

clarinets

*the essentials*



éditions selmer

# The clarinet family

Although the Böehm system clarinet in Bb is the most widely known member of the clarinet family, it also has a number of cousins that share the limelight with contemporary musicians today.

Here we take a look at the clarinet family, from the highest to the lowest voice.

two



## Sopranino clarinet in Ab

Now a curiosity in itself, this instrument is very rare and one of the most highly prized pieces among collectors. Its use, however, was largely limited to military bands.

Sopranino clarinet in Ab

## Sopranino clarinet in Eb

Best remembered for its contribution to Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique*, this instrument demands a strong technique as its high notes require special fingering. Its star quality? The perfect resonance of its high tones.

Sopranino clarinet in Eb

## Sopranino clarinet in D

Also not for the faint hearted, the sopranino clarinet in D nevertheless found favour with Molter in his concertos and with Richard Strauss in his symphonic poem *Till Eulenspiegel*. It has the advantage of being easier to play than its Eb counterpart.

Sopranino clarinet in D

## Clarinet in C

Increasingly cast aside by experienced players in favour of the Bb, this instrument, which seduced both Franz Liszt in *Faust* (choral symphony) and Richard Strauss in *The Knight of the Rose*, is sometimes used as a beginner's instrument.

Clarinet in C

## Clarinet in Bb

The most commonly used. Combining brilliance and eloquence with a full and radiant sound, it blends perfectly with both woodwind and string instruments. Virtuoso and faithful companion of soloists from the worlds of classical, jazz and contemporary music alike.

Clarinet in Bb

## Clarinet in A

A favourite amongst Bb devotees who revel in its warm intimacy combined with an exquisite softness and beautifully deep tone. It is little wonder that this clarinet made its mark in the chamber music of both Mozart and Brahms.

Clarinet in A

## Basset clarinet in A

Similar in design to the clarinet in A but with the added possibility of a low C, this instrument excels in Mozart's *Quintet for clarinet and strings*, K 581. However, it remains very rare.

Basset clarinet in A



**Basset horn  
in F**

Who wouldn't think of Mozart and his *Requiem* when considering this instrument that was also a favourite of Strauss and Massenet? Previously bent in the middle, today's basset horn is straight in form and has a metal neck.

Basset horn in F



**Alto clarinet  
in Eb**

The alto clarinet in Eb differs from other clarinets in its curved metal neck and bell, much like the basset horn. It is a much sought after instrument and is particularly appreciated in chamber music.

Alto clarinet in Eb



**Bass clarinet  
in Bb**

This clarinet has a curved neck and a larger bell, while its authoritative bass notes combine marvellously with the wood and string sections of jazz and contemporary music alike. There are two bass models: one going down to low Eb and the other to low C.

Bass clarinet in Bb



**Contralto  
clarinet in Eb**

This clarinet draws on all the charms of its superbly smooth, deep register, which gives it exceptional range. Unfortunately, however, it is all too rarely used in a symphony orchestra.

Contralto clarinet in Eb



**Contrabass  
clarinet in Bb**

The shape of this instrument is what sets it apart from the rest: folded back on itself, it is 2.31 metres long. Made from metal and wood, it extends to a low Bb bass octave. Composers are turning to it more and more.

Contrabass clarinet in Bb

# Contents

Written by:  
Yves Guilloux

Graphic design and printing:  
Edipso Communication, Paris 13  
www.edipso.com

Photos:  
Studio Trente Quarante, J.-C. Meignan  
Marc Rouvé

Acknowledgements:  
For their kindness, availability and  
precious advice, we would like  
to thank:  
Frédéric Loué  
Sébastien Fontaine  
Yannick Ducasse  
Jean-Claude Veilhan.

four



## The clarinet family 2

## History of the clarinet 5

The French 'chalumeau' of mediaeval origin becomes the clarinet

Jacob Denner, Beer and Barthold optimize the tones

First appearances of the clarinet

Müller invents the 13-key multi-tone clarinet in 1812

1839: the Bøehm system flute is adapted for the clarinet

The Müller clarinet is still copied by many

The Albert system clarinet was very much in vogue at the beginning  
of the 20th century

Centered Tone, Benny Goodman's favourite clarinet

Henri Selmer & Cie at the heart of 20th century research

## Henri Selmer Paris 13

1910, Selmer already offers a large number of models

A success story between Paris and New York thanks to the clarinet

Consolidation of the Adolph Sax company in 1928 and birth  
of the Balanced Action saxophone in 1936

A highly diversified activity in 1950

Selmer today

## A glance at the Selmer catalogues 18

The 1935/1936 catalogue

Radio Improved clarinets in 1934, Centered Tone in 1954 and new Series 9  
and Series 9\* series in 1961

The Marchi-system clarinet or the Selmer revolution

New classification of clarinets in April 1987

Selmer, a selection of top-of-the-range and professional clarinets

## Clarinet making 20

Granadilla wood takes the form of a clarinet

Crafting the instrument

The finish, a decisive step

## The mouthpiece & the reed 22

Select pieces of the clarinet

## Taking care of your clarinet 23

What you need to know

The art of assembling the instrument

Care



# History of the clarinet

---

## From baroque to the present day



Much loved for its tonal qualities, from the softest to the sharpest, the warmth of its deep register and the vivacity of its higher register, the clarinet in Bb is today a real diva covering three octaves and one sixth. Its limitless range of expression makes it the instrument of choice for symphony orchestras as well as composers of traditional, contemporary and jazz music. But what of the path it has followed since its invention by Denner at the very beginning of the 18th century and the application of the Bøhm ring mechanism in 1839. Not forgetting the contributions made to its development.

