

Bassoon Basics

Woodwind Methods 2012

Guidelines for Choosing a Young Student for the Bassoon:

- There is something to say about letting a student select an instrument at the beginning level, and allowing enthusiasm to be the motivating force. Much is the same for bassoon as with oboe.

Select students who:

- Have long fingers and hand spread!
- Are smart!
- Are go-getters
- Problem solvers, and
- Very, very patient.
- Physical-long fingers, upper lip is able to tuck under upper teeth, and good lung capacity.
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The Instrument:

- The same procedures as with other wind instruments.

- Parts of the bassoon (top to bottom):

- bell
- tenor joint
- bass joint
- boot
- bocal (fits into tenor joint)

Family: German (what we teach)

French (keywork slightly different, excellent in high register playing)

Contrabassoon-big, probably won't have one. Octave lower transposition.

- Very efficient instrument-don't be scared of the left finger thumb keys. Very specific requirements.
- Professional model: Maple, rosewood, grenadilla
 - Precautions-cracking
- Student model: Ebonite (hard rubber)
- Manufacturers:
 - Heckel
 - Fox/Renard
 - Schreiber
 - Yamaha

- The Bocal- Bocals are usually marked with a #0, 1, 2, 3, or 4) and indicates the length of the bocal. The lower the number the shorter in the length.

Very important part of instrument. BE CAREFUL!!

- Bore: The bore of the bassoon is CONICAL-gradually increases in diameter
- The First Year of Student:
There is always debate on whether or not to start a young player on bassoon. Many professionals believe that a year of understanding to breathing, note reading, and maturity are of benefit. Clarinet, and in particular SAXOPHONE are traditional transfer instruments.

Maintenance and Care:

- Fairly easy to take care of.
- After playing the saliva should be removed from bocal
- The bell and bass joint do not require swabbing as no moisture involved.
- The tenor joint and the boot must be swabbed before being put away.
- Dump water from U-tube in boot. Be careful of U-tube do not want to dent or rupture.
- Swabs will typically come with instrument.

LONG TERM:

- Dust under keys-paintbrush is very effective.
- Dust inside the bell and bass joint
- Clean each tone hole with a pipe cleaner
- Oil contact points
- Clean bocal. Special bocal brush. Liquid soap and cold water to remove debris.
- Tenon corks (cork or string tenors) Apply petroleum or cork grease

Posture & Finger Position:

- Must be careful that an inordinate amount of the bassoon's weight does NOT fall on left hand. The hands should be used as little as possible to actually support the bassoon. Like the saxophone let the SEAT STRAP do the work.
- SEAT STRAP or NECK STRAP-bassoonists generally use the seat strap. Problems with both. Be careful where you place the strap on the seat.
- Instrument position- allow the bassoon to be in a more vertical position, that is a position in which it approaches perpendicular angle to the floor.
- Hands: Hands should be held in a natural position with the wrists as straight as possible.

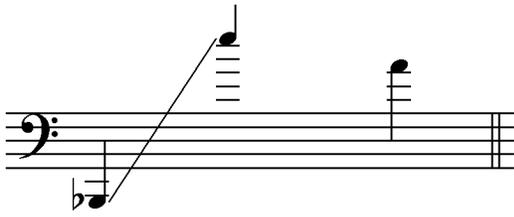
Embouchure:

- Two most common-smile and whistle. Whistle-typically easier to play at the proper pitch level and center an open sound.
- The amount of lip tucked into the cushion varies from player to player.
- OPEN MOUTH and THROAT POSITION while playing.

Breathing:

- Diaphragmatic

Range:



Fingerings:

- Very similar to clarinet (chalumeau register)
- Four important concepts to understand
 - a) Half-hole



- a) 'Bb' vs. 'B natural'
- b) Thum Keys
- c) Pivoting
- d) FLICKING

The Reed

Terms You Should Know:

Blank-Raw piece of cane

Cane-the same as the clarinet, saxophone, and bassoon. "Arundo Donax"

Crow-A critically important rich, multiple (octaves) sound used to test the reed's responsiveness and pitch supporting capabilities. The crow is produced by blowing with the reed fully inserted into the mouth, lips close to the thread.

Gouge-the scooped out portion of the reed.

Rails-the edges or sides of the reed.

Tip Opening-the opening at the tip of the reed (dah!) Too closed the sound will be thin; too open the sound will be wild and unmanageable.

Tube-Distance from end or butt of reed to shoulder of reed (right above the first wire)

"Wires) 1st, 2nd, 3rd wire under the thread wrapping or "Turks Head" TOTALLY NOT PC!

TUNING OF BASSOON

- Primarily tuning is determined by length of bocal and reed.

Equipment that one needs to work on reeds:

- Knife
- Mandrel
- Plaque
- Cutting block
- Shaper
- Gouger
- Easel.

Methodology:

- Weissenborn, Practical Method for Bassoon.
- Rubank Series is also a good way to start.

Repertoire:

The repertoire for the oboe includes a vast number of compositions. You should know the major repertoire by the following composers:

Mozart, Vivaldi, Hindemith, Saint-Saëns, Tansman, and Weber.