), *Duets and Trios for Bamboo Pipes* (London: Novello, 1934), p. [1]: 'In arranging these little Ayres, Minuets, &c., of the late 17th and early 18th centuries for performance on bamboo pipes, it has been impossible, owing to the modest capabilities of these instruments, to give exact transcriptions from the originals. However, the editor has endeavoured to keep as close as possible to the original texts in so far as the limitations of the pipes have allowed him'.

His first, short stab at writing on the recorder produced a tutor for adult beginners, successfully pitched to Oxford University Press in 1931 but not passed for publication until it had been re-worked in collaboration with Robert Donington, Secretary to the Dolmetsch Foundation.<sup>54</sup> Hunt chafed against this constraint but OUP imposed it for good reason. The only people likely to buy *A Practical Method for the Recorder* (as it became) would also be buying instruments from Dolmetsch: without the firm's imprimatur it would be lucky to sell at all. *A Practical Method* was issued in two volumes: playing instructions with some solos and duets in the first, and a selection of Haslemere Festival consort pieces in the second, some arranged by Donington and some by Marco Pallis (another Dolmetsch/Haslemere insider). Volume 2 gave players 'the nucleus of an ensemble repertory'.<sup>55</sup> When recalling its birth travails decades later Hunt neglected to say where that repertory came from.

The negotiations necessary to agree its content delayed publication of *A Practical Method* until 1935. Hunt placed a different tutor book with Boosey & Hawkes meanwhile: *A Concise Tutor for Descant, Treble and Tenor Recorders, For Use in Schools*.<sup>56</sup> This also appeared in 1935. Widespread use in schools (even the private ones to which wealthy parents sent their children) had not been a realistic prospect in 1931, but by 1935 Hunt was pushing hard for it. Tutees would need entry-level instruments to practise on. Uncoincidentally, he wrote *A Concise Tutor* while nailing down recorder import arrangements with Herwig.

Boosey & Hawkes were instrument-makers mainly, publishing tutor books and sheet music to boost the sale of woodwind and brass instruments mass-produced in their Edgware factory. The firm did try making and selling school recorders on the back of *A Concise Tutor*, but as Hunt implies abandoned the effort after failing at it:

*About this time the firm which had published my Concise Tutor started making some recorders. Unfortunately these instruments did nothing to enhance the firm's reputation. I do not think they realized how very difficult it is to make a good recorder that will sell at a low price.*<sup>57</sup>

Descant and treble recorders made by Boosey & Hawkes were advertised on the back cover of Hunt's *Concise Tutor*, priced at 17/6 and 27/6 respectively. They looked very much like Herwiga-Rexes, as black-and-white photos illustrating the advertisement reveal. They were also advertised on the back cover of *A Practical*

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<sup>54</sup> Hunt, *The Recorder and its Music*, p. 135.

<sup>55</sup> Hunt, *The Recorder and its Music*, p. 135.

<sup>56</sup> Edgar Hunt, *A Concise Tutor for Descant, Treble and Tenor Recorders For Use in Schools* (London: Boosey & Co., 1935). Although Boosey & Co. had merged with Hawkes & Son in 1930, for some reason *A Concise Tutor* appeared with this pre-merger imprint.

<sup>57</sup> Hunt, *The Recorder and its Music*, p. 137.

*Method* (OUP presumably thinking that recorder sales would drive demand for their instruction books as well as Boosey's), in these terms:



Illus. 2: Dolmetsch descant #1040 (left), Herwiga-Rex #1803 (right).

*Recorders are now being made by Boosey & Hawkes, Ltd., 295, Regent Street, London, W.1. The Descant model in C is 17/6. The Treble in F is 27/6. The Tenor Recorder will follow in due course. All models are pitched C522 [A439] and the traditional English fingering has been maintained.*<sup>58</sup>

Tenors may or may not have followed in due course. To my knowledge, no Boosey & Hawkes recorders dating back to the 1930s survive in public collections, nor have I come across one for sale.

Herwig could supply Herwiga-Rex recorders in Dolmetsch- and Harlan-fingered variant forms because Dolmetsch's baroque-copy bore design – copied in turn by Max König, running the workshop in which Rexes were made – supported both configurations. Dolmetsch bores were backward-compatible with Harlan fingering in

other words. Harlan-fingered Rexes suffered from none of the defects that Hunt and others in Britain had come to associate with German recorders. Their range was not restricted to one octave and a sixth, nor were their #IV's and #IV''s problematic. [#IV' = treble  $\natural b'$ /descant #f'; #IV'' = treble  $\natural b''$ /descant #f'.] Instruments would veer in one direction or the other (Dolmetsch or Harlan) at hole-drilling and tuning stage but until then both possibilities remained open.

Cheap and mid-price instruments in Herwig's expanding range, also with Dolmetsch-type baroque-copy bores, could be produced in Dolmetsch- and Harlan-fingered variant forms just as readily as Rexes. They may have lacked the tonal sophistication of Rexes but they played all the same notes properly in tune. Alone among German dealers when Hunt asked round in Kassel (September 1934), Herwig was prepared to supply 'recorders with the English fingering ... for the English market' because he was confident of his and König's ability to do so profitably. The pair had readily-adaptable designs in hand if not already in production. Herwig could have offered corps de rechange for switching between systems but no-one at the time saw value in that. So Harlan-fingered Herwigas stayed in Germany, Dolmetsch-

<sup>58</sup> Edgar H. Hunt and Robert Donington, *A Practical Method for the Recorder* (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), Vol. 2, back cover.

fingering Herwigas left for England, and comparisons that might have tempered English recorder players' sense of invincible superiority were put off indefinitely.

Illus. 2 shows two descants side by side: Dolmetsch #1040 on the left, Herwiga-Rex #1803 to the right. The two correspond in all performance-critical dimensions. The Rex has a somewhat simplified external appearance – baroque turnery nudged in the direction of art deco – but its bore profile, finger hole disposition and voicing geometry clearly derive from a Dolmetsch original. It is a Dolmetsch-fingered example. A player forced to choose between them could do so only on subjective



Illus. 3: Five treble recorders side by side: from left to right, a Herwiga Solist, Herwiga Chor (I), Herwiga Chor (II), Herwiga Hamlin and (for comparison) Dolmetsch #758. The Chors are numbered (I) and (II) for ease of reference here: no such marks appear on the instruments themselves.

grounds, since neither obviously out-performs the other. Hunt's positive assessment of the Rex treble he bought and tested in 1933 would apply equally to descant #1803.

Until the late 1930s Dolmetsch windway dimensions, ramp angles, ramp lengths (a function of angle) and ramp/edge curvatures were very variable. Exceptionally skilled final voicing pulled all the elements together to ensure consistently successful musical performance but nothing like a 'standard' product emerged. Use of the same reamers to make every instrument in a same-sized batch did of course ensure that bores were reproduced near-identically.

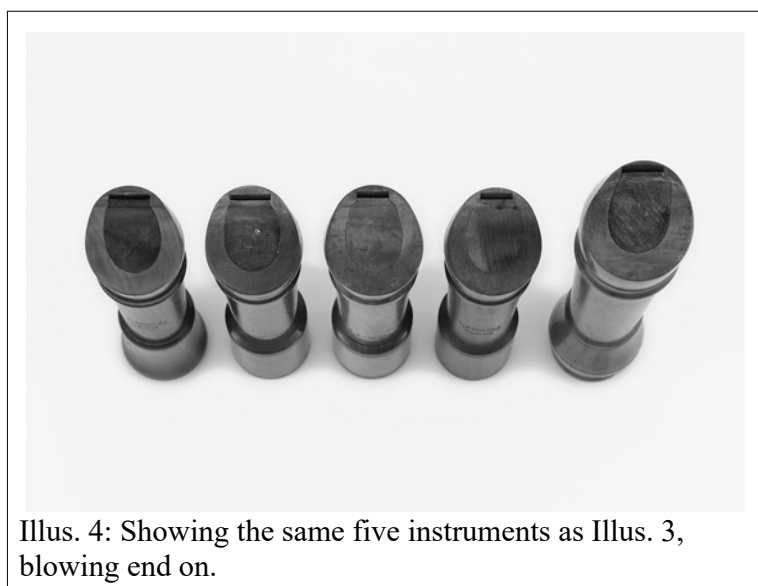
Like early printed books that went through multiple editions, pre Second World War Dolmetsches survive in a variety of states. Recorders supplied by Dolmetsch for the purposes of copying presumably represented the firm at its best around the time of their dispatch; but designs evolved through the 1930s. Comments on the accuracy with which other makers either tried or managed to copy Dolmetsch must be heavily caveated when the only evidence supporting them is observational. How do we know which states their reference instruments were in? In the Herwig-König case contemporaneous documentary evidence

exists as well, much of it unearthed by Robert Ehrlich, permitting a more ambitious attempt at historical reconstruction than would be prudent otherwise.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>59</sup> See Ehrlich, 'The Recorder in the Twentieth Century', pp. 238-240, notes 65-71 and bibliography (where directed by the notes). Ehrlich cites 'a series of frank consumer reports' by the German recorder virtuoso Manfred Ruëtz, published in the early 1930s. Ruëtz compared Dolmetsch instruments with the best available German-made alternatives and ruled consistently in favour of Dolmetsch. Comparing Dolmetsches with Herwiga-Rexes specifically, Ruëtz observed 'that

Illus. 3 shows five treble recorders side by side: from left to right, a Herwiga Solist, Herwiga Chor (I), Herwiga Chor (II), Herwiga Hamlin and (for comparison) Dolmetsch #758. All were made in the mid to late 1930s. Even then, as is evident from the photo, some Dolmetsches had single holes for right-hand fingers 3 and 4.<sup>60</sup> The Solist is an instrument with Harlan fingering meant for sale in Germany. The rest are English either in origin or by adoption, with Dolmetsch fingering.

All parts of all four Herwigas are interchangeable. Any head-joint will fit with any centre and any foot. However they are mixed and matched, a fully viable instrument always results. The head with which that instrument ends up determines its playing character.



Illus. 4: Showing the same five instruments as Illus. 3, blowing end on.

Illus. 4 shows the same five instruments as Illus. 3 blowing end on, so that windway openings can be compared. The Herwiga Solist and Chor (I) have tapered windways, wider at the blowing end than at the windway exit end. Chor (II) and the Hamlin have parallel-sided windways. Since windway height is more or less maintained these are smaller in cross-sectional area. A player sensitive to feel would not be inclined to

feel would not be inclined to blow them quite so hard. Whether tapered or parallel-sided, all the Herwiga windways pictured are flat (rectangular in cross section) rather than curved.

