

"A Competence Checklist for the Advanced High School Bassoonist"

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Embouchure

1. This would seem to be a beginning area. However, many advanced High School and College students have this problem.
2. Usually too hard, too much pressure on reed.
Keep working on Reed plus Bocal should sound a C
3. Keep Jaw down, mouth open, muscles supporting lips not teeth.
4. Whistle to get feel of correct embouchure.

Tone Quality

Tone Production

1. Air/Embouchure Balance; Air support and loose embouchure
2. Let reed vibrate and don't let a tight embouchure choke off sound.

Tonal Concept

1. Listening to recordings, many on iTunes
2. Use of recorder, eg. iPod or iPhone
3. Very difficult to change tonal concept.

Projection

1. The tone of the Bassoon does not carry out into the hall as well as some other instruments, particularly those higher in pitch such as clarinet or flute.
2. Bassoon solo lines might need to be louder than you might think when standing on the podium.

Intonation

Most Out-of-tune Notes

1. **G2: Usually the most out-of-tune note on the Bassoon, very sharp – Add low Eb key to lower pitch**
2. F#1: Usually Flat
3. G1: Usually Flat
4. Bb1 to F1: These notes are all usually Sharp in pitch, some notes more so than others.
5. F#2: Usually sharp-Use Little Finger F#2, see P. 8 [DR-27] of Finger Chart
6. D3 to F3: These notes are all usually Flat in pitch. The F3 in particular.

7. F3: Usually flat, add Low Eb key
(note: low Eb key should be used on all notes from E3 and above)

Use of fingerings to correct intonation

To Lower Pitch: close tone hole below first open hole

To Raise Pitch: open tone hole below first open hole

Methods to Correct Intonation Problems

1. In principle; the bassoon is an embouchure-tuned instr.
Should not move bocal in or out to adjust intonation
2. Purchase a shorter or longer bocal, this affects entire basn.
-higher number equals a longer bocal
-this changes intonation level of entire bassoon
3. Air/Embouchure Balance
4. Fingerings

Use of Tuner

1. Important, but do not use too much.
2. Mainly to see intonation tendencies of your instrument.
3. See *Bandworld* Article "Tuning Charts", by Dwight Satterwhite, in November-December 1988 issue.

Rhythm

1. Tempo, not rushing
2. Filling up the beat
3. Sight reading rhythms
4. Rests, notes after rest a problem
5. Metronome
 - a. Practicing with a metronome can help all the above problems.
 - b. Just as with a tuner, do not use all the time.

Technique

Range

1. An advance high school bassoonist should be able to play **Low Bb to Bb4** (fourth Bb on the Bassoon).

Tonguing; Ask student if touching the Reed with Tongue

1. An advanced high school bassoonist should be able to tongue sixteenths at 112.
2. Most problems relating to tonguing speed are not that the tongue cannot articulate fast enough, but cannot articulate fast long enough, **an endurance problem**; the tongue is a muscle which needs exercise.
3. Problems: If a student cannot tongue at this tempo, usually one or more of the following is at fault.
 - a. Tongue placement, contacting reed too far back on tongue. **Tip to Tip**

- b. Moving too much of the tongue, only the tip of the tongue should move.
- c. Reed could be too hard.

Venting

1. Venting or Flicking is the opening of a speaker key, either the High A key # 7 or the High C key # 8
[See DR-19 for key numbering system]
2. A2, Bb3, B3, and C3 are the notes most often vented.
 - a. For A2 vent High A Key.
 - b. For Bb3, B3, and C3 vent High C key.
3. Speaker key can be opened at beginning of note or held down entire duration of note.
4. Used to prevent "cracking", or to negotiate a wide leap.
5. Bassoon has 5 speaker keys (octave keys),
nib on bocal not best for each note

