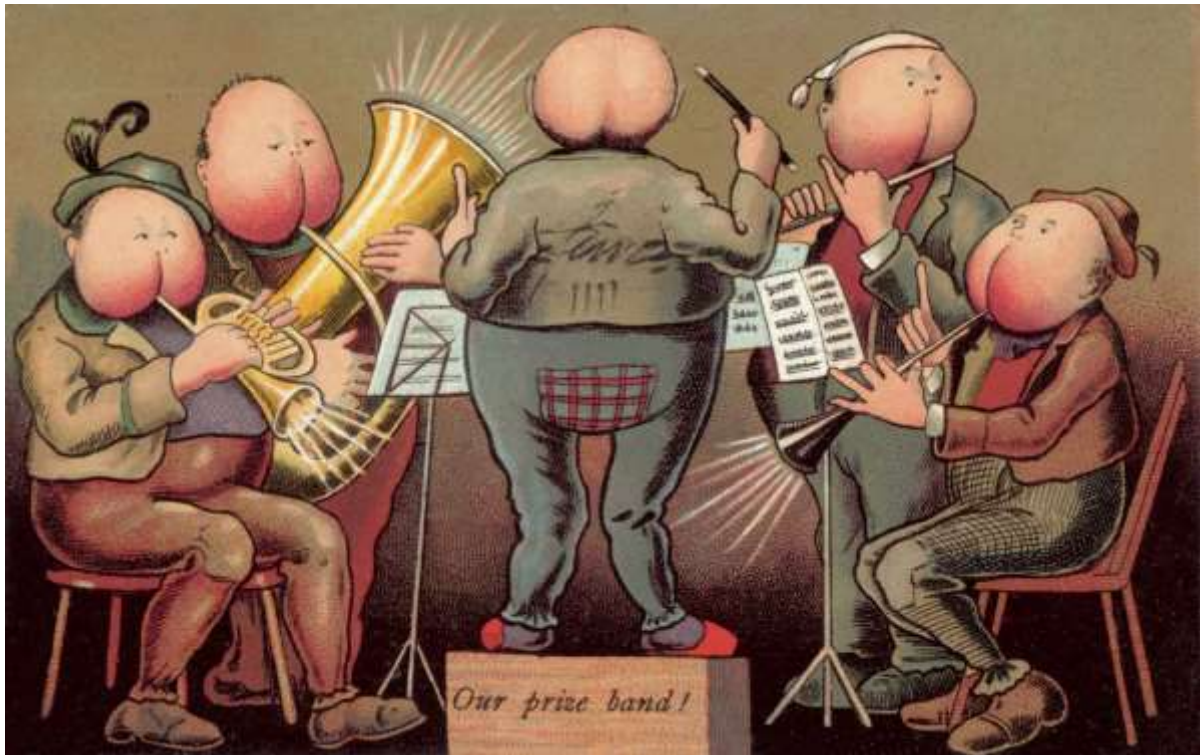


Bum Notes – a look at some brassy raspberries

Gavin Holman, July 2019

I came across the first of these images “Our Prize Band” many years ago, and largely dismissed it as a humorous postcard, poking fun at bands, since then I have seen two other versions, in French and German, so the original image was clearly re-purposed for at least two alternative markets. There is not much else that can be said, other than that the costumes look mid-European, so perhaps the German one was the original?



Our prize band!



Fanfare d'Ecublens



Hinaus in die Ferne!

Of course, the “bums” (feel free to choose your own slang term or euphemism) in the above images have to be playing wind & brass instruments, a theme continued in the following items, which are all connected to largely one man (General Oku Yasukata who commanded the Imperial Army in the Russo-Japanese War 1904-1905.

Despite the fact that France was allied with Russia in this conflict, French illustrators took great delight in portraying both sides of the conflict in insulting, scatological images, perhaps influenced by the fact that General Oku's name sounds, in French, like "au cul" or "at the arse/bum" in English.