Dolmetsch #758's over-sized ramp and asymmetrically cut ramp side-walls suggest hand-work by a relatively inexperienced employee. (Extant eighteenth-century originals rarely if ever look like this, nor in general do Dolmetsches.)<sup>61</sup> Though #758's windway roof is obviously curved at the blowing end, its edge is almost straight. This and similar instruments needed very careful final voicing before they could be passed for sale, and while attending to that Carl Dolmetsch must have wondered whether

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Dolmetsch's design was not protected by a German patent ... [and] listed features that had evidently been directly copied from Dolmetsch: the bore design (but not the exterior form) and the shape of the windway, block, and labium'. The same explanation for similarities between Dolmetsch #1040 and Herwiga-Rex #1803 would be hard to avoid.

<sup>60</sup> Illus. 3 shows Dolmetsch #758 with a replacement foot joint made by John Willman. The single-holed original survives but its socket is too badly cracked to repair.

<sup>61</sup> Others in this over-sized ramp state do exist. Those I have seen have serial numbers dating them to the mid to late 1930s.

efforts to match windway to edge curvature were worth the bother. Straight-edged Herwigas served all but the most advanced players just as well and were much simpler to make.<sup>62</sup> By the late 1930s Dolmetsches with flat, laterally-tapered windways and straight edges were starting to appear, resembling Herwiga Solists in this respect. The Dolmetsch ‘letterbox’ type of windway, parallel-sided like those of Herwiga Chor (II)



Illus. 5: Herwiga Chor (I) alongside a Harlan-branded treble also meant for ‘chorist’ use.

and the Hamlin shown in Illus. 4 but much taller at the blowing end, was a post-war development further simplifying manufacture while allowing soloists to play louder than ever.<sup>63</sup> Once Dolmetsch and Max König, making Herwigas, were openly competing for British custom they had good reason to keep each other’s products under review. Design influence possibly did flow in both directions between 1935 and 1939.

Illus. 5 shows Herwiga Chor (I) alongside a Harlan-branded treble also meant for ‘chorist’ use – in ensemble rather than solo situations. External resemblances are obvious. Other German dealers mimicking Peter Harlan (who got in first) sold sets of recorders with this rather blocky external turning; Herwig followed suit. Harlan-type head joints were proportionately shorter than Dolmetsch’s. Herwigas matching them in this respect could still be produced in Harlan- and Dolmetsch-fingered variant forms because bore narrowing in Dolmetsch’s carefully-calibrated eighteenth-century manner (a

Herwiga feature too, copied from Dolmetsch) was only necessary at the bottom end of the instrument.

Together Illus. 2, 3 and 5 make Herwig’s approach to market segmentation helpfully clear. Rexes were sold as Dolmetsch near-equivalents, playing to the same high standard and looking suspiciously similar. Cheaper Herwigas were designed to appeal to German customers wanting (in most cases) ensemble instruments for use alongside other German dealers’ offerings, and to fit in would need to ape the competition.

Further clues to Herwig’s marketing method can at least be glimpsed in Illus. 3. (Colour reproduction would have made them easier to spot.) Chor (II) is a varnished version of the Hamlin treble, more expensive for that reason. Varnish apart, there are

<sup>62</sup> I find pre-war Herwiga recorders much more rewarding to play than Alexandra Williams apparently did, even the cheapest Hamlins. For her assessment see Williams, ‘The Dodo’, pp. 141-142.

<sup>63</sup> See Pinnock, ‘Boring for Britain’, pp. 49-50 for more on the evolution of Dolmetsch’s ‘letterbox’ windway and likely reasons for it.

no other differences between them. The ‘Solist’ is no more or less a solo instrument than Chor (I). Its modified external turning, softening the Chor’s blockiness with a few curves gesturing toward the baroque, implies more of a difference than players comparing the two would be likely to notice. Whether Chor (I) and Chor (II) – both Dolmetsch-fingered, both exported to England – were meant for sale at different prices is a moot point. Chor (I) possibly acquired a Solist’s tapered windway by accident.

The ‘Hamlin’ sub-brand for unvarnished, Dolmetsch-fingered Herwigas was another marketing ploy, apparently suggested by Hunt: Hamelin mis-spelled, referencing the Pied Piper familiar to English schoolchildren from their story books and cinema visits.



Illus. 6: A Herwiga Hamlin descant on the left (Dolmetsch fingering, for the British market), and one of Herwig’s C-soprano school recorders on the right (Harlan fingering, for the German market).

The Pied Piper cartoon short in Walt Disney’s ‘Silly Symphonies’ series was released in September 1933.<sup>64</sup> In 1934 London publisher John Lane issued an attractively packaged book-of-the-film with ‘Story and Illustrations by the Staff of the WALT DISNEY STUDIOS’, passing credit for the writing on from dead Victorian poet Robert Browning to Mickey Mouse’s Technicolor animation team.<sup>65</sup>

Illus. 6 shows a Hamlin descant on the left, and a broadly similar Harlan-fingered C-soprano on the right (probably marketed by Herwig though unstamped).<sup>66</sup> Their head joints are interchangeable. As was the case with more expensive Herwigas, the firm’s cheap descants could be readied for sale in England rather than Germany at tuning stage, fairly late in the manufacturing process. Hunt’s design suggestions may not have been as useful or influential as he imagined. (Both instruments play at the same pitch. The one on the right has a more pronounced bore taper, and as a result is somewhat longer. The perforated key covering its hole 4 gives players a risk-free way to half-hole for #IV’/#IV" [#f’/#f"], pointless on Dolmetsch-fingered instruments, not really necessary here, but a handy

addition for which some customers were presumably prepared to pay extra.)

The child-friendly course book for which Britain’s school recorder-teaching pioneers had been waiting reached British classrooms in October 1939: Part 1 of *The*

<sup>64</sup> <https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x2zyxz3> [accessed 31 July 2025]. Also available on YouTube.

<sup>65</sup> Walt Disney Studios [Story and Illustrations by the Staff of], ‘*The Pied Piper*’ | *From the Walt Disney Silly Symphony* | *Illustrated in Colour* (London: John Lane/The Bodley Head, 1934).

<sup>66</sup> The Herwiga-branded canvas bag in which it reached me may or may not be original.

*School Recorder Book*. Part 2 followed three months later.<sup>67</sup> These were massively successful spin-outs from a music education experiment that Hunt had helped to set up, designed to get every elementary school pupil in the Bradford area of West



Illus. 7: Left to right: the Enford School Recorder, a near-identical instrument branded Lyra, and the Paxton Dulcet. All three are descants with plastic head joints and black-lacquered wooden bodies.

Yorkshire started on the recorder. Bradford then was a heavily industrialized city, full of textile mills in which many of the children would go on to work, not on the face of it a natural hotbed for developing interest in ‘the music and instruments of olden times’.<sup>68</sup> Hunt ran two week-long recorder-playing courses to prepare Bradford teachers for their extended role;<sup>69</sup> but the success of the experiment was mainly due to Edmund Priestley and Fred Fowler, leading its local delivery. They developed teaching material instantly intelligible to pupils.

Unlike Hunt’s *A Concise Tutor, The School Recorder Book* included photos to demonstrate the fingering of every note. The schoolgirl player shown in all these photos used a white-painted Hamlin descant: white paint against black finger holes made for clearer reproduction. All the consort instruments illustrated were Herwigas. The ‘more expensive’ descant pictured was a Herwiga-Rex: double holes for #c’ and #d’ put the price up. *The School Recorder Book* Part 1’s introductory ‘talk’ on the history of the recorder credited Arnold

Dolmetsch with most of the research enabling its modern revival, but photos of Dolmetsch products beyond any likely reader’s financial means were tactfully

<sup>67</sup> Edmund Priestley and Fred Fowler, *The School Recorder Book Part 1* (Leeds: E.J. Arnold & Son, 1939); Edmund Priestley and Fred Fowler, *The School Recorder Book Part 2* (Leeds: E.J. Arnold & Son, 1940). Reprints of Parts 1 and 2 of *The School Recorder Book*, though frequent, were rarely dated. Their first editions may not have been dated either. E.J. Arnold only found out later that they had a classic on their hands. First and reprint date lists given in the 3rd edition, 13th impression of Part 1 (1947) and the 2nd edition, 6th impression of Part 2 (1947) show that their first editions both appeared in wartime, in October 1939 and January 1940 respectively. Hunt was out by two years when, in *The Recorder and its Music* (p. 137), he wrote that ‘Arnold’s of Leeds published [*The School Recorder Book*] in 1937’.

<sup>68</sup> Priestley and Fowler, *The School Recorder Book Part 1*, p. 7.

<sup>69</sup> Hunt’s own contemporaneous reports, in issues 1 and 2 of *The Recorder News*, confirm that he visited Bradford to train soon-to-be recorder teachers in 1938 and again in 1939. By mistake, almost certainly, the *Recorder and its Music* brought his first visit forward to 1937. See Williams, ‘The Dodo’, p. 131.

omitted. Ironically – and inconveniently – the British school recorder movement had reached take-off speed just as war with Germany put a halt to the Herwiga imports on which its entire future seemed to depend.

Into the breach stepped music publisher Joseph Williams Ltd, launching their ‘Enford’ School Recorder, a new *School Recorder Tutor*, ‘Enford’ Recorder Tune Books and the ‘Enford’ Recorder Series (more music for descant and piano) in late 1939. Enford referenced the London street in which their showroom was located. Ernest Haywood, Tune Book compiler and the *Tutor*’s ostensible author, was a well known editor of educational works for piano, by then in his seventies:<sup>70</sup> the perfect



Illus. 8: A ‘John Adler’ C soprano with a plastic head and dark (Cocobolo?) body; an Enford descant for comparison; and John Adler’s all plastic D ‘soprano recorder’.

front for a sales operation bundling up cheap school instruments with a method promising quick results (‘will teach you to play ... in no time worth mentioning’),<sup>71</sup> and sets of sheet music suitable for handing round in class. Enford recorders were advertised in November 1939 as ready for sale (see Illus. 10):<sup>72</sup> it must have taken Joseph Williams some months to make supply chain arrangements with a British manufacturer able to match Herwig on price.

