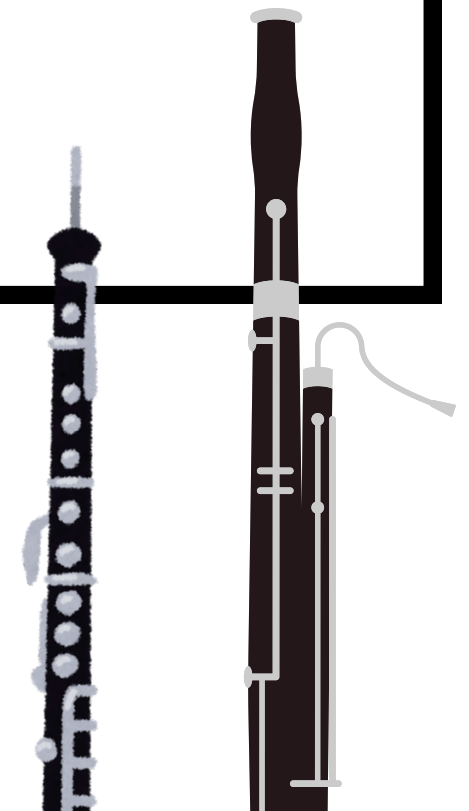


DOUBLE TALK:

**OBOE AND BASSOON FUNDAMENTALS TO IMPROVE
RESPONSE, INTONATION, AND TONE**

Dr. Kathleen Carter Bell & Dr. Conor Bell
West Texas A&M University

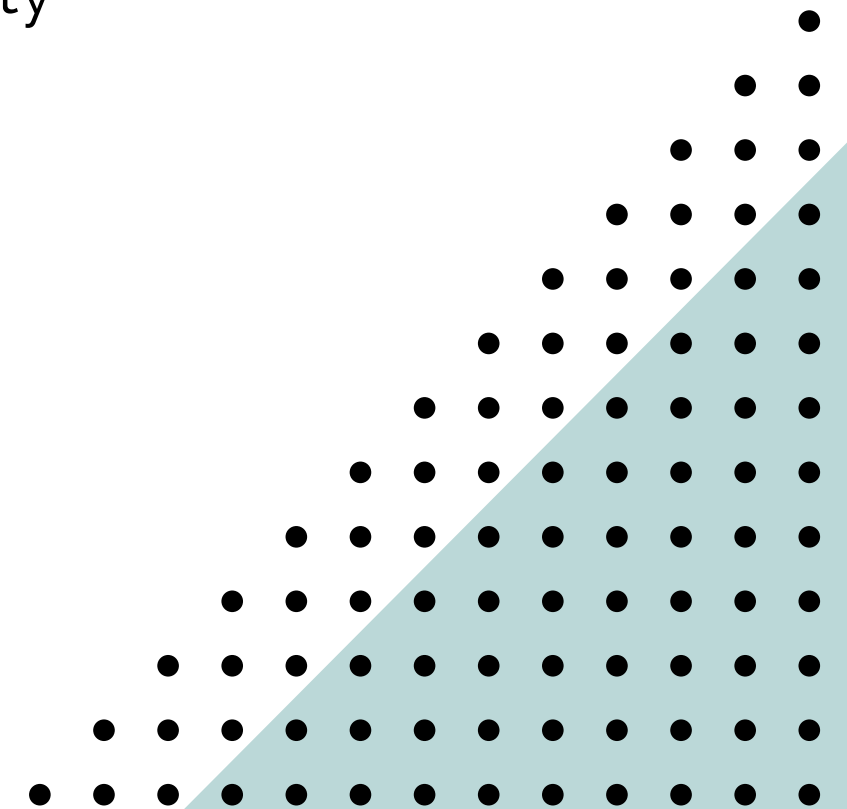




Dr. Kathleen Carter Bell

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- Oboe Faculty, Interlochen Arts Camp
- Artistic Director of Chamber Music Amarillo
- Principal Oboe, Lubbock Symphony Orchestra
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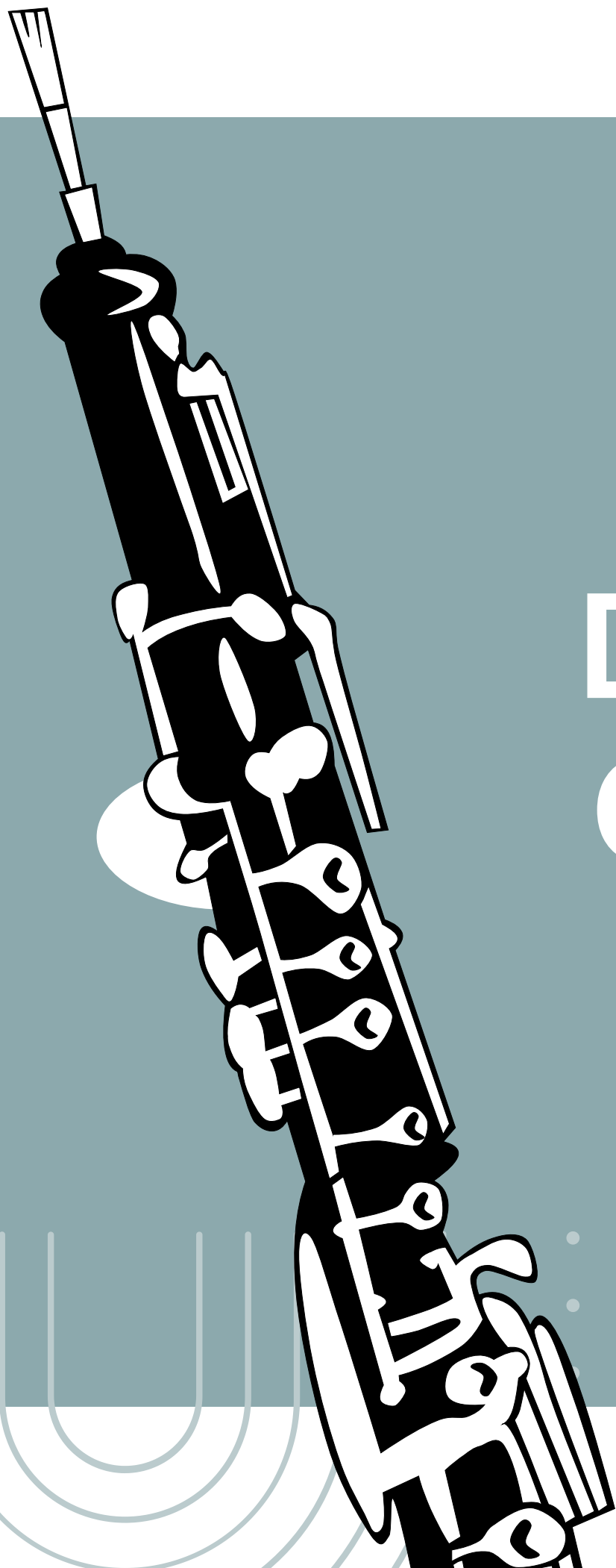


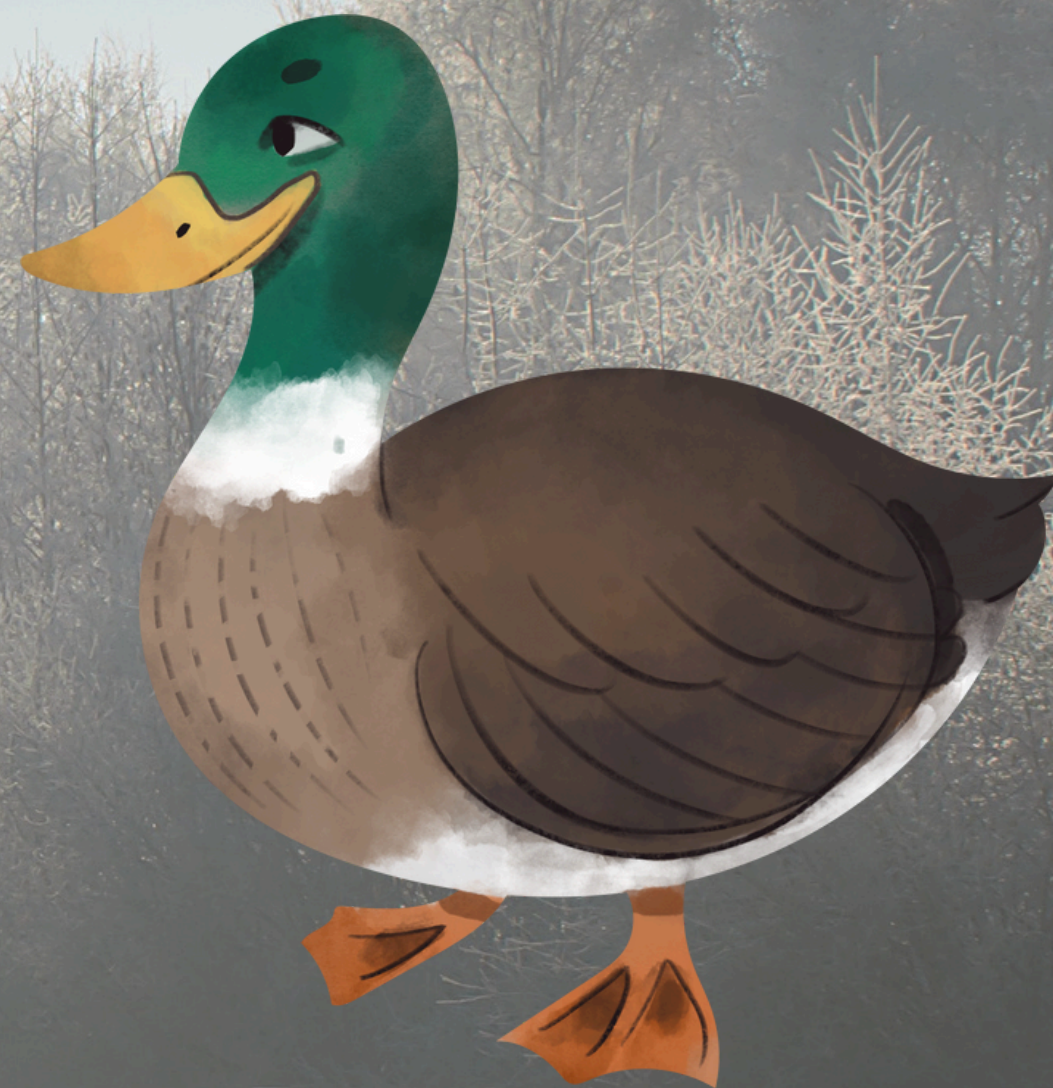
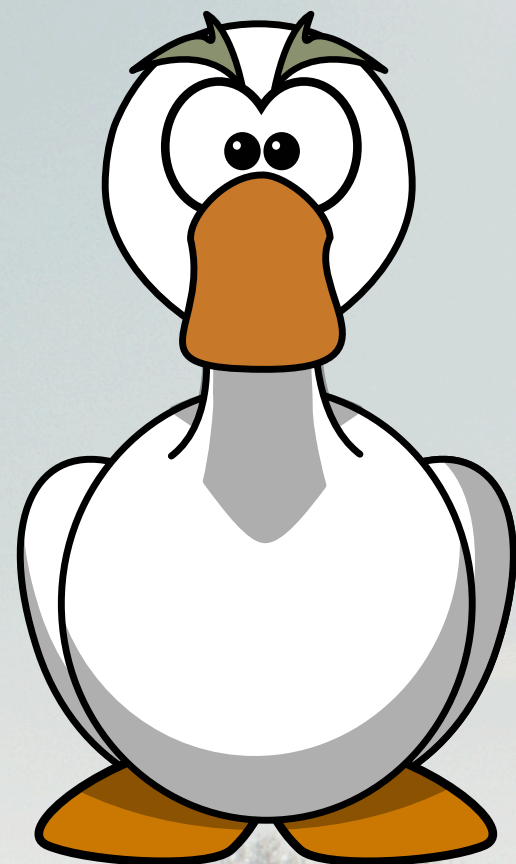


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- Assistant Professor of Bassoon, West Texas A&M University
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- DM, MM Indiana University