A number of different, similarly themed postcards were produced and consisted of

1. La Musique du Général Oku – showing brass instruments
2. L'Artillerie du Général Oku
3. Le Bombardement de Port Arthur par L'Artillerie du Général Oku
4. L'Artillerie du Général Oku – nettoyage des bouches au feu
5. L'Etat Major du Général Oku fumant à la recherche des positions russes
6. The Japanese army charging, seated on chamber pots (*"the dysentery which is afflicting the Japanese army has forced them to adopt a new uniform"*)
7. La musique russe du general Kivatropatrine (*the Russian General Aleksey Kuropatkin's name was switched to sound like "qui va trop aux latrines", "who goes to the toilet a bit too often"*)
8. La musique Prussienne (unrelated, at least in military conflict terms) and also showing brass instruments

Variations in colouring were used, and it is obvious the French, at least, loved poking fun at the various combatants. These were not just "political" cartoons published in the newspapers, but postcards bought and sent by the public throughout France and elsewhere.

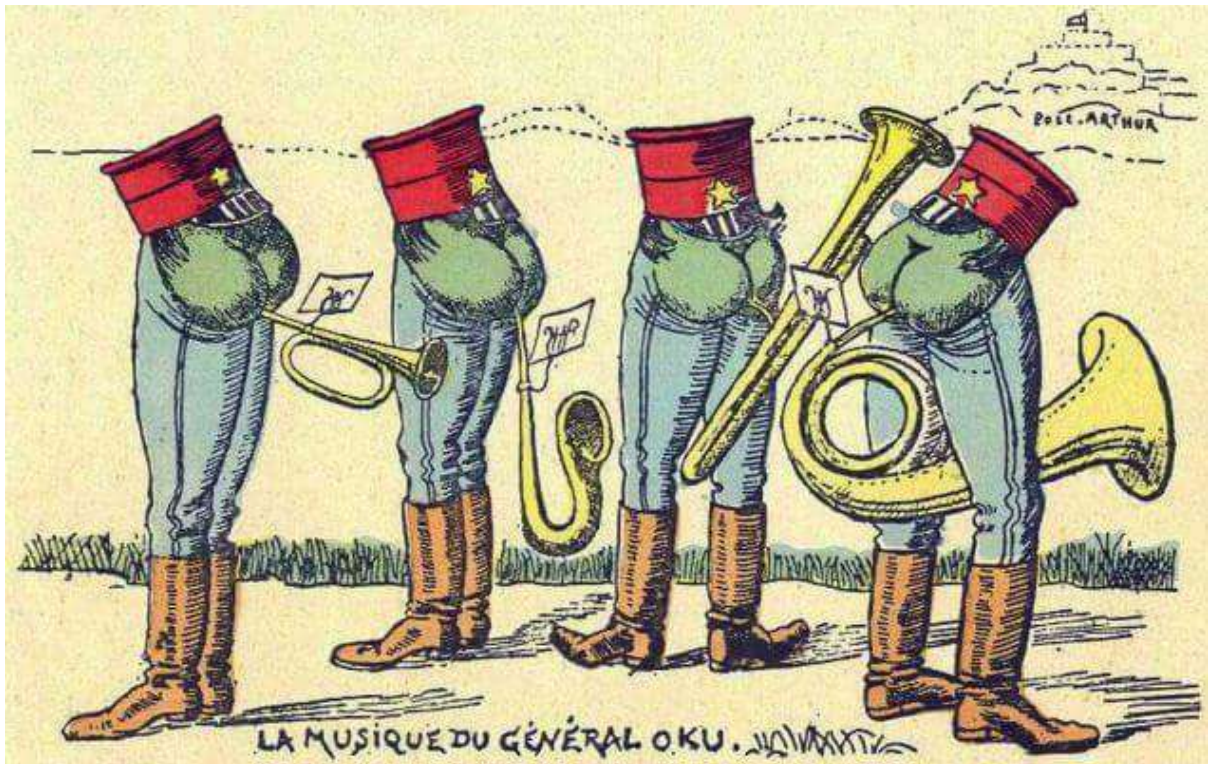
General Oku even appeared on some French chocolate wrappers, though in a more traditional military image.



