

## The Oboe in France

Portfolio prepared by Eric Taver  
Paris, France

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**A** new breath into the oboe! In such a way one can characterize the situation of this instrument in France. It is true that the French school of the oboe has been enjoying for a long time an international reputation. Marcel Tabuteau, in the United States, then Pierre Pierlot, throughout the world, knew how to make this school glow with vitality. And the French makers of the oboe dominate quite simply, and by a long stretch, the world market. But the French oboe does not rest on its laurels. While the French oboists of today, like those we have met, nurture this school with their genius, the exchanges between musicians intensifies thanks to the French Association of the Oboe and this practice is encouraged, notably through the development of oboe bands. The workmanship is, according to the Association, made dynamic by the healthy competition between makers. In brief, everything would go rather well in a little republic of oboists. Most of them have all the time to devote themselves to two of their favorite obsessions: to make music... but also, more prosaically, to find the right reed!

### Contents:

#### II. The musicians

- ii. François Leleux
- iii. Jean-Louis Capezzali
- iv. Claude Villevielle
- v. Bernard Delcambre

#### VI. The instrument

- vi. Marigaux
- vii. Rigoutat
- viii. Lorée
- ix. Fossati
- x. Buffet-Crampon
- xi. Yamaha-France

#### XII. The reeds

- xii. Glotin
- xiii. Neuranter Paris
- xiv. The opinion of some musicians

#### XIV. Writing pad

### The Musicians

*the heritage of Pierre Pierlot and Maurice Bourgue*

Four oboists speak: François Leleux and Jean-Louis Capezzali describe their work as soloist and orchestra musician, Claude Villevielle becomes passionate for oboe bands. As for Bernard Delcambre, he explains to us why he founded the French Association of the Oboe.

#### FRANÇOIS LELEUX,

soloist, first oboe of the Symphony Orchestra of the Bavarian Radio, ex-supersoloist of the Orchestra of the Paris Opera, professor at the Richard Strauss Conservatory of Munich.

"Today, the oboe has established a place nearly similar to that of the violin..."

"I followed a classical course of study: music school, CNSM of Paris and the doctorate. During my doctoral studies, I also took part in the international competitions of Toulon, Munich, Prague and Manchester.

The only atypical thing about my studies is that I entered the CNSM at 14 years old, doctoral studies at 17; I joined the Orchestra of the Opera of Paris at 18 years old, and I won international competitions at that age. For a violinist, this precociousness is already rare enough, but for a wind instrumentalist, I believe I am able to say that I was the first: normally, all this takes place a little later in life...

**Begin young.** In fact, I wanted to play the oboe at age 4 or 5; I began at 6, but things did not begin to get serious until age 7. In general, one begins the oboe rather towards 9 or 10 years of age, for reasons of dentition: the loss of baby teeth appears to be an obstacle. But one could do otherwise and simply stop for several months during this period. I think indeed that it is a great advantage to learn while young: one learns the oboe more naturally; the bases are more healthy.

The most important thing, beyond age, is that the child really want to play his instrument.

In France, where the school of the oboe is particularly brilliant, there has not been any recent revolution in its teaching. After our masters, Pierre Pierlot and Maurice Bourgue, a new generation comes, and one is going perhaps to witness some small changes. But Pierre Pierlot

and Maurice Bourgue have definitively marked the oboe milieu; they have even left their imprint on music in general. Pierre Pierlot has ennobled the instrument. With his recording "The charm of the oboe", one discovers an oboe that sings. Maurice Bourgue has defended, through the oboe, the musical and even intellectual meaning of a repertory: it was no longer just a pastoral instrument. He used to defend his interpretations with more theoretical arguments, close to those of Celibidache.

**The repertory.** The importance of these French masters lay equally for us in a renewal of our repertory. Pierre Pierlot played the same role as Maurice André for the trumpet or Jean-Pierre Rampal for the flute, and we have hereafter a true literature and some beautiful concertos signed Penderecki, Maderna, Ligeti, Lutoslawski, without forgetting, for certain, the *Sequenza* of Berio.

But the oboe has also evolved greatly thanks to the composers. Saint-Saëns, Debussy, Dutilleux first of all. Then Britten or Jean Françaix. Today, Thierry Pécou, Eric Tanguy or Nicola Bacri, composers whom I admire and whom I often play, also equally share this role.

This development of the repertory is so much more useful—if the baroque repertory was very important, the classic and romantic repertory is very limited: there is, for sure, the *Concerto in C* by Mozart (a concerto by Schubert as well as a concerto by Beethoven have been lost), and the *Romances* of Schumann, but the nineteenth century is certainly represented by composers like Rietz, Moscheles, Kalliwoda or Molique... It is still necessary to give a special mention to Pasculli, the "Paganini of the oboe," who made improvements upon the technical capacity of the oboe, and notably the continuous breathing: his piece *Les Abeilles* lasts eight minutes without a single stop! With all this, today, the oboe has established a place more and more similar to that of the violin, notably in chamber music: I am invited to play at Châtelet, the Théâtre de Ville, the Louvre, and Pleyel! There is moreover a general sign of recognition of the French school of wind instruments that we are witnessing today: with names like those of Emmanuel Pahud, Paul Meyer, Hervé Joulain, France occupies a predominant place. This predominant place France occupies equally with respect to the workmanship. The oboe, globally, in the world, is of French workmanship: it is only in Vienna where one uses an oboe of different workmanship, less evolved, less successful.