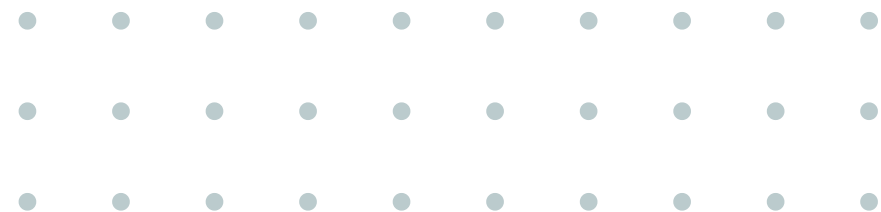
DOUBLE REED CHALLENGES





Common Double Reed Challenges

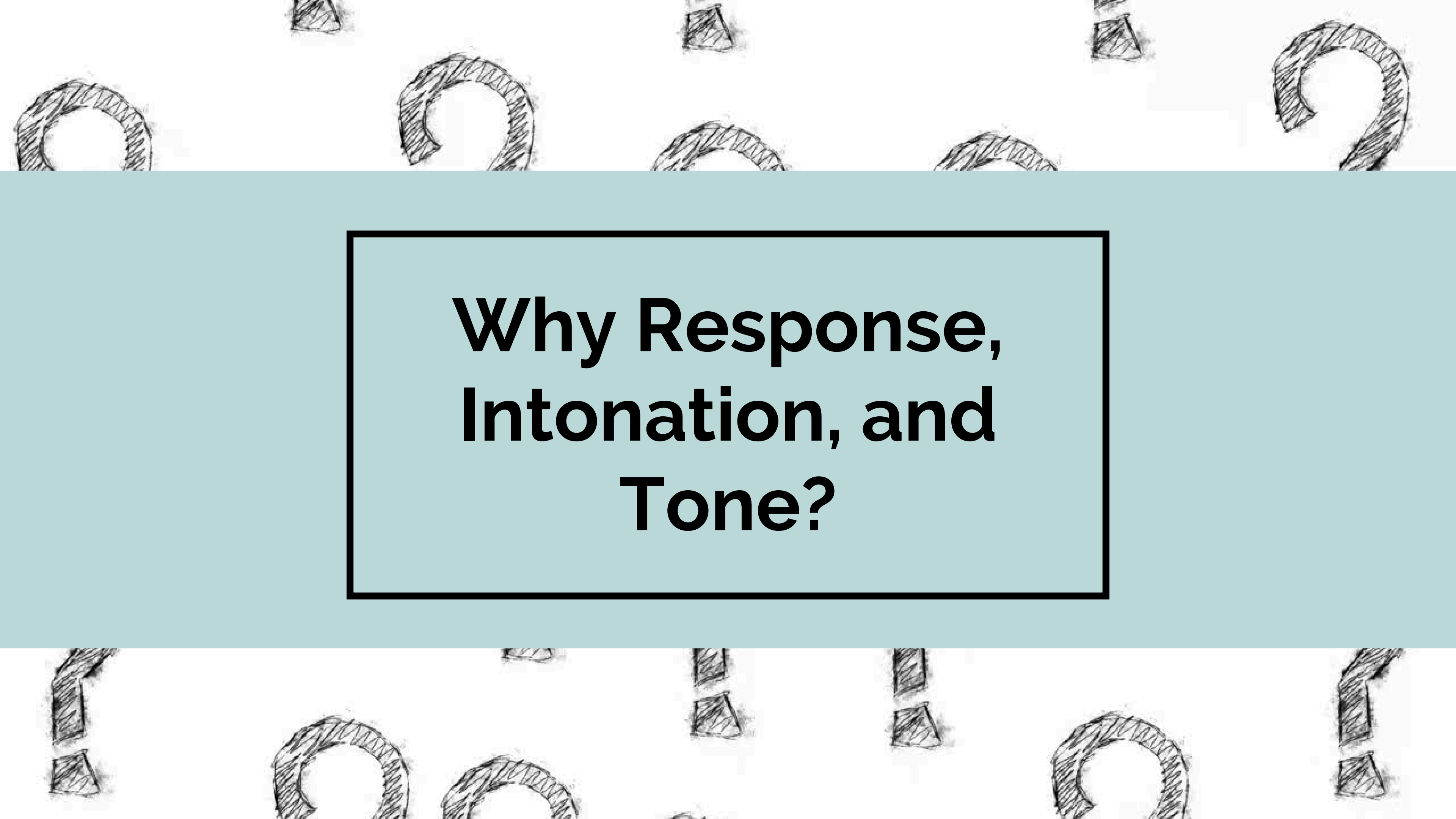
1. Can be isolating
2. Fewer private teachers
3. Reeds!
4. Equipment uncertainty
5. Not a marching instrument



“

"Music's effects are magical, but it's not magic to create those effects."

--David McGill,
Sound in Motion



Why Response, Intonation, and Tone?

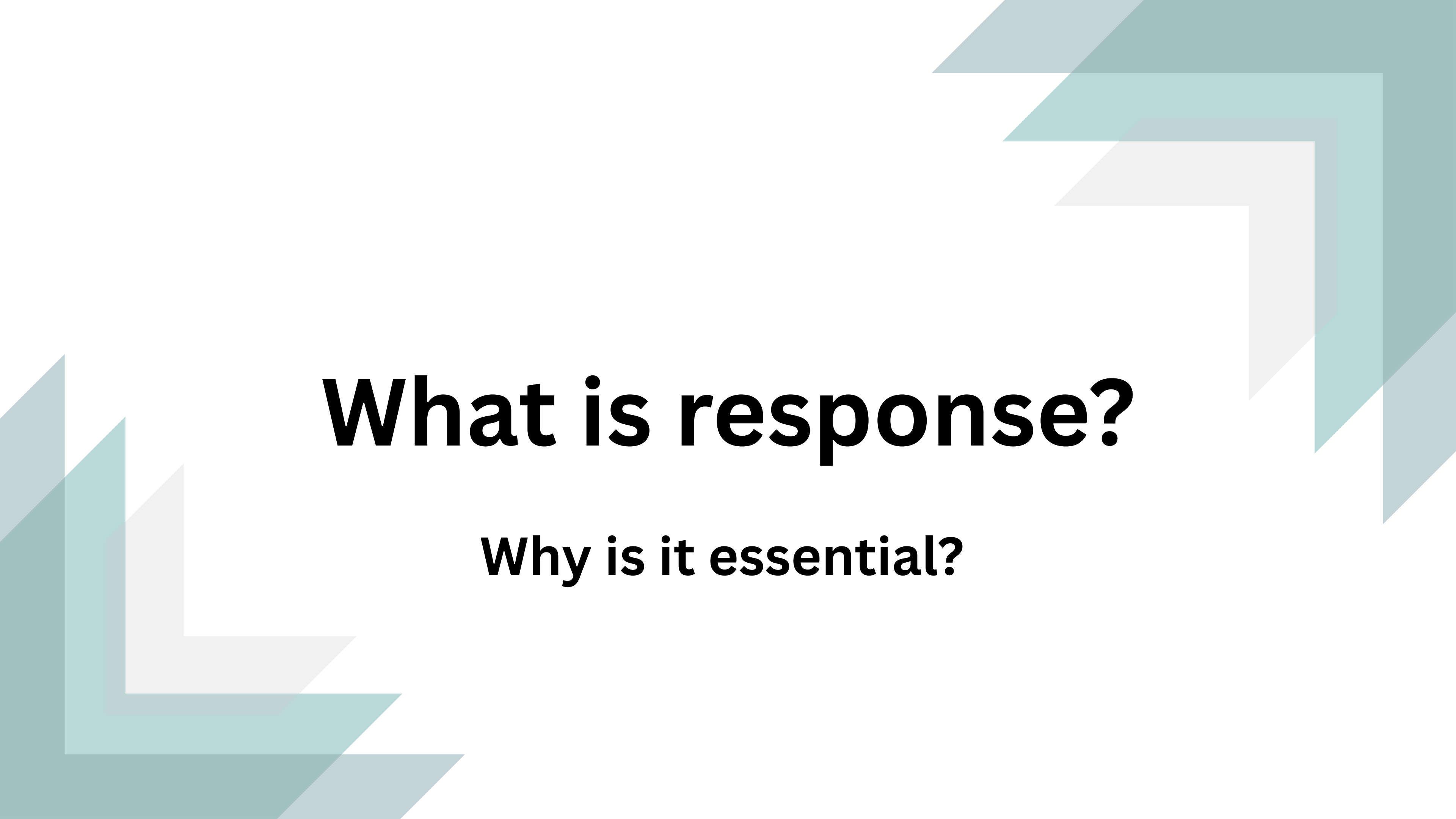


Goals for this session:

- Outline the challenges facing double reed players
- Provide solutions and strategies for common issues
- Empower educators to help their double reed players succeed

A graphic design featuring two oboes. One oboe is on the left, angled upwards, with its keys and mechanism visible. The other oboe is on the right, angled downwards, with its bell and keys visible. The word "RESPONSE" is centered in the middle in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The background is a light blue-grey color with a grid of small dots at the bottom. There are also some curved lines on the left and right sides.

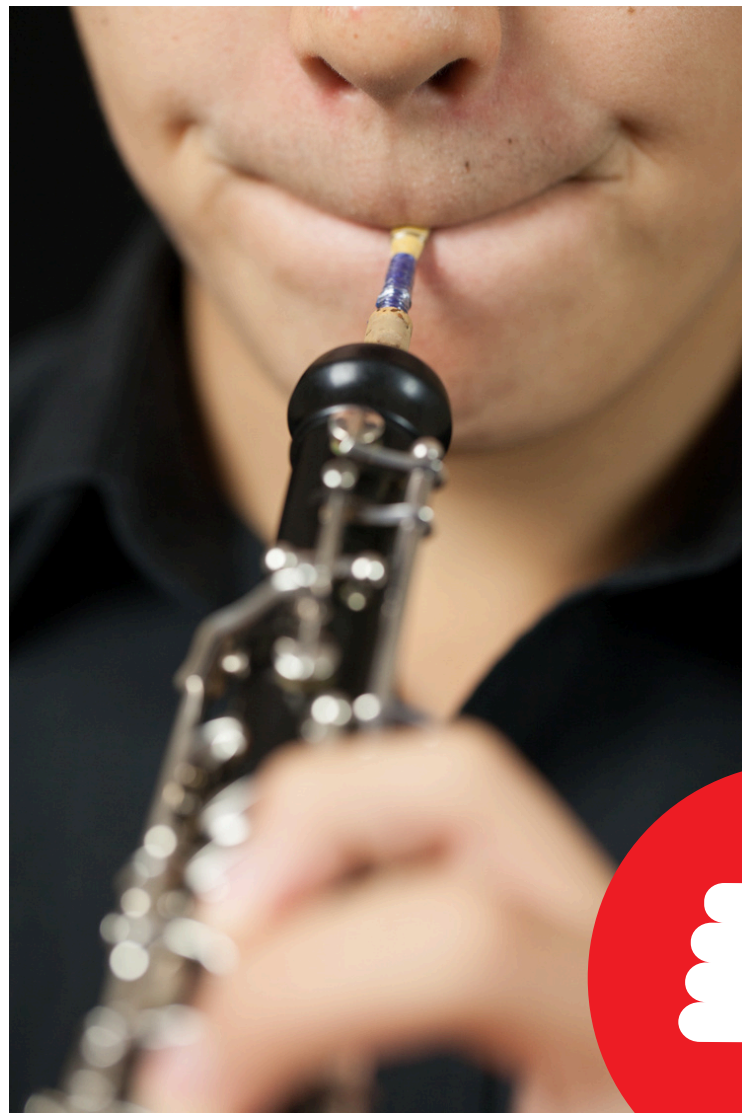
RESPONSE

The background features several large, overlapping L-shaped geometric blocks in the corners. These blocks are in shades of teal, light blue, and a pale grey, creating a modern, architectural feel.

What is response?

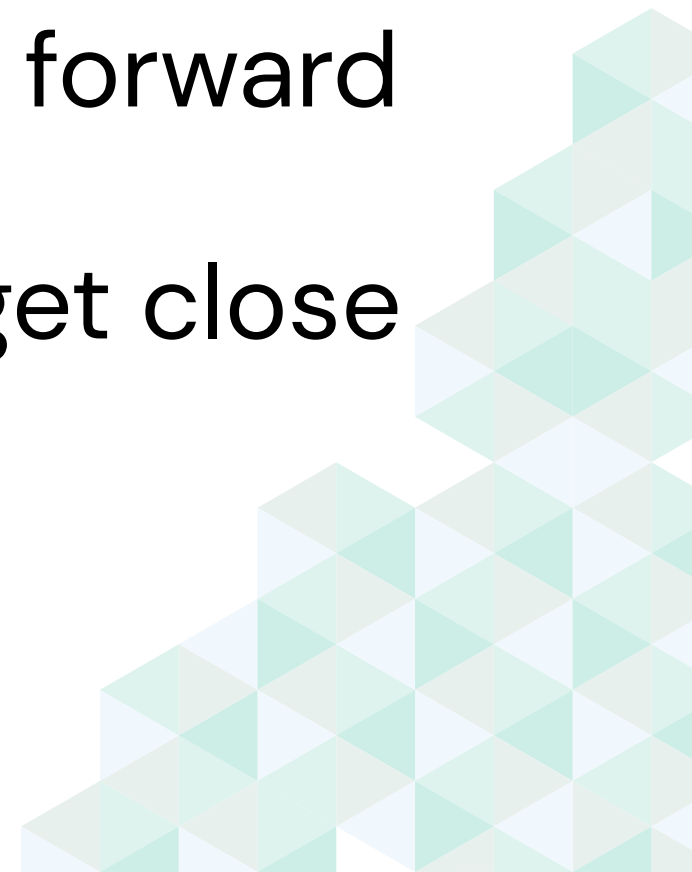
Why is it essential?