Illus. 7 shows The Enford School Recorder alongside a near-identical instrument branded Lyra. Since their plastic head joints have the same distinctive kink, presumably they emerged from very similar moulds. Their wooden bodies are interchangeable – and also fit the head joints of German-made ‘John Adler’ [= Johannes Adler] recorders, imported for sale to unsuspecting British customers for a brief period in the run-up to war. Enfords and Lyras were Adler copies, essentially, modifying Adler design fundamentals only with

respect to fingering. The Paxton ‘Dulcet’ recorder also shown in Illus. 7 has a different-shaped head, even more parsimonious in its use of plastic, but the same wooden body as Enfords and Lyras. The same manufacturer supplied unmarked bodies, evidently, to which variously-branded plastic heads could

<sup>70</sup> Haywood died in October 1947 aged 81. In a long career he ‘produced and edited many educational works for piano which have given his name world-wide recognition’. See his obituary in *The Musical Times* 88/No.1257 (November 1947), p. 366.

<sup>71</sup> From a *Radio Times* review quoted on the back cover of reprint editions of Haywood’s *School Recorder Tutor*.

<sup>72</sup> In *The Musical Times* 80/No.1161 (November 1939), p. 743.

be attached prior to sale.

Illus. 8 shows (from left to right) a John Adler C soprano with a plastic head and darkwood (Cocobolo?) body, Harlan-fingered but a respectable instrument when played accordingly; an Enford descant for comparison; and John Adler's all-plastic D 'soprano recorder' – in fact a six-holed pipe with no thumbhole, not a recorder at all. The Adler specimens pictured are in as-new condition, no great surprise considering the tuning grief they would have caused if taken into any British school and used there. Adler bags had been customized for the British market (Illus. 9), but not the instruments inside. By the time buyers found out it would be too late to take them back for a refund.<sup>73</sup> Enfords can be played fairly well in tune across two octaves using Dolmetsch fingering. They were fit for teaching purpose in that respect – and helpfully available, at a time when Herwigas no longer were. But their tonal attributes were radically misdescribed in Joseph Williams' advert (Illus. 10). Weak and woolly comes closer to the mark than 'exceptionally pure'.



Illus. 9: 'John Adler' canvas bags.

In Spring 1940 Paxton & Co., another London music publisher, took on Joseph Williams with 'The Paxton Dulcet Recorder' (Illus. 7) and a series of tune books 'arranged in graded form by Edgar H. Hunt' (see Illus. 11 for a representative advertisement).<sup>74</sup> Hunt had by then produced tutors for OUP, Boosey & Hawkes and Schott.<sup>75</sup> Paxton let him off writing yet another. Instead the Dulcet

came with a free instruction leaflet. Alexandra Williams found Hunt's willingness to work for Paxton even as an arranger hard to explain, but his contract with Schott must have allowed it.<sup>76</sup> In playing terms the Dulcet performs no better and no worse than

<sup>73</sup> German-made Adler recorders 'with English fingering for the English market' started to arrive soon after Herwigas, according to Hunt (*The Recorder and its Music*, p. 137). The Harlan-fingered C-soprano shown in Illus. 8 may have been put into its John Adler bag by mistake; but I cannot think of any plausible excuse for the D-soprano.

<sup>74</sup> In *Music & Letters*, 22/1 (January 1941), unpaginated front matter. For an earlier Paxton advertisement in *Piping Times* (March 1940) promoting recorders without calling them 'Dulcet', see Williams, 'The Dodo', p. 405.

<sup>75</sup> Edgar H. Hunt, *Method for Group Instruction for Recorders (All Types with the English Fingering)* (London: Schott & Co., 1939).

<sup>76</sup> Perhaps Paxton had their March 1941 Dulcet advert in *Piping Times* designed around a clearly

Enfords and Lyras. Paxton & Co. must have hoped that Hunt's implied endorsement would give their basically generic product some stand-out appeal; and for a time perhaps it did.<sup>77</sup>

**SCHOOL  
RECORDER TUTOR**  
By **ERNEST HAYWOOD**  
Price 2/- net

By the aid of diagrams every new step is presented in the clearest way, and beginners are led to proficiency in the most pleasant and instructive manner.

**The 'ENFORD' SCHOOL RECORDER**  
A splendid instrument of British manufacture at the modest price of 5/- (postage 6d.). Exceptionally pure tone, and the special moulded head makes playing extremely simple.  
*Will be sent "on approval" for 10 days on receipt of postage*

**JOSEPH WILLIAMS LIMITED** 29 Enford Street,  
London, W.1

Illus. 10: Advert in *The Musical Times*, November 1939, for the Enford School Recorder.

When recalling the wartime origin of Schott's much more successful all-plastic descant recorder Hunt never mentioned these British-made, wood-and-plastic precursors. His version of the story begins in 1940, with a surprise visit from Mark Barnes of Barnes & Mullins, a London-based trading company sourcing and selling musical instruments and accessories. Barnes showed Hunt a plastic-and-wood sample recorder that he claimed to have made, hoping that Hunt would like it and order in bulk on behalf of

Schott. Hunt declined the offer as first broached but did agree to help Barnes with a new design, registrable in their joint names and earning them royalty income when it went into production.<sup>78</sup> Whether Barnes' rejected effort differed greatly from Enfords, Lyras or Paxton Dulcets may be doubted.

With incentives neatly aligned – profit and prestige for Schott if the new instrument played well, and a modest profit-share arrangement in place to reward its co-inventors – Hunt and Barnes went to work. Barnes had contacts in the plastics manufacturing world, and Hunt on behalf of Schott set the performance standards to which instruments bearing the company name would have to live up.

To economize on material Schott's Plastic Descant as first released for sale was a slender, narrow-bored recorder made of easy-to-mould and, when set, still fairly soft and scratchable cellulose acetate, light in the hand and very pleasant-sounding at low-to-moderate breath pressure. Uncontrolled blowing by schoolchildren would have overpowered it. That, and a tendency to warp when left in the sun or near fires, rendered these instruments unsuitable for school use. Well-preserved examples are rare. Barnes and Hunt switched from cellulose acetate to Bakelite to solve the warping

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recognizable portrait of Hunt 'without ... his knowledge or permission' (Williams, 'The Dodo', p. 406). I consider this highly unlikely.

<sup>77</sup> For evidence connecting the Paxton Dulcet recorder with Rose, Morris & Co.'s suspiciously similar Dulcet design, see n.85.

<sup>78</sup> Williams, 'The Dodo', pp. 143-146.

problem.<sup>79</sup> Though Bakelite instruments would chip or crack when dropped, wooden ones did the same. Careless players would have to explain breakages when they happened, not the manufacturer. Illus. 12 shows the cellulose acetate and Bakelite versions side by side.



**THE PAXTON  
DULCET RECORDER**

BRITISH MADE AND TESTED

An easy, fascinating instrument, with a delicate pastoral tone, suitable for unison or part playing. Each instrument receives individual attention for voicing and tuning. English fingering.

Descant (Tenor) Model—Key C  
Price 5/9 each (Postage 4d.)  
Free instruction leaflet given with every instrument

**MUSIC FOR THE RECORDER**  
Arranged in graded form by EDGAR H. HUNT

**UNISON SERIES** includes English Airs, Handel's Largo, Träumerei, etc.  
**TWO-PART SERIES** includes Bach Minuets, Polonaise, etc.  
**THREE-PART SERIES** includes works by Schumann, Tchaikovsky, etc.

Full particulars of music published will be gladly sent **FREE OF CHARGE** on receipt of a card, or better still ask to see **SEND TO-DAY** copies for inspection through our On Approval Department.

**PAXTON'S**  
36-38 DEAN STREET, LONDON, W. 1

Illus. 11: Advert in *Music & Letters*, January 1941, for Paxton's Dulcet Recorder.

Schott's plastic descants were a great improvement on Enfords, Lyras and Dulcets. After a year or more muddling through without Herwigas, at last Britain's school recorder teachers could unequivocally recommend a British-made substitute. Schott & Co. had the instruments on sale by January 1941, when Carl Dolmetsch gave them a respectful mention in his *Music & Letters* article 'The Recorder or English Flute': 'a few British firms are now doing what should have been done long ago – producing really cheap instruments. The cheapest of them are moulded from plastic materials, and although they cannot with truth be said to equal those in wood, they are serviceable and fill a much-felt need'.<sup>80</sup>

During the winter 1940-41 phase of the London Blitz

Hunt sketched out wooden treble and tenor designs for Schott.<sup>81</sup> This announcement appeared on the last page of *The Recorder News*, issue 4, published in November or

<sup>79</sup> Williams, 'The Dodo', pp. 145-146.

<sup>80</sup> Carl Dolmetsch, 'The Recorder or English Flute', *Music & Letters* 22/1 (January 1941), p. 73. Schott's plastic descant was the cheapest British-made recorder then available, and the only one moulded entirely from plastic.

<sup>81</sup> See Hunt's editorial in *The Recorder News* 4 (1940-41), p. 2: 'Last winter's recorder activities kept me busy, in spite of London's blitz and ever-increasing Home Guard duties ... Schott's wooden treble and tenor recorders were designed in our shelter during heavy raids'.

December 1941:<sup>82</sup>

*Messrs. SCHOTT & CO. LTD, 48 Great Marlborough Street, London W.1. now have a treble and tenor recorder at reasonable prices. This may interest many people enquiring for cheaper instruments.*<sup>83</sup>

Since handmade Dolmetsches had always been the tools of choice for members of the Society of Recorder Players, could still be ordered, and were still being made in limited numbers even at this stage of the war,<sup>84</sup> Schott & Co. would not have been allowed to place any blatant advertisement for rival products in the Society's own magazine. Here – in a spirit of service to cash-strapped readers, and in very small print – they were simply inviting enquiries.

Illus. 13 shows, from left to right: two Schott-branded wooden trebles, a treble branded Rushworth & Dreaper Liverpool, and a Schott wooden tenor. Trebles branded 'John Grey' are occasionally offered for sale online.<sup>85</sup> Hunt's treble design was not

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<sup>82</sup> *The Recorder News* 4 (1940-41), p. 16. Likely months of publication can be inferred from Hunt's editorial in the same issue. 'It seems a long time since I left the world of music for the Army, yet it was only eight months ago.' He joined the army in mid March 1941.