La Musique du Général Oku



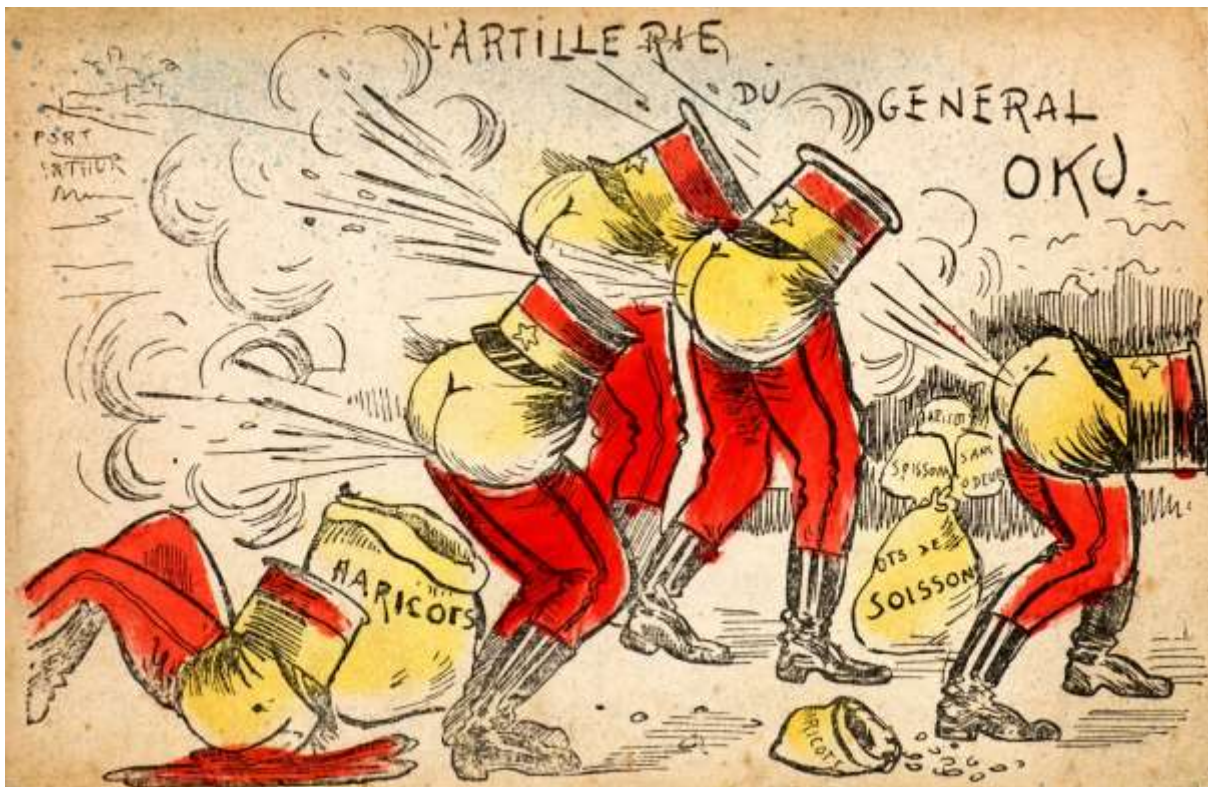
La Musique du Général Oku - a reversed image