Muting vs. Non-Muting Embouchures



Muting

- flat lip line
- corners of mouth back, rather than forward
- reduces the space in the mouth
- results in biting the reed, as teeth get close to the reed



Muting vs. Non-Muting Embouchures



Non-Muting

- round, whistle shape
- some space between teeth
- corners forward, chin flat
- allows reed room to vibrate
- lips support and surround reed, teeth



EMBOUCHURE

- Non-muting desirable
- Relaxed jaw, space in mouth
- Whistle shape with lips
- Corners forward, chin flat
- Say “ooh” and roll in somewhat

Results: rounder sound, reed isn't pinched, so it can vibrate freely, position is optimal for entrances

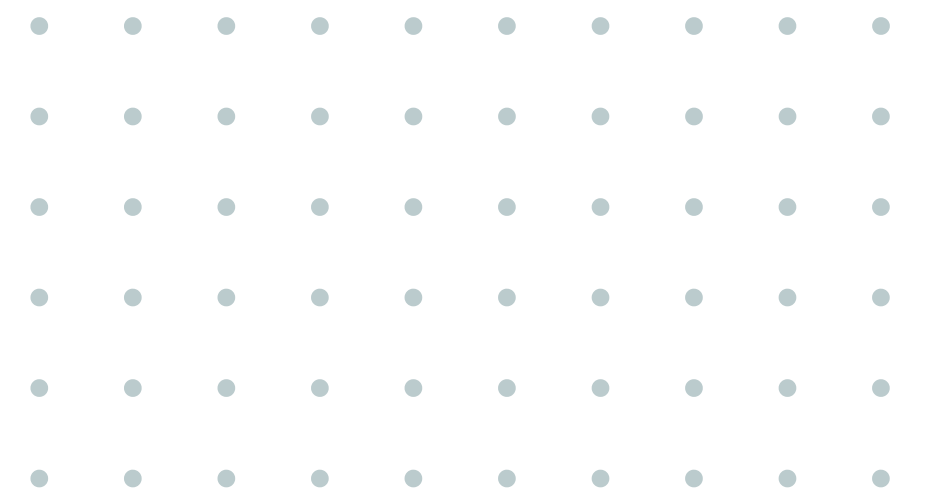


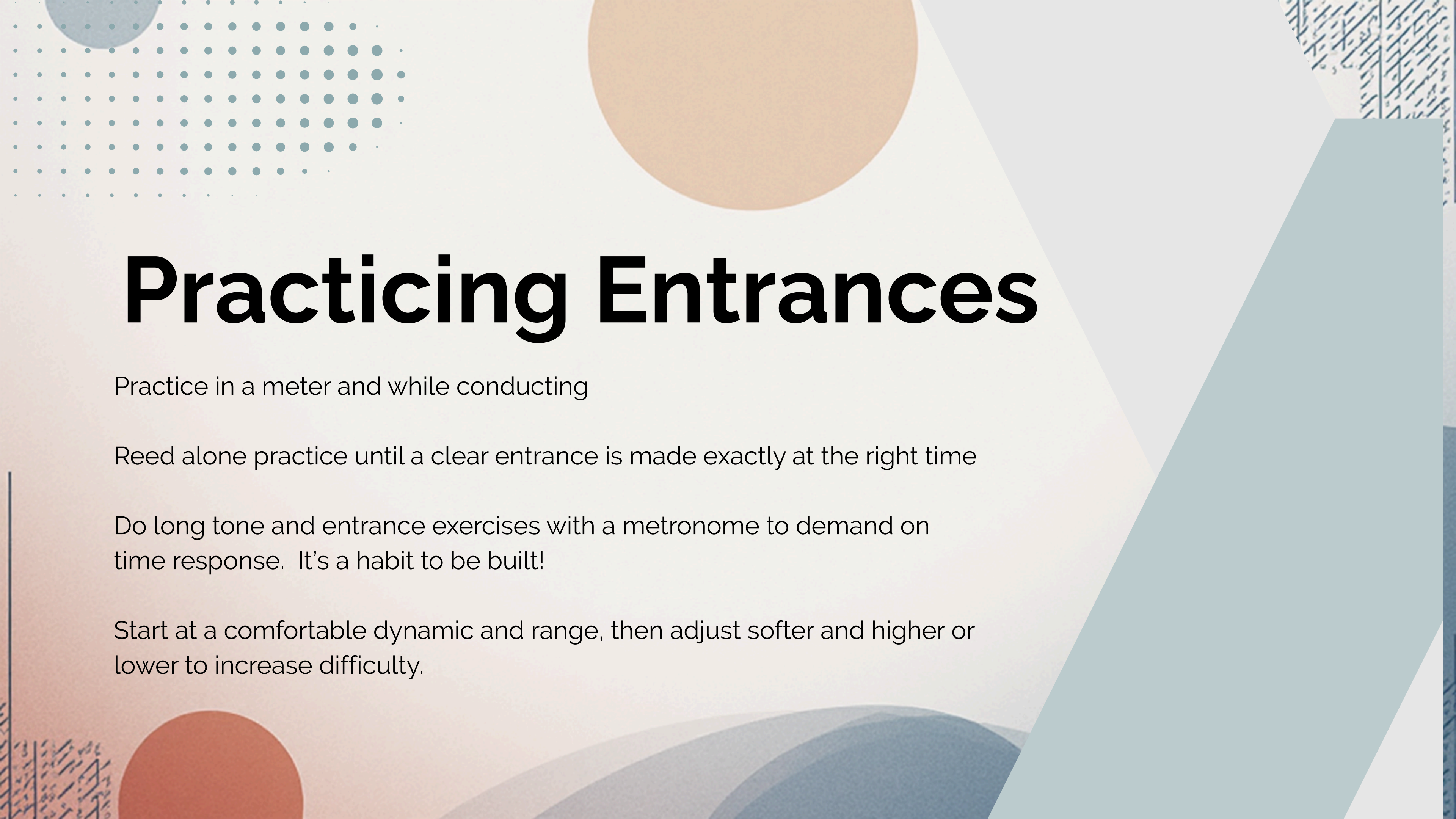
PRODUCING A GREAT ENTRANCE



The Steps:

1. Breathe out
2. Breathe in
3. Engage support, engage embouchure, tongue in tip of reed (getting "set")
4. Release tongue and make entrance!



The background features a light cream color with various geometric and musical-themed decorations. In the top left, there is a grid of small teal dots. A large, solid orange circle is positioned in the upper center. A large, light blue triangle points upwards from the bottom right corner. In the bottom left, there are faint, stylized musical staves and notes. A large, solid orange circle is also visible in the bottom left corner.

Practicing Entrances

Practice in a meter and while conducting

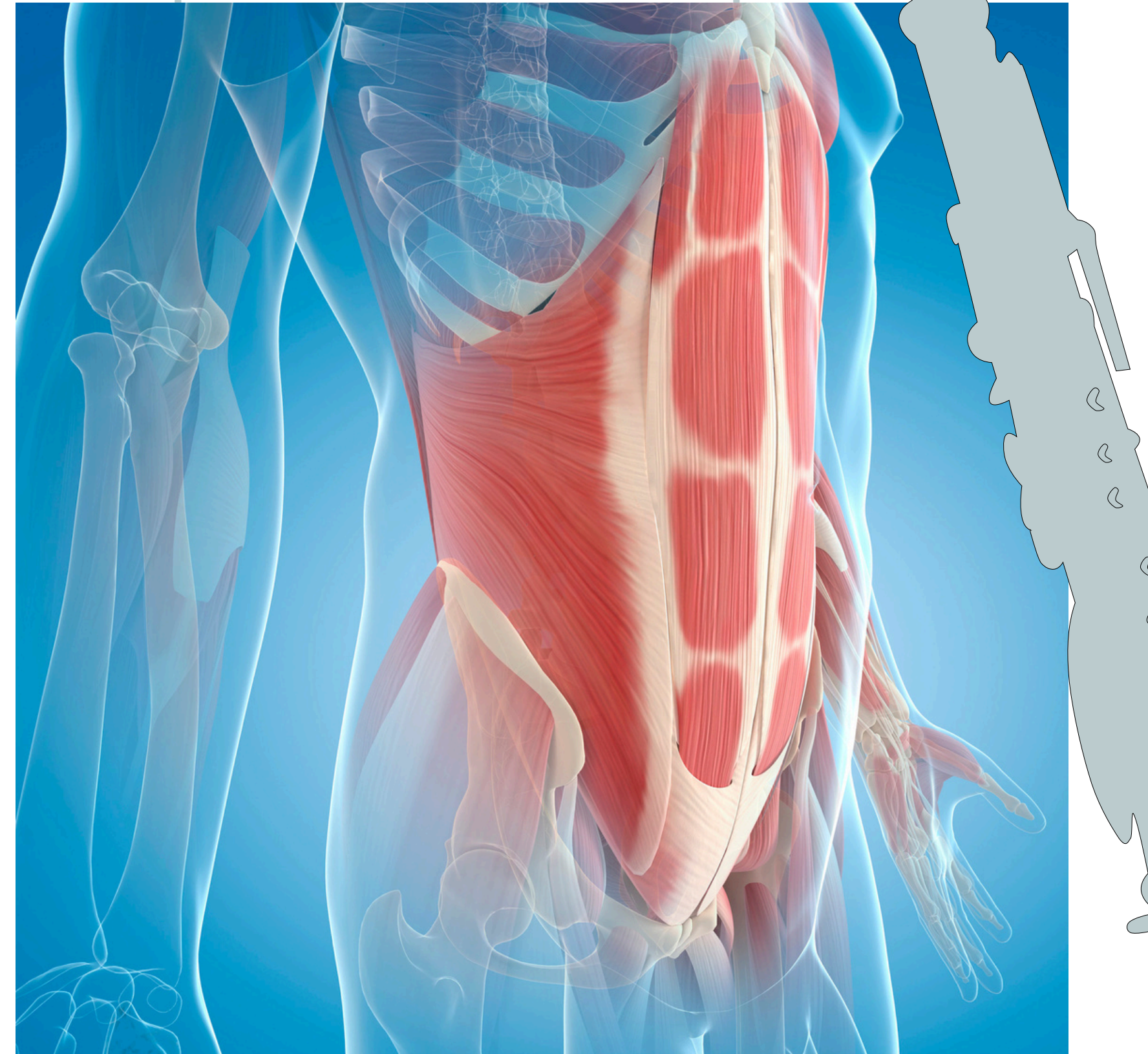
Reed alone practice until a clear entrance is made exactly at the right time

Do long tone and entrance exercises with a metronome to demand on time response. It's a habit to be built!

Start at a comfortable dynamic and range, then adjust softer and higher or lower to increase difficulty.

ABDOMINAL SUPPORT & AIR USE

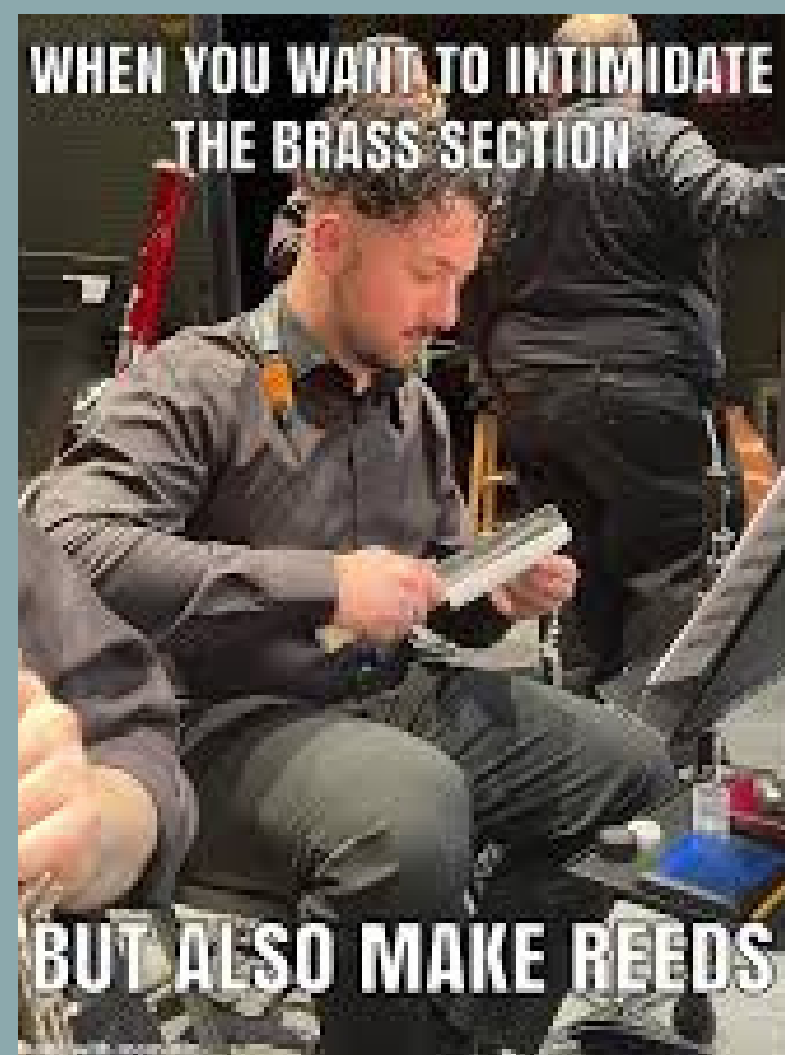
- We don't need much air—avoid telling double reeds to blow more air
- Bassoon needs more air quantity than oboe, still fast!
- DO WANT: Supported, fast air
- Abdominal muscles must be engaged





REEDS





REED CARE

GET A CASE!

SOAK REED IN
WATER

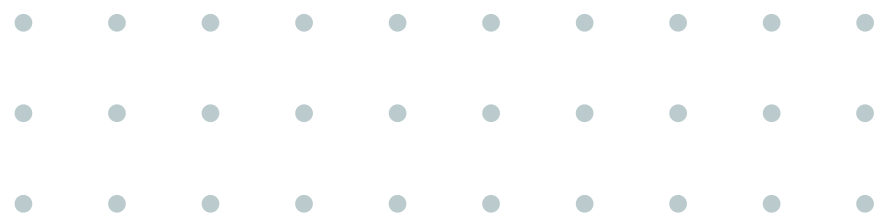
ALTERNATE REEDS

PROTECT REED



REEDS

- Determine everything
- THERE IS NO PERFECT REED
- Avoid mass-produced reeds
- Oboe reed should crow a "C"
- Handmade reeds are best
- Normal to need adjustments



The Reed IS the instrument!



- ...From a physics standpoint anyway.
- If the reed is faulty, even a great double reed player won't sound their best—AND they're uncomfortable!
- Ensure that your double reed players have several good reeds and rotate between them each day.
- They should buy handmade reeds, probably from their private teacher or online.
 - Experiment with different makers and then stick with what works.



Reed Needs for Entrances

Vibrate readily
Thin enough tip
Moderate opening
Well soaked (in water)



Bassoon Reed Basics

Unlike oboe reeds, bassoon reeds come with wires for adjustments!
Simple to do with a pair of needlenose pliers on a soaked reed

Squeeze the first wire from the sides to open the tip and:

- Lower the pitch
- Increase resistance
- Make it easier to play loudly
- Make it easier to play low

Squeeze the first wire from the top and bottom to close the tip and:

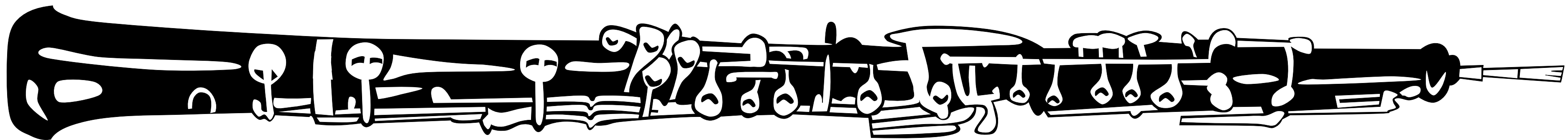
- Raise the pitch
- Decrease resistance
- Make it easier to play softly
- Make it easier to play high

The second wire is the opposite! When choosing which wire to adjust, we want the first wire to be an oval, and the second wire to be halfway between oval and round.