### **The importance of chamber music...**

The double career, as soloist and orchestra member, is for me an excellent thing.

In the orchestra, the oboe possesses a not insignificant literature, and one learns the pleasure of playing together. But it is indispensable to know how to reflect upon what one is doing in little groups. When I return to Munich after having played with Steven Isserlis, Natalia Gutman, or Yefim Bronfman, I have new ideas about phrasing, and I share them with my colleagues. That is why I consider that I have an ideal contract in Munich: although the Symphony Orchestra of the Bavarian Radio demands a constant and intoxicating will to do well, it takes only a hundred days a year. I therefore have two hundred sixty days for my other activities. This freedom is essential.

Art, in general, is very fragile. There is nothing more back-breaking than a routine. It is better to never limit an orchestra musician in his extra-orchestral activities: that is one of the reasons that I left the Orchestra of the Paris Opera.

**...and the contribution of the baroque.** The baroque specialists have contributed new ideas about phrasing, and above all about the ease of the phrasing. However, I have the feeling that the modern oboe is played, in general, with too much force. Thus, while playing the fantasies of Telemann, I try to play with more of a distance, rather than play with effort. It is necessary to allow oneself to be carried by the energy of the music rather than by his own force. In fact, the active period in the performance of the oboe is the inspiration. But there is no activity when one is exhausted; the phrase must be resorbing by itself: that is what the baroque specialists, and also Maurice Bourgue, have taught us. But, I will go further when I speak of a real positioning of the "voice" in the head: I have the impression of singing when I play. For that, it is necessary to rely on three points: the support of the diaphragm (for the violin, it would be the swiftness of the bow), the positioning of the throat (the left hand of the violinists) and the reed (this would be the pressure of the bow on the string). In my education, no one spoke of these three points: it worked or it did not. In fact, it is learned and taught: by simply listening to a wind instrumentalist, I can say where it "pinches", where it forces. And I return to this idea that one should not force: one should integrate into the flow of the phrase and not impose himself or go against it."

JEAN-LOUIS CAPEZZALI,  
soloist, professor at the CNSM Paris

"The oboe requires considerable physical energy and mental activity."

"I began music lessons at the age of 9 with the piano. I only discovered the oboe later at 14 years old, while listening to a recording of concertos by Vivaldi interpreted by Pierre Pierlot. I took a year of courses at the Schola Cantorum before taking lessons at arranged times. "Music-Study" at the CNR of Versailles: there I studied the oboe with Gaston Longatte who gave me a practice method, a technical basis, and encouragement to continue. That year was decisive, because, since I was unable to practice the piano enough (I was a boarder in high school), I avenged myself on the oboe by practicing secretly in the basement in the evening. Later, at the age of 19, I obtained my CA ("certificat d'aptitude") as professor, and in the same year I won the solo oboe audition with the Lamoureux Orchestra. After a few international prizes, I obtained the position as supersoloist of the Philharmonic Orchestra of Radio France (1984). It was in 1988 that Maurice Bourgue entrusted me with the post as his class assistant at the CNSM Paris. I replaced him only later as a completely independent professor—at the time of his departure for the Geneva Conservatory. Since 1998, I have been a professor at the CNSM Lyon.

**The orchestra "sacrificed".** My decision to go to the CNSM Lyon was motivated by the possibility to teach full-time (12 hours) instead of half-time as in Paris. Under these conditions I was able to hope for a year's leave from the orchestra. In fact, having played in numerous different groups (chamber orchestras, ensembles, symphony orchestras), taught at all levels (CNR, CNSM, international academies, etc.), I feel, after all these rich experiences combined simultaneously and complementing each other marvelously, the need to gain some perspective and to have some time. Why sacrifice the orchestra (in some sense)?

The schedule of a solo oboist with great training is very heavy. That of a professor is less, and that allows, on the one hand, for much better preparation of solo concerts, and on the other, for the opportunity to remain in contact with the rising young generations which count among their ranks so many prodigies. It is necessary, after some years in this profession, to give oneself the time to recoup, to reforge ambitions, in order not to fall into a certain routine.

**"Energy and mental vivaciousness."** The oboe is an instrument which offers great possibilities of

expression, comparable to those of the violin. Indeed, the oboe may not be able to rival the virtuosity and the brilliance of a violin, but by its particular sonority, it can be intensely moving. A difficult instrument to master because of its mouthpiece with a double reed, it requires considerable physical energy and mental vivaciousness.

**The radiance of the French school.** Today, the different schools tend to become uniform, in Europe for example. The tendency is to seek the roundness of the sound. The real differences between the German and French schools, which existed, have presently vanished. Pierre Pierlot and Lothar Koch, two extraordinary artists, the first soloist with the Paris Opera and the second with the Berlin Philharmonic, had very different techniques. Today, a French person can be solo oboist in Germany and vice versa. But the English and the Americans have retained their characteristic tone concept. They play for the most part systems of reeds and oboes quite distant from ours, the extreme being the model of "Viennese oboe" that alone two Austrian orchestras use. In brief, the French school, that of Pierre Pierlot, Maurice Bourgue and Heinz Holliger (untiring creator of contemporary scores), is not in any danger. It radiates and will continue to radiate throughout the world."