HENRI  
ELMER  
PARIS

The start of the age of enlightenment brought an unprecedented breath of musical creativity: the whole of Europe was in tune with inventors continually widening the *ambitus* of instruments (range of voice, melody or instrument, from the lowest to the highest note), adapting the fingering and securing a better sound production.

If we turn to Italy, it was Bartolomeo Cristofori, in 1700, who created the first pianoforte, an instrument very close to the harpsichord in shape, but which introduced *piano* and *forte* nuances, thanks to its system of small hammers.

Moving on to France, it was the Hotteterre dynasty of La Couture-Boussey in Eure, of which Jacques, known as the Roman, was the most illustrious representative, that was to further the cause of woodwind instruments.

And finally to Germany, where Johann Christoph Denner (Leipzig 1655-Nuremberg 1707) invented the clarinet in the early years of the 18th century, after ten years of research. Denner had the idea of developing the “chalumeau” (pipe), which had two keys (A and Bb), and a single reed attached to the mouthpiece by a small cord. He extended the body using a bell and, most importantly, moved the Bb key up to become the 12th key: the clarinet was born.

*The ligature (small cord) now attaches the reed to the mouthpiece.*



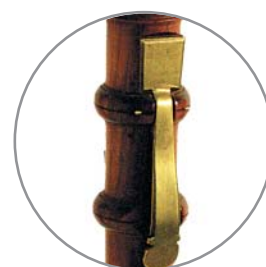
*2-key clarinet in C by Denner, as it was in around 1720 (copy by Laurent Verjat made in 1980).*

## The French ‘chalumeau’ of mediaeval origin becomes the clarinet

French records from the 12th century help to provide increasingly precise evidence of the origins of the clarinet. History has it, for example, that Chrétien de Troyes (circa 1135 – 1183) played a type of chalumeau at *the wedding of Érec and Énide*.

Over time, the name chalumeau prevailed and, towards the end of the 12th century, this French pipe had eight holes, was made of boxwood and used a natural reed. Its range was very limited, not exceeding the tenth, meaning that it was impossible to produce overtones. It was nevertheless this same pipe that, in Germany, was to have a very strong influence on Johann Christoph Denner, whose genius lays in his ability to develop it into a clarinet with a bell and a twelfth key.

*The 12th key on Laurent Verjat’s copy of Denner’s clarinet.*





## Jacob Denner, Beer and Barthold optimize the tones

Denner also had the idea of adding a small length of copper piping inside the Bb hole to prevent the build-up of moisture within the instrument. However, although the clarinet could be played over a range of nearly three octaves, it could not go below F, which made it impossible to produce a natural B sound, one twelfth higher. This problem was solved by Denner's eldest son, Jacob, who extended the instrument to include a low E, thus adding a new key, played with the right thumb. Joseph Beer (1744-1812), for his part, started to

learn the clarinet at the age of 14 and entered into the service of the Duke of Orleans in around 1767, where he worked as chief musician and bodyguard for some 20 years.

François-Joseph Fétis, a 19th century musicologist, attributes the introduction of the fifth key to Beer in his universal biography of musicians published in Brussels in 1837, even if other sources cite Fritz Barthold as being behind these two additional keys, which enabled musicians to play low F# and low G#, as well as their twelfths, C# and D#.

Beer went on to be a major influence in France, passing his expertise on to Michel Yost, leader

of the French clarinet school from 1754 to 1786.

## First appearances of the clarinet

Captivated by the tone of the new clarinet, composers at the beginning of the 18th century were unanimous in their praise. Vivaldi was the first to give it a place of honour in his opera *Juditha Triumphans* in 1716, taking great pleasure in combining the two clarinets and two oboes in his *Grosso Concertos R.V. 559 and R.V. 560*. Not forgetting of course Antonio Caldara in 1718, Telemann as of 1719 and Jean Adam Joseph Faber, kapellmeister of Anvers cathedral, who wrote his *Mass for*

5-key clarinet by Baumann (circa 1790) in the time of Mozart.



*the Assumption* in 1720. In France, Jean-Philippe Rameau was the first to add to his orchestra with the new sounds of the clarinet in his opera *Zoroastre* in 1749 and in *Acante and Céphise* in 1751.

Mozart first used the clarinet in his *Divertimento K 113* in 1771, and of course in his famous *Clarinet concerto K 622* (1791) and *Quintet for clarinet and strings K 581* (1789) – two major works dedicated to Anton Stadler, the famous clarinetist. Nevertheless, the

clarinet remained a very difficult instrument to play, leading to extensive research to make the fingering more rational and above all more ergonomic.