If you make it worse, you can put it back!

Oboe Reed Basics

- No wires to adjust, unfortunately
- Need to scrape or break in reeds to alter the way they play
- Thickness of reed and opening shape impact our ability to enter beautifully



Oboe Reed Tests: help us be scientific about reed adjustment

Reed Alone:

- Aspirated Entrance on Reed
- Weak wind to strong wind



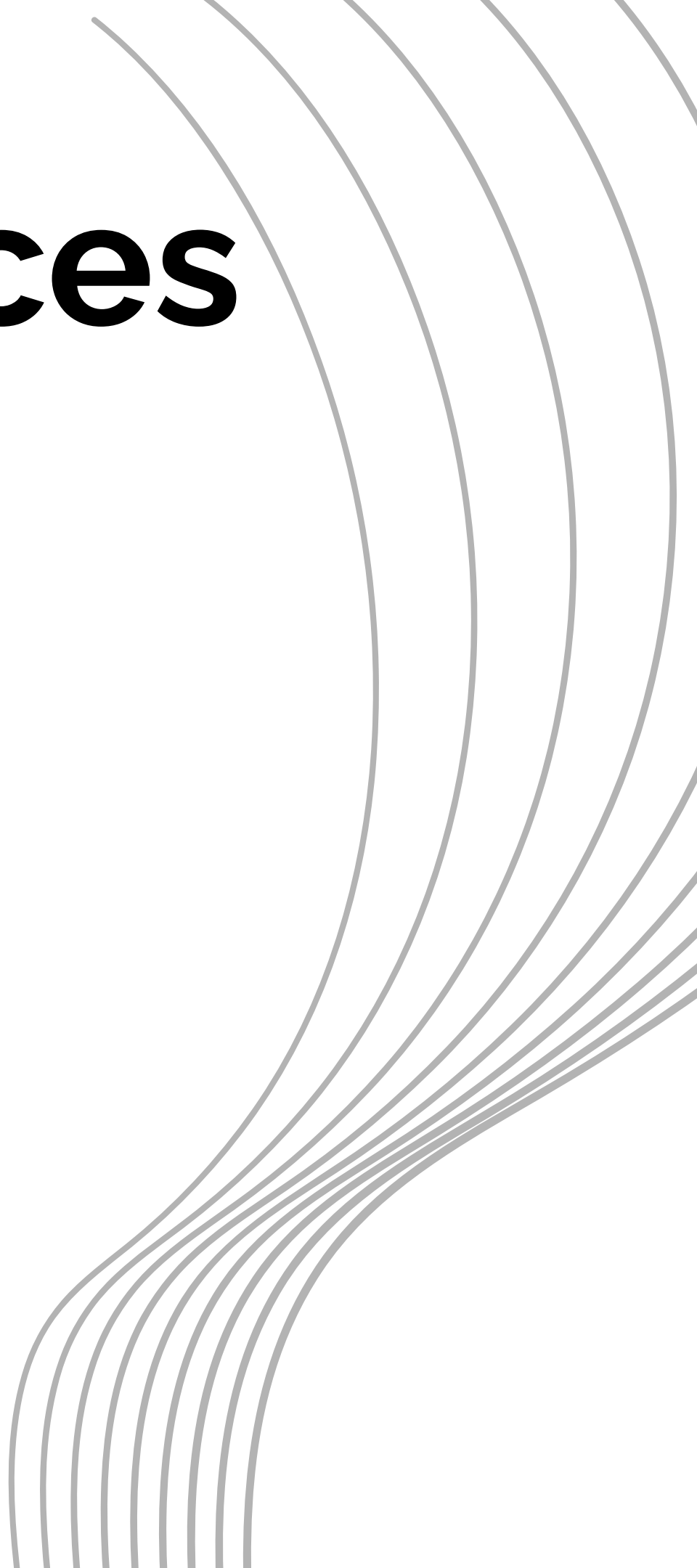
Oboe Test:

- High C and Low D (both aspirated)
- Want sound to emerge, not be too sudden or resistant





Low Register Entrances

- Voicing: imagine you're singing low note, adjusting mouth and throat shape
 - Go further out on reed
 - Make sure you're not biting—relaxed embouchure
- 

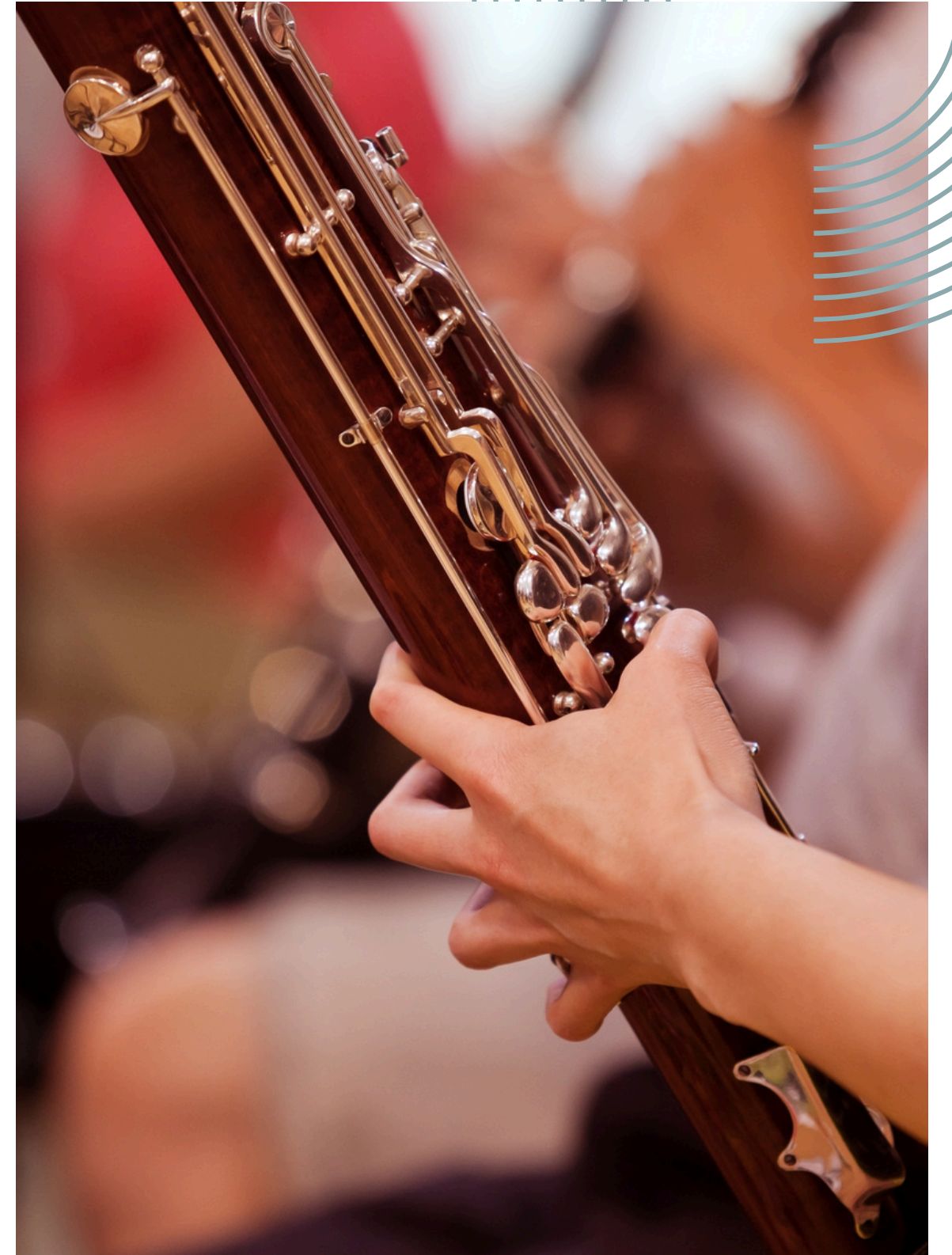
Oboe Adjustments



- Adjustment Screws—treat with care!
- Balance relationship of pads to each other
- Very common issue on oboes—impacted by technique, weather, age of instrument

Bassoon Adjustments

- No adjustment screws!
- Make sure the instrument is subjected to regular maintenance by someone who knows bassoons.
- Make sure students swab,
 - moisture will harden pads, creating leaks (and rot wood)



INTONATION



Instrument Tendencies

Impacted by

- Instrument limitations
- Dynamics
- High vs. low register
- Temperature
- Reed
- Pitch flexibility of double reeds

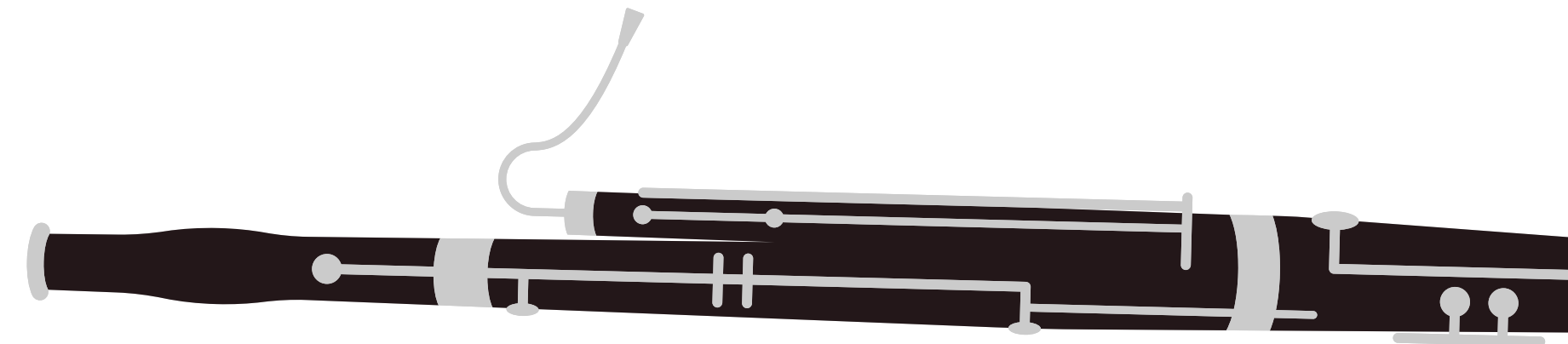


Basic Instrument Tendencies

Oboe:

Sharp: octave E

Flat: low register notes



Bassoon:

Sharp: low register, middle F#

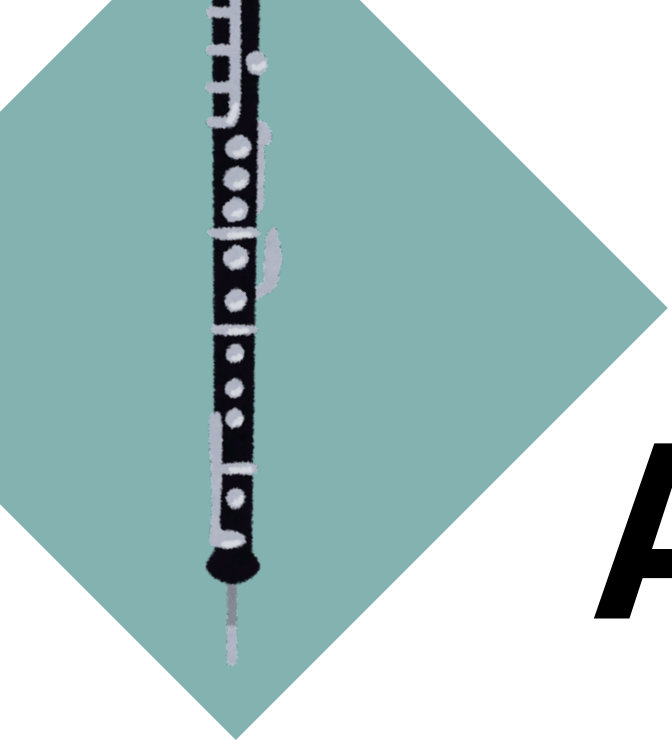
Flat: tenor Eb, E, and F

FOCUSING THE AIR

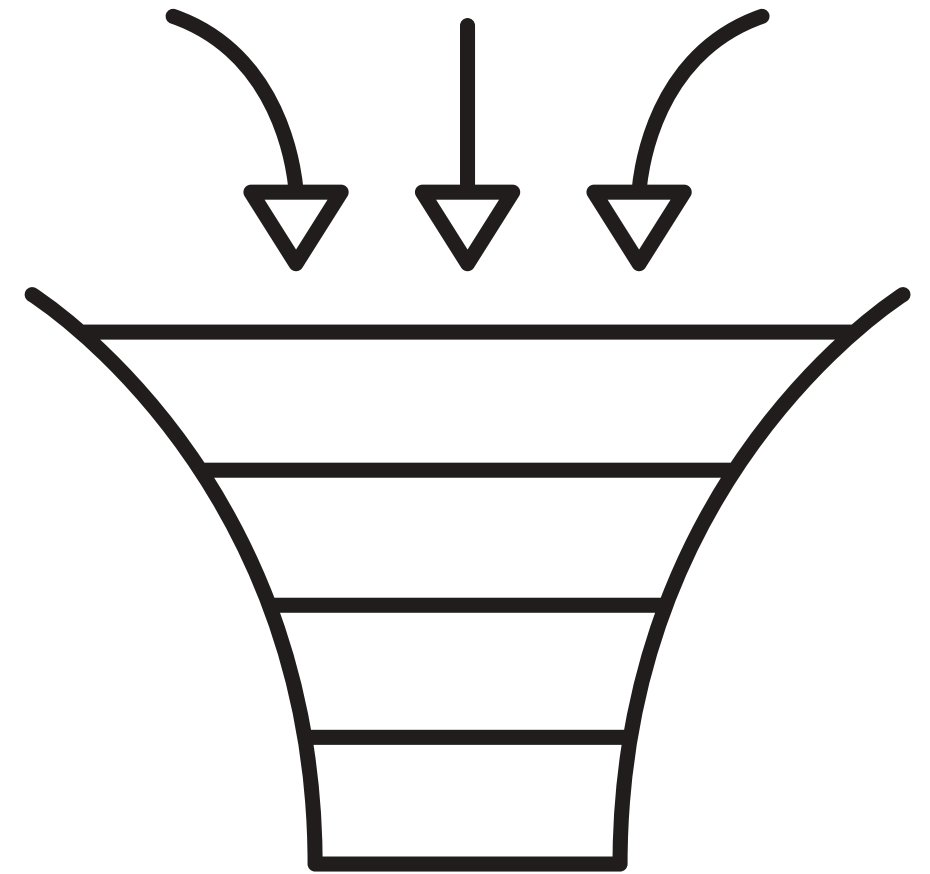
Focus of air = POWER

Use throat and vowel shape
to accomplish focus





Achieving Focus



- Fake Coughs
- Fake groan
- Hold breath as if swimming underwater with mouth open

