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

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
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 Perfectionee 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 Mehra 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.