Finally, a sixth key was added to the clarinet by Jean Xavier Lefebvre around 1791, enabling the little finger of the left hand to reach the G# of the horn and, more importantly, the C# of the pipe.

## Müller invents the 13-key multi-tone clarinet in 1812

The 13-key multi-tone clarinet submitted by Iwan Müller before the committee of the Paris Conservatoire in 1812 was obviously ahead of its time. The idea of favouring the whole range of tones was, moreover, shared by others. Jean-Baptiste Dupont and Jean-Claude Labbaye, for example, put forward designs for multi-tone horns in 1815 and 1820 respectively. Unfortunately, Iwan Müller was to come up against a rare narrow-mindedness among the members of the Committee, in particular Lefebvre (who actually

went on to adopt Müller's clarinet), who rejected the instrument time and time again. A highly questionable attitude that brings to mind the similar fate reserved for Théobald Böhm's new flute mechanism in 1832. Müller's instrument was revolutionary in its use of a brand new layout of bevelled holes with a reed attached by metal ligature, making it far more practical. In reality, the new Müller clarinet aroused considerable enthusiasm among clarinetists, who now had a much more effective instrument. In fact, Frédéric Berr, lecturer at the Paris Conservatoire, was a partisan of this new clarinet, as was his illustrious disciple Hyacinthe Klosé, who went on to instruct both Henri and Alexandre Selmer.

## 1839: the Böhm system flute is adapted for the clarinet

However, Hyacinthe Klosé was not entirely satisfied with Müller's clarinet and contemplated the potential benefits of the new ring system that Théobald Böhm had

13-key clarinet by Lefèvre (circa 1820), using Müller's multi-tone clarinet design of 1812.



Böhm system clarinet in Bb appearing in the Selmer catalogue for the first time in 1910.





invented for the flute a short time before in 1832. Indeed, the new Bøehm flute featured a hole layout that obeyed the laws of acoustics, with screwed rests, and that was made up of interlinked rod axles connected to both the annular keys and flat keys, allowing for an unprecedented quality of sound.

Hyacinthe Klosé persuaded Louis-Auguste Buffet to make the clarinet with the new Bøehm ring system in 1839: the modern clarinet was born.

1843 was the year in which Buffet officially registered his patent for a new type of clarinet, the “ring-key” clarinet, but also the year that saw

the introduction of Klosé’s famous clarinet method, which took into account the new layout of bilateral keywork of the Bøehm system. It was also Klosé who generalized the addition of the right thumb rest, as ebony was slightly heavier than the old boxwood used to make clarinets.

### The Müller clarinet is still copied by many

Nevertheless, the Müller clarinet still counted numerous admirers looking to improve their instrument. These included the Frenchmen, Simiot, from Lyon, who built a 19-key clarinet in 1828 and Lefebvre in 1845, who added two ring keys to the 13-key clarinet. There was

also Gyssens in 1852, who retained Müller’s fingering systems but combined it with the accurate tuning of Bøehm’s system, and, not forgetting, the German Oehler system, very much inspired from the Müller clarinet but with a highly complex mechanism. Last but not least were the Albert brothers of Brussels, who brought the best out of the Müller clarinet with a slightly wider body. It is worth mentioning that there also existed a 15-key, 2-ring clarinet, known more commonly as the demi-Bøehm, which combined the respective advantages of the Müller clarinet and the Bøehm system. Furthermore, a large number of changes to the clarinet (often of

HENRI  
SELMER  
PARIS

*Albert system clarinet at the beginning of the 20th century, available in the Selmer catalogue of 1910.*



little worth) were made in the second half of the 19th century, of which the most significant were: the Bb fork (improving the Bb4 fingering) and the G# covered with a curved piece of metal.

The Albert system clarinet was very much in vogue at the beginning of the 20th century

Henri Selmer's passion

for the clarinet is what fed his interest in reeds and their manufacture, so vital to the instrument's sound. Success was immediate with the



*Bøhm and Albert system clarinets in Bb, making their first appearance in the 1935-1936 catalogue.*

award of the silver medal at the Montpellier Exhibition in 1896, just eleven years after the company's foundation. In fact it proved just the boost that this young company needed to go on to manufacture clarinets, flutes, oboes, bassoons and saxophones under the name Henri Selmer.

However, clarinetists were still very attached to the German 13-key Müller clarinet, with, at the beginning of the 20th century, the Müller-inspired Albert system clarinet representing the next best thing. Everything was done to seduce and win over clarinet players: Bøhm system clarinets were fitted with a flat thumb rest to please saxophonists, whilst the curved G# lever and numerous other Henri Selmer inventions saw the light of day up to and including the 20-key model, a combination of the Bøhm and Albert systems. All instruments were made in ebony, granadilla and even hard rubber, a material abandoned in the 1935 catalogue.



Centered  
Tone

*Benny Goodman playing the mythical Centered Tone clarinet, which featured in the 1954 catalogue.*

## Centered Tone, Benny Goodman's favourite clarinet

The 1935 Selmer catalogue marked a major change in the history of the clarinet, which by now had adopted the Bøhm ring mechanism. Of course, the Albert system 12 and 18 models were still available, but there is no denying that the Bøhm system clarinet in Bb had imposed itself as the international standard.

