



Let's Talk About Oboe!

POSTURE: As with playing any instrument, your posture while playing the oboe should include sitting on the edge of the chair with a straight back and relaxed shoulders in order to allow air to travel a smooth path from your diaphragm to the instrument. Playing the oboe creates back pressure that can lead to a bad habit of having tension in your arms, shoulders and neck while playing. Try this exercise: With good posture, place your arms at your sides and let them feel as loose as possible, then pick up your oboe and try playing while maintaining the relaxed feeling in your arms and neck. Also see the back of this page for a picture of proper posture and a side view of embouchure.

AIR: Despite the small reed opening, the oboe requires good quality air support to be played correctly. Because of the small reed opening, we must realize that we need to allow time to inhale AND exhale while playing. Be sure that when you inhale, the shoulders stay relaxed and the stomach expands out. You should always exhale and inhale before you begin playing. While playing, the support should be strong and elastic, avoiding tension. The oboe doesn't require BIG breaths, but GOOD QUALITY breaths to achieve correct support.

EMBOUCHURE: Look in a mirror and place the tip of the reed in the center of your bottom lip. Gently close the top lip and roll the reed into your mouth slowly until the red part of your lips are no longer visible and feel your mouth in an "O" shape. Now pull the sides of your mouth (or the sides of the "O") down so your chin is flat. This should create a correct basic embouchure. As you play, you will adjust your embouchure for pitch, dynamics and tone quality.

REEDS: Of course, reeds are not only important to playing the oboe well, but a bad reed can make playing the oboe even more difficult and even frustrating. A good reed should respond quickly to the air, be in tune and have depth and decent tone quality. If you are having major trouble with any of these things, it is likely that the reed is the main problem. Very ambitious student oboists will learn to make reeds from their private teachers, but in many cases, student reeds can be purchased from your private teacher or from the vendors listed at the back of the page in the section called "Resources." When buying reeds from unknown vendors, realize that they may or may not be great reeds. A private teacher is the best resource when it comes to learning to adjust and make reeds.

Happy oboe playing! If you're interested in private lessons, please find my contact information on the back of this handout.

Marissa Honda

University of Southern California Thornton School of Music M.M. Oboe Performance '13

USC Thornton School of Music B.M. Oboe Performance '11

Recipient of the USC Thornton Outreach Program Award for teaching music '13

marissa.honda@gmail.com

(559) 349-8122

Resources:

RDG Woodwinds: rdgwoodwinds.com, store located in Hollywood

Midwest Musical Imports: mmimports.com

Stuart Dunkel Oboe Cane and Reeds: stuart-dunkel.com

****Great oboe posture and oboe embouchure side view!**

