VANDOREN
1905-2005
100 YEARS OF PASSION

Registered: November 2005
Publishing director: Bernard Van Doren • Chief editor: Anne-Sophie Van Doren
With the participation of Louis Hauser, Madame Marchal, Jean-Michel Paul, Jean Rapenne
Photos: Nicolas Roux • D. Buisson, Vandoren
Translated by Jeffrey Grice
Conception, layout, printing: Christophe Hauser / La Maison. Tel.: 01 44 90 02 20. christophe@la-maison.net

VANDOREN
1905-2005
100 YEARS OF PASSION
Giving back to music
all it has given to us...

I am proud to offer you this special centennial edition in a year
which has proven rich and exciting in every respect. I wanted
it convivial and confidential but also very clear and comprehen-
sive from a technical point of view. We need to keep you
informed about our products, your fidelity merits straightfor-
wardness and transparency. It also retraces the stages of evolu-
tion Vandoren has experienced in a century. Though built up
on a heritage and a rich past, the firm can only gain in
strength if our future prospects are promising. With the
passing of time, tools, machinery and products are being
perfected, but know-how remains the same… We are far
closer to you now than yesterday. May tomorrow bring us even
closer. I am optimistic about the future. It belongs to the
young generations, for us as much as for you.
We have to give back to music all it has given to us…

Bernard VAN DOREN

CONTENTS
4 MOUTHPIECES AND REEDS. THE INSIDE STORY
10 A PASSION FOR INNOVATION
16 THE FAMILY SPIRIT
18 UP THE RUE LEPIC
MOUTHPIECES AND REEDS,
THE INSIDE STORY
Mouthpieces and reeds, the inside story

Vandoren, a century of achievement

About reeds

A seemingly endless range of reeds...

Each reed corresponds to a certain type of music. Vandoren's wide range of reeds add the finishing touch to all styles and orchestral settings. Ever wondered why there are so many different women's lipstick shades? It's a bit like that...

Technical progress and tradition.

Has the cut of the reed changed in the course of the century? Though the principle remains the same, there has been a marked evolution. The cut is still unique and the reed is still the same, but manufacturing procedures have made significant advances.

Changing the cut?

Modifying the cane?

A much debated subject, but in all truth, no one can claim that today's cane is any better than yesterday's. There are natural and inalterable characteristics... Cane is a plant, of the graminaceae family, and subject to specific stages of development. The shoot takes two years to grow, has to be dry-cured in winter, put out in the sun to get its golden colour, and then left to dry naturally in a ventilated warehouse, a process which also takes two years... Advances have been made significantly in terms of what can be reproduced. For example, a reed of identical quality can now be reproduced despite the natural differences in plants. We have also made considerable progress with regard to the precise selection of cane. The range of strengths, even though unchanged, is now far more detailed. Our artists had to be content with "medium" or "medium hard" reeds. In 1985, we created "half strengths" in order to facilitate more intense, this large spectrum. In order to answer the demands of musicians, we also try to foresee them. For example, revolutionary "Flow Packs" now yield reeds individually maintaining an unsurpassed hygroscopic stability until their opening. Imagine every reed as factory fresh as if just picked up from our workshop in the south of France!
I was just a few years prior to the war that the very first signed Vandoren mouthpieces appeared. In 1936, Robert bought the little Perfecta workshop in La Couture Boussey and began manufacturing. They, along with the rest of the instrument world, were ready to get underway, all the manufacturing equipment was transformed to the world of professional.

These first mouthpieces had very closed settings, offering a beautifully mellow tone. After a certain amount of experimentation, Robert perfected the 5RV, a project so dear to him that he gave his own initials to his new "Bonde", meaning the beginning of the 5RV era. Then, he went on to develop a wider range of the 5RV " Specialy.

Acclaimed and appreciated by musicians, personal, reviews by, and by many, who toured the world, making Vandoren a household name in the field of mouthpiece manufacturing. But in the 1960s, the family business was only putting out 500 mouthpieces a month, and it was up to Bernard to expand manufacturing potential. Optimised by his drive, the firm now manufactures 10,000 mouthpieces a month. But an entire century takes a while to cross, and Vandoren’s story is punctuated with numerous technical innovations and other artistic subtleties.