CLAUDE VILLEVEILLE,  
soloist, member of the Reed Trio Ozi, director of  
the "Band of Oboes", professor at the Nanterre,  
Châtillon and Yerres Conservatories

"a detective's job into scores"

**"I received my education in Nîmes,** under the training of Jean-Pierre Taurignan. He had notably a speciality: he played the oboe d'amour, which was very rare in the 70s. After that, I created with the clarinetist Lucien Aubert and the bassoonist Alexandre Ouzounoff the Trio Ozi. We have toured the entire world, even in Africa! It was often awful for the instruments to be in countries with extreme temperatures like Korea! With this trio, we discovered quite a literature—at first, that of the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, like the work of Ozi, for certain, or of Joseph-François Garnier.

**The untiring search for repertory.** In the libraries, I undertook a real job as detective of scores, but I do it first of all so that unknown or little known music can be played. I also play as an enthusiast, the baroque oboe. It allows me to play this "old" repertory on a modern instrument: one learns to overlook the slurrings which have been

added to the scores; for example, one remarks that certain pieces were easier to play on these instruments than on ours, like certain trills which we now have to make by using several keys. But I am too much in love with my "modern" oboe and the literature of the 19th and 20th centuries to abandon it! From doing research, I found myself director of my own collection at IMD. There I publish works by composers who have lived in France but who are still little known like Louis Grabu (second half of the 17th century) or Filippo Prover (18th century). The oboe repertory is far from being limited, above all if one does not limit oneself to the German composers Telemann or C.P.E. Bach. We try therefore to give life back to this repertory, but equally to promote contemporary compositions, while not forgetting above all the English horn, the oboe d'amour, and oboe bands.

**The flight of oboe bands:** flourishing until the 18th century, they had disappeared. They have been in existence again for about ten years. One is able to recall that these oboe bands joined all the tessituras of the family, namely: in soprano, the oboe; in alto, the oboe d'amour; in tenor, the English horn; in bass, the barytone oboe, when one finds it, or otherwise a bassoon. The oboe d'amour, which plays a third below the oboe, was essentially used in Germany and Northern Europe. It disappeared in the 19th century and was resuscitated by Richard Strauss who used it in his *Symphonia Domestica* (Ravel also used it in *Boléro*). Since, Bruno Maderna prescribes it in his concertos, and the makers, notably Lorée who is the specialist, manufacture it again. The oboe d'amour is not very different from an oboe; the reeds, for example, are very close—which is not the case with the English horn. It is an instrument which one should really specialize in. There is never any need to play it as a part of an audition. And let's not talk of the barytone oboe, still more rare! Establishments like the Instrumental Park of Ariam/Ile-de-France, which notably rents percussion instruments, could have a barytone oboe that they would also rent...

It is therefore necessary to talk about those instruments which allow for the formation of oboe bands. These bands are a stupendous way to engage the enthusiasts after they leave the conservatory. And then, there is also still quite a repertory to discover: Lully, Delalande, Philidor, Mouret. I created my ensemble, the Oboe Band, in 1994 after a few attempts with some students. We want to be quite open, for example by modulating the organization, by working with beginners, by ensuring concerts with children.

But throughout France these bands are in full flight, notably in Nantes and Metz, where a local publication of arrangements has been made and of new pieces by local composers. Yes, the oboe is causing a stir!"

BERNARD DELCAMBRE,  
president of the French Association of the Oboe,  
professor at the CNR Nantes

"To bring together all the oboists..."

**"At the time of establishing the French Association of the Oboe,** our intention was to bring together all the oboists: "classic," baroque and traditional, orchestra musicians and amateurs. The baroque players resisted a little; the traditionalists were difficult to contact, because they are most often amateurs, but we succeeded! It was important that this combination come about, because we were certainly not wanting to create an association of professors.

The association really began two years ago, when I succeeded in bringing together about fifty French soloists in Nantes. Now we are six hundred; we publish *La Lettre du hautboïste* twice a year and the *Inf'Hautbois* six times a year. And we now have our Website, which allows us to have contact with the Americans, for example. But, for the moment, we are preparing above all the next convention of the French Association of the Oboe, which will take place in Angers, October 30-31, 1999.

Conventions provide first of all for the opportunity to have a general assembly of the association with elections to office, etc. There are also numerous concerts, master classes, and papers. One has to hear the oboe from all angles: I think it important that people realize that the music for oboe is very diverse. Everyone mixes, including during meals, because it is quite known that oboists like a good wine.... More seriously, at the annual convention there is also a large exhibition: all the French makers are brought together, as well as the makers of reeds and other materials, without forgetting the publishers. They are all invited to participate in our general assembly.

