

In 1841 (27 years old) spring of that year Adolphe Sax went back to Paris and he reunited with Hector Berlioz who was 38 years old and if I am correct. They became very close friends. Berlioz was also a Music Critic of sorts and he wrote in a publication entitled "Journal des Debats. (Debates Journal)" So if Hector Berlioz wrote about something in that journal, that he thought was important, it got quite a bit of recognition from the locals. Berlioz loved Adolphe and his inventions, so after Hector wrote an article about Adolf in this journal that praised the saxophone, Adolphe became extremely popular. The title of the article was "Adolphe Sax's Musical Instruments." One quote from the article says and I quote Berlioz, "Composers will be indebted to Mr. Sax when his new instruments are in general use, if he perseveres, he will get support of all friends of music."

The intrigue from this article led to a concert where people could observe and hear some of the instruments that Adolphe was working on like his saxhorn and saxophone. The concert was held at the local conservatory and attended by quite a few composers at the time including Berlioz, Halevy and Habeneck to name a few. I am sure Adolphe was very pleased to be in such company and demonstrating his instruments. He was a great clarinetist, so he presented his work as an instrumentalist and instrument maker.

Everyone was impressed, and he got investors shortly after the presentation and was encouraged to open up a factory in Paris. He opened his shop in a little shed that he converted into a factory. The address was 10 Rue Saint George's. This was the beginning of Adolphe's trouble with the local music manufacturing industry in Paris. There was jealousy about how quickly he seemed to rise. His popularity upset them.

One of the things that separated Adolphe Sax from the local musical instrument manufacturers was that he preferred to make his instruments by hand. He hired a few helpers and he taught them what they needed to know but he did not have an assembly line. The other manufacturers had assembly lines to make their instruments. They would make different parts of the instrument throughout town, then they would assemble the instrument in the various places where the parts were made. That wasn't how Adolphe did it. He liked to supervise everything, that way he would be certain of the quality of every instrument. Once he got started though everything moved very well, and he hired employees.

In 1842 Berlioz took a tour of Germany and he saw the military bands there and was impressed. He thought France needed to upgrade their military bands. By this time Adolphe had made quite a few enemies; just his existence threatened the local manufacturers of musical instruments. The quality of his instruments alone threatened their companies. So, the idea of him having a relationship with the military and supplying them with instruments was insulting to some of the local instrument manufacturers and they had to do something about it.

A lot of the local musicians and instrumentalists, particularly the musicians who played in the opera orchestra, which was one of the most prestigious ensembles to be in, had relationships with the manufacturers that were opposed to Adolphe and his work. They refused to play any of Adolphe's instruments because many of them had endorsements or were in league with the manufacturers against Adolphe.

Adolphe made many enemies like I said earlier and, from what I read, they tried to set him on fire by using some type of ignition or a fuse of sorts. Which did not work obviously so he wasn't harmed but come on! There was an ambush of some kind, but he seemed to get away from that as well. This is what happens when you threaten someone's livelihood. But still, "Young Sax the Ghost" would always somehow survive.

It is unfortunate that they came at him with such determination and hate. He was prolific and obviously talented, and the locals just were not having it! They had to try to put an end or at least slow down his success. They would offer his employees more money than what Adolphe could afford to pay them. Things started to get rough for Adolphe and fortunately the military was very intrigued with his work because his business was starting to struggle.

From what I've read Berlioz was a big fan and supporter of Adolphe Sax but there were very few, if any saxophones in his new compositions at that time. He did "rearrange" a choral work of his entitled "Le Chant Sacre'". Please someone who's listening to this podcast if I'm incorrect please correct me but from what I've read, there are no saxophones in Berlioz's music other than the rearranged "Le Chant Sacred".

Also, something to take note of is Adolphe had concerts at his factory to showcase his instruments. It was easier and profitable for him to do this because he made all the instruments at the factory. It was also a great way for him to introduce himself to potential benefactors and popular musicians whose support he was lobbying for. For them to see and hear the instruments played at his facility made everything that much easier.