As another sign of the times, metal clarinets were starting to appear in the same catalogue: there was now a metal soprano clarinet in Eb, the first of its kind in the Selmer catalogues. A manufacturing

process considered to be extremely precise and elaborate, and which, even today, makes a fair number of clarinet players nostalgic.

The Henri Selmer company went on to make the mythical Radio Improved and Balanced Tone clarinets that conquered the United States in the 1930s.

The revolution came with the legendary Centered Tone, Benny Goodman's favourite clarinet. The Centered Tone first appeared in the 1954 catalogue, stepping aside for the Series 9 and Series 9\* clarinets in 1961 (Series 9 for jazz and Series 9\* for symphony orchestra).



## Henri Selmer & Cie at the heart of 20th century research

The Series 10 followed on from the Series 9 and Series 9\* in 1968, while the Marchi system Selmer clarinet first appeared in the Selmer catalogue in August 1975, representing one of the major contributions of the 20th century in terms of instrument craftsmanship and added repertoire.

Indeed, Joseph Marchi spent more than 20 years leading research that brought about the addition of a 17th key, improving pitch and sound in high and top registers and extending the range of the Böehm system clarinet in Bb by an extra octave,

thereby preparing it for contemporary repertoire. It is nevertheless worth noting that Houvenaghel, in 1948, also favoured the 17th key on the double-Böehm clarinet, which, although praised by the critics, enjoyed limited commercial success.

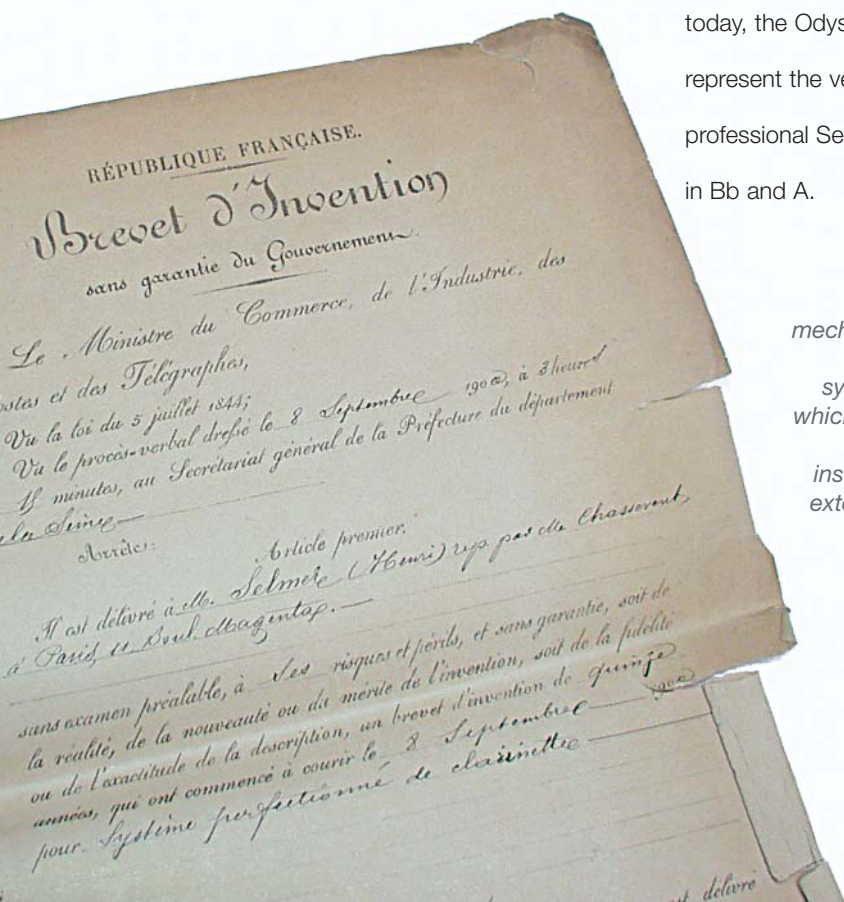
The Selmer clarinet saga continued with the introduction of the 10 S in August 1977, the mythical Récital in October 1984, the Prologue in March 1992, and the 10 S II in March 1994.

As of March 1997, the Signature clarinet was to the Selmer range what *haute couture* is to fashion, and, today, the Odysée and Artys represent the very latest in professional Selmer clarinets in Bb and A.

Marchi system clarinet as it appeared in the 1975 Selmer catalogue.



17th key mechanism on the 1975 Marchi system clarinet, which enabled the range of the instrument to be extended by one octave.



# Henri Selmer Paris

---

## A wind of creativity since 1885

The 19th century witnessed a number of inventions still used on wind instruments today, including Henri Blümel and Friedrich Stölzel's valve in 1813 and Buffet and Klosé's Bøhm system clarinet in 1839.

The family of saxhorns created by Adolph Sax in 1840, followed by that of the saxophones, also had an influence on new musical trends. 1928 will always be remembered as the year in which Adolph Sax & Cie was taken over by Selmer, making Henri Selmer & Cie the sole legatee of the history of the saxophone.