**Support for oboe bands.** We try to give a position of honor to the oboe bands. I created my first "band" of oboes at the CNR in Angers twenty-five years ago. An enormous work of repertory was relaunched in Great Britain by the London Oboe Band directed by Paul Goodwin. For a few years, the Ensemble Philidor, based in Tours, has been amplifying this research. These two ensembles play on period instruments. There are today approximately twenty oboe bands active in

the CNRs and music schools. We need to add to that the veritable swelling of publications, notably in Metz, Angers or Ile-de-France.

**Among our projects**, we want to draw students. We would also like to create a collection of scores which are no longer published or never were, to organize a competition and master classes, to solicit great composers to write for the oboe and oboe bands (there will be at our convention in Tours in three years a creation of a concerto for oboe and orchestra), to have recorded CDs of pedagogical pieces so that students may hear as often as possible piano accompaniments. We envisage also a sort of federation between oboists and bassoonists, which should lead to the organization of a convention of the International Double Reed Society (Association des anches doubles) in France, for the first time."

### The Instruments

#### French Domination

Oboe workmanship is very largely dominated, throughout the world, by French makers. The oldest and the first vendor is Lorée, "number 1" in the United States. In France still, two makers, Marigaux and Rigoutat, are considered as forming the "traditional" alternative. But a newcomer, Gérard Fossati, sets people talking about him; Buffet-Crampon relaunches an oboe model. Nonetheless, the Japanese maker Yamaha has not said its last word...

#### MARIGAUX

Philippe Tribouillois

President of SML-Strasser Marigaux

"to be the closest possible to the wishes of the musicians"

**A craftsman's fabrication.** "The oboe market, like that of many other wind instruments, has not evolved for two or three years. The misappreciation of this instrument does not encourage new enrollments in the music schools. To that, one has to add the economic moroseness which contributes detrimentally to an instrument which is not cheap. The oboe is a superb instrument, but which, by its often high price, discourages some parents from choosing one according to its quality. Nonetheless, one must understand that the oboe's conical bore and complex key system does not allow for machine production. In fact, we evolve in an industry of hand craftsmanship: nearly 80% of the price of this instrument comes directly from the quality of the craftsmanship. This craftsmanship is very

specialized; we must therefore use it to achieve the very high quality, symbol of the Marigaux house.

The competition with sister houses is thus necessary and healthy, because we work all to the same end: to make oboes which respond to the musicians' criteria of quality. Because, from the start, it's the musician who decides: he alone is right. This drives us to make instruments with strong added value.

There exists nonetheless for the beginning musician the possibility to rent his first oboe. It's often the solution recommended by teachers who do not wish to see their pupils begin on oboes with incomplete key systems or with dubious acoustic qualities. In this way, the pupil will expect to rise to the level of the instrument, which will allow him to complete his studies or even to derive pleasure as an amateur for many years.

**The oboe, a French speciality.** Nearly all oboists in the world play on an instrument made in France. Marigaux exports 80% of its production (800 oboes for exportation, 200 for France) to approximately thirty countries each year with Japan being the largest importer, then Germany and Central Europe. The Asian situation comforts us in our desire to be still more present in the greatest possible number of countries, so that we can protect our susceptible financial structure.

Our international presence allows us to collect the most varied opinions about what constitutes a good oboe. The primary concern of the Marigaux house is to be the closest possible to the wishes of the musicians. It's after listening attentively that we make modifications to our oboes. All improvements issue from the work of our technicians and our team of tuners. To accomplish this, we rely on Michel Crocquenoy (first solo oboist of the National Orchestra of France) and on François Leleux, who allows us to benefit from his international experience. But the color of the sound is not mathematically definable: finally, it's the will of the musician which infinitely focuses our attention.

Our activity corresponds therefore to that of a "large artisan workshop." We place the quality of an experienced team in the service of an enterprise with human dimensions."

Insert: François Leleux

**To prevent the tuba from swallowing the oboe.** "As I travel a lot with the orchestra and as a soloist, I hear a lot of different sounds from other oboists, which helps me in the advice that I give to the Marigaux establishment. We work on the homogeneity and the facility of the sound emission, in order that it may be more round,

more soft: in a philharmonic orchestra, the strong overtones of the tubas or the contrabasses swallow those of the oboe making it too easily hard and edgy.”

#### RIGOUTAT

Claude Rigoutat, General Director

to favor “the French sound of the oboe”

**A family business.** “Philippe Rigoutat, current president of the Rigoutat house, is the heir of a know-how which traces back to his grandfather, Charles Rigoutat. Charles, after having been key maker and foreman, established his own business after the war. His son, Roland entered the Paris Conservatory to study the oboe: we are truly the specialists of the oboe. We owe it to ourselves to be serious, since we make only the oboe and its family of instruments, namely the English horn, also the oboe d’amour developed by Roland Rigoutat, and the barytone oboe with which Philippe completed the family. From a little studio in the beginning, we have now come to the stage of a small business with twenty-eight employees.

**The models.** With the boom in music schools, we created in 1967 a school oboe, the RIEC (Rigoutat E Cole, about 17,000 francs), which has always been successful. It’s a complete oboe which an amateur can use all his life. We also brought out a model for beginners, the Delphine (about 11,000 francs), which keeps the same finger spacing for children but has a lighter key system.