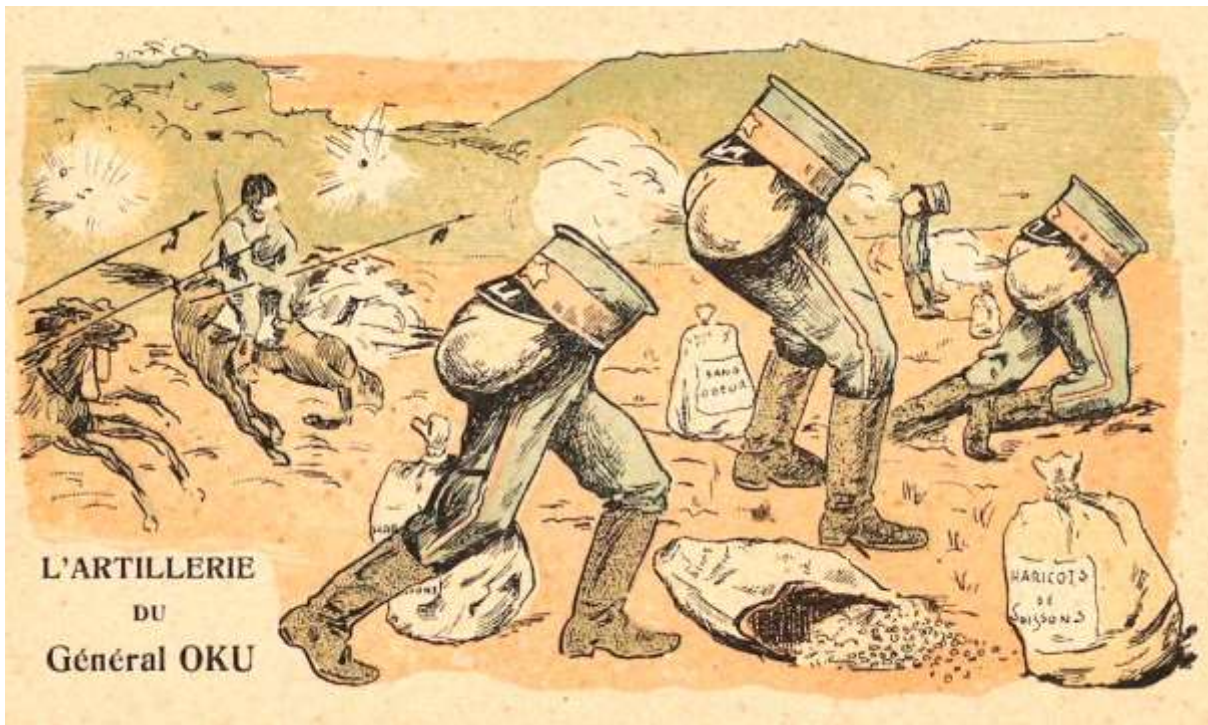
La Musique du Général Oku



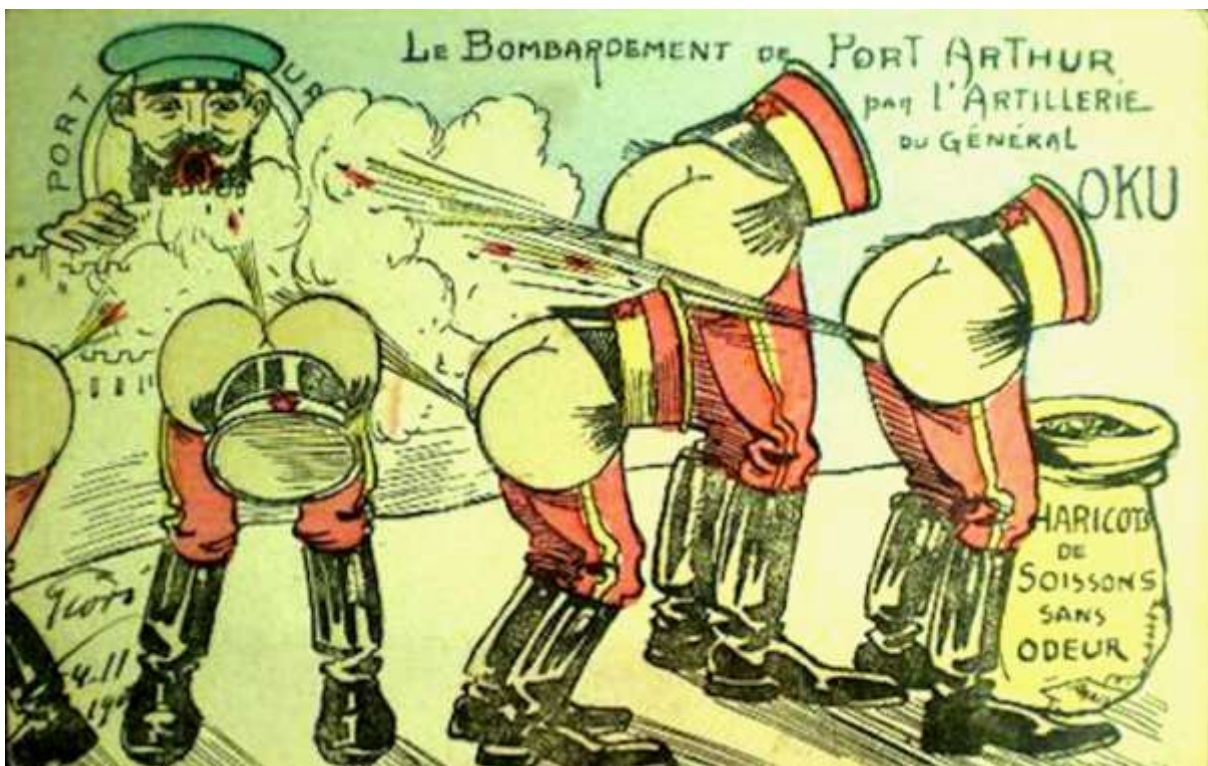
La Musique du Général Oku



L'Artillerie du Général Oku – complete with bags of beans and sausages



L'Artillerie du Général Oku



Le Bombardement de Port Arthur par L'Artillerie du Général Oku



