

Indiana University – Oboe Studio

How to Choose an Oboe

- Getting started
 - Characteristics of reeds to use when testing an oboe
 - Good response and pitch placement
 - Good tone
 - Compare your good reed with a mediocre reed as well
 - Try other new oboes to see a wide range of new instruments for comparison
 - Testing the oboe
 - Test the oboe by yourself
 - Test the oboe with other players
 - Let others play the oboe while you listen
 - Let other listen while you play the oboe
 - 1) Test suction (oboe should be completely sealed)
 - 2) Observe key heights, in particular low C and B/Bb holes
 - 3) Make a note of your first impressions
 - First impressions when playing your warm-up
 - First impressions of tone and pitch placements when playing scales
 - First impressions when playing a piece of familiar music

- Things to look for in a new oboe
 - Tone
 - Key words: rich, deep, magnetic, ringing, personal, expressive, broad, expansive
 - Good placement
 - Is it special? (Can you sing in it? Does it make you want to play?)
 - Scale (for pitch and color)
 - Notes should be in tune with proper color
 - Pay particular attention to G and C
 - Flat middle C and sharp high C are nearly unfixable
 - Discrepancies between octaves?
 - Tests notes with a tuner
 - Listen to I, IV, V in each scale
 - Determine pitch aside from color
 - Make note of the inclinations of the notes
 - Second and third octave notes
 - Are they full and yet up to pitch vs. thin or flat?
 - Test these notes with harmonics
 - Note, some problems could be corrected with octave vents or half hole size
 - Is anything unfixable?
 - Low register
 - Does it speak with ease, response, and depth to the bottom?
 - Does it slur into the low register with ease
 - G should sound deeper than A
 - Does the low register have clear articulation?
 - Articulate on C and G for pitch and depth vs. pointiness/trebleness
 - Resistance with response balance
 - When blowing against the oboe, does the tone deepen or does it become too treble?
 - Legato slurring from half-hole D to low G
 - Smooth, yet with tonal outline
 - General connection between notes
 - Your gut feelings
 - Would you enjoy playing this oboe?
 - Could you make reeds for this instrument?
 - Could you live with this on a daily basis?
 - Could you play this oboe with a mediocre reed?