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O Tubas!

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When I was asked to write the history of the Tuba in a short and compendious form, I was appalled at the audacity of the suggestion! My task appeared like an attempt at the impossible. There was, however, one redeeming feature in the request: I was to be amply paid for my efforts!

The Tuba belongs to the class of aerophones or wind instruments. Perhaps owing their inception to the riverside and the grain-sown fields... or to the sports of the chase if not the battlefield.

But just when man actually first learned to sound the cheerful Tuba... is shrouded in the mists of antiquity. Yet we may infer, from the manner of its sound-production, that it was discovered by our forefathers' preprandial requirements or posprandial satisfaction.

(in other words... they got hungry) One of the earliest forms of the Tuba... is the spiral shell found as the Cank or conch shell in Asia and as the Biou in Europe.
Now in order to get at the fish concealed within it was necessary to break off the tip of the shell to push it or blow it out... *slow* ...*accel*... with the final blast that heralded the meal, the Tuba was discovered!

The earliest record however, of the making of a Tuba which we've been able to discover... is contained in an ancient description of the labors... of the Sumerian hero, Gilgamesh dated from the Fourth or Third Millenium B.C.E.

In this instance the instrument... was constructed of wood... with the added refinement of an attachment at the end to augment the sound!

Other inland peoples also crafted the Tuba on large, hollow river-reeds...thus, in the Gilgamesh story on the cuneiform tablet... the mark used for...

..."Tu-ba" also means..."Reed." To this elementary instrument would soon be added a resonator of gourd, wood, or horn, serving as... a *tap bell*
In Egypt... weird ensembles of Tubas used for state and military purposes appear in hieroglyphs about 1500 B.C.E. then passed

to the traders of the Eastern Meditteranean and it is in this connection, that the side-blown metal war tubas found in Ireland, can best be explained

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These fierce Tubas, know as \textit{Karnyx}, frightened the most redoubtable warriors

eventually being forced to retaliate by creating three different forms of the Tuba: the large, circular \textit{Bucina}, used for signaling.... the crescent-shaped \textit{Cornu},

and the huge \textit{Contrabadass}...........the direct progenitor of today's powerful Double Bb giants!

These Roman tubas were extremely unwieldy, with the production of overtones, or upper notes, doubtful at best

For several centuries therefore, Herculean efforts were directed towards the construction of a Tuba capable of playing...the "perfect scale":

mouthpiece buzz

heavy breathing

mp

\( \leftarrow \rightarrow \) ppp
By the Middel Ages, the most important bass instruments were referred to by the ominous title: Serpents! a reference to their circular shape.

Serpents ranged widely in size... from the petite *Ophimonocleide* which could only play one note... to a truly leviathan *Double Contra Serpent*.

The last known specimen now taking up an entire wing of the Municipal Museum at Grand Island was the............ *Ophicleide*

Berlioz informs us, that the monster..." required an amount of breath which would exhaust the lungs...

do...of the most robust man!"

In the 19th Century a delightful variety of Tubas were developed: a baritone *Bugle a piston*...the spacious *Sonorophone*...the elliptical *Helicon*, the impressive, deep-throated...
Bambardon, and how can one forget...the Wagnerian Tuba!

The most familiar descendant of these marvelous instruments is, of course...the Sousaphone, mainstay of countless...high school marching bands!

So dawns a new century and already many composers, such as Honneger, Ibert, Milhaud, and Spike Jones...have recognized the Tubas possibilities. The unknown tonal effects and mysterious charms which lie hidden within its cavernous depths may in the years to come place it as the foremost...of our musical instruments.