L'Artillerie du Général Oku – nettoyage des bouches au feu



General Oku Yasukata





L'Etat Major du Général Oku fumant à la recherche des positions russes

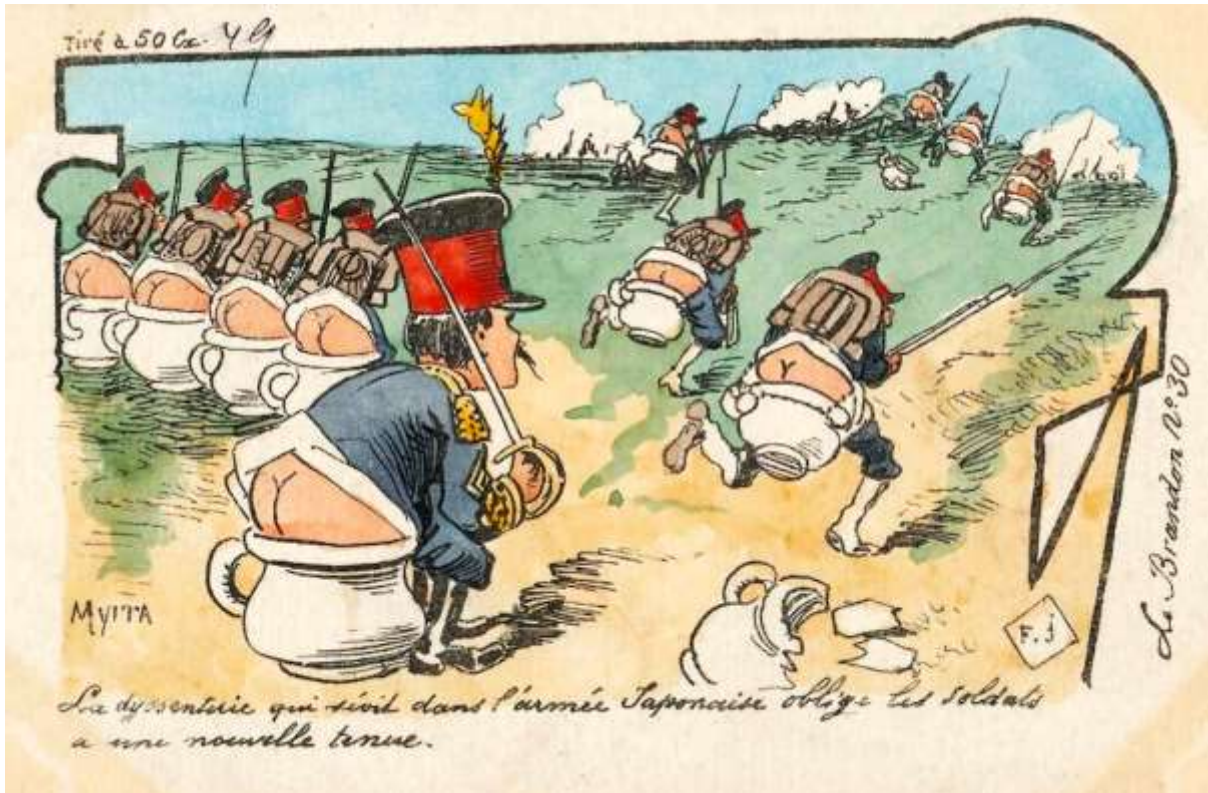
Quartier Général. via Fusan. 1^{er} janvier 1905