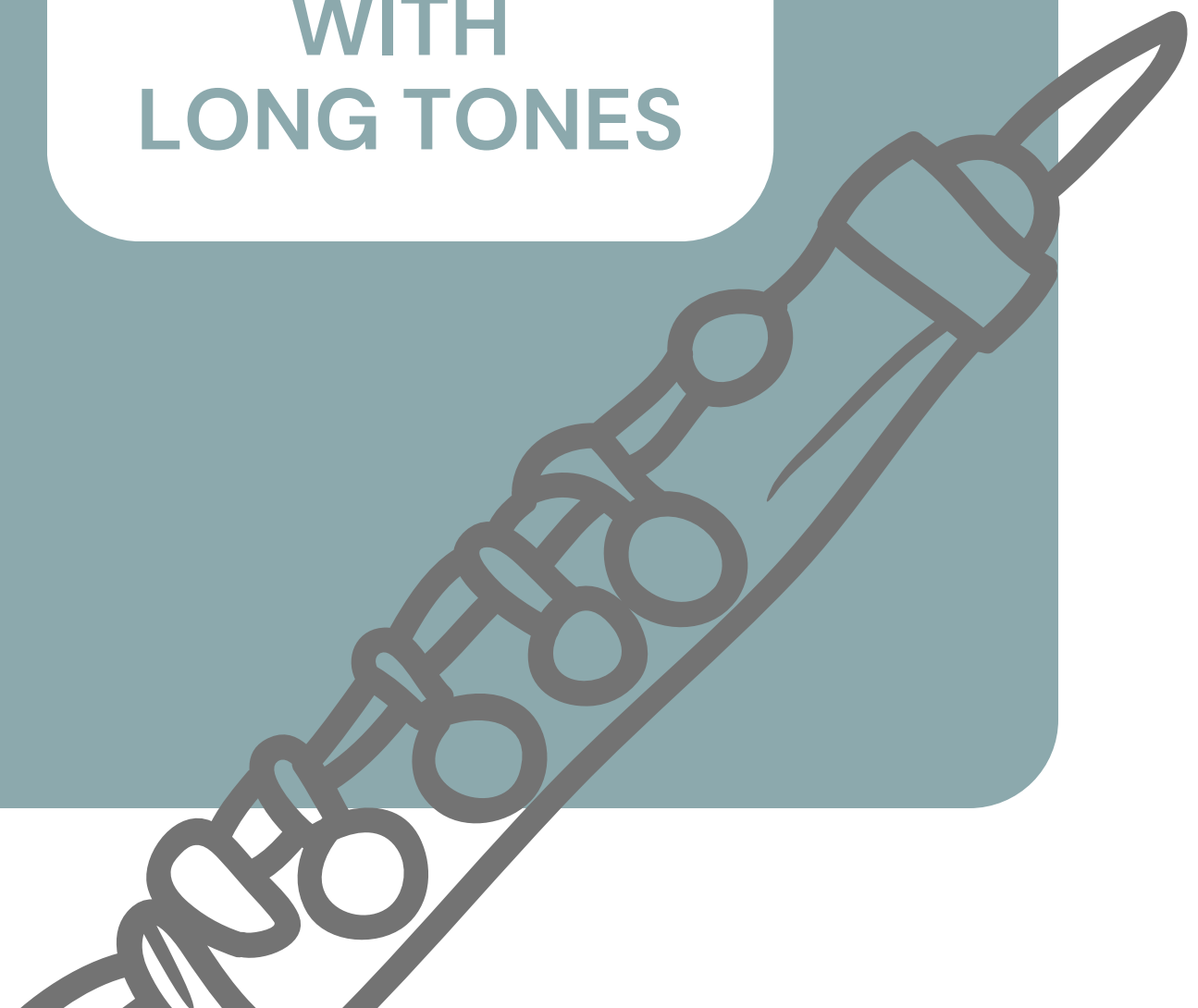
No focus on bassoon, stay open and relaxed

DYNAMICS IMPACT INTONATION

NOT ABLE TO PLAY
THE SOFTEST OR
LOUDEST

TAKE PITY ON
DOUBLE REEDS
WITH DIMINUENDOS

DEVELOP RANGE
WITH
LONG TONES



What typically happens?

Forte



Blow the sound sharp
Bassoon: louder flatter
unless reed is too closed,
then sharp

Piano

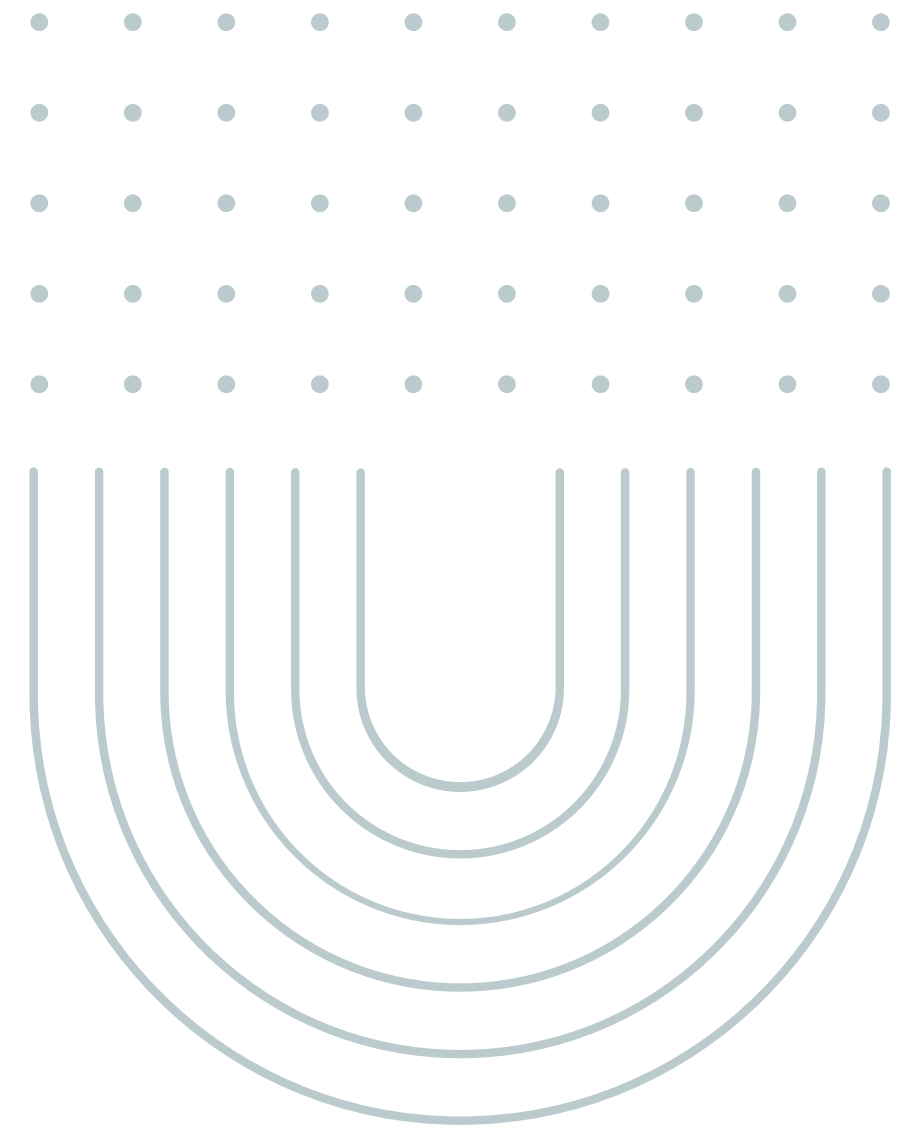


Unsupported=flat
Squeezing reed=sharp

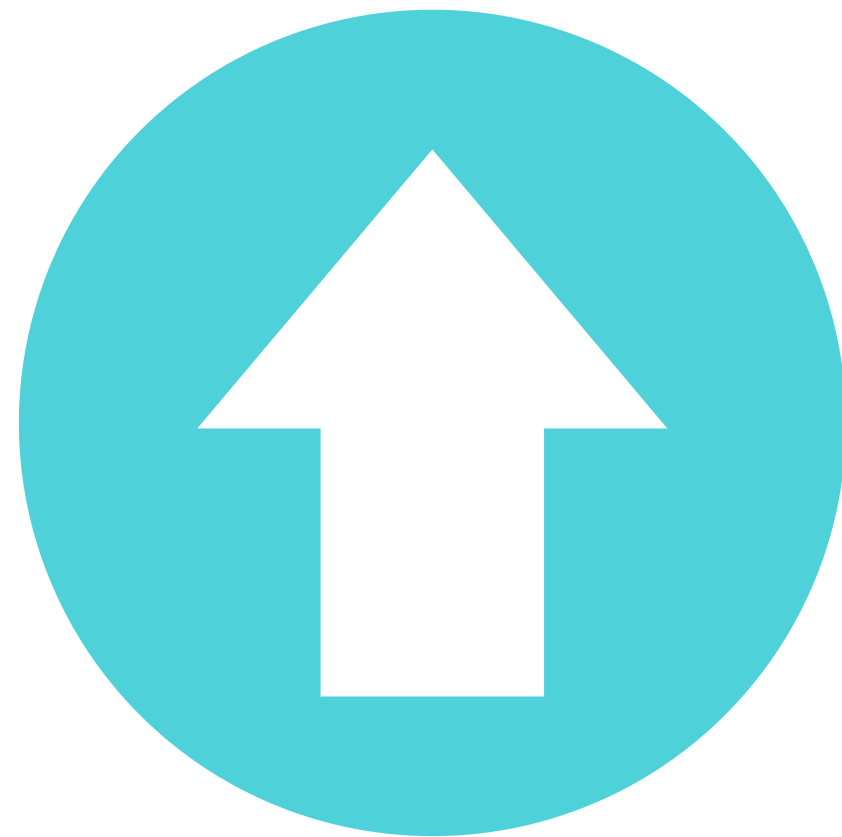


Flat

- More support
- Faster air
- Reed issue?
- Embouchure engaged?
- Check voicing
- Too far out on reed tip?

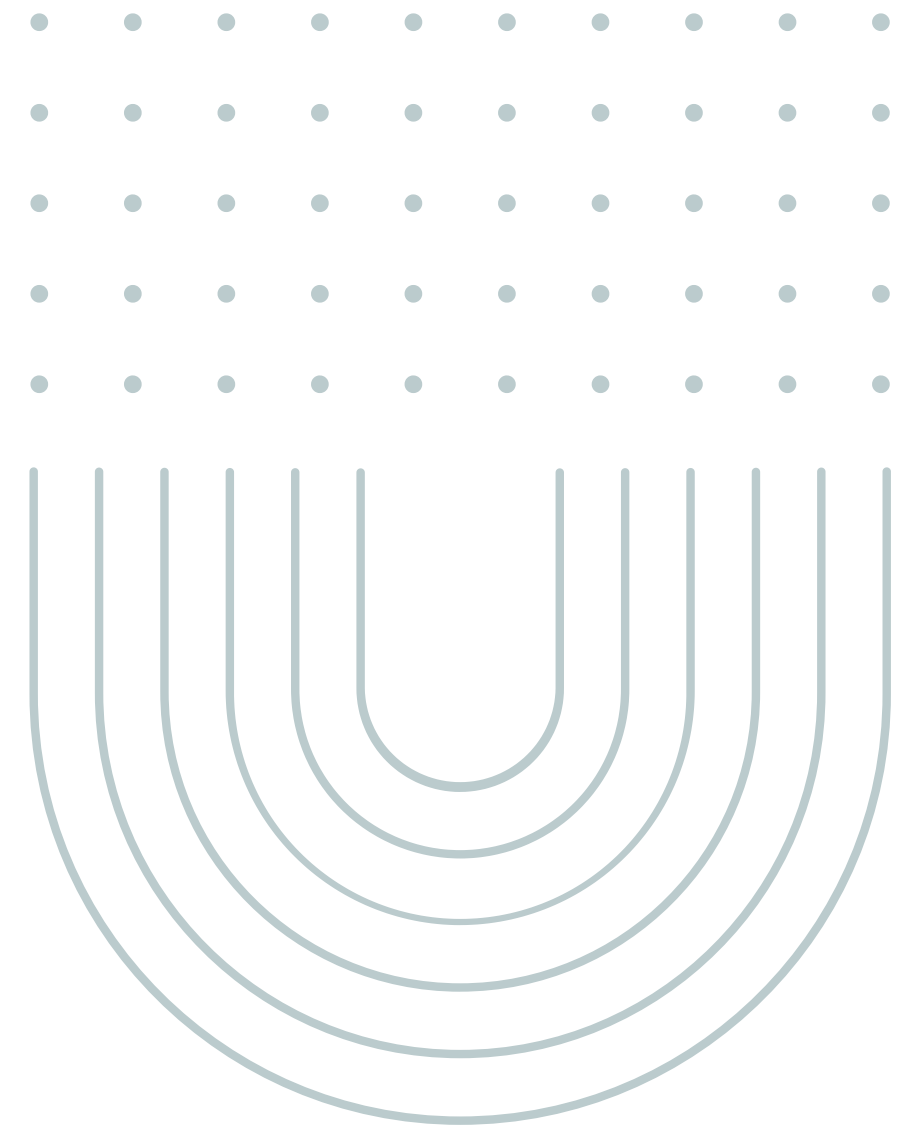


PITCH
TROUBLESHOOTING



Sharp

- Biting?
- Too much air?
- Reed issue?
- Too much reed in mouth?



