

# 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><b>MANUFACTURE D'INSTRUMENTS DE MUSIQUE, BOIS &amp; CUIVRE</b> Système Prototype <b>F. BESSON</b> 96, 98, rue d'Angoulême, Paris (Adresse télégraphique : Fontaine-Besson, Paris) Fournisseur des Armées, Marins et Conservatoires de toutes les nations, des Concerts du Conservatoire, Lemoine et Colonne, de la Garde de Paris et de toutes les Musiques civiles et militaires en réputation. 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><b>DERNIÈRES CREATIONS</b> Saxophones, nouvelle percus et clés additionnelles. — Les "Cornophones". — La Clarinette "Pédale". — Basses et Contrebasses, nouvelles proportions. — Les Cornets "Le Soliste", le desideratum. — Le Concertiste. — Trombones. — Clairons 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 15<sup>th</sup> 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

1932 Strasser Margaux & Lemaire acquires F-Besson 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 #94000; start of 0.47" bore Meha trumpet.

1948 A fire destroys the Paris factory and the English Besson name is purchased by B&H/Besson; instruments are then all made in England (Myers & Eldredge); 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 F-Besson name after the death of Mathilde.
- 1969 A fire destroys the Couesnon plant, ending F-Besson production.
- 1981 Besson is acquired by Boosey & Hawkes.
- 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)



- 1986 B&H is acquired by Carl Fischer.
- 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)
- 2003 The Music Group restructures Carl Fischer. The Besson designs & tooling are destroyed and the name used to a new line of instruments built in India and other locations. (Berndt)
- 2006 Buffet Crampon buys the Besson name and production is moved to Markneukirchen, Germany. (Berndt)
- 2019 BAC Musical Instruments acquires the records and tooling from Kanstul. (Berndt)
- 2020 BAC acquires the Besson name and starts production.

Information from *The New Langwill Index* unless noted.

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