<sup>83</sup> Later advertisements help to fix the treble price point that would have been considered reasonable in 1941. 'FOR SALE: SCHOTT SOPRANO RECORDER, as new, 60/- or offer' (*The Musical Times* 84/No.1201 (March 1943), p. 96). Since hardly anyone in 1940s Britain used the term soprano recorder, and Schott's plastic descants were easy and much cheaper to obtain, this instrument was probably a wooden treble. For sale five years later, and unambiguously labelled with respect to size, a second-hand Schott treble cost about the same: £3 6s (*The Musical Times* 89/No.1265 (July 1948), p. 222). See here for the Bank of England's online inflation calculator: <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator>

<sup>84</sup> In *The Recorder News* 4 (1940-41), p.1, Carl Dolmetsch reported 'a restriction on the output of new instruments', not yet total cessation: 'Despite all efforts to keep pace with the large demand for recorders with the reduced time and facilities available, there is, sad to say, a long waiting list for would-be owners'.

<sup>85</sup> A number of London-based companies making and selling musical instruments merged between the First and Second World Wars. Rose, Morris & Co. bought the musical instrument side of Barnett Samuel and Sons' business in 1932, and with it the Barnett Samuel trademarks 'Dulcet' and 'John Grey'. (Barnett Samuel's much more profitable DECCA gramophone division had floated on the London stock market four years earlier.) Though no firm evidence connecting Rose, Morris & Co. with the manufacture either of 'Paxton Dulcet' recorders or of Hunt-designed wooden trebles and tenors has yet come to light, trademark ownership considerations do suggest their involvement. Rose, Morris & Co. – not Paxton – filed a patent application concerning the Dulcet recorder in May 1944. Grant of patent followed in November 1946. (See Pinnock, 'Boring for Britain', p. 52 for a few more details.) An instrument with the distinctively shaped plastic head shown in Paxton's January 1941 advertisement (Illus.11 here) also appeared in Rose, Morris & Co.'s patent documentation. For a brief period after the Second World War descants of this 1944/6 patented type were sold in boxes labelling them 'A "JOHN GREY" PRODUCT', with 'John Grey and Sons' instruction leaflets discreetly marked 'R.M. & Co. Ltd. LONDON' in one corner. By 1948, Rose, Morris & Co. were advertising completely redesigned all-plastic Dulcet descants very closely

exclusive to Schott's, nor presumably was his tenor design. Other retailers signed up: own-brand stamps applied to otherwise identical instruments leaving the same (as yet



Illus. 12: Schott's wartime plastic descant: cellulose acetate and Bakelite versions side by side.

unidentified) factory gave customers a choice more apparent than real. They closely resembled the Herwiga-Rex trebles and tenors that Hunt had endorsed and imported in the mid 1930s. Actual Herwiga-Rexes may well have been used as models.

Buyers hoping for Rex-like levels of performance were doomed to disappointment. Even the cheapest Herwigas played better.<sup>86</sup> In more favourable circumstances Hunt probably would have tackled quality control problems and got Schott's wooden trebles and tenors working properly; but the war prevented that. He enlisted for military service with the Royal Artillery in mid March 1941,<sup>87</sup> spent the rest of the year shuttling from camp to camp in England, was then posted to India, and finally returned home in 1946. Walter Bergmann, a refugee from Nazi Germany, kept Schott's recorder retail business running smoothly, shipping plastic descants out to schools and to soldiers wanting them

to combat boredom, but further expansion would not have been appropriate or even possible in Hunt's absence.<sup>88</sup> Hunt did not mention his wartime effort to clone Rexes in *The Recorder and its Music* (rather the opposite: 'Wood was out of the question');<sup>89</sup> nor did he include pictures of the instruments resulting in his book's photo parade of Schott successes. Either he forgot about them – possible, with so much else going on –

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resembling pre-war Herwiga Hamlins, giving Hamlin loyalists a source of surrogate supply. Hunt mentioned the latter in *The Recorder and its Music*, p. 157: 'The design of [the] "Hamlin" descant was imitated by Messrs. Rose, Morris for their "Dulcet" recorders'. An early advert for this redesigned Dulcet appeared on the back cover of John Manifold, *The Amorous Flute: An Unprofessional Handbook for Recorder Players and All Amateurs of Music* (London: Workers' Music Association, 1948): 'Acclaimed by Musical Educationalists! PLAYED by those who know the best'. See here for the relevant company histories:  
[https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Barnett\\_Samuel\\_and\\_Sons](https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Barnett_Samuel_and_Sons);  
[https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Rose,\\_Morris\\_and\\_Co](https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Rose,_Morris_and_Co);  
[https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Decca\\_Gramophone\\_Co](https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Decca_Gramophone_Co) [all accessed 31 July 2025].

<sup>86</sup> I base this opinion on limited playing experience, obviously. Instruments in my own research collection were the only ones tested.

<sup>87</sup> See *The Recorder News* 4 (1940-41), p. 2 and p. 6. Hunt (so he said) enlisted three weeks after broadcasting an illustrated radio talk in the 'Music Makers' Half-Hour' series. That programme went out on 21 February 1941. See in addition n. 82.

<sup>88</sup> Williams, 'The Dodo', p. 146.

<sup>89</sup> Hunt, *The Recorder and its Music*, p. 141.

or had chosen to forget.

While mass-producing aircraft parts to government order, Dolmetsch's workshop staff had also been learning new techniques. They relaxed their collective grip on



Illus. 13: Two Schott-branded wooden trebles, a treble branded Rushworth & Dreaper Liverpool, and a Schott wooden tenor.

Arnold's Arts and Crafts principles as duty demanded, emerging from the war far better adjusted to modern factory routine than they had been before. Post-war Dolmetsch recorders have parallel-sided not tapered windways, cut using a machine so that blocks made in a few slightly over-tight standard sizes could quickly be planed down to a perfect fit. Numbered bits of varying diameter were used to drill holes of pre-determined size in pre-determined places. A jig to guide the drilling fixed hole positions. Since very little hole re-sizing or undercutting was now required at final fine-tuning stage, Carl could check every instrument over before passing it for sale and personally guarantee its quality.<sup>90</sup>

Standardization greatly increased workshop output: up from 50-100 per year before the war to 400 or so in the early post-war years, rising to 800 or more in the 1960s and 70s.<sup>91</sup> Once a standard pattern for each size of Dolmetsch wooden recorder had

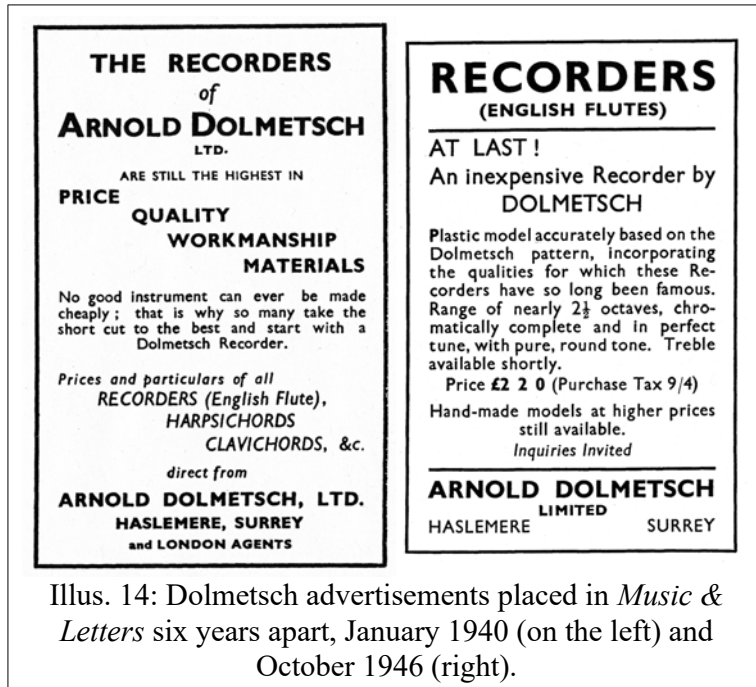
been established – in a marked break with pre-war practice – then Dolmetsch could truthfully claim that the firm's mass-produced Bakelite treble and descant models conformed to it. These launched in 1947 and 1950 respectively. Dolmetsch patent applications filed in 1946 (for the treble) and 1949 (for the descant) gave exact bore dimensions, finger hole positions and finger hole diameters.<sup>92</sup> Both applications had, thanks to the instruments' all-plastic construction, a degree of novelty sufficient to

<sup>90</sup> Irving Sloane, *Making Musical Instruments* (New York: Dutton, 1978), has a generously illustrated chapter (pp. 146-157) on 'The Dolmetsch Recorder'. This includes a full-size technical drawing giving many of the Dolmetsch wooden treble's key measurements, and photos showing various recorder-making tools in use.

<sup>91</sup> See here for a chart connecting Dolmetsch recorder serial numbers with likely dates of manufacture: <https://www.dolmetsch.com/handmaderecorders.htm> [accessed 31 July 2025]. Pinnock, 'Boring for Britain', pp. 58-59 suggests some modification of pre-war output figures implied by the chart.

<sup>92</sup> See Pinnock, 'Boring for Britain', p. 53 for patent numbers and some further information.

justify patent registration, but the measurements integral to them basically derived from wooden treble and descant reference recorders of Dolmetsch's post-war machine-tooled type.



Illus. 14: Dolmetsch advertisements placed in *Music & Letters* six years apart, January 1940 (on the left) and October 1946 (right).

The speed, efficiency and on past form rather unlikely enthusiasm with which Dolmetsch embraced plastic recorder manufacture must have taken Hunt by surprise. Advertisements placed in *Music & Letters* six years apart (Illus. 14, left and right) show how comprehensively the firm U-turned during the war, in light of developments that Hunt, half a world away, was in no position to monitor.<sup>93</sup>

Handmade Dolmetsches were still available in January

1940.<sup>94</sup> 'No good instrument can ever be made cheaply': this was the firm's official position throughout Arnold's lifetime.<sup>95</sup> He died in February 1940. By July 1946 'An inexpensive Recorder by DOLMETSCH' was not only discussable, but on its way. Inexpensive was a matter of degree. Launching the treble first, Dolmetsch aimed it at adults who had been waiting years for the firm to resume recorder production and

<sup>93</sup> *Music & Letters* 21/1 (January 1940), unpaginated front matter; *Music & Letters* 27/4 (October 1946), unpaginated back matter. An advertisement anticipating the latter, identically worded but slightly different in layout, had already appeared in *The Musical Times* 87/No.1241 (July 1946), p. 198.