Vous avez vu avec quel flair
j'ai conduit mon armée! Aussi, je vous
souhaite d'avoir toujours mon nez.

OKU



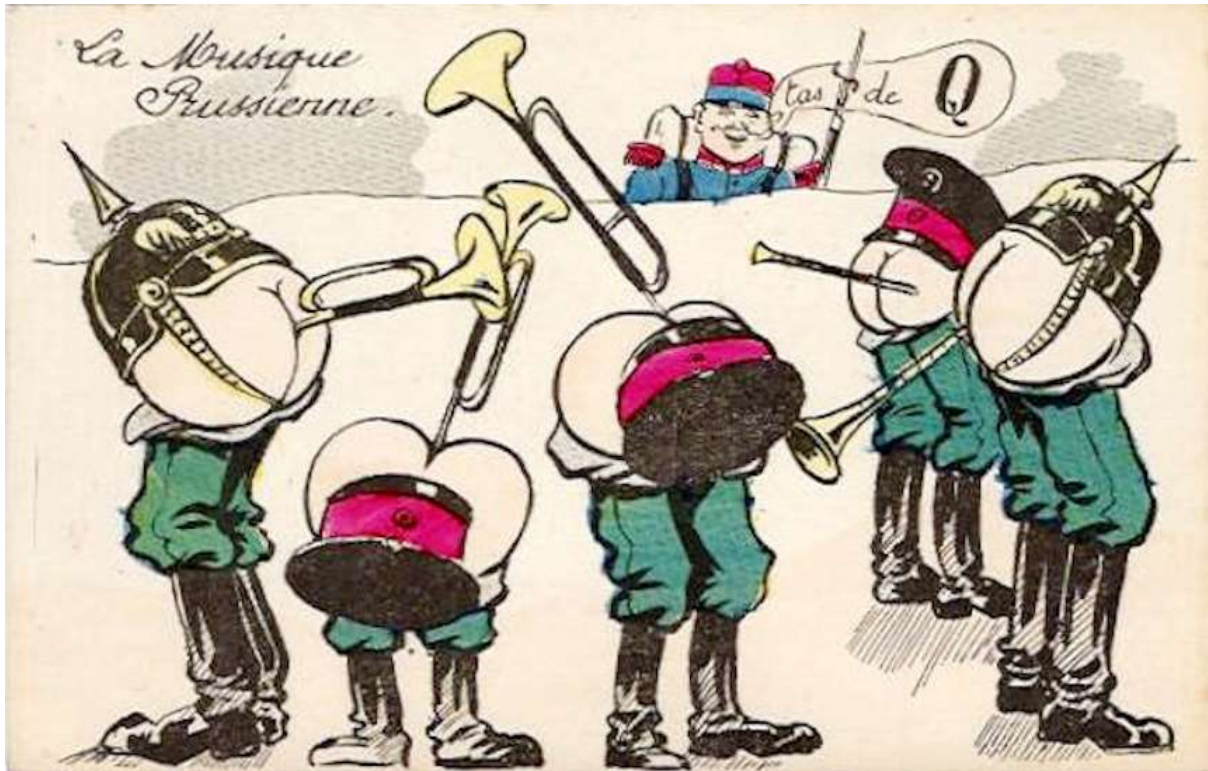




The Japanese army charging, seated on chamber pots ("the dysentery which is afflicting the Japanese army has forced them to adopt a new uniform")