Our principal model, for professionals, is LE Rigoutat. It is always evolving a little, and we work on making improvements to the facility, the intonation, and the homogeneity. Philippe has also made some improvements to the key system, which remain however minimal: there is no more room on the wood to put new keys! We offer obviously specific options indispensable for export countries, like automatic octave keys, and we equally handle all special orders by musicians (for the quarter tones for contemporary music, for example). To the professional English horn we have added a model RIEC much in demand by conservatory orchestras. The oboe d’amour is less in demand: different from the English horn, there is not a specific place for the barytone oboe; even if it remains marginal, we absolutely value keeping it alive. We offer one, moreover, on rental.

**The French sound and the concern about wood.** With the Rigoutat, we offer first of all the French sound of the oboe. The “classic” Rigoutat does not get lost very easily in orchestras; since it is rich in sound, musicians continue to appreciate its personality (about 28,000 francs). For

orchestra, we have developed the “Symphony” Rigoutat (about 30,000 francs) or the “Expression” Rigoutat which allies sonority and suppleness. In fact, orchestra work and solo work have quite different requirements today, and in order to adapt to one or the other, we had to find a new balance, indeed to select new textures of wood.

The places where one cultivates ebony in Mozambique have often been worn away by the war which has raged in this country, and the cultivation has become difficult. We therefore have a four year supply. We do not bathe the wood and furthermore we do not dye it. The differences in color become blurred themselves in six months.

For a house like Rigoutat, the essential is to know how to adapt to the market. When we created the “J1,” the ancestor to the Delphine for beginners, our cost prices were too high, and other houses which had created simplified models for children had prices clearly more competitive. But, now, we have been able to mark it down with notably by eliminating some keys which allows us to make a small series.

**The dependancy on exportation.** For about twenty years, all the houses have grown, and new craftsmen have set up at their expense. All this makes it necessary heretofore to go truly before the client in exhibitions and abroad. Rigoutat does 70% of its sales in export, and its instruments are sold in 58 countries. That makes us aware of the economic crises of certain countries like Korea for example. For the French market, where the importation of oboes is in fact confidential, one can say that at present the supply meets the demand: there must be sold approximately a thousand instruments each year, all labels combined.”

#### LORÉE

Alain de Gourdon, CEO

“Knowledge and experience have been carried over through several generations”

**A secular tradition.** In 1881, François Lorée founded his own oboe company. Since then, the instruments have carried the label “F. Lorée.” His son Lucien who succeeded him is the creator of numerous key systems.

In 1906, with the participation of Georges Gillet, professor at the Paris Conservatory, he invented the “conservatory model with plateau keys”, very quickly adopted by all the soloists throughout the world. The reputation of Lorée oboes is based upon more than a century of traditions. Knowledge and experience have been

carried over through several generations and, thanks to new innovations and techniques, allow the business to satisfy the needs of the most demanding musicians while all along respecting the specifications of each one at best.

**The student model.** In 1974 the company annexed the label “Cabart,” another very old oboe company. We make under this name student oboes which are appreciated for the quality of their craftsmanship, their rigorous intonation and their attractive price (Cabart “Modèle conservatoire” [“Conservatory model”] 17,000 francs). At the request of numerous professors and in order to allow very young children to begin playing the oboe (between 7 and 8 years), was created the Cabart “Petits mains” (“Little hands”) (about 10,000 francs), a lighter model, with close fingering and a simplified system. It is in ebony.

**The “Royal.”** In 1989 Lorée created a truly new model combining musicality, reliability and beauty, the “Royal,” which attracted a new clientele seeking different sonorities. It’s a model of high caliber guaranteed for three years (35,000 francs), which reinforces the reputation of the traditional Lorée model (for sale at 27,000 francs). Finally, we also make the oboe d’amour, English horn, barytone oboe and the piccolo oboe (musette).

**The most played label in the world.** Located in Magnanville (near Mantes), the factory, equipped with very modern machines, like digitally-controlled lathes and drills, produced more than 1,500 instruments in 1998. But it’s in Paris, at the rue du Vertbois, where the final inspections, tests, and last touches are given to each instrument. There oboists from all over the world meet up: orchestras as prestigious as that of New York, Cleveland, Chicago and Israel play Lorée, but also closer to us, the Scala of Milan, the Concertgebouw of Amsterdam, the Berlin Philharmonic and the EIC. For more than a century, “F. Lorée” is the label most played by the professionals.”