<sup>94</sup> Perhaps until or even past the end of 1941, though in very limited numbers. See n. 84.

<sup>95</sup> While the earlier advertisement took a side-swipe at Enfords it mainly targeted Robert Goble, a former Dolmetsch employee who had left to set up a workshop of his own, also in Haslemere. Throughout 1939 Goble advertised 'hand-made Recorders ... unique at such moderate prices' in *The Musical Times*. Wording differed somewhat from month to month but the prices quoted undercut Dolmetsch significantly. Dolmetsch hit back in December 1939 and again in January 1940, placing sternly worded counter-advertisements first in *The Musical Times* then in *Music & Letters*. Goble had to put his business plans on hold when conscripted for war work, first in a Gosport boatyard then for the Admiralty Signal Establishment in Haslemere. After the war he moved to Headington, just outside Oxford, to resume instrument-making at a tactful distance from Dolmetsch HQ. For further information see Pinnock, 'Boring for Britain ... Six Brief Addenda', pp. 90-92, and Wikipedia's helpfully detailed article on Robert Goble.

might have to wait years longer if they ordered a handmade wooden one. £2 2 0 plus purchase tax signalled far higher quality than any British plastic recorder supplier had



Illus. 15: Schott's first post-war plastic descant, alongside its matching treble.

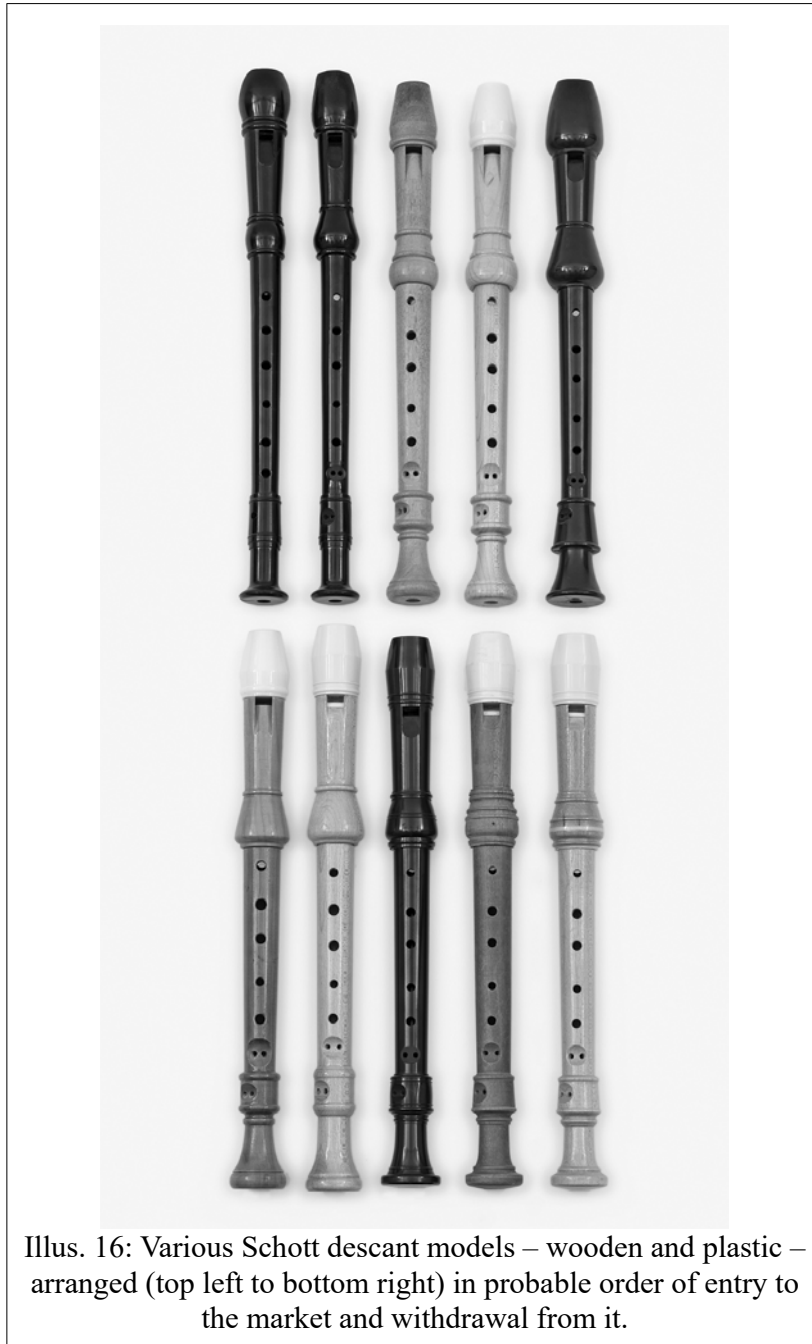
claimed previously. Dolmetsch entered the plastic market with a size of instrument ruling out immediate comparison with others available (all of them descants), and with a value proposition threatening the incumbents. It went like this: Dolmetsch recorders were uniformly excellent. Their price varied because plastic instruments were cheaper to make than wooden ones, not for any other reason. With plastic Dolmetsches now on offer, or soon to be, even customers on tight budgets could afford the best. Boosey & Hawkes, appointed to handle plastic recorder distribution on behalf of Dolmetsch, reinforced this message strongly through the 1950s, reprinting Hunt's *Concise Tutor* with a gushing advertisement for Dolmetsch on the back cover ('When you think of recorders – buy Dolmetsch!') and publishing a new method called *The Book of the Dolmetsch Descant Recorder* in 1959.<sup>96</sup> Imogen Holst had written it. Peter Pears

contributed a short note on breathing. Holst and Benjamin Britten co-edited the Boosey & Hawkes recorder music series into which it slotted. Here were leading figures in Britain's musical establishment publicly endorsing Dolmetsch.<sup>97</sup> Evidently modelled on *The School Recorder Book*, *The Book of the Dolmetsch Descant Recorder* included photos of several schoolgirl players demonstrating correct hand and finger positions on exactly that.

With the Dolmetsch juggernaut now unstoppable, Hunt steered Schott & Co. out of its direct path. As he had before the war he pursued research, teaching and business interests distinct from Dolmetsch's, avoiding conflict and (as it seemed to others in Britain's recorder world) complementing Dolmetsch activity in a generously self-effacing way.

<sup>96</sup> Imogen Holst, *The Book of the Dolmetsch Descant Recorder* (London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1959).

<sup>97</sup> Britten was by far the best-known composer of new 'classically'-positioned music in Britain at the time, and Pears the country's most famous tenor singer. Theirs was a hugely influential artistic as well as personal partnership.



His 1952 recording of Brandenburg 4, with Carl Dolmetsch and the London Baroque Ensemble under Karl Haas, holds up well against others made in the early LP era,<sup>98</sup> but Edgar, unlike Carl, never put himself forward as a virtuoso performer. Later documented appearances alongside Frans Brüggen (in Brandenburg 4) and David Munrow (broadcasting recorder consorts) show or at least imply that he stayed on professional playing form into the 1970s.<sup>99</sup> Hunt designed a chunkier-looking Schott plastic descant to replace its slim war economy predecessor, and a new plastic treble to match (Illus. 15). These instruments had the same distinctive foot-joint silhouette as Schott's wartime wooden trebles and tenors, and as Herwiga-Rexes (Hunt found it especially pleasing), but an ill-proportioned overall appearance owing nothing obvious either to Dolmetsch products or to Dolmetsch's elegantly illustrated patent documentation.

To fill the cheap wooden descant niche from which Herwiga Hamlins had been dislodged in 1939, Hunt designed a genuinely innovative Schott substitute, patented in 1953.<sup>100</sup> At first made entirely of wood, except for its plastic plug-in block, it soon acquired a plastic mouthpiece; and much later a plastic edge moulded along with the mouthpiece. (Pre-formed plastic voicing units could then be glued to wooden head-joint stubs, speeding up manufacture.) Schott's wooden school descants – marketed as such – were quieter instruments than their plastic cousins, appealing to teachers for that reason. Played en masse in class they were kinder on the ears.<sup>101</sup>

Thorough enquiry into the evolution of cheap Schott recorders will not be attempted in this article. To give a very general impression, Illus. 16 arranges various Schott descant models – wooden and plastic – in probable order of entry to the market and

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<sup>98</sup> London Baroque Ensemble/Karl Haas, *Brandenburg Concertos: No. 2 in F Major • No. 4 in G Major (Original Version with Recorders)* (New York: Westminster Recording Company, 1952 [WL 5113]). Available for listening online here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U7lHi30jzz0> [accessed 31 July 2025].

<sup>99</sup> Informal documentation, admittedly. See tributes by Friedrich and Ingeborg von Heune and John Turner in Andrew Mayes (ed.), 'Edgar Hubert Hunt (1909-2006): Tributes and Memories', *The Recorder Magazine* 26/2 (Summer 2006), pp. 44-50. Available online here: <https://www.srp.org.uk/edgar-hunt/> [accessed 31 July 2025].

<sup>100</sup> Patent No. 692491. The patent application was filed in August 1950. For more on the nature of the innovation see Pinnock, 'Boring for Britain', p. 54. Unusually, these instruments had an upper ramp but no corresponding lower ramp. Their head joint walls were thinned down to an edge from the outside only. Manufacture was considerably simplified when edge-cutting excavations inside the bore were no longer necessary. See Illus. 19, near the end of this article, for a partially dismantled head joint view showing how its edge and near-cylindrical plastic block lined up.

<sup>101</sup> Confirmed by Anthony Rowland-Jones in *Recorder Technique* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 139: 'The tone-quality of Schott wooden recorders is intended to have its full effect in choral playing, and individual instruments, therefore, do not possess a commanding tone'. Since Hunt had read and criticized the book before publication he presumably agreed with Rowland-Jones's assessment. These were instruments stripped of any potential for commanding tone by deliberate design decision.

withdrawal from it. In external appearance the three on the bottom right are far more plausibly ‘baroque’ than any of the others.