Fingerings

Correct Fingerings

1. Need to be sure student is using correct fingerings, not a fingering used for a special purpose like a trill fingering.
See first three pages of Fingering Chart. [DR-18]
2. **Eb2, not trill Db-Eb.** See Page 6 [DR-25]
3. Regular Bb2, not trill fingering. See Page P. 5 [DR-24]
4. Regular F#1 and F#2, not front F# [DR-22, 27]
5. Regular G2, uses whisper key and 1/2 hole.
See P. 8 [DR-27]
6. Db2 and Db3, both C# key and low D is pressed. See P. 11 [DR-25, 30]

Alternate Fingerings

1. There are more than one fingering for most notes on the bassoon.
2. A bassoonist can use different fingerings to solve many problems such as technique and intonation.
3. An advanced High School bassoonist should know alternate fingerings for the following notes: (See Fingering Chart)
 1. **Eb2, P. 6 [DR-25]; Add Bb key, finger V (RH)**
 2. **E2, P. 7 [DR-26]; Add Low E key, to stabilize**
 3. **G2, P. 9 [DR-27]; Add Low Eb key to lower pitch**
 4. C#3, P. 11 [DR-30]
 5. F#2, P. 8 [DR-27]
 6. G#2, P. 9 [DR-28]
 7. F#3, P. 13 [DR-32]
 8. G#3, P. 14 [DR-33]

Accuracy and Speed

1. Advanced High School bassoonists should be able to play scales in a sixteenth note pattern at quarter note equals 88.
2. Use Scales in Thirds and Fourths to build technique.
3. Finger and Hand Position
4. Fingers close to keys
5. Move fingers very quickly, no matter the tempo

Tenor Clef

1. Thanks to the extension, the bassoon has an effective range of 3 and 1/2 octaves [Bb1 to F4]; Tenor Clef is necessary!
2. The tenor clef is used in some band literature, More today than 30 years ago. e.g., Arnold, *Four Scottish Dances*; Dahl, *Sinfonietta*; Grainger, *Children's March*.
3. Many good trombone books that have exercises on the tenor clef, but only used tenor clef, not alto.
4. Any exercise can be played in tenor clef just add one sharp to the key signature.

Sight Reading

1. This skill needs to be practiced like any other skill
2. Sight read every day
3. Will improve technique a great deal

Musical Style and Phrasing

1. Defining the end of Phrase
2. Going toward the Turning Point of phrase
How to determine the Apex of the phrase
 - a. Highest note in phrase, less frequently the lowest note
 - b. Longest note in phrase
 - c. Note that is dissonant, alien to key or appoggiatura
3. **Slur Markings are Phrasing Markings**

Vibrato

1. An advanced High School bassoonist should be able to play with vibrato.
2. A good rule for vibrato speed is approximately 1/16's at quarter equals 76.
3. Should use Singing Vibrato (Diaphragm/Throat vibrato) not Jaw Vibrato
4. A method to start a Singing Vibrato
 - a. Whistle repeated notes
 - b. Play with hand on throat
 - c. Listen to other instrumentalist and singers

Practicing

1. Most High School students do not know how to practice.
2. Three most important elements to practicing:
 - a. Practice small parts of piece, a phrase, a measure or even two notes.
 - b. Practicing as slow as necessary to play something correctly.
 - c. Be organized, divide time and include:
 - 1) Finger Calisthenics; Scales, Arpeggios, Patterns, etc.
 - 2) Etudes
 - 3) Solos, Band Parts, Chamber Music, etc.
3. Many students start practicing slowly but get too fast too soon.
4. See article by Richard Hahn, "About Practicing",
Published by Gemeinhardt.
5. Remember you are training the brain not the muscles
 - a. use Visualization
6. Great book on Visualization and other performance aspects and how they relate to the body
You Are Your Instrument, by Julie Lyonn Lieberman
Published by Huiksi Music
ISBN#1-879730-20-0

Literature

Solo

1. Telemann; *Sonata in F minor*, International;
Sonata in A minor, Schott
2. Paul Hindemith, *Sonate for Bassoon*, Schott
3. Benedetto Marcello, *Sonata in E Minor*, International Music
4. Burrill Phillips, *Concert Piece*, Carl Fischer (Also Band Arr.)
5. Antonio Vivaldi, *Sonata Number Three in A Minor*,
International Music