Colour in the mouthpiece for colour in the playing?…

In line with the culturally booming seventies, Vandoren revolutionised the aesthetic of its mouthpieces. Her was growing shoulder length, skirts were turning floral, mouthpieces became coloured, these last mouthpieces were better, and then they were one. The reason? A different inspiration… "I thought a musician might like to blow into a coloured mouthpiece," explains Bernard, the creator of this audacious idea.

Is the crystal mouthpiece, a transparency that had gone out of fashion, catching on again? Crystal was more of a trend at the time of Eugène but as in the case of coloured mouthpieces, aesthetic innovations in the seventies had their way. And thanks to the transparency of the crystal, the mouthpiece had a very clean look, with a very modern sound. This subsequently led to the B45, with a wider front, playing piece shaped in the new, and of the extremity of the reed to give it a more malleable sound.
A PASSION
FOR INNOVATION
For Vandoren, research and development have always been priorities. Here, we outline our research strategy being implemented at the factory in Bormes les Mimosas. A foretaste of the mouthpieces and reeds of tomorrow?

Where can mouthpieces go from here?

Our research objectives are twofold: continuing to create new models based on our current know-how, in order to remain effectively meet musicians’ varied requirements, and innovating as much as possible by exploring new shapes and materials, in order to propose alternatives in terms of ergonomics, sonority and resistance to wear and tear. It should however be pointed out that although many geometric variations have already been experimented in a great many ways (especially for the clarinet), as far as materials are concerned, everything remains to be done. Today we have all our disposable an incredibly wide choice of materials from mainstream to traditional materials, through a whole range of synthetic or composite materials like wood based composites. We make a breakthrough with the AIRS and we are working on new materials using materials even more pleasant to touch, more resistant to wear and tear, and more ‘musical’, if such a thing is possible.

Just how much influence does material have on sound for a given geometry?

Material is generally considered to be less influential than geometry. The slightest variation in internal geometry, in the baffle in particular, produces a totally different sound level. Reaching such different effects by simply modifying the material seems a long shot. Moreover, until now every test has confirmed the truth of this hypothesis, betraying frequent misconceptions like “metal sounds brilliant” or “cold, “plastic sounds weak”, “glass sounds clear”, etc. However, two characteristics of materials do play a role, through a more or less sensitive ‘filter’ of the mouthpiece. The first is the material’s own capacity to vibrate and therefore participate in sound production. Like the wood, this can be demonstrated in the basic using the same material, a more resonant basis produces a more brilliant sound (although sometimes with less control). And the second is the roughness of the inner surface, especially at the level of the baffle, which can have a slight influence on timbre.

Could the same mouthpiece exist in different materials?

That’s the whole point! Exactly reproducing the same mouthpiece in different materials is very difficult to do for two reasons. Firstly because moulded pieces and moulding methods can differ from one material to another, and secondly because on pieces that are entirely machined, the slightest imperfections in material finishing touches are no guarantee for a good reproducibility. It was never possible for materials to be identical. Each material has its own characteristics, which can have a slight influence on timbre.

What might the mouthpiece of the future be like?

That’s the burning question! Directly reproducing the same mouthpiece in different materials is very difficult to do for two reasons. Firstly because moulded pieces and moulding methods can differ from one material to another, and secondly because on pieces that are entirely machined, the slightest imperfections in material finishing touches are no guarantee for a good reproducibility. It was never possible for materials to be identical. Each material has its own characteristics, which can have a slight influence on timbre.

What could be the mouthpiece of the future be like?

Perhaps adjustable, no doubt more ergonomic and easier to use. The simplification of the ligature could be the first step in this evolution.

How important is the role of the ligature in the sound?

In theory, a good ligature should play no predominant role in sound quality. Its role is simply to hold the mouthpiece in place and ensure the minimum of freedom in the baffle, the part of the reed that vibrates and produces the sound. Musicians who over-emphasize tightening or ligature positioning to control their playing sound are exposing themselves to constant sound level changes as they move the business of the reed and the mouthpiece.