PITCH
TROUBLESHOOTING



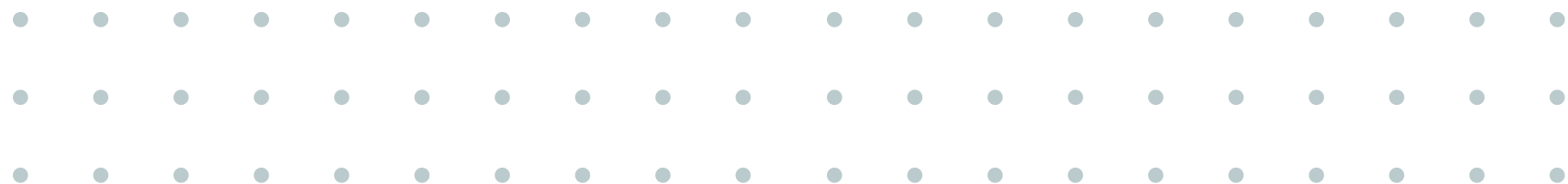
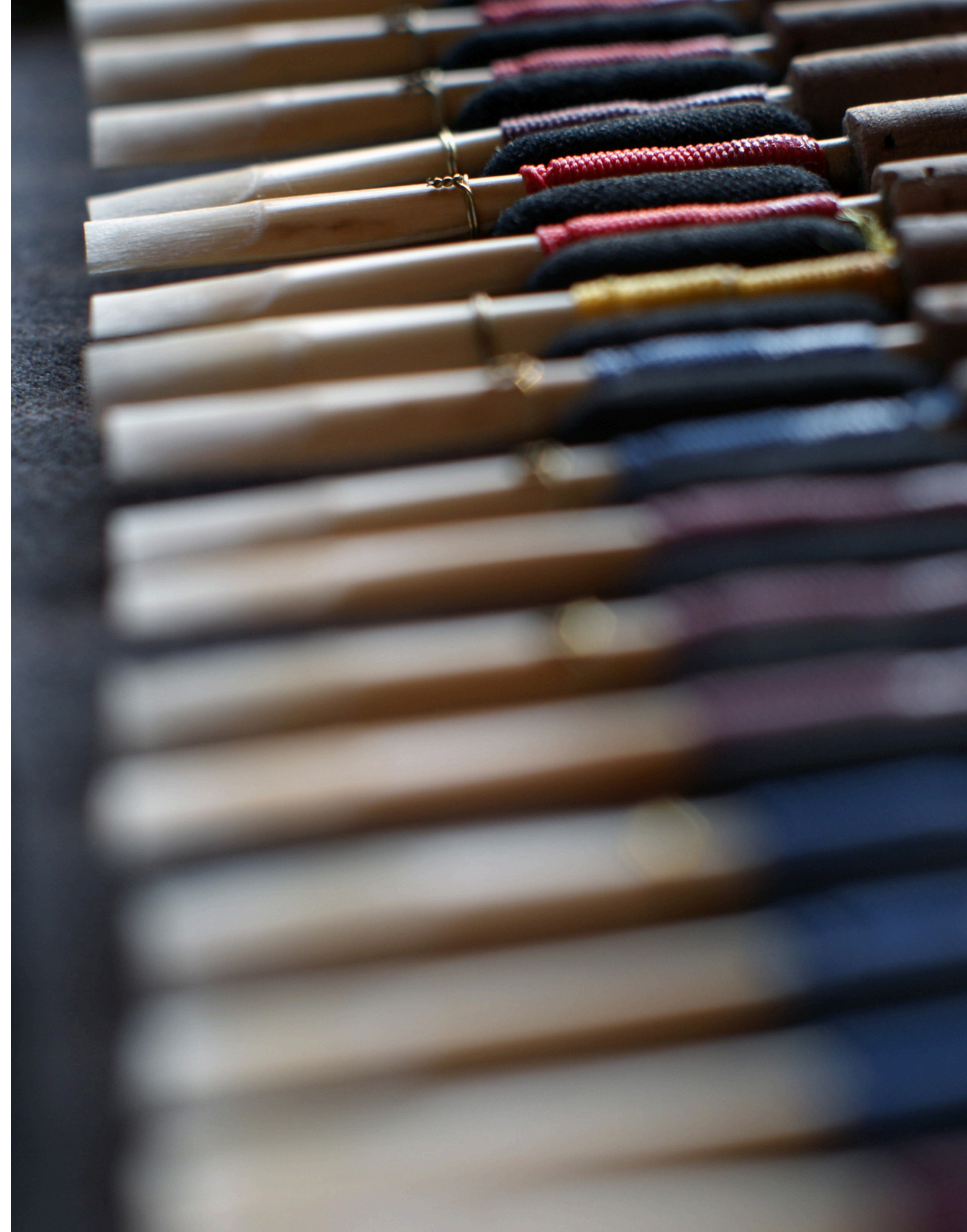
REEDS AND INTONATION

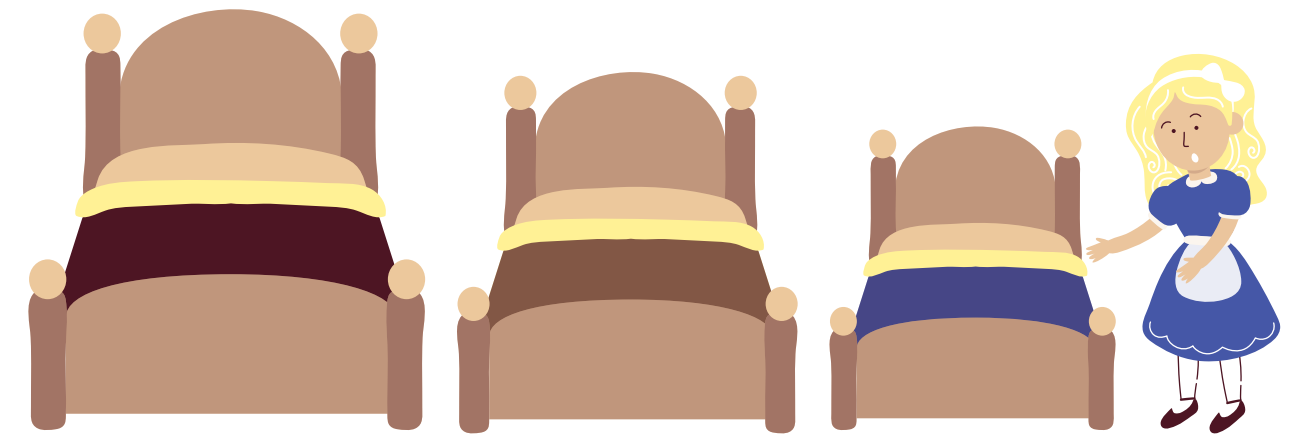
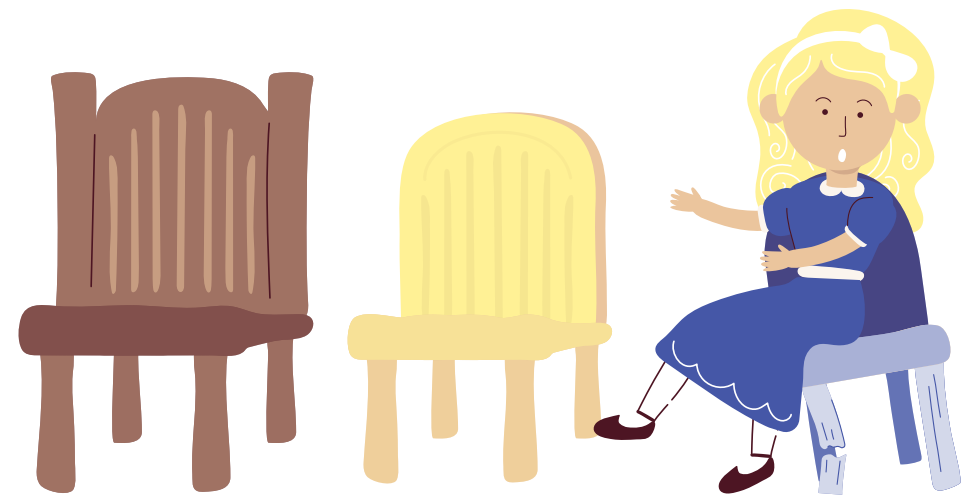


Reeds & Intonation

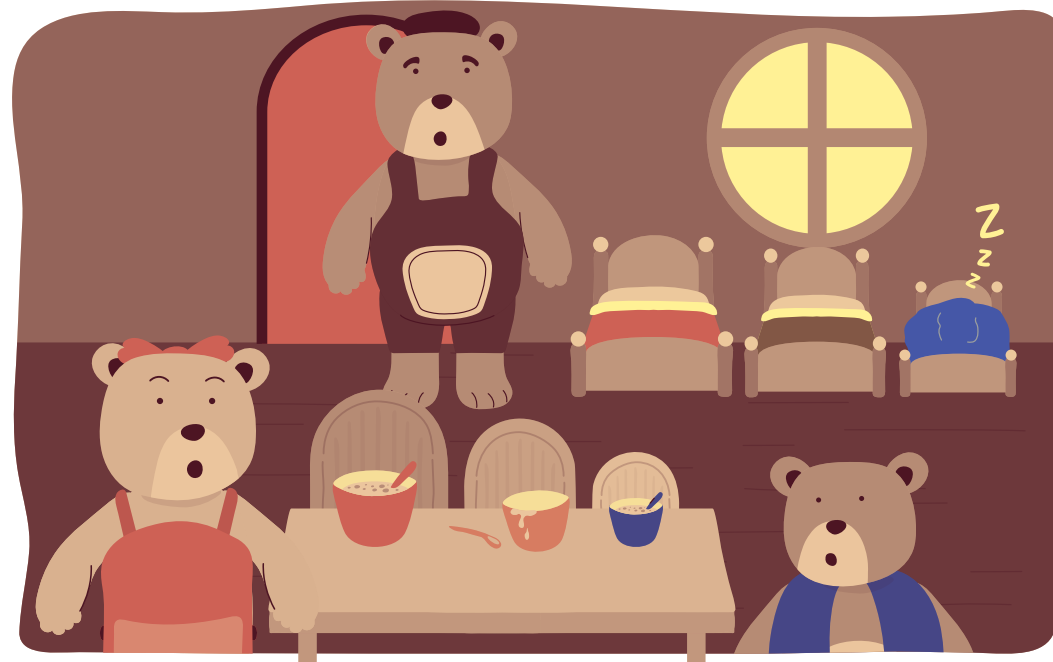
Watch for:

- Very closed or open reeds
- Cracks
- Grainy cane
- very long or very short
- very thick or very thin
- very old or very new

