

Gustav Besson

Paris, France

- 1837 Gustav Besson (1820-1874) designs a new cornet with better acoustical properties than any others
- 1838 Besson opens shop in Paris, rue Tiquetonne 14 (photo 1)
- 1845 Besson moves to rue des Trois Couronnes 7 (photos 2&3)
- 1854 Besson invents a straight through bore design
- 1855 Besson invents a full bore design which improves response
- 1856 Besson invents the prototype system of tools to enable production of consistent copies
- 1857 dispute with Sax over his patent forces Besson to move to London and open a factory there while his wife takes over the Paris factory; the "Brevete" mark changes to "Brevetee" to indicate feminine ownership
- 1869 separate serial numbers for Paris and London start with Paris starting at zero in their new location at rue d'Angouleme 92
- 1874 Gustav dies, leaving the business to his widow and two daughters; daughter Marthe takes over running it
- 1880 Marthe (photo 4) marries Adolphe Fontaine and the company changes to Fontaine-Besson
- 1881 the Paris factory has 62 workers
- 1882 Besson develops a new cornet with compensating design
- 1884 Paris factory at serial #30000
- 1889 Paris factory moves to rue d'Angouleme 96-98



	<p>MANUFACTURE D'INSTRUMENTS DE MUSIQUE, BOIS & CUIVRE Système Prototype F. BESSON 96, 98, rue d'Angoulême, Paris (Adresse télégraphique : Fontaine-Besson, Paris) Fournisseur des Armées, Marins et Conservatoire de toutes les nations, des Concerts du Conservatoire, Lemoine et Colonne, de la Garde de Paris et de toutes les Musiques civiles et militaires ou réputées. 49 MÉDAILLES et DIPLOMES D'HONNEUR, la seule MÉDAILLE D'OR décernée par le Ministère de la Guerre en 1889 Le "Système Prototype" est le seul assurant la parfaite justesse dans tous les Instruments</p> <p>DERNIÈRES CREATIONS Saxophones, nouvelle percus et clés additionnelles. — Les "Coraphones". — La Clarinette "Pédale". — Basses et Contrebasses, nouvelles proportions. — Les Cornets "Le Soliste", le desideratum. — Le Concertiste. — Trombones. — Clairs et Trompettes.</p>	
LE SOLISTE		CORNOPHONE

- 1894 Paris factory at serial #50000 and has a work force of 145; Marthe moves to London to avoid Fontaine's violent behavior; 90 workers in Paris strike for six weeks in protest of him
- 1895 Marthe sells the London business on April 15th and Adolphe sues to try and block the sale; the quarrel is finally resolved the next year



1906 Paris factory at serial #70000

1908 both Marthe and Adolphe die this year and their daughter Mathilde Sabatier takes ownership

1920 Paris factory at serial #82000

1930s Strasser Margaux & Lemaire produce Besson instruments with Aubertin making valves, bells & final assembly

1934 Paris instruments at serial #87000

1930s the US restricts French imports due to Nazi occupation but parts can be purchased and it's said that a Rapuano in New York City purchased these and assembled them here; these are marked "Fabrication Francaise Perfectionnee Paris France" (#86278 below, #88306 top right)



If this is Joseph Rapuano, the musician who developed his own mutes, then these would date to before February 1935 when he died. This would not fit the German occupation that started in 1940.

1945 Paris instruments at serial #92000; start of 0.47" bore Meha trumpet

c1948 a fire destroys the Paris factory and the Besson name is purchased by B&H/Besson; instruments are then all made in England (Myers & Eldridge); Paris instruments end at around serial #103000

Trumpet #103137 below still marked with the Paris location



Photos: 2 = Alto #5122; 3 = Alto #78032 c.1912 (author's photo); 4 = Ballad horn #42858 c.1890



1957 Couesnon buys the Besson name after the death of Mathilde

1982 The long dormant F. Besson name is alive again when B&H hires Zig Kanstul to make modern copies. He measures about fifty trumpets and begins production based on these and tools reproduced from the originals saved from Paris. They are introduced for sale in 1983. (*Music Trades*, 1983)



1998 Kanstul ends production of most Besson models but new ones were still available later from old stock. He continues to make the Classic and Stamm models. (Besson website)

2006 Buffet Crampon buys the Besson name

Information from *The New Langwill Index* unless noted.

Instrument photos from Horn-u-copia.net unless noted.