HENRI  
SELMER  
PARIS

thirteen



*Alexandre and Henri Selmer.*

Having studied the clarinet under Hyacinthe Klosé at the Paris Conservatoire, Henri Selmer (1858-1941) had learned under the new Klosé method, specially written in 1843 for the new Bøhm system clarinet.

During the second half of the 19th century, clarinetists were also given the choice between the 13-key Müller clarinet and its various by-products, and the brand new Bøhm system.

However, the instrument's manufacture at the time still posed a number of technical problems and did not always leave musicians feeling entirely satisfied.

Reeds also suffered from unreliable and sometimes poor production, hence Henri Selmer's decision to undertake their manufacture himself.

From 1885, Henri Selmer, clarinetist for the French Opera, Lamoureux Orchestra and the French Republican Guard, launched a business specialising in the manufacture and fitting of reeds that won him a silver medal at the Montpellier Exhibition in 1896 and a bronze medal at the Paris Exhibition in 1900.

*At the beginning of the 20th century, the Selmer workshops take up residence in the heart of Montmartre at 4, place Dancourt.*



1910, Selmer already offers an extensive catalogue of products

What better example of the reactivity of this musical instrument company founded in 1885 than its 1910 catalogue, which, in addition to clarinets, featured oboes, English horns, bassoons, flutes, flageolets, saxophones and all kinds of reeds. A catalogue that also announced Selmer's acquisition of the production rights of the Florentin Barbier flute makers and that all instruments were available in ebony, grenadilla and even hard rubber, a material abandoned when the new catalogue was published in 1935.

The Selmer workshops were established in the heart of Montmartre (4, place Dancourt) and employed some 25 workers.

Alexandre Selmer (1864-1953), brother of Henri and also a student of Hyacinthe Klosé, left for the United States in 1898 to lead a brilliant career as a clarinetist with the Boston Symphony Orchestra (1898-1901), the Cincinnati



Symphony Orchestra (1902-1906) and the New York Philharmonic Orchestra (1909-1911). In fact, the fame of Alexandre Selmer, who by now played only Henri Selmer clarinets, very quickly provided a major leverage effect on the growth of the company in Paris, thanks to an ever-increasing demand in the United States; demand which, furthermore, earned the company a gold medal in 1904 at the Saint Louis Exhibition in Missouri.

### A success story between Paris and New York thanks to the clarinet

In 1906, Alexandre Selmer started an import and retail sales business in New York City. This was the start

of a great US adventure that contributed to the international renown of Selmer instruments. In Paris, however, the small workshops on Place Dancourt were no longer large enough to meet the sharp growth in business. In 1911, the site of Gaillon in Eure, 60 miles from Paris, was chosen to house the first Selmer factory.

15 more workers were hired, bringing the total headcount to 34, and managed by Maurice and Henri Lefèvre, as well as Henri Selmer's own son, Maurice Selmer. Factory activity centred on the milling and planing of wood but also the manufacture of blanking, drawing and forging die for clarinet

*In 1911, the site of Gaillon in Eure takes over from Place Dancourt in the production of Selmer instruments.*



keys. It was during this same period that a small series of machines were designed to cut natural reeds in order to meet high market demand.

Alexandre Selmer returned to France in 1911, passing the US distribution business over to George M. Bundy (1886-1951), with the First World War unfortunately putting a temporary halt to this impressive growth, reducing the workforce to just twenty people.

## Consolidation of the Adolph Sax company in 1928 and birth of the Balanced Action saxophone in 1936

Registered in 1928 under the name Henri Selmer & Cie, the Selmer company already had a workforce of 180 people at the turn of the 1930s at its factory in Mantes-la-Ville, which opened in 1919. 1928 was the year in which Adolph Sax & Cie was taken over by Selmer, thus making Henri Selmer & Cie the sole legatee of the history of the saxophone. The Schoenaers-Millereau company, which specialised in woods and brass, was also consolidated within Selmer. The manufacture of brass took off on an unprecedented scale.



*The Mark VI saxophone followed the Super Action until 1973.*

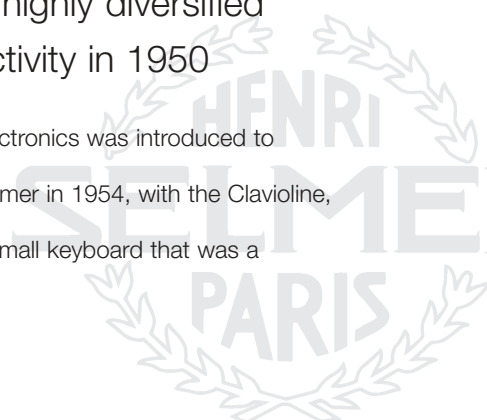
The guitar also aroused great enthusiasm with the collaboration of Mario Maccaferri, famous guitarist and guitar maker, who created Django Reinhardt's favourite guitar, noted for its trapezium-shaped hole and the addition of a sound box glued under the sound-board.

At the same time, research on the saxophone intensified. Selmer launched its first saxophone in 1922, known as the model 22, while in 1936, the brand new series of Balanced Action saxophones saw the light of day, paving the way for the modern saxophone.