Also, we cannot ignore the Distin family of brass instrumentalists who took up the saxhorn. I will not go into that but, they were very instrumental in its popularity. They took up the saxhorn and toured with it. And they made it a very popular instrument. So, you must mention the Distin family if you are going to do any research about Adolphe Sax. They adopted the saxhorn and toured the world with it, including the United States, if I am correct. I am not going to go into detail about the saxhorn. Because this show is called Let's Talk About Sax, meaning saxophone.

As I stated earlier, Adolphe had a lot of trouble with the local instrument manufacturers in Paris. He also had problems getting his instruments accepted into the symphonic and opera orchestras. It seemed to be somewhat of a concerted effort to make sure that his instruments were not included. But the military seemed to be an obvious opportunity for him. His father Charles had success with instruments for the government in Belgium. So, it seemed logical for Adolphe to move into that realm in France. He had support from a few local important musicians and writers, particularly Berlioz. So, he sought out the military and I believe if I am correct, they sought him out as well. The military musicians and bandsmen did not have the power to go against the ranking order so that is where he had some initial success for his manufacturing company.

So, Sax received the military's interest. They pursued him and were encouraged by Berlioz and others who had great respect for Adolf's expertise and his instruments. But when the local manufacturers of musical instruments got news of this, they were highly upset. They thought of Adolphe as a major threat

to their livelihood and in some respects he was so that elevated their plans to bring Adolphe Sax down.

But before Adolphe could actually get this appointment the powers-that-be had to do an inventory and survey the instruments that their musicians were playing and ponder why they seemed so inferior and what they could do about it. They did the inventory and sent out a plea to all the local manufacturers to see if they could help fix this problem. Seems like the only person that responded was Adolphe Sax.

There was one other challenge from a gentleman named Michael Carafa who was the head of the military bands at that time and this was in April 1845 (Adolphe was 31). Michelle Carafa who was also a composer and had written an Opera which did not get great reviews from Berlioz in the publication that he contributed to. Because of that they were not friends Carafa was the head of the military band in France at the time and he took up the challenge against Adolphe.

Carafa and Adolphe presented their instrumentation of what they thought should be the future of the military bands and of course Sax had some saxhorns and a couple of saxophones in there. The military proposed a "Battle of the Bands", for lack of a better term, to determine which of the two musicians could foster the best band to improve the military outfits.

So the big "Battle of the Bands" happened and they both had their bands ready. They even had opening acts. There were tens of thousands of people out to see this event that was in an outdoor coliseum. This event had been advertised in the local papers as "The Reorganization of the Military Bands." It was a big event around town.

Carafa's band played first and had a great response from the audience. Adolphe's band was shorthanded and some of his musicians were bribed away by his enemies. He had quite a few musicians he needed to replace, and he had to prepare to go on soon. It was a very hurried and difficult moment for him but somehow, he gathered up enough musicians to perform.

Nonetheless Adolphe's band started to play, even though the audience did not show him much support because he was a foreigner. They started hurling things at his band but that did not deter any of the musicians. Adolphe and his band sat down and played the same composition that Carafa's band played and won the audience over.

And this, being a battle of the bands, and similar to the modern version of such battles like "The Voice" and "American Idol" the audience influenced the outcome. The thunderous applause that Adolphe Sax and his musicians received made him victorious against Carafa.

Well that was it! Adolphe Sax proved that his band was superior. The success brought investors wanting to help him expand his company. Now that he had work with the military that meant his company would grow. So investors came looking to help and of course that only increased the amount of jealousy that the local musical instrument manufacturers had towards Adolphe.

Also after his success with the Battle of the Bands, Adolphe was given the title of "Chevalier de la Couronne de Chene" which I think means "Crowned Knight of the Oak Trees" or something like that, by

King William II of the Netherlands as a symbol of pride from his motherland. He was moving up in the world!