Illus. 17 shows the plastic version of this ‘baroque’-type descant next to its treble equivalent. These were the last Hunt designs on which he worked with a British



Illus. 17: The Schott plastic ‘baroque’ – or Bressan-type descant shown in Illus. 16 (bottom row; centre) next to its treble equivalent.

manufacturer or manufacturers before retiring from Schott’s in 1974.<sup>102,103</sup> The treble sold as a Bressan copy, after Hunt’s much-admired original, scaled to A440 and adjusted in other necessary ways (Dolmetsch fingering, double holes, and an integral thumb-rest to help support its considerable weight). Unusually for plastic recorders at the time it did have a curved edge and windway. The descants were smaller versions of the treble, with straight edges and windways. As at other pivotal moments in his career Hunt turned to Bressan for guidance, this time on ways to keep ahead of Japanese plastic recorder makers now emerging as a serious threat. Dolmetsch completely redesigned their plastic range around 1970, switching from Bakelite to ABS – the more modern, much lighter type of plastic that Japanese competitors were using.<sup>104</sup> Hunt stuck with wood and heavy plastic, hoping that improved looks (where Bressan came in) would render any more radical re-think unnecessary. It was a brave but unsuccessful strategy from which Schott soon

backed off, parting company with their British suppliers and selling Schott-branded ABS plastic recorders made in Japan instead.

With Bressan’s re-entry the story comes full circle. Hunt-Dolmetsch rivalries

<sup>102</sup> Hunt turned 65 in 1974. *ODNB* confirms his retirement from Schott that year, at (as it was then) the normal pensionable age for men.

<sup>103</sup> From autumn 1964 to December 1970 recorders approved for school use in Britain (and even top-of-the-range Dolmetsches, in case they ended up there) carried a British Standards Institute kitemark and a British Standards Number, 3499-2A. Some of Schott’s c.1971 Bressan-style descants and trebles have strangely spaced-out Schott stamps on their head-joint undersides, clearly designed around the kitemark but leaving a large gap where it usually appeared. BS reference numbers and the mark itself have been blanked out. Other examples do have kitemarks and BS reference numbers. The likely explanation for this anomaly is BS 3499-2A’s withdrawal as or just after the instruments went into production, prompting hurried modification of the moulds and stamps prepared for use before that happened.

<sup>104</sup> Switching to ABS from ‘Dolonite’, strictly speaking, a proprietary type of Bakelite named for Dolmetsch.

belonged to the past. Lively and highly consequential through the 1930s, by 1970 they had mellowed down to mutual respect and even friendship. Hunt left clues to some of the earlier tensions in his writings on recorder-revivalist activity before the Second World War (more voluminous than Carl Dolmetsch's), and by leaving gaps where awkward recollections could have been inserted. The present article will help readers fill these gaps if minded to do so and, by putting them in context, help to explain the small score-settling gestures that Hunt did occasionally slip into print.

His 1976 review of Margaret Campbell's Arnold Dolmetsch biography is a case in point. Hunt wanted readers to know that he visited the 1932 Haslemere Festival 'not to study the recorder' (which he could play already) but to meet up with friends and do business of his own between concerts. Edmund van der Straeten, one of the friends, had been playing viols and researching the history of the instrument for decades. Arnold paid van der Straeten to transcribe consort pieces from early sources in the British Museum but encouraged audiences to think he had discovered the music himself. Hunt wanted readers to know that too.<sup>105</sup>

In masterly riposte to *The Book of the Dolmetsch Descant Recorder* Schott partnered with the original publishers of *The School Recorder Book*, E.J. Arnold, to bring out a revised second edition in 1962.<sup>106</sup> New schoolgirl demonstrators were photographed for the revised edition. Some posed with Herwiga Hamlin descants as before, but Schott's wooden school descants had been issued to others. Diagrams printed alongside the photos, showing even more clearly which holes to close and which to leave open, were all re-drawn. Schott's wooden school descant was now very obviously the instrument appearing in outline. Since E.J. Arnold were specialist suppliers of books and other educational materials to schools, *The School Recorder Book* was much more widely distributed than its Boosey & Hawkes competitor. Hunt's subtle product placement sowed seeds of Schott awareness in literally millions of young minds over the ensuing decades.

Undoubtedly, the British school recorder movement ushered into being by Hunt did reach dimensions of which Arnold Dolmetsch could not have dreamed. Hunt's early rejection by Arnold uncorked not a vengeful genie but one fiercely determined to build a recorder-centred career away from Haslemere, without Dolmetsch support if necessary.

Soaring demand for cheap school recorders after the Second World War created opportunities that Carl Dolmetsch – managing director of Arnold Dolmetsch Ltd after Arnold's death – was eager and well prepared to exploit. The Dolmetsch workshop had re-tooled and re-organized during the war, learned to work with new materials,<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Edgar Hunt, 'Margaret Campbell: Arnold Dolmetsch, the Man and his Work' [book review], *The Galpin Society Journal* 29 (May 1976), pp. 133-134.

<sup>106</sup> Edmund Priestley and Fred Fowler, *The School Recorder Book 1* and *The School Recorder Book 2*, revised editions (Leeds: E.J. Arnold & Son; London: Schott & Co., 1962).

<sup>107</sup> See Carl Dolmetsch and Leslie Ward, 'Musical Instrument Makers', edited interview transcript in

and linked up with specialist suppliers of these new materials. Carl kept details secret, but the speed with which Dolmetsch Bakelite recorders were prototyped and launched in post-war manufacturing partnership with Insulators Ltd (Edmonton) would be easy to explain if the two firms had shared wartime experience to build upon.<sup>108</sup>

With sales prospects bright across much of the English-speaking world, not just in Britain, Schott and Dolmetsch could perfectly well coexist. Though substantially enabled by Hunt, Dolmetsch's post-war mass-marketing success was not achieved at Hunt's expense. He stocked Dolmetsch handmade recorders in Schott's London showroom, subject to availability,<sup>109</sup> played them himself,<sup>110</sup> and recommended them to students at Trinity.<sup>111</sup> Schott's plastic recorders were cheaper than Dolmetsch's: the price discount signalled slightly inferior quality but it helped them sell.<sup>112</sup> Schott's wooden school descants filled a niche of no interest to Dolmetsch. When trade with former enemy nations resumed after the war, and Schott started importing mid-price wooden recorders from the German Democratic Republic, these made SATB sets and consort playing possibilities far more equitably accessible than they had been till then, without in any way reducing the status appeal of built-to-order Dolmetsches.<sup>113,114</sup> As

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John Farleigh, *The Creative Craftsman* (London: G. Bell & Sons, 1950), p. 182: 'Our experiments with different materials – perspex and bakelite – brought us to the conclusion that, more important than the actual material is the use that is made of it, and that a well-made plastic recorder is far better than a badly made one of wood; also that a well-moulded plastic could look very nice and be considerably cheaper'.

<sup>108</sup> See here for evidence of Insulators Ltd's early involvement in the manufacture of Dolmetsch plastic recorders: <https://www.horniman.ac.uk/object/M27-1987/> [click + Commentary]. Carl Dolmetsch donated one to the Horniman Museum in 1987, and probably passed this information on to Horniman curators at the same time.

<sup>109</sup> Williams, 'The Dodo', p. 142.

<sup>110</sup> See Hunt, *The Recorder and its Music*, Plate 1 (facing p. 32): 'MODERN RECORDERS ... These are the instruments the writer plays'.

<sup>111</sup> John Willman, personal communication.

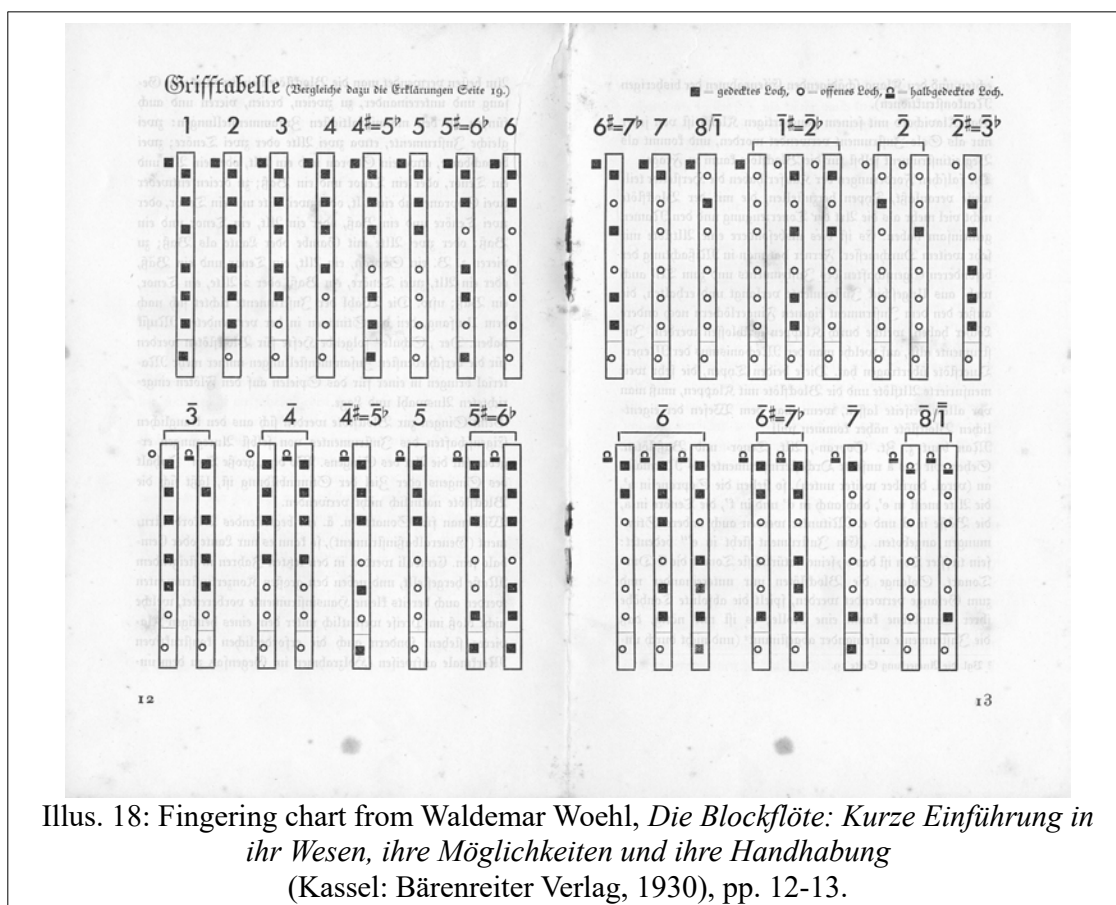
<sup>112</sup> In *The Musical Times* 96/No.1349 (July 1955), p. 387, G. Scarth Ltd, 55 Charing Cross Road, advertised RECORDERS!! at the following prices: 'DESCANT KEY C. Schott, plastic, 10/6; Schott, wood, 14/-; Dulcet, plastic, 12/6; Dulcet, wood, 16/4; Dolmetsch, plastic, 16/7. TREBLE KEY F. Schott, plastic, 28/-; Schott, wood, £3/6/0; Dolmetsch, plastic, 35/9'.