FOSSATI

Pascal Emery, Public Relations  
a new maker

#### **A new high caliber workshop.**

“After having worked for another house, Gérard Fossati wanted to create his own instrument. In 1983, a first prototype was elaborated, and in 1986, a workshop was mounted and a company created. Our range includes: a beginner’s model, the “Junior,” with a simplified key system, intended for music schools; the “Tiery,” with a complete key system, which is recommended for those buying their first oboe (it’s easy to resell); and two oboe

models for professionals, the “F 01” (about 22, 000 francs), with a classic key system, for the good amateurs, and the “A 01N” (about 29,000 francs), with a developed key system. The “A 01N” is truly a different instrument: on a layer of silver, we have placed a layer of inoxidizable rhodium which allows for the key system to remain esthetically like new and more resistant; the pads are of skin, which guarantee very good sealing that lasts longer than gold-beater’s skin or cork; we have modified the two holes of B/C sharp and C/D for the cadences of trills, which decreases the chance of errors; the adjustment for the left hand (upper joint) is different and allows for a more fine adjustment. We offer equally the English horn and the oboe d’amour in these two professional versions (“F 01” and “A 01N”), and we even have a “Tiery” English horn. With this wide gamut, we offer a better equivalence of quality and price: to pay 20,000 francs or 30,000 francs to acquire a second instrument is not the same thing.

I would like to highlight that for each instrument we have a specialist who advises us: Michel Bénét and Fabrice Mélinon for the oboe, Jean-Christophe Gaillot for the oboe d’amour, Patrick Roger and Jean-Marc Liet for the English horn.

**The quest for homogeneity.** Our work began with a request from oboists who were having a problem choosing between instruments perfect for orchestral playing but tricky for placing oneself into a soloistic context and those which affirm their personality but cause problems in the orchestra.

The request was thus to have a homogenous instrument, but one which stays in the French spirit with respect to versatility and sound. We have a trump: the absence of a past; we were not impeded by a tradition.

**The fragility of a “micro-market.”** It’s really necessary to say that the oboe is a micro-market. It’s not an instrument that one plays easily. Different from the clarinet, one absolutely has to pass through a conservatory to be able to play it. It is moreover not an instrument used for popular music, even if things have changed a little. The most important oboe makers produce about one thousand instruments a year: that’s equal to three weeks of production of clarinets!”

BUFFET-CRAMPON

Jean-Louis Capezzali, tester  
a tradition of high quality

“When, in 1992, I began to work with Buffet-Crampon, it was to make a complete design of a new instrument. Buffet had nearly abandoned

oboe production, and it was therefore necessary to begin again from zero. We had, Sherif Touati, René Lesieux and me, nearly *carte blanche* to elaborate a high caliber model. We thus proceeded with methodical attempts, problem by problem, while making improvements. We had our instruments played by numerous musicians in order to have their criticisms and compliments; the danger was to make an instrument only for us, for the testers.

With a tradition of “high quality” which is the reputation of the Buffet house, sales began in the United States, Japan, and Germany. Many artists play our instruments in France also. At the end of only six years of research, Buffet equally offers all its models in the “Green Line” material and at the same price (32,730 francs for the “3613” semi-automatic). This material, ebony dust compressed with a secret compound, incredibly resists aging and does not show therefore any perceptible dilatation. Its sonorous qualities are virtually identical to those of wood. Material of the future—it has the well-known advantage of saving precious trees.

A little ecological sense doesn't hurt!"

#### YAMAHA-FRANCE

Jean-Noël Martin, Wind and percussion  
instruments products specialist

instruments conceived “in a veritable research laboratory”

“**Our instruments**, made in Japan, are present on the entire world market. They are conceived in what we call a “design section,” a veritable testing, research, and acoustic laboratory. The oboe “design section” is directed by M. Miyaoka.

**We offer three oboe models.** The student oboe (YOB-211, 7,990 francs) is made of resin and has a simplified mechanism. It is sturdy and tolerates bumps and changes in temperature better than ebony. This instrument is for us a great success: it is offered to conservatories and music schools so that they can rent it or loan it to their pupils. The intermediary model (YOB-421, 14,950 francs), in ebony, is intended for more advanced students, who have already studied for more than two years, for example. And our high-caliber model, called “Custom” (YOB-821, 27,850 francs), is naturally intended for students at a high level and for soloists. We are trying to develop this last market in collaboration with our network of specialized retailers. On the other hand, in Japan, and also in Germany, our “Custom” oboe is played by several prominent musicians such as Ingo Goritzki, professor at the Hochschule in

Stuttgart. We are also hoping to seduce more oboists, when we have completed development of our new high-caliber oboe, which is for the moment at the stage of being a prototype.

**The worry of an easy sound emission.** Like all Yamaha wind instruments, our oboes are conceived to develop two essential qualities: homogeneity and easy sound emission. We look for a dense and full sonority across the whole range without making false sounds in the middle of a scale. We want to offer a direct and easy emission with a mechanism which responds well under the fingers and which is less heavy than that of other labels, as has been verified by several musicians. Our high-caliber instrument is therefore a polyvalent instrument; one can play it as a soloist or in the heart of an orchestra. In the latter context, the YOB-821 is reassuring: when it becomes necessary, after long measures without having played, to take up suddenly a solo, its easy sound emission is perceptible.”

#### The Reeds

the singing reed

In the world, one makes reeds according to four techniques: French, German, Dutch, and American. But the choice does not stop there. The quality of the cane is as essential as that of the scraping technique. The reed makers have their opinion on the question: two of them (but there are numerous small workshops) share theirs with us. The oboists (those we have met in any case) also have theirs, and one cannot say that the conclusion is unanimous.