His enemies were not done though. His celebrity alarmed them, so they organized. They forgave each other for whatever differences they may have had in the past to organize against Adolphe Sax. His enemies formed "The United Association of Instrument Makers" to conspire against Adolphe. It got accredited and was a legal local society with a Constitution that came together shortly after he was appointed as head of the military band. The society formed in May of 1845 (Adolphe was 30 going on 31 years old)

Also in 1845 Adolphe began improving the saxophone and he sought out a formal patent and this is also where the Association attacked saying that he did not invent the saxophone and that again it was just him stealing ideas from other manufacturers and labeling them as his own.

It is reported that Adolphe Sax was not an easy person to get along with and had a huge ego and was arrogant. He was also known to be kind and somewhat gentle and approachable and that his arrogance only showed when he was being challenged and it seems like he was constantly challenged. He was invariably in court defending his patents and fighting off his enemies or detractors for most of his life. So, I can understand why he would be bitter. He obviously was a great musician and a great maker of musical instruments. I can see how one can become bitter and arrogant considering you are always in court defending your hard work.

A lot of manufacturers started coming at Adolphe saying he did not invent the saxophone. And several other instrument makers and "The Association" took Adolphe to court for decades about his various instruments.

One instrument that they wanted to incriminate Adolf with stealing or adapting his saxophone after was called the "bathyphone." The bathyphone looks basically like a bass clarinet or contrabass clarinet and I would like to think that Adolf knew what that was. He was quite the clarinetist and maybe he did use some of the ideas for the saxophone but the clarinet is not a saxophone so I don't think that would stick.

All kinds of trickery was used to try to convince the courts that Adolphe didn't invent the saxophone. I've read that his opposition bought a few of Adolphe's saxophones, scraped off the engravings of Adolphe's name, shipped the saxophones elsewhere, had them shipped back to Paris with different engravings and saying to the courts "look someone else had already made this" and of course that didn't work.

Well after a few lawsuits the Court finally granted Adolphe Sax his patent for the family of saxophones on the 22nd of June in 1846. Still, the Association was successful in slowing down his production by bribing some of his workmen to leave Adolphe Sax. There is an interesting story about Sax trying to cut costs and hire workers to replace the ones that left by hiring some local prison inmates and training them on the production of saxophones. When the inmates were released from jail they went straight to Adolf Sax's Factory looking for work and he denied them.

Things changed dramatically for Adolphe Sax and for everyone in France on the 23rd and 24th of February 1848 when the "Revolution" started and King Louis-Philippe was overturned. The King was a supporter of Adolphe Sax so things changed for him dramatically after that.

The new regime did not take kindly to Sax and anyone who favored King Philippe and subsequently Adolphe's reign as the head of the military bands ended, which left him with a bunch of instruments in his factory that were sitting there and piling up. With help from friends he kept his factory together somehow.

Napoleon III became President and eventually Emperor of France after the Revolution and he made Adolphe a member of the "Legion of Honor." That tormented his enemies who were suffering during that time as so many people were.

It must be noted that Adolphe was a great inventor but not the best businessman. He filed for bankruptcy after money that he assumed was a gift and was given to him directly after the revolution started, was later found to be a loan. He admitted to the court, after the gentleman that gave him the gift had died, that it indeed was a loan. The deceased gentleman's family was looking to collect that loan which was thirty thousand francs and Adolphe subsequently had to file for bankruptcy. I believe this happened in 1852 shortly after Napoleon had taken full reign over France.

In 1853 Adolphe's parents moved to Paris to be with him. His father Charles was somewhere near the age of 60, and was having trouble running his own company, and since Adolphe was doing well in France, they moved from Brussels to be with their son. Most of Adolphe's siblings had died except for Adolphe's brother Alphonse who had made the move to Paris with his parents. Adolphe was working with his father and his younger brother Alphonse in his factory.

So things flipped! Adolphe was head of his company and now his father was working for him. I am sure there was a lot of respect between the two because it was great for Charles to see how well his son was doing in Paris. Adolphe was very thankful for his father to have directed him to fulfill his talent and skill so I'm sure they had a good working relationship.