Its successor, the Super Action, stole the limelight between 1948 and the end of 1953 with the Mark VI series taking over from 1954 until the end of 1973. The Mark VII, another favourite between 1974 and the end of 1980, was given a slightly different keywork with a larger left and right hand bass scale.

## A highly diversified activity in 1950

Electronics was introduced to Selmer in 1954, with the Clavioline, a small keyboard that was a







forerunner to the synthesiser, and which reproduced the sounds of string and wind instruments (violin, cello, saxophone, trumpet, oboe, Hawaiian guitar, flute, horn, bassoon), while the Varitone cellular microphone and a control box that altered the sound of reed instruments, initially used for the saxophone, were added in 1967.

A little later, in the mid-eighties, Selmer also oversaw the distribution of the Variospec, a tuning and control device for clarinets, saxophones and flutes, which varied their acoustic impedance and was particularly appreciated in the interpretation of contemporary music. The Variospec was made under licence from Ernest Ferron, the French

acoustics specialist who invented the system.

## Selmer today

Today, Selmer is present in Europe, North and South America, the Middle East and Southeast Asia, giving exclusive rights to distributors in each of these geographical zones. Its head offices are located at 18, rue de La Fontaine au Roi in the 11th arrondissement of Paris and the factory in Mantes-la-Ville currently employs six hundred people.

The Signature and Récital clarinets represent the top of the Selmer range, closely followed by the Odyssee and Artys since the end of 2001. More than ever, Selmer is focusing its energies on the

development of woodwind and brass instruments, offering a vast range of instruments to meet the demands of top international musicians. This wide range of activities is what makes the company a leading player in acoustic research, as well as the manufacture and distribution of wind instruments worldwide.

Jean Selmer, Georges Selmer and Jacques Selmer managed the company until the end of the 1990s.

Today, Patrick Selmer is Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Brigitte Dupont-Selmer Vice-Chairman and Jérôme Selmer General Manager. The company changed its name to Henri Selmer Paris in 2001.

# A glance at the Selmer catalogues

eighteen

Since 1910, Selmer catalogues have provided an unrivalled overview of the history of the clarinet in which the aesthetic sounds of France and Germany subtly intertwine.

As top-of-the-range instruments, Selmer clarinets, which are today made from Mozambique grenadilla wood, are aimed at established students and professional musicians. The roundness and ease of the *Odyssée* and brilliance of the *Artys* make these instruments the perfect acoustic and artistic choice, as does the incomparable dynamic range of the *Récital* and warm, centred sound of the *Signature*.

The 1910 catalogue clearly reflects the Selmer house's interest in woodwind instruments as it is devoted entirely to them. It lists the 17-key Böhm system clarinet in Bb with its 6 rings and 24 holes, but also the 13-key Müller clarinet and its by-products such as the Albert system clarinet.

Alto and bass clarinets are also featured, with the exception of contrabasses that were to come later. Note that the catalogue also included a basset horn in F, which goes down to low C, called the alto clarinet in F.

## The 1935/1936 catalogue

Sign of the times, in the new Selmer catalogue of 1935, the clarinet in Bb is largely in keeping with the Böhm system. Only two Albert system models prevail, numbers 12 and 18, and there are now contrabass models available. Another notable fact, metal clarinets are now part of the brochure with the soprano clarinet in Eb, the first of its kind in the Selmer catalogues. The 1936 edition was the only one in which these metal clarinets appeared.



## Radio Improved in 1934, Centered Tone in 1954 and new Series 9 and Series 9\* in 1961

The **Radio Improved** clarinet, published in the US catalogue in 1934, was created at the same time as the Radio Improved saxophone. It was followed by the **Balanced Tone** in 1936, in memory of the Balanced Action saxophones.

The 1954 catalogue announced the launch of the Centered Tone, and included a simplified and more rational classification of clarinets. The instruments became referenced under the numbers 1, 2, 4, 6 and 8.

Alto, bass and contrabass clarinets, for their part, were referenced under the numbers 19, 23 and 26. Shortly after, the 1961 catalogue brought together the **Centered Tone** and the new **Series 9** and **Series 9\***, thus orchestrating the first appearance of the Eb and C models. Lastly, the **Series 10** joined the catalogue in 1968.

## The Marchi-system clarinet or the Selmer revolution

The Series 10 (Bb and A) in the August 1975 catalogue was divided into the 1, 2, 3, 4, 6 and 8 models, along with a newcomer, the **8 SM** (for *Système Marchi*), which featured 7 rings and 20 keys, including a 17th key to reach top G

more easily. With this new system, the clarinet's range had gained an octave. The **Series 10 S**, for its part, first appeared in April 1977.

The mythical **Récital** (Bb and the No. 1) and the 10 S 8 SM clarinet in A were first made available to aficionados in October 1984, and were backed by the arrival of the **10 G series** in Bb and A based on the No. 1 (standard 17-key, 6-ring Bøehm) while the Series 9 and Series 9\* was discontinued.

## New classification for clarinets in April 1987

A major change was made to the April 1987 catalogue, aimed at introducing a new system for classifying instruments.

