

The Raoux Family

Raoux narrow bore natural and piston horns were sought after by horn players in the 19th and early 20th century as being the best and were played by both Aubrey Brain and his son Dennis. The Raoux family members who manufactured horns were:

François (1695-1749)

Brothers Pierre (1723-after 1789) and Joseph (1725-1787)

Lucien-Joseph (1752-1823)

Marcel-Auguste (1795-1871)

The Raoux story begins in 1663 when Louis Raoux moved to Nancy in the Lorraine region of France. Louis and his son François were *chaudronniers*; i.e., coppersmiths and pot and pan makers, the most highly skilled of which were organized in guilds in major cities and made high value objects, including timpani and trumpets. François became a master chaudronnier and was later described as Warden of His Royal Highness, the Duke of Lorraine's Hunt and, after a move to Versailles, as Horn Maker to the King's (Louis XV of France) Hunt, a position he held until his death.

Two of François's sons followed him in the business. Pierre remained in Nancy, listed as "merchant-maker of cors-de-chasse" and also was among the artisans who made a fountain in Nancy in 1756. Joseph moved to Paris and joined the Guild of Luthiers, Organ Builders, and Musical Instrument Makers in 1754. Before this, the cor-de-chasse was not considered to be a musical instrument as such, but, like trumpets and timpani, classified as "instruments of war and the hunt."

Both guilds manufactured horns from 1759, an important development as it reflected the growing interest in the horn as an orchestral instrument in France. These orchestral horns were triple-wound (introduced around 1814), following earlier designs of single-wound trompe (favored by the Marquis de Dampierre) and double-wound trompe Dauphine. The Raoux atelier developed two ranges of instrument: *trompes-de-chasse* for the hunt and *cors-de-chasse* for the orchestra.

Joseph seems to have made mainly hunting horns despite his entry into the Luthier's Guild. He was the exclusive supplier of trompe-de-chasse to the king. His son, Lucien-Joseph, apprenticed to his father, left to work with a former shop workman and competitor, Jean-François Corméry, but later returned to work with his father, possibly concentrating on orchestral horns while his father took care of hunting horns.

Lucien-Joseph developed a new form of *cor d'invention* in 1781, the *cor solo*. He made a beautiful example for an award to Louis-François Dauprat, winner of the first Premier Prix for horn at the Paris Conservatoire in 1797. Over the years, he made horns for Giovanni Punto, Domnich, Duvernoy, Kenn, and Lebrun. His workshop included a lathe.

Marcel-Auguste worked with his father and was a horn player as well as maker. Among the changes in industry and manufacturing at this time was the introduction of valves, arriving from Germany with trumpets in 1826. Following a revolution in 1830, royal patents were cancelled, competition increased, Adolph Sax won a competition for military band instruments, and the Raoux business went into decline. After years of litigation, Marcel-Auguste was forced in 1857 to sell the company's assets to Jacques-Christophe Labbaye, the horn-playing son of a maker.

In 1878, François Millereau, who started his own shop in 1861, bought Marcel-Auguste's patterns and the rights to the Raoux name from Labbaye, who continued to work in his employ. Millereau was succeeded by his son-in-law, Herman Schoenaers. The firm went bankrupt in 1931 and was bought by H. Selmer, who continue to use the Raoux name until around 1938.

Marcel-Auguste Raoux had a son, Auguste-Ernest (1826-1889), who became a government inspector; Auguste-Ernest's only child, a daughter, died in 1930, the end of this Raoux family.

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