Adolphe did marry or he had a baby mama, for lack of a better term. The research is inconclusive on whether he married or not, but he did have kids. The issue is whether he married. The woman's name was Louise Adele Mayer and they had five kids, says some researchers. Some say he did not marry her because she was of lower class and some say they did marry so it's really hard to get certain facts about that. The date of the marriage, if it happened at all, is vague as well.

He had a son named Adolphe Edward Sax-Mayer who continued to manufacture saxophones under the family name of "Adolphe Sax & Sons" up to the second world war.

1854 (40 years old) was an exceptionally good year for Adolphe. Napoleon III appointed him "The Emperor's Private Director of Music" he also had another title "The Musical Instrument Maker to the Household Troops of the Emperor," and those were his official titles. His father had a similar role in Belgium, so the Sax family had historically made great impressions on persons of power within their lifetimes. And having such a title gave him influence over those who had challenged him and his patents. And if anyone crossed him in anyway about his patents he now had muscle to handle his business.

And he used that power by gathering up forces and visiting the opposition who had taken him to court so many times. He visited them with forces from the military and the powers-that-be and confiscated any instruments that he thought were breaking those patents or interfering with his work.

He did, kind of, step over his feet by not going through the correct means to gather up these instruments and again found himself in court. His opposition said that Sax did not give a fair warning to those who had his instruments illegally.

So he went and got the correct paperwork and gave them the warning that they asked for. Then he went and confiscated all the instruments from those that had them illegally.

Something else that needs to be noted about Adolphe Sax was that not only did he invent the saxophone and the saxhorn but there wasn't an instrument that he wasn't interested in improving. He tried to improve the piano he tried to improve the timpani drums, he attempted to improve every type of instrument out there. He invented a 10 headed trombone that looked like something out of a Godzilla movie. He was prolific to say the least. And driven, very driven. But there is no doubt he was a successful inventor.

He was not a good businessman, maybe not the best father, maybe a little arrogant at times but he was a great inventor, and everyone acknowledged that he improved on a lot of instruments that he never got credit for. Since the saxophone is such a dominant instrument, some of his other work never got acknowledged at all and history never noted some of the improvements he made to the clarinet. I'm sure he played fantastic saxophone and I think it's okay to say that Adolphe Sax was the best saxophonist ever because he invented the horn and no matter how well Charlie Parker or John Coltrane may have played it Adolphe Sax invented it so is undoubtedly better by that basic association. I know that is open for debate but Let's Talk About Sax! And of course, Adolphe Sax had to become a teacher. He had to teach people how to play the saxophone. He was by the default the first sax instructor.

In the 1850s the saxophone started to show up in England and around the world. Like I mentioned earlier the Saxhorn was an important instrument in the American Civil War. And every instrument Adolphe invented had the name 'Sax' added to it. Saxtromba was one that had some minor success. The "Saxtuba" is out there on Wikipedia as an instrument Adolphe tried to introduce.

He also tried to venture into civil engineering and gave advice about various things within Paris, and Belgium. How to improve water flow or the railroad in Paris. He was a thinker and it was not just the saxophone he was an engineer at heart as well as an extraordinary musician and an extraordinary inventor.

Charles Sax died April 26th, 1865 and I'm sure it was very difficult for Adolphe. They were close, father and son both prolific musical instrument inventors. Adolphe was undoubtedly in debt to his father for encouraging him to pursue musical instrument making. I am sure his death was difficult for him; his mother had died maybe four years before that.

1870 was obviously a difficult time for all of France The French-Prussian War dethroned Napoleon III. That obviously made things exceedingly difficult for Adolphe. After that he lost his "Appointed" positions and had to file for bankruptcy. And he slowly declined, and his son took over some of his positions. Adolphe kind of gradually disappeared until his death which was the fourth of February 1894 and there is also some research that say that he died on the 7th of February in 1894. (79 years old)

But one thing is absolute: the saxophone is a beautiful instrument, a mixture of woodwind and brass and still is a major force and arguably the most popular wind instrument in the world.

Thank you, Adolphe Sax thank, you Antoine Joseph Sax.