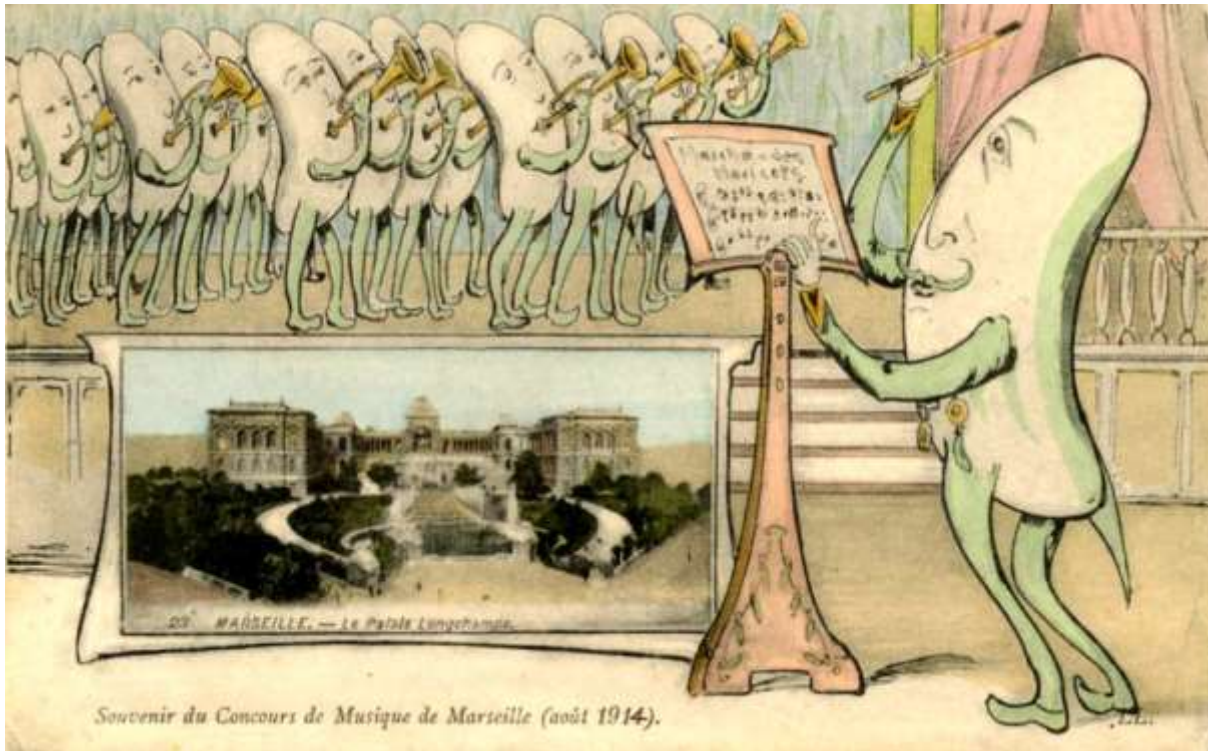
La musique russe du general Kivatropatrine (the Russian General Aleksey Kuropatkin's name was switched to sound like "qui va trop aux latrines", "who goes to the toilet a bit too often")



La Musique Prussienne – unrelated to the previous Russo-Japanese examples, but following in the same “tradition”

A slightly less obvious “wind” band is shown in these two examples of a French “bean” brass band, dating from around 1910 in the first instance and 1914 in the second.





Finally, some evidence that such “brass windy” imagery is not just a 20th century phenomenon, here is one example of a mediæval illustration which satisfies the conditions – though what it is really is meant to portray is anyone’s guess!