The **Récital** in Bb clarinet was split into four models:

No. 1: the standard Bøehm in Bb  
No. 1 RF: resonance of F  
No. 1 B: with Eb lever  
No. 1 B RF: with Eb lever and resonance of F.

The 10 S series included models 1, 2, 6, 8 and 8 SM for clarinets in Bb, and model No. 11 for the clarinet in A.

This classification, in use since the 1936 catalogue, was refocused and simplified in 1954.

Furthermore, the Series 10 G was only available in the No. 1 in Bb and A.

Lastly the Eb, D and C clarinets became available in:

- Eb **Récital** and Bb No. 1, Bb No. 8
- D No. 1
- C No. 1 and C No. 8.

Only bass clarinets 22A, 23 and 25, are available in rosewood, namely the 22A PAL, 23 PAL and 25 PAL models.

## Selmer, a selection of top-of-the-range and professional clarinets

Newcomer to the catalogue in March 1992, the **Prologue** clarinet was marketed as a student instrument. Referenced as a No. 1 model, as of March 1994 it was sold in two models, the No. 1 and the No. 1B (Eb lever). The 1992 catalogue also marked the arrival of the **Series 10 S II** in Bb and the 23/II and 25/II bass clarinets, all equipped with a more ergonomic keywork.

In March 1996, the **Prologue** gave way to the **Prologue II**.

At the top of the Selmer range, the **Signature** appeared in March 1997, featuring an Eb, Bb and A lever and providing the perfect opportunity to remove the Series 10 S from the catalogue, whilst retaining the Series 10 S II.

More recently, since March 2001, the **Odysée** clarinet is to Selmer what *haute couture* is to fashion, with the new **Artys** the perfect match for most professionals.



# Clarinet making

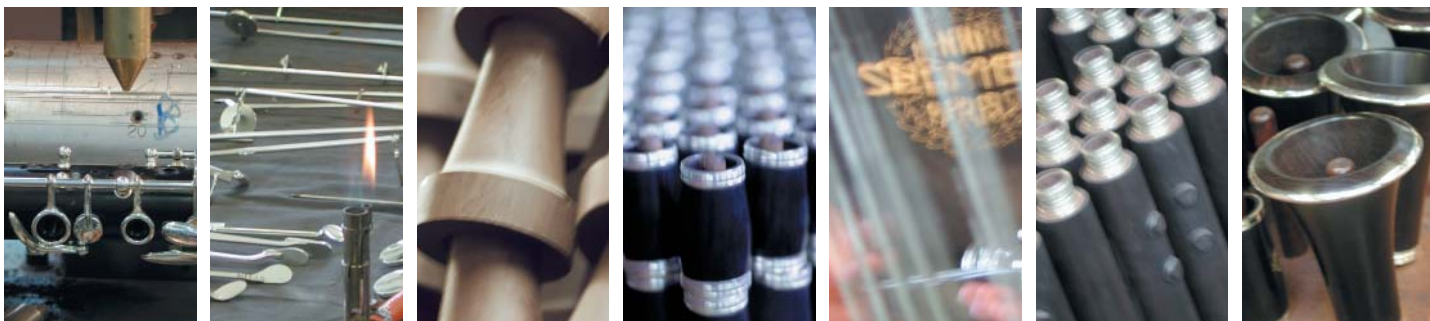
Formerly in boxwood, the clarinet is now made from Mozambique ebony, although in the 19th century a number of models were also made from granadilla, as was the case with flutes. Its current organology places it in the woodwind category, even though several other materials were tried at the end of the 19th century, such as hard rubber, which was quickly abandoned, but which is still very much used in the manufacture of mouthpieces.

The beginning of the 1930s nonetheless marked a new approach in the manufacture of clarinets as Selmer launched a series of metal clarinets that enjoyed unprecedented success in the United States.



## Grenadilla wood takes the form of a clarinet

The life of a clarinet begins with the long drying process of ebony logs from Mozambique. All perfectly regular in aspect, each piece of this beautiful black wood is of incomparable finesse. Cut to size, the pieces of rough ebony are scaled to the respective proportions of each part of the clarinet. An initial outer turning is used to thin each piece whilst a hole is drilled through its middle, and it is at this stage that the four distinguishable parts to the clarinet take shape: barrel, upper joint, lower joint and bell. The wood is then carefully stored for a further three years in a room with controlled temperature and humidity in order to perfectly stabilize it before the manufacturing process takes place.



## Crafting the instrument

Once the ebony has stabilized, the final turning of the four parts of the instrument can be carried out along with the indentations to mark the placement of the tone holes. Naturally, the keys, posts, rods, rings, plates and various mechanical components are also made with the utmost precision. Next come a series of particularly delicate operations such as the boring of the holes, which is carried out with the help of CNC machines. Lastly, the fixing of the posts, which house the instrument's keys, is done by hand. The rods and bridges (on which the keys are hinged) are perfectly adjusted and tested.

## The finish, a decisive step

This is a key stage in the manufacture of the clarinet as it includes the assembly of needle springs on the heads and the placement of all pads, felt and cork. Of course, the keys fitted with their pads are now permanently mounted, while the tuning of the instrument is carried out with the utmost care. At this stage, the clarinet undergoes tests on its quality and construction, the way it plays and its external appearance. A number of sound tests confirms the musical quality of Selmer instruments around the world.



