

Plate 120 | Brun—Infanterie de Ligne Tambour Major et Musicien

Line Infantry, Bandsman and Drum Major

Here Brun presents two of the five figures depicted in the original Bommer illustration, which was simply labeled (in German) “Line Infantry.” The original’s fifth figure, a cymbalist, appears in the previous plate in a gathering of figures from various Bommer illustrations, while the first two Bommer figures were the front and back views of an infantry pioneer in full dress.

Military musicians in the French army were usually professionals, and they received perks and higher pay than their enlisted colleagues. Among those perks was a dressier uniform. These figures offer a general image of the appearance of bandsmen and drum majors of 1813.

The left figure (3), a musician, is dressed more simply than were his gaudy comrades of the Empire’s heyday. Instead of wearing reversed colors, he is simply clad in a regular line infantry coat (*babut*), still of the old-fashioned cut, with double lace on the collar and trefoil epaulettes. As a further distinction, he wears boots *à la Suvarov* (see Plate 37) and a straight sword hanging from a waist belt instead of the typical *sabre-briquet* supported from a shoulder belt.

The right figure (4) wears a drum major’s uniform, which, despite the supply difficulties of 1813, is still richly ornamented with golden lace, heavy, fringed epaulettes, and an elaborately trimmed baldric (a wide belt worn diagonally from shoulder to hip to support the sword). His drumsticks are a ceremonial vestige of his position as chief of the drummers. The plume and falling ostrich feathers are in the French national colors, although the blue is pale rather than dark. Despite this opulent outfit, his rank is the equivalent of a sergeant-major, the insignia of which is indicated by the gold line running through the middle of the field of his epaulettes’ shoulder boards. Interestingly, in the original Bommer illustration, the epaulettes of the drum major and the pioneer were identical, with red and gold mixed fringes, but here, Brun “corrected” this and altered the drum major’s to be entirely gold.

The page of the original manuscript from which these figures come was one of the key pieces of evidence relied upon when comparing the portfolio of illustrations with other clearly identified Bommer drawings, to help identify Bommer as the artist actually responsible for the *Camp of Dresden Manuscript* (see page 9).

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Bommer II, 8 (3 and 4) >



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