Could the same mouthpiece exist in different materials?

That’s the whole point! Exactly reproducing the same mouthpiece in different materials is very difficult to do for two reasons. Firstly because moulded pieces and moulding methods can differ from one material to another, and secondly because on pieces that are entirely machined, the slightest imperfections in material finishing touches are no guarantee for a good reproducibility. It was never possible for materials to be identical. Each material has its own characteristics, which can have a slight influence on timbre.

What might the mouthpiece of the future be like?

Perhaps adjustable, no doubt more ergonomic and easier to use. The simplification of the ligature could be the first step in this evolution.

Could the same mouthpiece exist in different materials?

That’s the whole point! Exactly reproducing the same mouthpiece in different materials is very difficult to do for two reasons. Firstly because moulded pieces and moulding methods can differ from one material to another, and secondly because on pieces that are entirely machined, the slightest imperfections in material finishing touches are no guarantee for a good reproducibility. It was never possible for materials to be identical. Each material has its own characteristics, which can have a slight influence on timbre.

What might the mouthpiece of the future be like?

Perhaps adjustable, no doubt more ergonomic and easier to use. The simplification of the ligature could be the first step in this evolution.

Where can mouthpieces go from here?

Our research objectives are twofold: continuing to create new models based on our current know-how, in order to remain effectively meet musicians’ varied requirements, and innovating as much as possible by exploring new shapes and materials, in order to propose alternatives in terms of ergonomics, sonority and resistance to wear and tear. It should however be pointed out that although many geometric variations have already been experimented in a great many ways (especially for the clarinet), as far as materials are concerned, everything remains to be done. Today we have all our disposable an incredibly wide choice of materials from mainstream to traditional materials, through a whole range of synthetic or composite materials like wood based composites. We make a breakthrough with the AIRS and we are working on new materials using materials even more pleasant to touch, more resistant to wear and tear, and more ‘musical’, if such a thing is possible.

Just how much influence does material have on sound for a given geometry?

Material is generally considered to be less influential than geometry. The slightest variation in internal geometry, in the baffle in particular, produces a totally different sound level. Reaching such different effects by simply modifying the material seems a long shot. Moreover, until now every test has confirmed the truth of this hypothesis, betraying frequent misconceptions like “metal sounds brilliant” or “cold, “plastic sounds weak”, “glass sounds clear”, etc. However, two characteristics of materials do play a role, through a more or less sensitive ‘filter’ of the mouthpiece. The first is the material’s own capacity to vibrate and therefore participate in sound production. Like the wood, this can be demonstrated in the basic using the same material, a more resonant basis produces a more brilliant sound (although sometimes with less control). And the second is the roughness of the inner surface, especially at the level of the baffle, which can have a slight influence on timbre.

Could the same mouthpiece exist in different materials?

That’s the whole point! Exactly reproducing the same mouthpiece in different materials is very difficult to do for two reasons. Firstly because moulded pieces and moulding methods can differ from one material to another, and secondly because on pieces that are entirely machined, the slightest imperfections in material finishing touches are no guarantee for a good reproducibility. It was never possible for materials to be identical. Each material has its own characteristics, which can have a slight influence on timbre.

What might the mouthpiece of the future be like?

Perhaps adjustable, no doubt more ergonomic and easier to use. The simplification of the ligature could be the first step in this evolution.

How important is the role of the ligature in the sound?

In theory, a good ligature should play no predominant role in sound quality. Its role is simply to hold the mouthpiece in place and ensure the minimum of freedom in the baffle, the part of the reed that vibrates and produces the sound. Musicians who over-emphasize tightening or ligature positioning to control their playing sound are exposing themselves to constant sound level changes as they move the business of the reed and the mouthpiece.

Can you explain capturing the spirit of the fifties in a mouth-piece?

This concept is popular in the States. It harks back to a type of “hot” jazz sound that saxophonists used to make, in a period where improvisation was more important than sound production, favouring the richness of the timbre.
and flexibility of timbre so characteristic of the saxophone. We will be launching two new ‘fifties legend’ ebonite mouthpieces in 2005-2006, one for soprano sax and one for tenor sax, with particularly ‘hot’ and maliable timbres.

