

OBOE OR BASSOON ANYONE?

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1. Why this session?
 - A. There's a serious need for double reed players at colleges and universities.
 - B. The double reed player's technique is often not as strong as the other woodwind players.
 - C. Most public school teachers know little about the instruments.
2. Recruiting
 - A. How to get them interested?
 1. Demonstrations by competent players and opportunities for students to try the instruments.
 2. Recordings like "Ready, Steady, Blow!" an oboe CD by the Musicians at Trinity College of Music and various CDs by the Bassoon Brothers.
 3. Mention the scholarship opportunities at colleges and universities.
 - B. When to begin? If not when the others begin, avoid waiting any more than 1 year.
 - C. If transferring, from what?
 1. Oboe: clarinet
 2. Bassoon: clarinet or saxophone
 3. If transferring from flute, make a complete break.
 4. Other odd transfers can work too like the trombone (bass clef).
 - D. **They must be able to match pitch.** The student needs to be able to sing a pitch they hear played.
3. Teaching the oboe
 - A. Embouchure. Set tip of reed on lower half of bottom lip, roll in, think "oo", reed should crow a C
 - B. Fingerings. Half hole on the 3 Ds with NO octave key; use side octave key on high A-C.
 - C. Use of air. **SMALL BREATH** but push it quickly. Exhale before new breath. Try to exhale then play without a new breath. Keep shoulders and chest relaxed. It's normal to feel pressure in your head especially in the high register. No pressure in the throat!
 - D. Tonguing. Think "thoo". Use the tongue to begin and end notes, but not the final notes of phrases. Keep the air moving!
 - E. Tone. It's contingent on the reed, embouchure, use of air, player's sound concept. Listen to recordings.
 - F. Tuning.
 1. Embouchure will have to make adjustments along with the pitch level of the reed.
 2. If sharp, try less reed in the mouth; pull reed out a little bit. Old reeds tend to be sharper.
 3. If flat, try a little more in the mouth. Be sure not to soak the reed too long. Gently squeeze the reed shut more. Use a firmer embouchure. New reeds tend to be flatter.
 - G. Equipment
 1. Instruments
 - a. Full-conservatory for high school and modified conservatory for middle school
 - b. Plastic instruments are OK; workmanship is more important; try half and half
 - c. Instruments missing several keys are only appropriate for a beginner (1st year)
 2. Reeds
 - a. Wood, not synthetic reeds!
 - b. Have more than one, and rotate them.
 - c. Find a good reed source but often they will still need to be adjusted.
 - d. Soak in water, not in your mouth! Warm water soaks them faster!
 - e. The longer it soaks, the more open it becomes, the flatter it gets and the embouchure becomes more tired.

4. Teaching the bassoon
 - A. Embouchure. More reed than the oboe. Think “oo”. Hold the jaw down. Think overbite. Reed plus the bocal together sounds a C.
 - B. Fingerings. Half hole on the 3 Gs. Use a full middle Eb fingering. Use the whisper key correctly!
 - C. Use of air. Use LOTS of it! It feels more like other instruments.
 - D. Tonguing. Think “thoo”. Use the tongue to begin and end notes, but not the final notes of phrases. Keep the air moving!
 - E. Tone. It’s contingent on reed, embouchure, use of air, player’s sound concept. Listen to recordings.
 - F. **Bassoonists need to play out! It’s never as loud as the player thinks it is. Encourage that!**
 - G. Tuning
 1. Embouchure will have to make adjustments along with the pitch level of the reed.
 2. May need to switch bocals. Use a longer one if sharp.
 3. Pulling out the bocal if sharp makes very little difference.
 4. If flat, place more reed in the mouth, use a firmer embouchure and more air.
 - H. Equipment
 1. Instruments
 - a. Wood for high school.
 - b. Plastic is OK for middle school. You may want to use a short-reach bassoon.
 2. Reeds
 - a. Wood, not a synthetic one!
 - b. Have more than one, and rotate them. They last longer than oboe reeds.
 - c. Find a good reed source but often they will still need to be adjusted.
 - d. Soak in water, not in your mouth! Warm water soaks them faster!
 - e. The opening can be adjusted easily with a small pliers at the first wire; Squeezing it open may help response in lower register and bring the pitch down.
5. The value of private lessons
 - A. Reed adjustment and making
 - B. Weekly assignments and sight reading
 - C. Scale development
 - D. Fingerings
 1. Oboes
 - a. Not just forked F. Use left F if the oboe has one. Use left Eb.
 - b. Playing above high C with correct fingerings
 2. Bassoons
 - a. Using the correct fingerings, especially use of the whisper key.
 - b. Playing in the high register and alternate fingerings.
6. How you can help them the most
 - A. Provide quality instruments at both the middle and high school levels.
 - B. Encourage lessons or require them, and help the student’s family pay for the lessons.
 - C. Understand how the reed can change from day to day, hour to hour.
 1. Humidity and temperature inside and outside affects them. Consider when the reed was last played on.
 2. How long the reed soaks makes a difference and the temperature of the water.
 3. Avoid storing the instrument in a cold space.
 4. Double reed players cannot easily play in tune in rooms that are cold or hot. Cold can lead to water in the keys very easily. It’s usually not their fault when that happens!
 - D. Begin them in middle school; avoid waiting until high school.
 - E. Promote chamber music. Provide accompanist for solo and ensemble.
 - F. Be sure that any tuning in a rehearsal or concert is done with a tuner. Concert F isn’t a good note.
 - G. Acknowledge them in rehearsals especially when they have the same parts as other instruments.
 - H. Select ensemble music that has solo parts for double reeds.
 - I. Ask the private teacher what they are working on so you can provide reinforcement during rehearsals.