#### GLOTIN

Danièle Glotin, CEO

to serve “professionals who know everything”

“**For more than fifty years**, we have been working with cane and particularly with that for the oboe, because Albert Glotin, the founder of the company, was himself an oboist. We are characterized as founders of a rigorous tradition of craftsmanship. Today, we perpetuate this work by adapting ourselves to the new schools, to the instrument which is evolving and to the constructive criticisms which alone the passionate musicians know how to convey. In fact, about the cane, the gouging, the shaping, etc., the oboists know everything—they are the professionals. They do not need for us, makers of reeds and suppliers of cane, to promise them the moon. What they want is a good reed, and they are able to find it.

**Eternal reed...** The fabrication process of a reed

is very complex: I would need four pages of this review to explain it. But I am completely willing to furnish upon simple demand all the explanations with the help of a slide-projector. I would simply like to recall that Glotin intervenes early in the production, in the choice of the primary material (we have our own production unit in the Var). One needs to tend the cane for several years before it is cut. It is harvested under certain conditions which are no longer left to chance but which are on the contrary a part of a tradition, a ritual, and a respect for the plant itself and its environment. One does not cut anything and anywhere: this would be harmful in the long run.

**...and modernity.** Conversely, the fabrication processes are constantly evolving, as they concern the “mechanics” and the research for quality: everything is minutely calculated, controlled, evaluated. With the cooperation among oboists, very good technicians and above all excellent advice, we are constantly improving on the processing of the cane, to be sure, and equally on that of the staples. In this way, for example, our efforts have been focused on the conicalness and the resistance to metal. An even thickness on the entire metallic part and an interior surface facilitating the production and the passage of air in the staple indeed improve the quality of the sound. Our quality and our modernness are the source of renown for the Glotin label.

A complete range of products and accessories is offered to oboists.”

#### NEURANTER PARIS

Pascal Neuranter

the secret of “drying” from father to son

**“The Neuranter house** has produced oboe reeds for three generations. I am myself an oboist, orchestra member and oboe professor: I myself test the prototypes. Our house has the reputation of offering a very good reed. To achieve this quality, we control the whole process, from the cutting of the wild cane to the tests. We notably give the greatest attention to the drying techniques which involve a secret that we have passed on from generation to generation...

**The line of the reeds...** The reed—we sell it in all forms, from the blank reed to the finished reed. Our range is therefore particularly complete with numerous varieties. The “reed kits” are for example offered with several openings, thicknesses and widths, while the finished reeds

exist in four “versions:” traditional reed, German reed, American scrape, and reed with wire. We sell more and more finished reeds. Moreover, we are able to furnish all the other instruments of the oboe family: the oboe d’amour, the English horn, the musette, and even the single reed for the oboe! The latter is a curiosity, used in jazz or contemporary music.”

#### **Other makers:**

Cantarosa (44700 Orvault)

Musique AD (68360 Soultz)

Rigotti (83990)

SARL Jany Berthelot (95840 Villiers)

V.A.R. (83210 Solliès-Pont)

#### **THE OPINION OF SOME MUSICIANS**

##### **François Leleux:**

Adapt the oboist to the reed and not the reed to the oboist

“One is always looking for the perfect reed. But I have only one piece of advice to give: what requires work is not the scraping but the ability to adapt the oboist to his reed. One should not blame one’s problems on the reed. For my part, a few days before a performance, I will make a reed and say to myself: “That one I will play at the next concert!” whatever its quality may be. I can therefore concentrate on the essential.”

##### **Bernard Delcambre**

The infinite and necessary science of the scraping

“An oboist spends a large part of his time fashioning, retouching his reeds. The myriad of scraping techniques lead to the richness, to the diversity of the sound, and therefore to different schools. This would be worth a long chapter—so much are we now at the stage of a science: culture, harvest, drying of the cane, transformation into tubes (hollow segments of about 10 x 20 cm.) which are in turn divided into three parts (“arrowing”) and from which one is hoping to pick a few good pieces of cane (attention to the grain markings, elasticity, the opening, the leaks...) New wave: Scrape oneself

In France there are very good reed makers. More and more oboists, starting with the tubes of cane, and thanks to “gouging” machines and sometimes to profiling machines, make their own reeds. There was a time when one left the conservatory hardly knowing how to scrape a reed: now, many students at the Master’s level have already a good knowledge of this primordial art for double reeds.”

**Jean-Louis Capezzali**

An unbearable dependence

“Reeds are a great source of bother and sometimes anguish. We unfortunately depend closely and directly on the quality of the reed, often mediocre....”

**Claude Villevieille**

Pessimism: the reed crisis

“I don't think the problems are going to be resolved. One can only state that the primary material becomes more rare and that a reed costs more and more. But one has to say also that we consume more and more of them, perhaps because we are richer than our predecessors.”

**The Oboe Writing Pad**

museums, Websites, scores, books, CDs, furnishings, and rentals

**THE MUSEUM OF WIND INSTRUMENTS**

Located in La Couture-Boussey. In this little village in the Eure, artisan tuners became, several centuries ago, tuner makers. The activity in this village is known primarily thanks to the fame of the Hotteterre family. Today still, many wind-instrument makers are set-up in the region.  
Tel. 02 32 36 28 80

**The Origins of the Oboe**

One can trace the origins of the oboe back to the “aulos”, an instrument played in India in the twelfth century BC. Closer to us, the Tunisian “raita”, the Breton bagpipes (“biniau, bombarde, cornemuse”) as well as the Catalan “tible” and the “tenora”, are the most obvious ancestors.