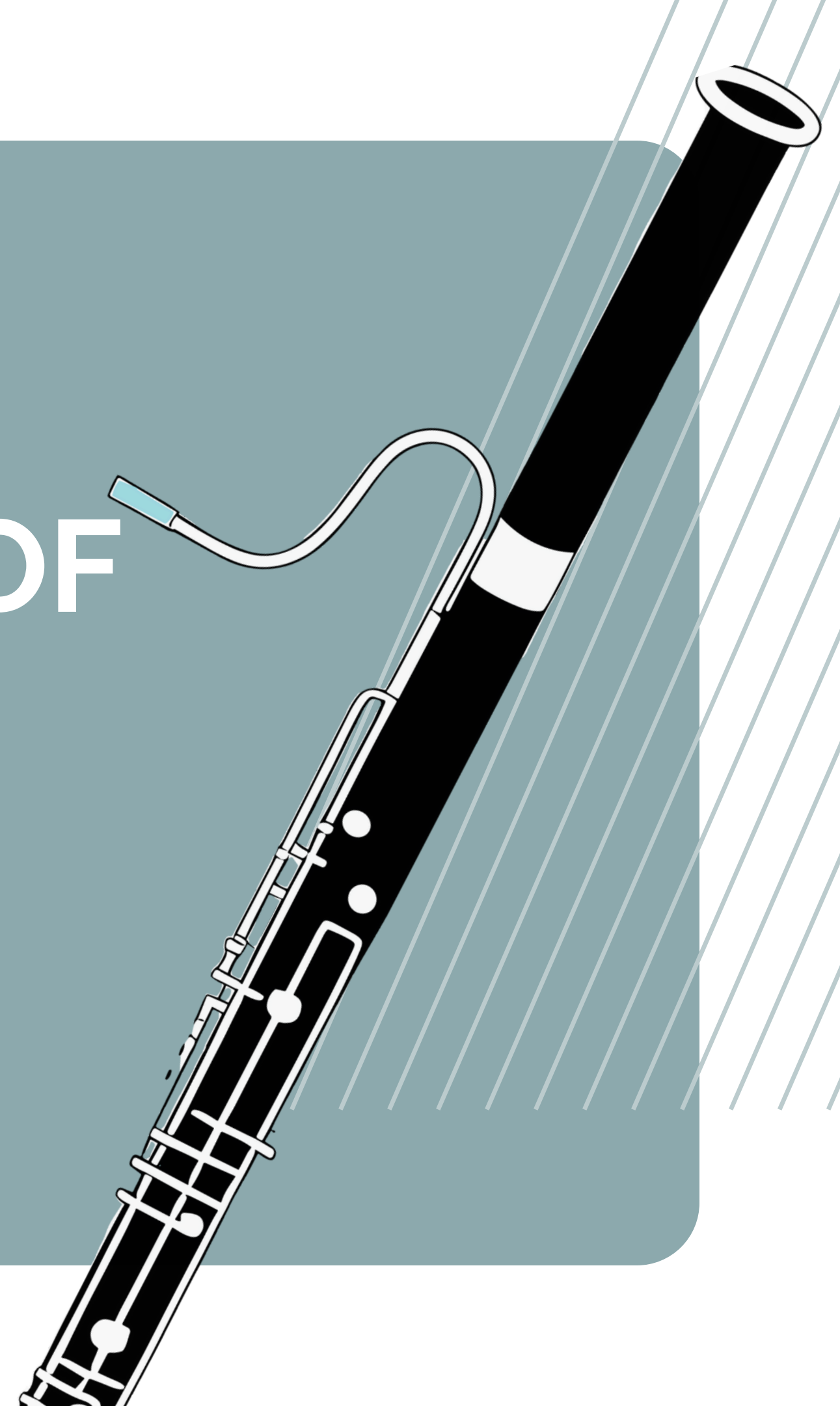
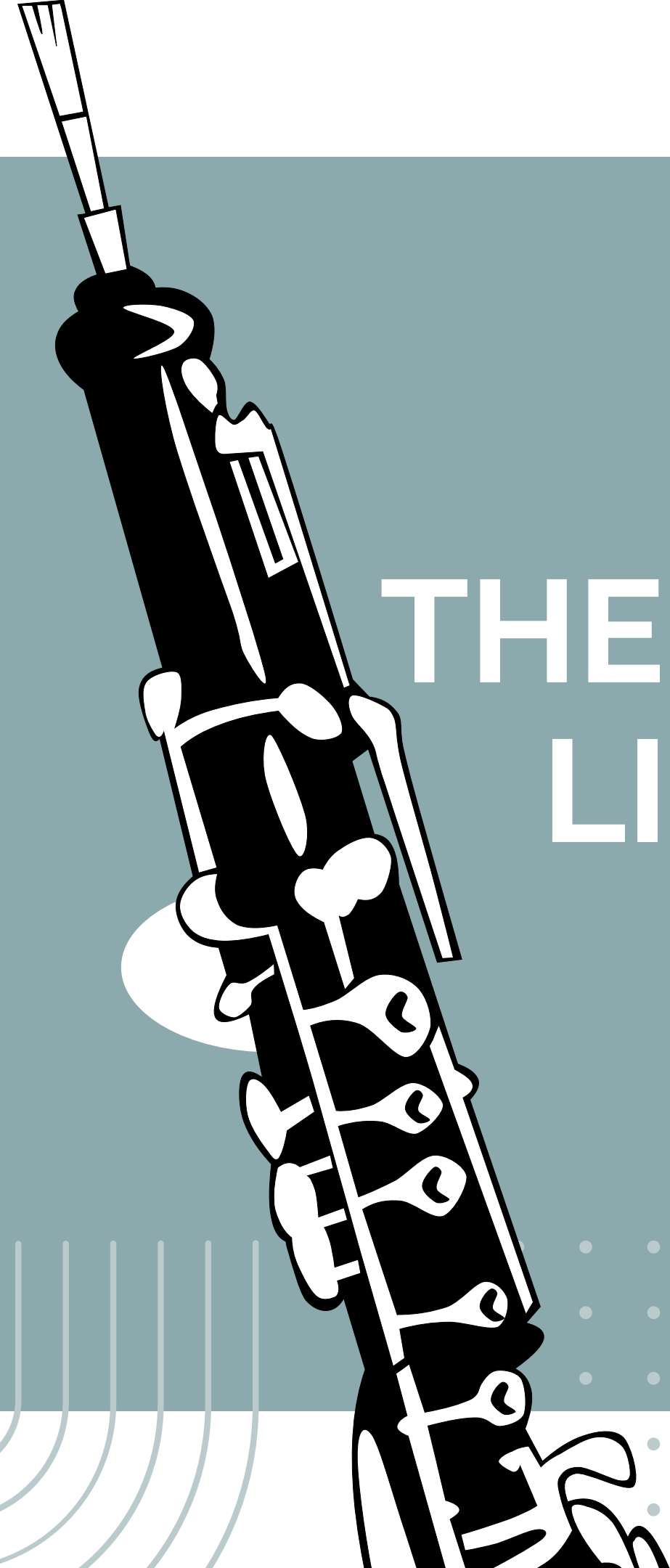


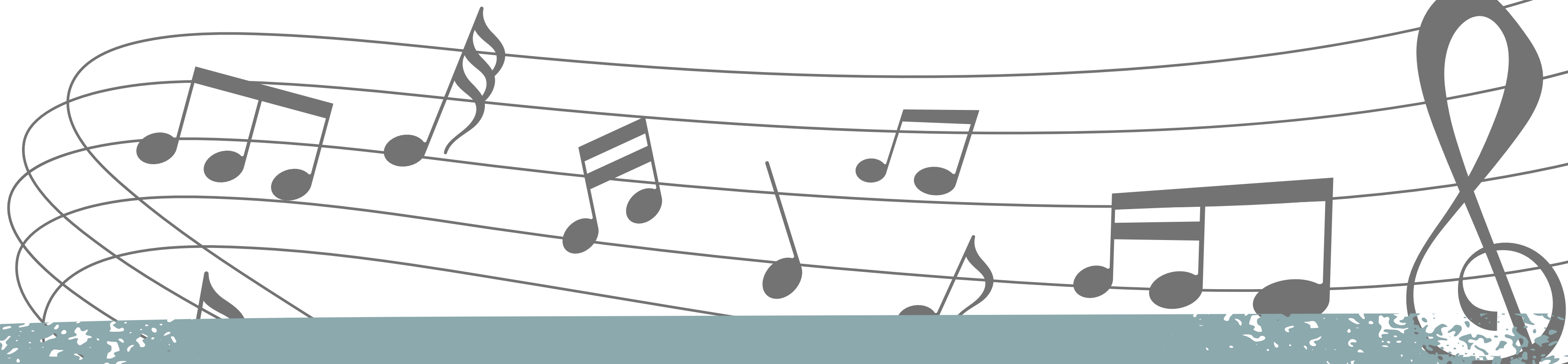


Want a GOLDILOCKS Reed

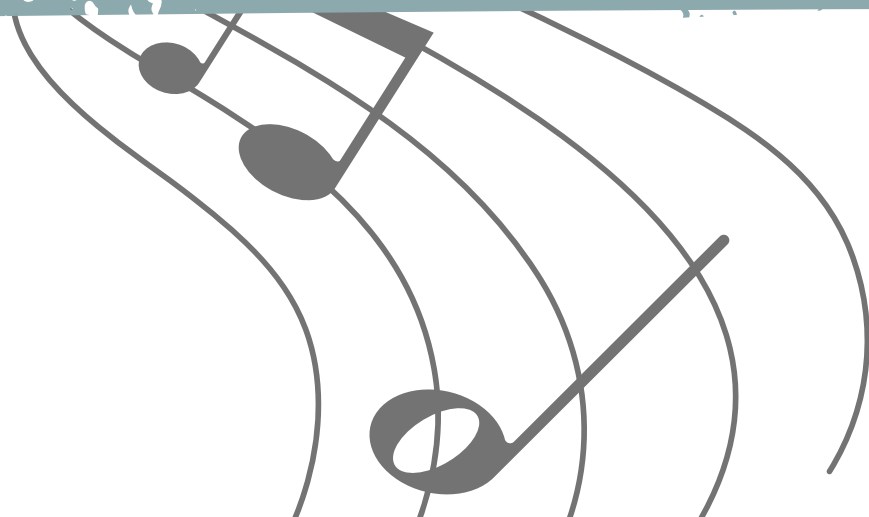


THE POWER OF LISTENING

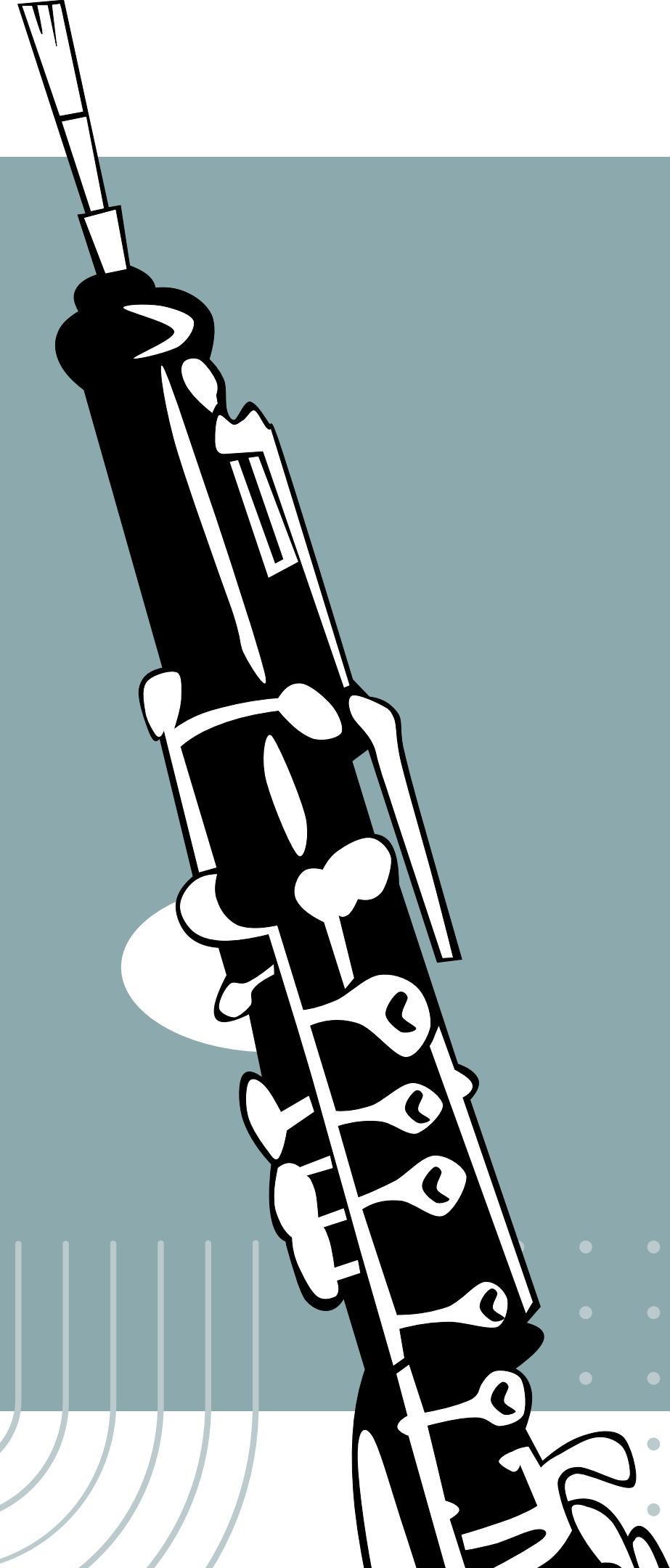




Incorporating Drones



TONE





TONE

- Focus the sound
 - Voicing: get the desired sound through mouth shape
 - “OOooo” over “EEee”
 - The reed matters
 - Model playing after great musicians
 - play to your desired sound concept always
- 



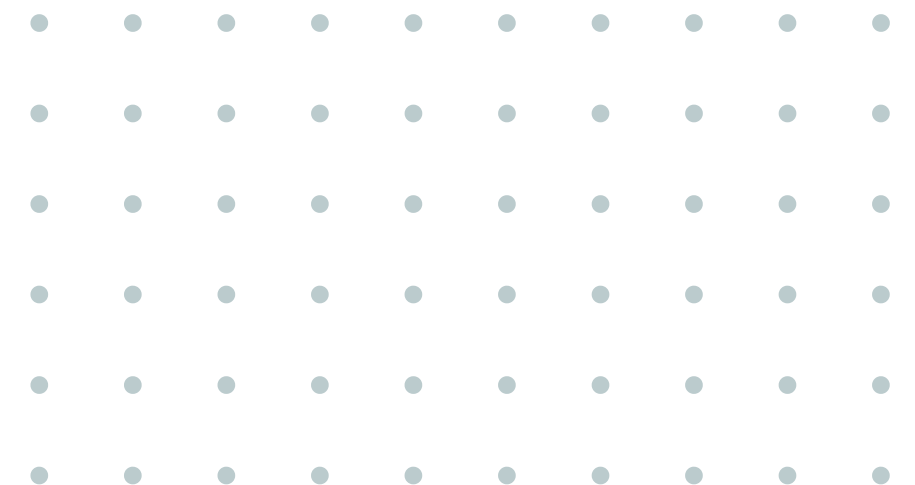
Embouchure

Non-muting
Supportive not constrictive
Round—"ooo" shape
Think like a vocalist

POSTURE (FACILITATES SUPPORT)

Oboe:

