



Brass Instruments

Manufacture and Mass Production

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Boosey and Hawkes and Besson are among the most famous names in brasswind instrument production. Boosey and Company began in the 1760s as a musical lending library. In the 1850s they branched out into instrument manufacture. Rivals, Hawkes and Son, was founded in 1865 as a publishing company but they too diversified into manufacture. "The Sonorous Works" instrument factory was built in Edgware in 1925.

A degree of mechanisation and mass production was introduced but all the brass instruments were produced and assembled on site. This footage of brass instrument production was shot as a record in the late 1990s.

In 2001 Boosey and Hawkes and Besson moved their British production centre to a more modern factory in Hertfordshire.

Although the manufacturing of bells, valves, tubing and piston parts is now done elsewhere in Europe, the components are still shipped to the UK for expert assembly and finishing. Despite the introduction of mass production techniques, assembling the instruments is still a highly skilled craft. Techniques used to put the basic instruments together are still recognisable from their origins in the workshops of the 16th and 17th centuries.

Modern technology uses sonic vibrations as part of the cleaning process ... and a computer drives the engraving tools.

The addition and assembly of the piston valves are innovations of the 19th century.

[TESTING NOTES]

Every instrument is tested before it leaves the factory.