The oboe assumed its current dimensions around the 15<sup>th</sup> century. It was found in military and royal music, where it doubled the number of trumpets (The *Royal Fireworks* of Handel were written for 9 trumpets, 9 horns, 24 oboes, and 12 bassoons). With the sound becoming softer and more coherent, Cambert was able to introduce it into the Paris Opera in 1671 (in the pastoral of *Pomona*).

**WEBSITES**

–French Association of the Oboe (Association française du hautbois)

<http://www.musique.net/hautbois/>

(all, or nearly all, on the instrument including education, competitions, concerts)

–Ircam

<http://sol.ircam.fr/instruments/instrum.html>

(with notably an impressive list of scores, references of publishers, of music composed after 1945).

–Museum of Wind Instruments

[http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/musee\\_des\\_instruments-a-vent/](http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/musee_des_instruments-a-vent/)

(history of a region which loves wind instruments)

–International Double Reed Society

<http://idrs.colorado.edu/>

(In English, subscription required in order to obtain any information, very rich).

–BG

<http://www.musicindustry.com/bg/>

(In English, commercial site, but very technical advice, accessories...)

**CDs**

–François Leleux

Telemann, Fantaisies (Syrius, dist. Disques Concord)

Poulenc, musique de chambre (RCA)

Poulenc and Britten (Harmonia Mundi)

–Jean-Louis Capezzali

Milhaud (Erato)

Mozart (Forlane)

Prokofiev (BNL)

Schumann (Pierre Verany)

–Claude Villevieille

Concertos of Kreutzer and Garnier (Koch-Schwann)

With the Trio Ozi: Caplet and Magnard (Koch-Schwann)

Villa-Lobos (Adès)

—Pierre Pierlot and Maurice Bourgue

numerous disks with Erato

–Heinz Holliger

numerous disks with Philips

–Paul Goodwin

(baroque oboe): numerous disks with Hyperion and Harmonia Mundi (oboe band)

**BOOKS**

–*Hautbois et basson*, by Günther Joppig (Payot Lausanne)

–*Le hautbois dans la musique française, 1650-1800*, by François Fleuret (Picard)

–*Médecine des arts no. 19* (March 1997): “Wind instruments” (tel. 05 63 20 08 09)

-*Le hautbois de neige* (novel), by Max Rouquette (Editions de Pris)

-*Mémoire du hautbois* (more than a thousand pages on the oboe!), by Bruce Haynes (c/o The Author, 3589 rue Sainte-Famille, Montreal H2X2L2 Canada)

-*Oboe* (in English), by Leon Goossens and Edwin Roxburgh (Yehudi Menuhin Guides)

-*The Double Reed* (in English), by the International Double Reed Society (IDRS, Idaho Falls, Idaho, USA)

#### METHODS AND SCORES, MUSIC PUBLISHERS

-Billaudet: method "Le hautbois facile" (2 volumes) by Bernard Delcambre, and numerous studies and scores

-J.M. Fuzeau (79440 Courlay): series "Méthodes et traités, France 1600-1800": The Oboe.

-IMD (75018 Paris): series "Claude Villevieille"

-Editions de musiques actuelles (57000 Metz): series "Réson'anches"

-Notissimo (69002 Lyon): series "Ensemble Junior" and "Ensemble Philidor"

-Amuca SARL (49243 Avrillé)

-Breitkopf: "Pro Musica nova 1980" (important selection of 20th-century music, chosen with the help of Heinz Holliger)

#### FURNISHINGS, RENTALS

-BG Franck Bichon (Francheville 69340): Bindings, accessories, peripherals. Fax 04 78 56 57 78.

Website <http://www.musicindsutry.com/bg/>

-Alfa Musique (Lyon): Reeds, accessories. Tel. 04 78 30 03 49.

-Arpèges (Paris): Rental of oboes d'amour, English horns, and baryton oboe. Tel. 01 53 06 39 40.

#### The Baroque Oboe

The baroque oboe is an adaptation of the brilliant French oboe or schalmey for chamber music and orchestra. It appeared for the first time with musicians of the Paris and Versailles courts (Hotteterre and Philidor) from the 1650s and it was developed considerably towards 1675 (the orchestras of Lully and Rameau). It is made of box-wood, also ebony, and even in ivory for the most precious instruments.

The baroque oboe family includes:

-the dessus, in D;

-the high counter oboe, or the alto oboe in A (future oboe d'amour, invented in Germany around 1720, and used by Bach);

-the taille, or the tenor oboe in F (a derived instrument, the oboe da caccia, is used by Bach); the English horn dates from the 19<sup>th</sup> century;

-the bassoon in F

#### Makers of baroque oboes

-Olivier Cottet (28410 Boutigny-sur-Apton)

-Marc Ecochard (16430 Vindelle) ❖