# The mouthpiece & the reed

## selected pieces of the clarinet



### The mouthpiece

Clarinet players all agree that the choice of mouthpiece is highly important as it is decisive in the way an instrument strikes up, the quality of its intonation, its projection and the roundness of its sound.

Alongside the reed, it represents one of the key elements in the clarinet's production of sound, although it must be recognized that the musician's morphology, the thickness of the lips, the amount of pressure from the bottom lip on the reed and the

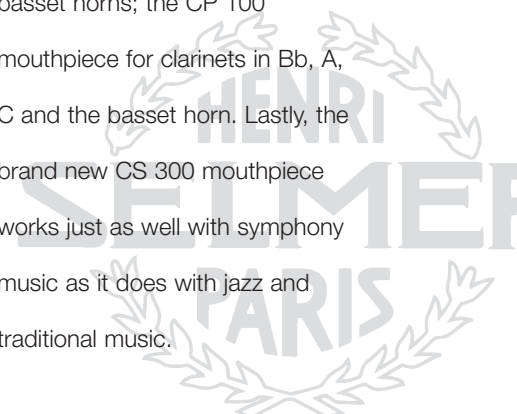
angle at which the instrument is held are all factors in the quality of the sound.

Since the clarinet was invented by Denner, the mouthpiece has been made out of a number of different woods, such as granadilla, boxwood, service wood and even rosewood. There was even an aborted attempt at the end of the 19th century at using crystal, solely for the clarinet.

The clarinet was revolutionized in 1850 with the invention of hard rubber, much more stable and above all much less sensitive to

hygrometric changes. Selmer manufactured its mouthpieces using a machining process, which allowed for a far greater degree of precision.

Today, Selmer markets a large range of mouthpieces: the standard mouthpiece for the whole clarinet family; the C 85 mouthpiece for clarinets in Bb, A, Eb and C, bass clarinets and basset horns; the CP 100 mouthpiece for clarinets in Bb, A, C and the basset horn. Lastly, the brand new CS 300 mouthpiece works just as well with symphony music as it does with jazz and traditional music.



# Taking care of your clarinet

## The reed

Poetically named the “musical” cane by the inhabitants of the Provence region in France, the Provence reed plant from which clarinet reeds are cut is better known among botanists by the name *Arundo Donax*.

Its culture is an art in itself: the marshes in which the reed grows are filled with plants spaced eight metres apart to receive the maximum amount of sun on each one. Several months after being cut, the thinning out of the canes requires great care. Then comes a two-year period of drying to preserve the elasticity of the fibre.

The canes are cut into tubes before being split and sawed depending on the type of the reed desired. Here, tabling consists in grinding the surface of the reed to a precision of one hundredth of a millimetre to give it its final shape.



It is important that you are well acquainted with your clarinet and know what actions to take to maintain it.

## What you need to know

Two sworn enemies: humidity and sudden changes in temperature.

First: do not leave the instrument in direct sunlight, in a car, or next to a heat source or radiator.

Second: do not forget to swab the instrument after use, so as to avoid an abnormally high level of humidity.

Lastly, common sense insists that you make sure the case is properly closed when carrying your instrument.

## The art of assembling the instrument

It will be easier to put your clarinet together if you regularly grease the joint cork with cork grease.

The instrument is assembled by mounting the top joint on the bottom joint while holding the Bb correspondence key down. Make sure both joints are properly aligned.

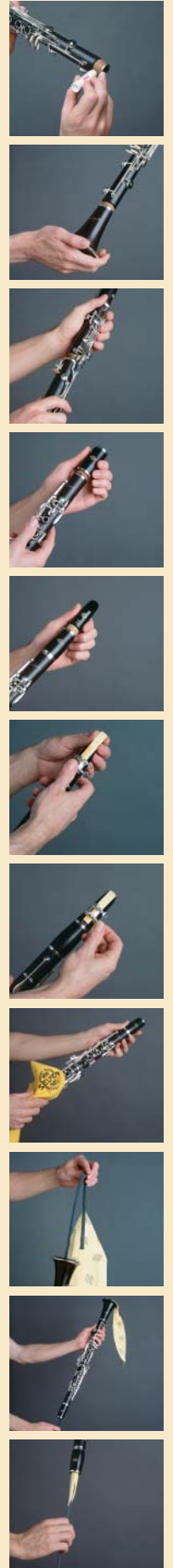
Now simply add the barrel and the mouthpiece.

## Care

Wipe the instrument with a cloth after each use to eliminate traces of acidity resulting from perspiration on the hands. You must, however, be careful not to disturb the mechanism by pressing too hard.

The bottom of the screws also requires close attention as they are the ideal place for dust and grease to build up.

Of course, the inside of the instrument will be wiped by passing the swab from the bell towards the top by pulling gently on the piece of string. Make sure that the swab is always clean and that it does not leave any fluff inside the clarinet.





Henri SELMER Paris

18, rue de la Fontaine au Roi 75011 Paris

Tel. (+33) 1 49 23 87 40

[www.selmer.fr](http://www.selmer.fr)