Could this be some passing craze?
It’s a matter of opinion but the trend seems to be catching on. Saxophone sound is still one of the rare instrumental timbres to sound yet been satisfactorily synthesised, precisely because of the richness and variety of its natural sonority. In the face of synthesizers and other samplers, the saxophone asserts its unquestionable originality.

Where does research stand with regard to new materials for reeds?
We have long been trying to find materials for reeds as good as cane, but more durable and, if possible, offering other alternatives in terms of sound. But until now none of the tests carried out by different manufacturers have led to any decisive result. The reason is simple: cane has exceptional mechanical and hydrophilic characteristics, due to its very particular structure, extremely complex to reproduce synthetically. Plus, the morphological ensemble of the reed, the mouthpiece and the instrument has developed for centuries on the basis of these characteristics, to the exclusion of any others. The reeds vibration conditions the whole chain of sound production, and any slight imperfection in the reed produces effects that neither the mouthpiece nor the instrument can compensate for. Either we replace cane with a material whose physical properties are really close, or we develop all or part of the sound production chain (the mouthpiece in particular) to allow the use of a somewhat different material. In either case, the research is long and tedious.

Will we ever manage to equal or surpass cane?
A priori, it’s not impossible. In any case, exploring the matter interests us.

Can you tell me about the benefits of the new “Flow Pack” packaging?
T.A.N. (Numerical Reed Tester) at your service 56 rue Lepic, in New York, Chicago and Tokyo.

For several years, all our manufacturing workshops have been maintained in supervised hygrometric conditions. This fantastic advance combined with refined grading techniques, also led us to optimise selection by strength and guarantee product quality. But we realised that all these precautions were often in vain, if transportation conditions or the storage facilities of shops and clients were not also ideal. Traditionally, packaging was not designed to adapt to unusual climatic conditions for long periods of time, and reeds were sometimes significantly affected. So we came up with a revolutionary packaging idea to maintain reeds, as perfectly and for as long as possible, in the conditions in which they left the factory, the ‘factory fresh’ concept. And for optimal results, we decided on an individually wrapped presentation. Now each reed reaches its final client in a state of remarkable freshness.

What parameters other than strength can be measured?
Most musicians use three basic criteria in describing their reeds: strength, timbre and durability. We already know how to measure strength in a precise, reproducible way. Durability depends a lot on the cane itself. Unfortunately, although rather obtrusive in its presence, the only way to weight this is by simulating wear and tear mechanically. But, we have great hopes of being able very soon to characterise certain aspects of sound. Work has just begun, so we cannot discuss this, let’s just say that it calls for research on very scale in advanced regions of physics and geometry and may well be the cornerstone of all new research on reeds and mouthpieces alike...
THE FAMILY SPIRIT

From the cane to the tree

Being compared to a tree may seem unusual for a firm like Vandoren, now centennial and exporting throughout the world. But perhaps this rather unexpected image really does reflect the true nature of this company: a small family industry that has prospered from season to season and been reinforced by being as firmly rooted in its original soil as in its tradition and technical know-how.

And it really is a tree... genealogically speaking. For Vandoren, a hundred years after its creation, is still a family business. Eugène's passion espoused the talent and artistic qualities of Robert, and both of them later incorporated Bernard's technical expertise and thrust for modernising. What's more, by enabling the manufacturing of its products, on numerous different sectors (agriculture, medical...), without the case in our currently overspecialised world, Vandoren grows like a tree with multiple ramifications.

But Vandoren is also a tree with firmly implanted roots. For though the firm exports over 90% of its production, its manufacturing is still authentically French. Its factory still in Bormes les Mimosas in the Var. And this is more than economic: "patrimonial", for the firm is still very attached to the spirit of its own tradition, relying quality products for a prestigious specialist label that has long proven its expertise and professionalism. The satisfaction of the musicians is a priority: keeping never to be jeopardised by some meticulous production or excessive industrial operations. So, remaining as one of Vandoren's chief objectives, notably in the terms of research and technical innovation (research for a constant hygrometry, research on new materials...).

