Oboe Reed Issues

By Sally Bohls

Reed area responsibilities:

Tip: response
Heart: low notes (crow)
Back: high notes
Spine: focus
Rails: tip opening/sides sealing

Pitch of reed: The pitch of a reed should be a B to a C. To check the pitch of the reed, go to the string and blow moderate air. The reed should produce 1 pitch. That pitch is a B to a C. If the pitch is below a B, the reed will be flat. If the pitch is above a C, the reed will be sharp. When you add more pressure to the air, the reed pitch should break into an octave. That lower octave is the "crow". The pitch of the reed and crow is vitally important to the reed maker/adjuster.

Problem #1: *The reed is too hard to blow.*

Solution #1:

There is too much cane still on the reed. The reed has to vibrate in order to produce sound. Positive scraping ADDS vibration to a reed. Take a small layer of cane off all areas of the reed to get it to vibrate. Check the pitch of the reed. Lightly thin the rails of the heart to relax the tip opening. If the reed sounds too muffled or fuzzy, lightly blend the upper heart into the tip and out to the corners. To help the upper register, lightly thin the upper back (windows) just under the heart. Always scrape away from the spine.

Problem #2: *The reed is too hard to tongue.*

Solution #2:

Either the tip is too heavy or the division between the tip and the heart is not blended enough or both issues. The very tip of the reed needs to be the thinnest part of the reed. Make sure the tip does not flair out. Check the reed from the profile view. The tip should come down to a point. It should not flair out. If looking at the flat of the reed in the light, there should not be a shadow at the tip. If the blend of the tip to the heart is too steep, it is as if the air hits a brick wall. Therefore, the response stops. Lightly blend the upper heart into the tip and out to the corners. Always check the pitch of the reed while doing adjustments.

Problem #3: *The reed is hard to control.*

Solution #3:

Basically, a reed that is hard to control is too free or over vibrating. This means we need to add resistance. Resistance is controlled vibration. Negative scraping CONTROLS how the reed vibrates. Thinning the rails of the tip pushes strength to the center of the reed. Thus, forming a spine in the tip. The spine adds focus and control to a reed. Check the pitch of the reed. If the pitch of the reed is flat, clip the tip of the reed a very tiny amount. Making the reed shorter will raise the pitch of the reed as well as add resistance. Always scrape away from the spine. Check the pitch of the reed often.

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