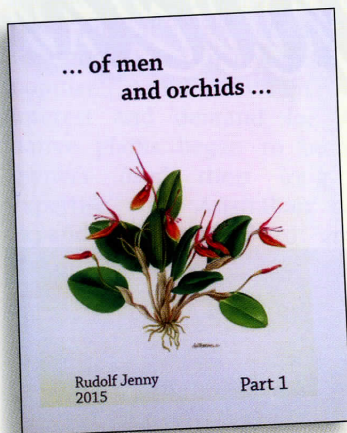


# ...of men and orchids...

(Part 1)



The human history of Orchids has long been a neglected topic when compared with the information available on the natural history of this fascinating group of plants. Nonetheless, orchidology,

both on the scientific and the horticultural sides, has expressed a number of pre-eminent figures, whose contributions are often appreciated and broadly used with no cues about their creators.

Rudolf Jenny's "*...of men and orchids...*", is neither a book on how humans grow orchids nor a treatise of how they classify plants, but an extraordinary look at the bond that unites men – botanists, gardeners, plant hunters, explorers – to the names of orchids and the histories behind their discovery and scientific apprehension. The work is a great step into the realm of history, and orchids are the perfect excuse to expose the efforts, the courage and bravery, the ambition and jealousies, and the indomitable will of those men in the flesh who have made it possible to discover and name the amazing diversity of plants.

Each of the 41 chapters that compose the volume tell the story of an orchid (or a few orchids) and a man, beginning with *Acineta beyrodtiana* and Otto Beyrodt, going through complete biographical sketches of the protagonists and discussing the sometimes complex taxonomy of the concerned orchid species. You will find very acknowledged names in plant history, like the Loddiges and Wendland dynasties, or botanists of the eminence of Eduard Friedrich Poeppig and Achille Richard, or famous explorers like Kegel and Jenman, but you will be also surprised at finding several less known names who compose the extraordinary story of orchidology. Vriese, Comparetti, Haller, Raddi, Loefgren, Lauche and Brade, Moquette and Hasskarl, are just a few of the many characters that are presented in the book, together with the orchids that immortalize their names. The sound of these names is often somewhat familiar to the passionate of orchids, because it echoes in the name of the plants that we study and cultivate, and Rudolf Jenny's book has the merit of giving them – often for the first time – a face, a place and a story. They are botanists, taxonomists, plant-collectors, growers and voyagers who, over more than a century, contributed to our knowledge and appreciation of orchids.

The texts, synthetic without being dry, and extraordinarily informative, are accompanied by an excellent and generous selection of illustrations, shown in full colour, including portraits of historical characters, ancient drawings, paintings, type specimens and engravings, watercolours or simple sketches of the concerned plants, as well as sharp photographs of their modern counterparts, mostly taken by the author himself. The whole is superbly packed into a beautifully designed and printed volume.

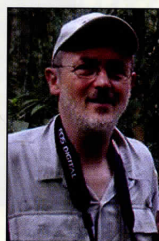
"*...of men and orchids...*" is an entertaining and instructive lecture, which benefits of the vast experience of the author in both the areas of orchid taxonomy and botanical history. The only criticism I would express to this superb book is the lack of a real frontispiece, which will probably cause some headaches to the responsible for cataloguing in the large libraries where this work will surely find a place.

This was privately printed by the author, with hundreds of photographs, historical illustrations and portraits. Because the edition is quite limited, I warmly suggest the interested readers trying to secure a copy soon. According to the author, this first volume will be followed in the coming years by two, or maybe three more. I, for one, am already hungrily waiting for the next volume.

**Franco Pupulin**  
(Orchid Curator at the Lankester Botanical Garden  
in San Jose, Costa Rica.)

To fully endorse Franco's comments and articulate review, *...of men and orchids...* is a superbly researched and produced book. The quality of the paper, printing and colour reproductions is outstanding. It is a heavy text with strong binding. Rudolf has an amazing knowledge and recall of orchid history and is also a serious collector of orchid literature. He knows the kind of "feel" and "look" he searches for in books and this work is to be commended for its high standards. The author is well known in Australia as an expert on *Stanhopea* and *Gongora* and for his numerous historical and taxonomic articles he has had published here, both in the *Australian Orchid Review* and *Orchids Australia*. The orchid species and stories in the book are recounted in alphabetical order, not on a regional or related basis. Orchid species native to Tropical America dominate this volume, however there are also numerous species treated from Asia. Sadly (my bias coming through now!) no Australian species are treated (not even under the *Phalaenopsis amabilis* entry). However, who knows what future volumes may provide us. *...of men and orchids...* is a wonderful opus for the serious species orchid enthusiast and those interested in orchid history and adventure, with its graphic trials and tribulations.

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(Rudolf Jenny is chemist by training and was active in environmental and ozone-technology until his retirement in 2008. He has been working with orchids for more than 40 years, had a large collection of tropical orchid plants until 1995. Over many years, he has travelled in Central and South America in connection with his studies in pollination ecology and taxonomy. He has published some 450 articles in many of the world's leading orchid journals

and published monographs of the genera *Gongora*, *Stanhopea*, *Paphinia* and *Sievekingia*. He is a regular lecturer at conferences around the world and owner of one of the most complete orchid libraries in private hands. He maintains BibliOrchidea, the world's largest and free accessible database for orchid literature with more than 165,000 entries, covering about 90 % of the existing literature. He is research associate at the Jany Renz Herbarium, University of Basel, Switzerland and honorary member and secretary general of the European Orchid Council. In addition to orchids, cave-climbing has been a hobby for many years.) ■

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