A century later, Vandoren resembles a beautifully robust plant whose deep roots and promising buds are watered by musicians...

Anne-Sophie Van Doren
Up the rue Lepic
A hundred years ago, Parisians were walking up the rue Lepic, arm in arm, to go sing and dance in the guinguettes (open-air cafés) and cabarets of the Butte, draped in greenery and resounding with the latest songs. Many painters were inspired by these rhythms, including Monet, Pissarro, Degas, and Cézanne, who lived in Montmartre. And other artists worked in the area, especially the Illustration team of the famous “Bateau-Lavoir” which around 1900 was installed in a former guinguette called “Le petit bateau”. Rodin, Modigliani, Renoir... Montmartre also had its many serious moments. The famous chorus of the “Rue Saint-Vincent” used to bring tears to the eyes of French walking girls. “Les temps des Cerises” also had a sad refrain: “I pluralise your pots all over the Butte Montmartre were very popular with young Parisians on Saturday nights: you could dine, drink and dance there until the early hours of the morning.

Nowadays, no-one really knows who Lepic was: a painter, a writer, a musician? A proprietress of a guinguette named “Le petit bateau”. Nowadays, the gaunt windmills sail no longer turn, the voice of Dalida has disappeared, and the spirit of Marcel Pagnol has vanished on a wall, but Montmartre, for the joy of the entire world, is still laughing heartily.

Vandoren’s birthday celebrated throughout the world

January Los Angeles
From the 20th to the 23rd of January at NAMM, the largest music fair in the world, a reception organized with the help of our distributor Domaine de l’Anglade allowed us to invite American and international distributors for a glass of Domaine de l’Anglade, the Vandoren wine.

June: Le Lavandou, France
On June 9th, Bernard Van Doren gave a reception for distributors, musicians and friends in the heart of his cane fields. A special cocktail was prepared at our distributor IZZO in Buenos Aires, Vandoren invited orchestra and band soloists (saxophone and clarinet) to a traditional dinner.

September: South America
Argentina: In Buenos Aires, Vandoren invited orchestras and band soloists (saxophone and clarinet) to a traditional dinner.

Central Events
Vandoren's birthday celebrated throughout the world

56, rue Lepic gets a face-lift

Our building has just been completely renovated this year, allowing musicians to be received in optimum conditions. We still have the test studios for sampling mouthpieces and accessories, along with our “Vandoren Perforated” which, for a few years already has been letting instrumentalists obtain the strength they desire with unparalleled precision. Our store of sheet music (and CDs) for clarinet and saxophone, created in 2000, offers a specialized service adapted to the needs of professional and amateur musicians.

The web site
Vandoren’s web site has been completely redone. The sheet music section is far more comprehensive and the site equipped with totally secure direct payment facilities and a multi-criteria search machine for surfing the immense Vandoren database (composers, arrangers, titles, categories, excerpts, etc.). Over 15,000 titles for your visual and listening pleasure!
The Paris Conservatoire class in China

In March 2005, I took 13 saxophonists from my class at the CNSM to China for a concert tour and master-classes in Peking, Shanghai and Xian. All were enormously impressed, hard not to be with such a country. There are nearly 20,000 amateur saxophonists in Shanghai alone. As a sense of mutual enrichment, the contact was brief but intense and full of promise. The French saxophone school, thanks to Sélim and Vandoren, was able to give a demonstration of its savoir-faire with enthusiastic publics and create strong bonds with a culture totally different to our own. Vandoren, thank-you a hundred times.

Keen to enrich the repertoire of contemporary music, Vandoren has had a policy of commissioning works from composers since 1991.

For saxophone: Stockhausen’s Linker Augentanz and Taïra’s Pénombres VI.