<sup>113</sup> As early as February 1951, Dale, Forty & Co. in Birmingham had a wide range of recorders for sale. These were advertised in *The Musical Times* monthly throughout the year: 'RECORDERS, Wood and Plastic, Descant, Treble, Tenor, Dolmetsch, Schott, Boosey & Hawkes, Dallas, Dulcet. Write for particulars of instruments and catalogue of Music and carrying cases canvas'. Instruments branded Dallas and Boosey & Hawkes were probably imported from Germany. Whether Dale, Forty & Co. could supply Schott-branded wooden trebles and tenors, and (if they could) whether these were Hunt's wartime designs still in British production or German imports reaching Britain via a route also known to John E. Dallas & Sons and Boosey & Hawkes, would take further research to establish.

<sup>114</sup> For a 'Summary of Makes of Recorders' available from London dealers in 1959, see Rowland-Jones, *Recorder Technique*, pp. 136-140 and Errata (on a glued-in slip facing the Contents page). As well as their 'range of "Concert" recorders' imported from the German Democratic Republic,

late as 1975 Dolmetsch had an eighteen-month waiting list.<sup>115</sup>

In short: Hunt-Dolmetsch rivalry in the 1930s had unintended consequences ultimately benefiting both. Hunt was forced to start some other way when Arnold Dolmetsch blocked the obvious one; but that initial disappointment set him off on a consistently successful search for Dolmetsch work-rounds. Rapprochement was possible as Edgar and Carl aged, because the competition straining relations between their younger selves turned out to have two winners.



Illus. 18: Fingering chart from Waldemar Woehl, *Die Blockflöte: Kurze Einführung in ihr Wesen, ihre Möglichkeiten und ihre Handhabung* (Kassel: Bärenreiter Verlag, 1930), pp. 12-13.

Schott & Co. were by then selling more expensive recorders by Moeck and Stieber (imports from the Federal Republic of Germany) and Küng (Switzerland). Boosey & Hawkes were 'producing [in fact importing, from the GDR] a new range of pearwood recorders' very much like Schott's 'Concert' instruments. A firm called Pro Arte Musica sold mid-price recorders branded Heinrich and Herrnsdorff and, 'in a high price range ... [Adler] Barockmeister recorders, which may be obtained with ivory garnishings', all imported from the GDR. At that stage, despite proliferating choice and what he thought were the real merits of some foreign makes included in his survey, Rowland-Jones saw no imminent threat to Dolmetsch supremacy: 'For sheer personality a recorder born in the Dolmetsch workshops has no equals'. Robert Ehrlich covers recorder design, manufacturing and marketing developments from the end of the Second World War almost to the present in 'The Recorder in the Twentieth Century', pp. 262-283.

<sup>115</sup> Christopher Ball, 'Renaissance and Baroque Recorders: Choosing an Instrument', *Early Music* 3/1 (January 1975), p. 14. I owe this reference to Robert Ehrlich.

## Appendix

‘Boring for Britain’ considered fingering issues fairly thoroughly, and reproduced the first (1929) published chart presenting Dolmetsch treble fingerings to the world.<sup>116</sup> At that stage they differed only slightly from fingerings specified in Jacques-Martin Hotteterre’s *Principes de la Flûte Traversière ... de la Flûte à Bec ... et du Haut-Bois*, 1707. Right-hand finger three stayed down for most notes in the lower octave, strengthening the tone of some of them without affecting tuning. In a move clearly intended to simplify things for beginners, Dolmetsch’s descant fingering chart first published the following year kept right-hand finger three clear of its hole for all notes except those only playable with the hole closed.<sup>117</sup> Reprints of the treble chart followed suit. A wider distance between Dolmetsch and Hotteterre fingerings had opened up.

The key differences between simplified, post-1930 Dolmetsch and ‘original’ (Hotteterre) fingerings are these:

### Dolmetsch

IV'	●	1 2 3	4 6	7	[treble $\flat$ $\flat$ '/descant $\sharp$ f']
#IV'	●	1 2 3	5 6		[treble $\sharp$ $\flat$ '/descant #f']
IV''	⊖	1 2 3	4 6		[treble $\flat$ $\flat$ "/descant $\sharp$ f'']
#IV''	⊖	1 2 3	5		[treble $\sharp$ $\flat$ "/descant #f'']

### Hotteterre

IV'	●	1 2 3	4 6	
#IV'	●	1 2 3	5 6	7
IV''	⊖	1 2 3	4 6	
#IV''	⊖	1 2 3	5 [6]	

By slightly different means, both systems correct the slightly narrow IV'/IV'' octave that would result if any forked fingering variant for the lower note were simply overblown to its next harmonic, and the instrument in hand had a plausibly baroque bore taper. Hotteterre took that taper for granted; Dolmetsch had managed to reproduce it.

Though loosely inspired by historic instruments, Harlan-type recorders made in the later 1920s and early 30s were not copied from originals or expected to behave like originals. Many different designs co-existed: rival workshops supplying rival dealers

<sup>116</sup> Pinnock, ‘Boring for Britain’, pp. 59-62 (Appendix 2 and Figure 10).

<sup>117</sup> For a facsimile of the 1930 Dolmetsch descant fingering chart see Nikolaj Tarasov, ‘Die »barocke« Griffweise bei Blockflöten gestern und heute. Ursachen terminologischer Ungereimtheiten, eine Übersicht der Parallelen und Unterschiede bei Griffbildern’, in Sebastian Werr, Lyndon Watts and Daniel Allenbach (eds), *Le Basson Savary: Bericht des Symposiums »Exakte Copie« in Bern 2012* (Schliengen: Edition Argus, 2017), p. 131. Link here: [https://www.hkb-interpretation.ch/fileadmin/user\\_upload/documents/Publikationen/Bd.8/HKB8\\_Basson\\_Savary.pdf](https://www.hkb-interpretation.ch/fileadmin/user_upload/documents/Publikationen/Bd.8/HKB8_Basson_Savary.pdf) [accessed 31 July 2025].

developed their own. All or almost all would produce a well-tuned diatonic scale when fingers were lifted one after the other. Harlan's system did away with forks for IV'/IV", but fingerings allowing modulation beyond the home key varied from instrument to instrument. Few had a full two octave range. Early revival recorder tutors published in Germany made alternative fingering suggestions so that players could experiment, and explained how holes could be shaded to lower notes sounding stubbornly sharp even when best available fingerings had been found for them. #IV' and #IV" were especially troublesome, often sharp yet hard even for beginners to avoid completely. Waldemar Woehl's 1930 chart for Bärenreiter is representative (Illus. 18).

When Hunt, in 1930, tested a Bärenreiter treble against his Dawson and Bressan instruments it was bound to come off worse, having a restricted range and questionable intonation in comparison with either. These were real shortcomings. Most recorders made in Germany at that still fairly early stage of the revival suffered from them. They were caused not by 'German fingering' as such, but by bore designs from which no conceivable system could coax a well-tuned, two octave chromatic scale.

Of course bore designs could be refined, and by the mid 1930s German instruments built for playing eighteenth-century solo repertoire of Bach and Telemann levels of difficulty were up to the job. Peter Thalheimer's assessment is salutary – a version of recorder truth rather at odds with the one put about by Hunt and other British revivalists working to fulfil their instrument's manifestly English destiny:

*In about 1934, design elements of the English Dolmetsch recorders were transferred to ... narrow-bored [German] instruments in C and F ...*<sup>118</sup>

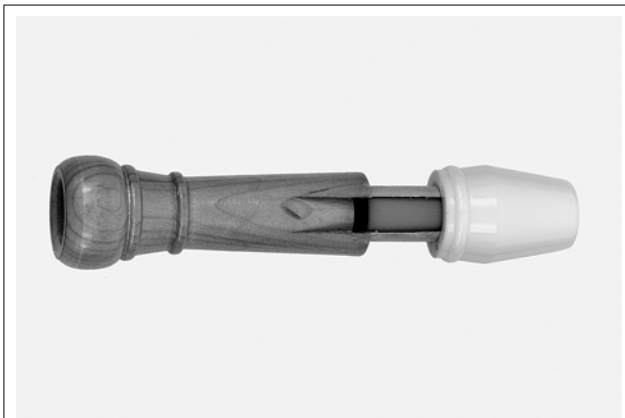
*... some of the [German] altos in f<sup>1</sup> ... produced in the last few years before the War and in the first War years were of remarkable quality as far as sound, response and intonation were concerned ... Some of the design elements which generally characterised the top instruments were "English fingering" ... adopted from the Dolmetsch models, double holes for the two lowest notes and, occasionally, a curved windway. The measurements of the instruments were frequently also based on Dolmetsch models, i.e. a narrow, strongly tapered bore in conjunction with an outwardly short length, which made a key for the fundamental tone redundant ... However, very high quality recorders not based on the Dolmetsch measurements were also developed.*<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Peter Thalheimer, *Vergessen und wieder entdeckt: Die Blockflöte (200 Instrumente der Jahre 1926 bis 1945 aus vogtländischen Werkstätten) / Forgotten and Rediscovered: The Recorder (200 Instruments Made in the Vogtland Region Between 1926 and 1945)* [dual language edition] (Markneukirchen: Verein der Freunde und Förderer des Musikinstrumenten-Museums Markneukirchen e.V., 2013), p. 16.

<sup>119</sup> Thalheimer, *Forgotten and Rediscovered*, p. 112.

The point to stress here – neatly exemplified by Herwiga-Rexes, so Hunt should have known – is the relatively minor importance of a recorder’s fingering system when weighed alongside other factors in the mix determining its overall performance. Harlan-fingered Dolmetsch copies made and sold before the war (as Herwiga-Rexes) played perfectly well. Real Dolmetsches could have been adapted to work with Harlan fingering. So could Hunt’s Bressan. Though a Dolmetsch-type chart will supply more of the ‘traditional’ fingerings required to play eighteenth-century recorders in tune, only its Harlan counterpart offers usable forks for #IV’/#IV”.



Illus. 19: Schott’s wooden school descant, Patent No. 692491. Head joint partially dismantled to show how its edge and plastic block align.