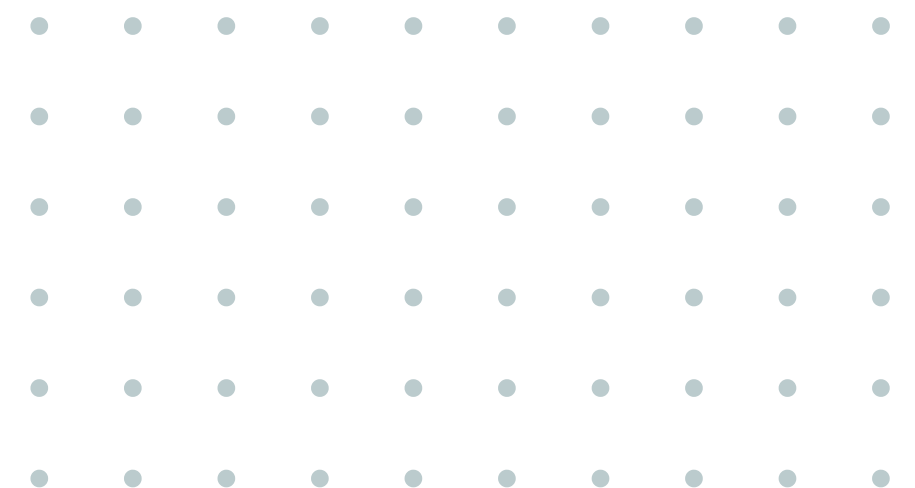
- Chest lifted
- Shoulders relaxed down
- Head neutral
- Angle down, but not tight to body
- Fingers curved





POSTURE (FACILITATES SUPPORT)

- Shoulders balanced over hips
- Head floating over shoulders
- Thumb keys to middle of chest
- Seat strap near front of chair, hips near back
- Bassoon balanced on left hand
- Some fingers can't be too curved



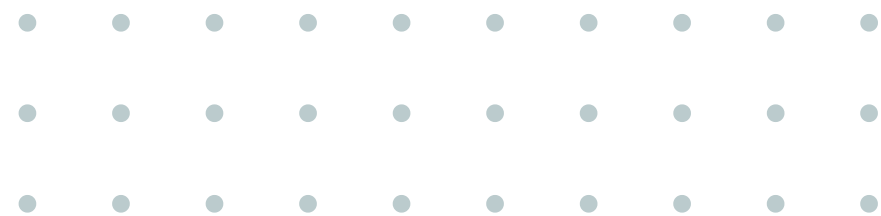
VIBRATO

- Oboe: vibrato comes from throat with help from abs
 - feel throat control (coughs, “ooo”)
- Bassoon: vibrato from abdominal muscles
- Vibrato long tones with reed alone then on instrument
- Change in intensity—loud/soft
- Same basic approach as voice



Instrument Quality Impacts Tone

- Oboe Adjustments—avoid leaking
- Plastic vs. Wood
- Some instruments have deeper or more colorful tones
- Humidify instruments
- Get regular check-ups with expert in double reed repair



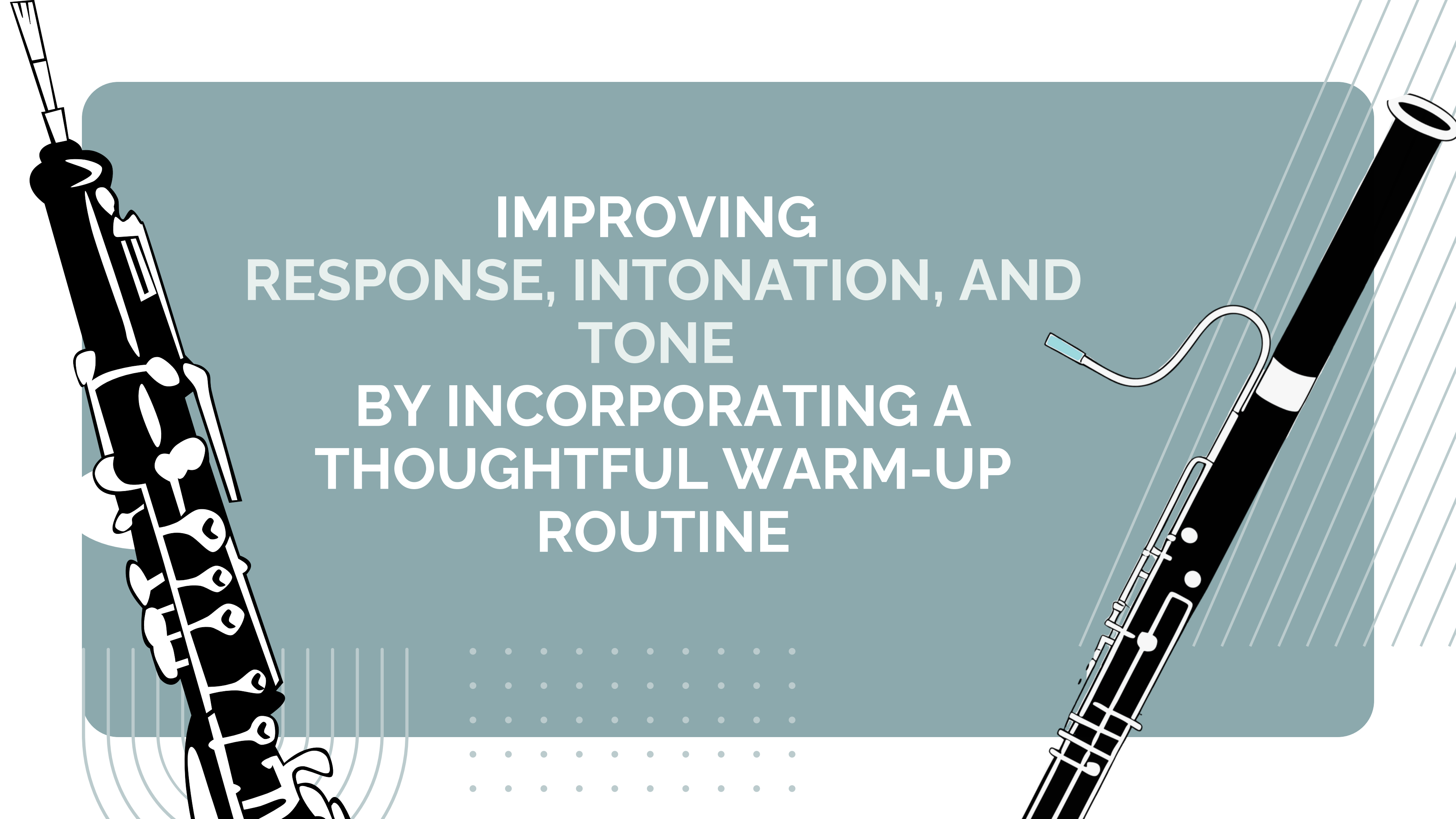
A graphic illustration featuring two oboes, one on the left and one on the right, angled towards the center. The oboes are black with white keys and a white bell. A blue cord is attached to the right oboe. The background is a light blue rectangle with a white border. At the bottom left, there are white concentric arcs representing sound waves. At the bottom center, there is a grid of small white dots. The text "THE POWER OF LISTENING" is written in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters in the center of the image.

THE POWER OF LISTENING

Emulating Professional Recordings

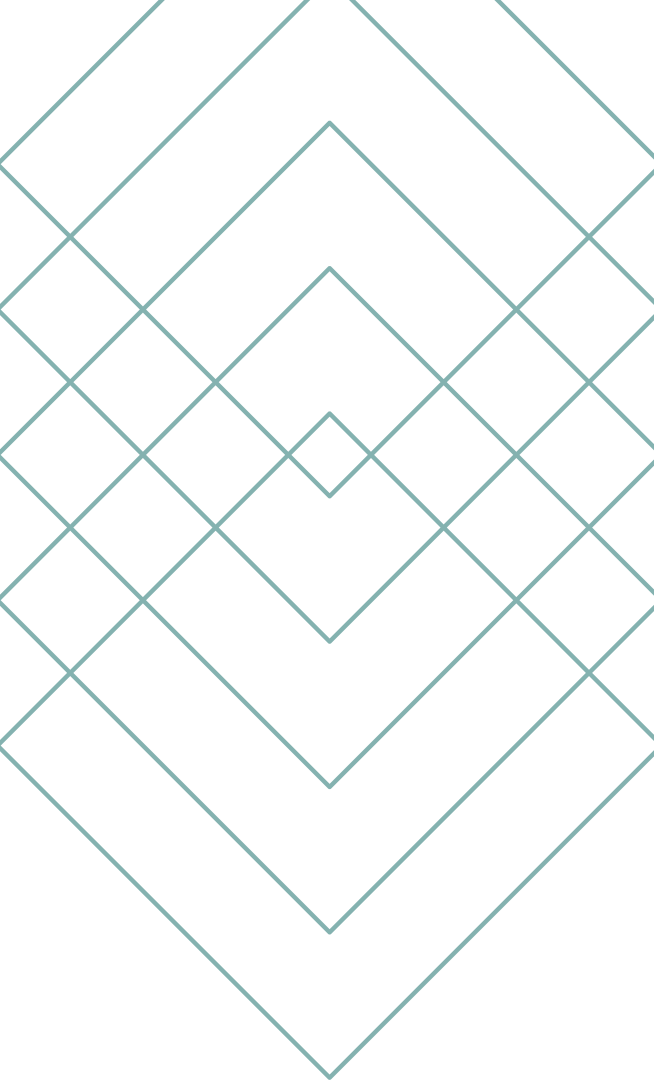
- GET STUDENTS THINKING EARLY ABOUT THEIR SOUND
- PROVIDE GREAT EXAMPLES
- CREATE LISTENING ASSIGNMENTS
 - COMPARE AND CONTRAST
 - WORD CLOUD





IMPROVING RESPONSE, INTONATION, AND TONE BY INCORPORATING A THOUGHTFUL WARM-UP ROUTINE





Warm-Up Routines for the win!

- Long tones
- Scales
- Entrance practice—in various characters and tempos
- With and without drones
- Vibrato exercises
- Practice on good reeds



RIT: where all fundamentals lead...



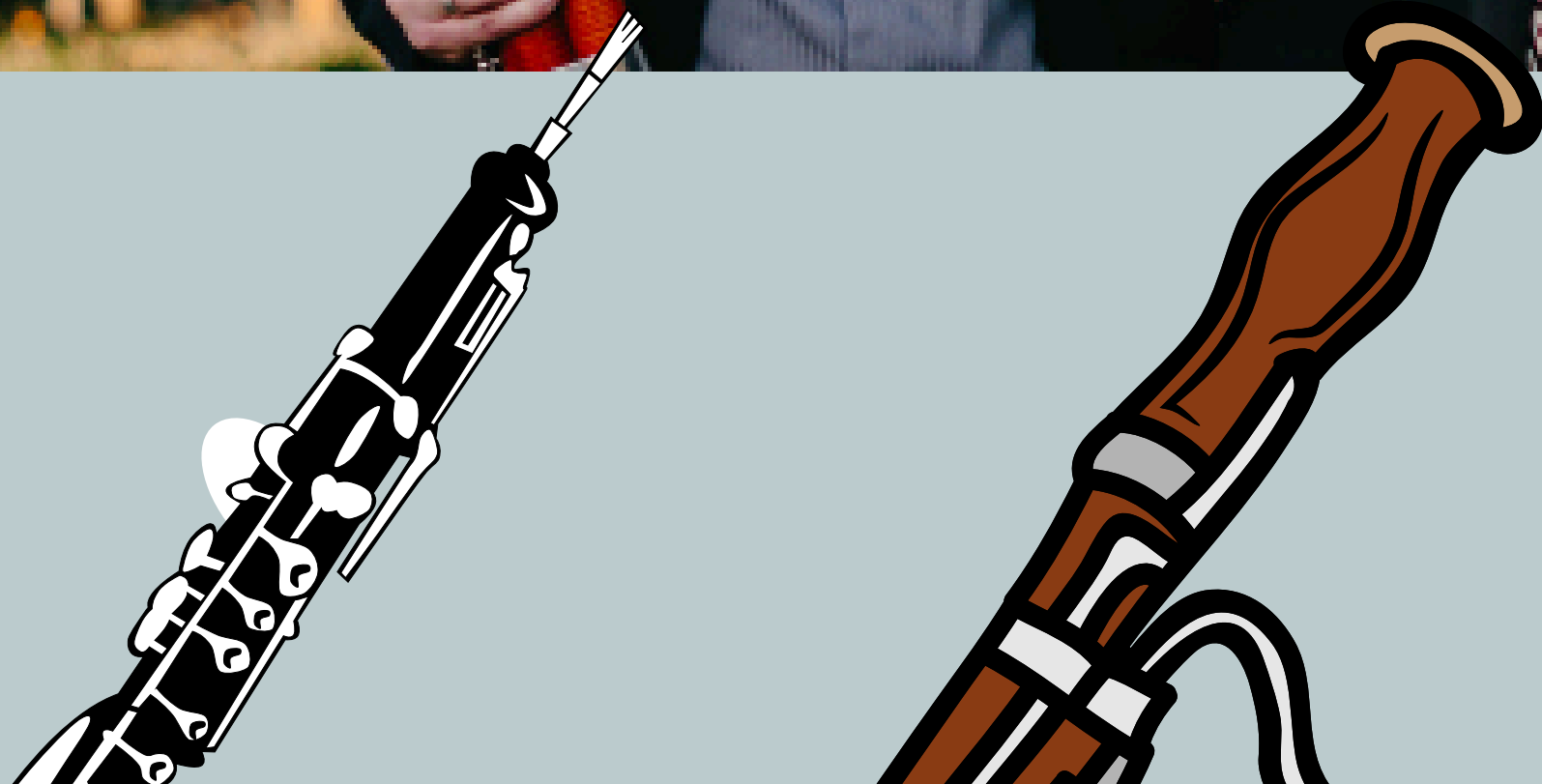
- Abdominal Support
- Use of Air
- Focus
- Embouchure

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Thank You!

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