For clarinet: Berio’s Alternatim, Bacri’s Concerto da camera and Sciarrino’s Altre Schegge di Canto. In this centennial year, Vandoren has already sponsored two exceptional premières. On February 3rd, Ivan Fedele’s Arco di vento was premièred in Turin. This magnificent concerto for clarinet and orchestra (2002-2004), was performed by Alessandro Carbonare and the orchestra of the RAI. And on May 28th, in Shanghai, the French-Chinese composer Qigang Chen gave a preview of Le songe d’une jeune femme française ("The dream of a young French woman"), a concerto for clarinet, orchestra and soloist, with Paul Meyer. The definitive premiere of this work took place in Strasbourg on June 23rd, 2005, with the Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg, conducted by Pierre boulez. This exceptional concert was given in the contest of the Europe’s Orchestral herit, to mark the 100th anniversary of the Orchestre Philharmonique de Strasbourg. Le songe d’une jeune femme française, based on poems by Christiane Fournier, is a story of male-female relationships, a “tale of life” where the clarinet is ultimately a spiritual and an intellectual double of the sponsor. The combination of soprano and clarinet with an orchestra is quite rare. The public, orchestral artistic directors from all over Europe, gave the work a most enthusiastic reception.

Jean-Noël CROQ in Peru

Touched by the humanitarian, cultural project of Aurélie and Rudy Valdivia, teachers in Rosheim in Alsace, to assist Peruvian clarinetists, I helped raise funds and collect material for their association in Quito, apart from their concerts in Quito and the mobilizing of the parents, teachers, and friends. I obtained sponsorship from Vandoren, Buffet-Crampon, the Cello-Maker workshop and Robert Martin, Stephanie Isaac, Cyrille-Méadel and I then went to Peru where we played concerts to enthusiastic and very generous audiences in Lima, Arequipa and Cusco (at an altitude of 3300 metres). We also gave master-classes and workshops, where we were able to explain questions of manufacturing, repairing and repainting to inquisitive young mari-net; but there is very great! In addressing my best wishes for the centennial of this great firm which has helped so many musicians in the past, may I hope, in the thundery years to come, young clarinetists of the world over will be able to access Vandoren reeds and mouthpieces without difficulty.

The Master-classes on DVD

A pedagogical DVD collection, master-classes filmed at Vandoren, will be released at the end of 2005.

DVD 1: Guy Deplus, Emeritus Professor at the Paris Conservatoire, co-founder of the Domaine Musical and former clarinet soloist of the Reims Opera, giving a master-class in December 2002.

DVD 2: Karl Leister, former clarinet solo of the Berlin Philharmonic, giving a master-class in 2004.

Philine FORBES in Colombia

What an amazing opportunity to be able to organise the 1st National Saxophone Competition in Bogota, thanks to the sponsorship of Vandoren, Selmer, Peeling Musique and local French institutions. The French Embassy gave an “Egide” study bursary to the winner of the soloist section, Juan Fernando Giraldo, the equivalent of a return ticket Bogota-Paris and a month’s study in February, 2006. This Competition seems to have been an immense success. More than 60 contestants came from throughout the country. There were three levels: Juvenil, Superior and Solista. Performances were generally of a very high standard, despite the students’ lack of good instruments and material. The prize-giving and final concert took place at the Teatro Cristobal Colon in the presence of His Excellency the French Ambassador to Colombia. There were over 3000 spectators for this unforgettable evening, the first important event of this kind, and Colombians thank Vandoren 100 times! I hope to be able to maintain artistic links with this fabulous country until 2005…

The latest on Vandjans

“Vandojams”, a popular Parisian night-life event in Montmartre since 2003-2004, and then the Sunset-Sunside since September, 2004, became larger in scale this season. On October 1st, Vandoren, in association with the “Nuits Blanches” Festival, presented the Francis Beaucage Quartet from 6 p.m till dawn. A programme which highlighted the great trends and standards of jazz history from swing to rock to pop… to think that jazz is over a hundred years old! And the “Year” sessions of Vandoren’s centennial celebrations will conclude on December 13th with the visit of young talent from all Europe for an evening at The Days Lounge Studio, in Paris’ 18th arrondissement. This year, “Vandojams” have also begun to catch on outside Paris. In Bordeaux on May 24th, they were in Canada (Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver) in June and November, 2005 in New York…

Birthday cards…

The complete articles are available on our site: www.vandoren.fr