Cleverly, but in a way much misunderstood by later reviewers in Britain and the USA, F.J. Giesbert crystallized the range of choice available in his 1937 *Schule für die Altblockflöte*.<sup>120</sup> This gave ‘old’ [Hotteterre], Dolmetsch and Harlan fingerings for every note when they differed, so that players could use the same tutor whichever sort of instrument they were learning on. Giesbert himself owned a J.C. Denner treble,<sup>121</sup> was unafraid of old fingerings, and structured his method around them. He

noted Dolmetsch and Harlan (‘English’ and ‘German’) variants without privileging one system over the other. Both deviated from common eighteenth-century practice, and Giesbert made that clear. At his suggestion one modern German maker had started to produce trebles with old fingering, allowing purists to revert to it if they wanted to. The maker Giesbert had in mind was almost certainly Max König, modifying his Dolmetsch-derived Herwiga-Rex design to the small extent necessary.<sup>122</sup>

Giesbert gained some traction in Germany. There, after the war, his method – really an elaboration of Hotteterre’s – was ‘being used and taught again’ (at least for a while),<sup>123</sup> and it kept levels of historical fingering awareness reasonably high even among players who preferred or had been told not to adopt it. Hildemarie Peter

<sup>120</sup> F.J. [Franz Julius] Giesbert, *Schule für die Altblockflöte* (Mainz: B. Schott’s Söhne, 1937). Available in English translation (*Method for the Treble Recorder*) from 1957.

<sup>121</sup> See Friedrich von Huene, ‘A Visit with Franz Julius Giesbert’, *The American Recorder* 24/3 (August 1983), p. 107.

<sup>122</sup> For a little more information about Herwig’s old-fingering instruments see Thalheimer, *Die Blockflöte in Deutschland 1920-1945*, pp. 232-233 and p. 478 (Illus. 184).

<sup>123</sup> Hildemarie Peter, *Die Blockflöte und ihre Spielweise in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart* (Berlin-Lichterfelde: Robert Lienau, 1953). English translation by Stanley Godman: *The Recorder: Its Traditions and its Tasks* (Berlin-Lichterfelde: Robert Lienau, 1958), p. 11.

included a fold-out fingering chart in her 1953 book *Die Blockflöte und ihre Spielweise in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart*, allowing readers to compare different systems going back to Virdung, 1511 and again (following Giesbert) presenting unmodernized Hotteterre ('Historically accurate Baroque fingering') as a currently available alternative to Dolmetsch-modified Hotteterre not a long-abandoned precursor.<sup>124</sup>

Was the 'fully developed solo instrument of the Baroque period' for which Hotteterre supplied fingering instructions much improvable? Giesbert thought not. Hunt himself was torn: on the winning side in a hard-fought British fight against 'German fingering' in the 1930s, one of the chief architects of victory, but also the owner of a fine Bressan treble built to work with 'old' fingerings that were easier to find in modern German-published charts than in British ones. Had postwar German and other mainland European players, forced to reckon with their far more complicated recent past, ended up in a better place – freer than British counterparts to choose different types of instrument for different purposes? Recorder happenings over the half century following Hunt's retirement from Schott & Co. would suggest so.

### **Further acknowledgements**

The Royal Academy of Music's Digitisation Officer Ian Brearey took all the photos used to illustrate this article. In the Royal Academy of Music Library and British Library I consulted source materials hard or impossible to find elsewhere. Tom Irvine in the Music Department, University of Southampton helped with German translation. John Willman shared recorder design insights and, along with them, his experience of recorder lessons with Edgar Hunt while a student at Trinity College of Music in the 1970s. Robert Ehrlich and David R.M. Irving read 'Start Some Other Way' in draft. Instruments destined to appear in the illustrations were collected over a number of years, by very economical eBay purchase in most cases. So along with everyone else who made this project possible I have to thank family members for indulging me as boxes piled up.

*Over a long career ANDREW PINNOCK has worked in insurance, for Arts Council England and – for the past twenty years – in the University of Southampton's Music Department, where he is now a professor. He has co-edited two opera volumes for the Purcell Society (The Indian Queen, The Fairy Queen) and is working on a third (King Arthur). He mainly researches seventeenth-century English musical theatre but does produce articles about cultural economics, cultural policy and organology from time to time. His book Funding the Arts: Politics, Economics and Their Interplay in Public Policy was published by Routledge in 2023.*

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<sup>124</sup> Peter, trans. Godman, *The Recorder*, pp. 10-11 and foldout charts.

## SUPPLEMENT

Larger, colour versions of recorder photos illustrating ‘Start Some Other Way’ as first published in *The Consort* 81 (2025), pp. 151-188.



Illus. 2: Dolmetsch descant #1040 (left), Herwiga-Rex #1803 (right).



Illus. 3: Five treble recorders side by side: from left to right, a Herwiga Solist, Herwiga Chor (I), Herwiga Chor (II), Herwiga Hamlin and (for comparison) Dolmetsch #758. The Chors are numbered (I) and (II) for ease of reference here: no such marks appear on the instruments themselves.



Illus. 4: Showing the same five instruments as Illus. 3, blowing end on.



Illus. 9 [out of sequence]: 'John Adler' canvas bags.



Illus. 5. Herwiga Chor (I) alongside a Harlan-branded treble also meant for 'chorist' use.



Illus. 6: A Herwig Hamlin descant on the left (Dolmetsch fingering, for the British market), and one of Herwig's C-soprano school recorders on the right (Harlan fingering, for the German market).



Illus. 7: Left to right: the Enford School Recorder, a near-identical instrument branded Lyra, and the Paxton Dulcet. All three are descants with plastic head joints and black-lacquered wooden bodies.



Illus. 8: A 'John Adler' C soprano with a plastic head and darkwood (Cocobolo?) body; an Enford descant for comparison; and John Adler's all-plastic D 'soprano recorder'.



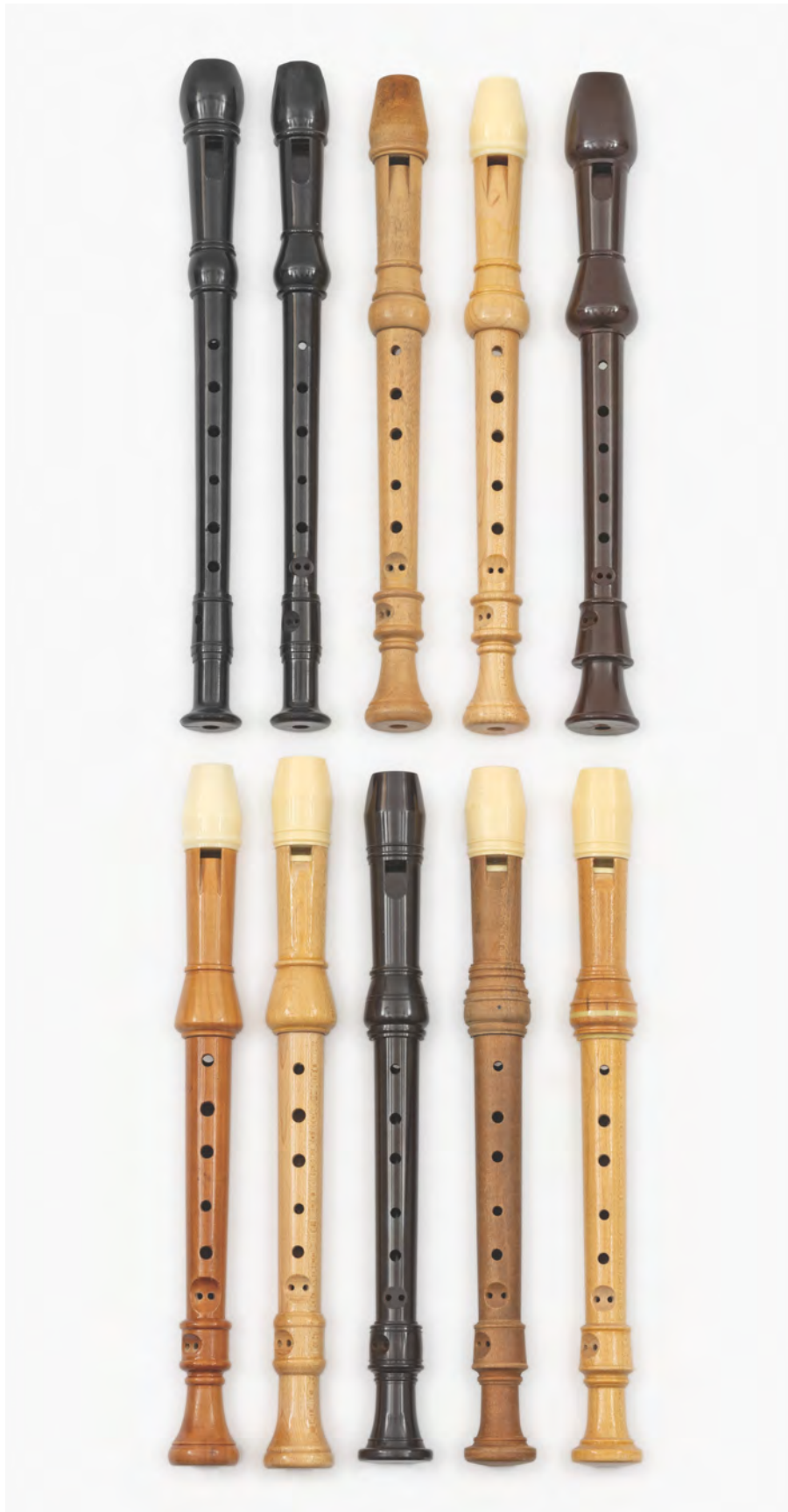
Illus. 12: Schott's wartime plastic descant: cellulose acetate and Bakelite versions side by side.



Illus. 13: Two Schott-branded wooden trebles, a treble branded Rushworth & Dreaper Liverpool, and a Schott wooden tenor.



Illus. 15: Schott's first post-war plastic descant, alongside its matching treble.



Illus. 16: Various Schott descant models – wooden and plastic – arranged (top left to bottom right) in probable order of entry to the market and withdrawal from it.



Illus. 17: The Schott plastic 'baroque'- or Bressan-type descant shown in Illus.16 (bottom row, centre) next to its treble equivalent



Illus. 19: Schott's wooden school descant, Patent No.692491. Head joint partially dismantled to show how its edge and plastic block align.