

Oboe Care and Maintenance

Having put great care into making your Howarth oboe, and to help protect your investment, we would like to offer some hints on looking after your instrument.

1) Before opening the case, place it on a flat stable surface. Hold the top and bottom joints firmly, line the sockets up and with a slight twisting motion push



the joints together. Be aware of any link keys across the joints and make sure they are not fouling. Repeat



with the bell. If the joints feel very tight, apply some grease sparingly to the cork joint. Old dirty grease should always be cleaned off with a rag beforehand. Wipe hands before playing. (Also see **Troubleshooting** note 2.)

2) If you lay the instrument on a table, always ensure that it rests on the right hand mechanism in order not to damage the delicate left hand low B\Bb mechanism.

3) Avoid playing a new instrument for lengthy periods. Short sessions of about fifteen minutes several times a day are preferable. The more the keys are activated the better however, as this will help to avoid key seizures. (See **Troubleshooting** note 1.)

4) Always mop out the inside after each session. Use silk mops or a pull-through, never feathers which deposit grease and dirt inside the instrument. With S20 models wipe out tenon sockets. Always disassemble the joints.

5) Wipe the keywork with a soft cloth before returning the instrument to the case in order to prevent tarnish and acid corrosion from the moisture in your fingers.

6) Try to avoid sudden changes in temperature and humidity, especially in winter. Blowing hot moist air through an oboe that has been in a cold place can have serious consequences.

7) Do not alter the regulation on adjusting screws without fully understanding their use. Only two (three if 3rd octave is fitted) are intended for self-regulation in order to adjust venting for high notes. (See **Troubleshooting** note 5.)

TROUBLESHOOTING

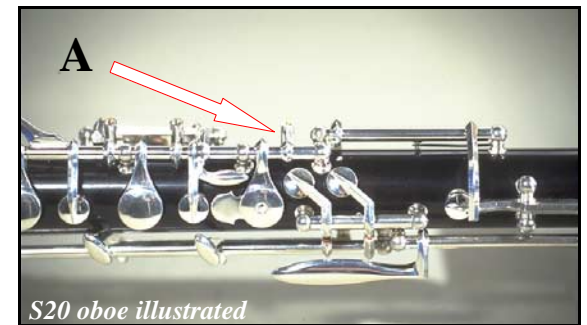
1) The most common problem with a new oboe is probably sticking keys. Because wood is hygroscopic it will expand and contract as humidity levels change, and especially if the instrument is in a dry atmosphere. This causes the pillars which support the keys to move very slightly and sometimes pinch the keys and prevent them from moving up and down. This is particularly common with the horizontally mounted keys such as the F vent and Eb keys. If the problem does not rectify itself after introducing some humidity into the atmosphere (eg keeping a special humidifier like a "Dampit" in the case), easing the keywork should only be done by a skilled technician.

2) In order to prevent movement between the joints, it is necessary for the tenon joints to have very close tolerances. On models without metal tenon liners, a slight shrinkage in the wood can cause the tenon to become too tight to fit together. This can be simply remedied by sanding the wood either side of the cork joint with a thin strip of fine abrasive cloth or paper. Be careful not to sand the cork and keep trying the joints as it is important that they are not loose.

3) Difficulty in obtaining low notes is often the result of adjusting screws bedding into the cork cushions between keys and airtightness being lost. A new instrument will often need re-regulating during its early life. This should only be done by a skilled technician unless you fully understand the use and regulation of adjusting screws.

4) Because of the complex and delicate mechanism of an oboe, a bent key can render the instrument unplayable. The low B\Bb and C#\Eb mechanisms are the most vulnerable, even a jolt inside the case can seize these keys. Again this is work for the skilled technician to rectify.

5) Problems in obtaining high notes (high C# and above) can invariably be remedied by altering the venting on the left hand first finger plate and the right



hand mid finger plate. If you lift the left hand first finger for these notes, adjust screw A on the back of the C# key (arrowed) until there is no movement, then turn anti-clockwise a quarter of a turn at a time until the notes speak easily. There should be a small venting movement.



You can likewise adjust the vent on the right hand mid finger plate by turning screw B (arrowed) on the C natural key, depending on the fingering you use.

OILING

Constant periods of exposure to warm moist air followed by drying out will cause stress to the wood and occasional applications of oil are necessary to keep the wood in prime condition. As a rule it will be obvious when the instrument body needs oiling. If the inside of the bore feels and looks dry a light application of oil is beneficial. The oil should be as thin as possible and of vegetable origin e.g. almond or raw linseed oil (never boiled linseed oil). The oil should be smeared onto a mop kept for the purpose and twirled inside the bore. Never apply enough oil to drip into the tone holes. A little often is the secret. For the first six months apply oil once a month (more often in very dry conditions), thereafter six-monthly applications should keep the wood in good condition.

Likewise the mechanism will benefit from a six-monthly oiling. This should be a light mineral oil applied sparingly at each key joint. Special oil applicators can be purchased to do this job very efficiently and cleanly. After applying the oil, operating all the mechanisms for a short while will draw the oil into the keys.

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CARING FOR YOUR HOWARTH OBOE



ESSENTIAL TIPS FOR KEEPING
YOUR INSTRUMENT IN GOOD
CONDITION