Methods

1. Julius Weissenborn, *Fifty Bassoon Studies*, Cundy-Bettoney
2. Henry Paine, *Studies and Melodious Etudes for Bassoon*,
Levels Two and Three, a part of the Student Instrumental
Course, Belwin Mills
3. Alan Hawkins, *Melodious and Progressive Studies*,
Southern Music
4. Voxman, *Advanced Method for Bassoon*, Vol. I, II, Rubank
5. Milde, *25 Studies* (Scale and Chord Studies), Carl Fischer
-Also in Cundy-Bettoney edition of Weissenborn
6. Kopprasch, *60 Studies*, Vol. 1, International Music Co

Duets

1. Voxman, *Selected Duets for Trombones*, Vol. I & II, Rubank
2. Blume, *Duets for Two Trombones*, Vol. I & II, International Music
3. Satzenhofer, *24 Duets*, International Music

Equipment

Bocal; A Fox number 2 or 3 Double Star CVX, or CVC

Reeds

Wires

1. Be sure that the wires, especially the wire closest to tip, are in their proper position.
-As reed gets older, first wire can slip down toward second wire
2. Flatten the first wire to make reed easier to play.
 - a. With pliers, press the top and bottom of the wire closest to the tip of the reed.
 - b. This decreases the structural arch and closes the tip.
3. If the 3rd space E always plays an Eb, clip the tip
 - a. Use Scissors or nippers
 - b. Start with only clipping off 1 mm
 - c. Also try tighten the wire if too loose.

Basic Set of Tools

1. Pliers with wire cutters
2. Small, fine file
3. Mandrel
4. Sandpaper: wet/dry, 400 grit
5. Plaque

How to Recognize a Good Commercial Reed

1. Should "Smile"
2. Blades should be even
3. Look at reed from side, shoulders should be even
4. Wires should not be falling off, however, they should be loose

Books on Reed Making

Bassoon Reed-Making: A Basic Approach

by Christopher Weait

Published by McGinnis and Marx

Bassoon Reed Making

by Mark Popkin and Loren Glickman

Published by the Instrumentalist

Diagnosis of Bassoon's Mechanical Problems

1. Whisper Key from Low E Key.
 - a. This bridge key mechanism (goes across the tenon) can get bent easily both when putting the bassoon together and in a badly fitted case.
2. Keys that Stand Closed.
 - a. These are keys that the pad is closed until the key is pressed.
 - b. The G# key because of its location. Make sure that the seat strap ring has not slipped up and holding the Ab key open.
3. Low C to D Mechanism
4. C# Key and High C Key opening Db-Eb trill tone hole

Important Bassoon Solos from the Band Literature

1. Malcolm Arnold, *English Dances*, Movement III
2. Malcolm Arnold, *Four Scottish Dances*, Movement II
3. Andreas Makris, *Aegean Festival Overture*
4. Robert Jager, *Variations On A Theme of Robert Schumann*, Var. I
5. Norman Dello Joio, *Variants on a Mediaeval Tune*
6. Morton Gould, *American Salute*
7. Darius Milhaud, *Suite Francaise*
8. Claude T. Smith, *Festival Variations*
9. Ingolf Dahl, *Sinfonietta*, "Pastoral Nocturne"
10. Percy Grainger, *Children's March*
11. Joseph Horovitz, *Bacchus on Blue Ridge*

Important Bassoon Solos with Other Instruments

1. Roger Nixon, *Fiesta Del Pacifico*, with Baritone
2. Percy Grainger, "*Lincolnshire Posy*", Mvt. 1, with Horns
3. Clare Grundman, *Second American Folk Rhapsody*, with Picc., Fl., and Clar.
4. Morton Gould, *Symphony for Band*, with Clarinets and Bass Clar.
5. Percy Grainger, *Scotch Strathspey and Reel*, with Oboe
6. Norman Dello Joio, *Scenes from "The Louvre"*