



THE MIDWEST CLINIC
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**SO YOU WANT TO
TEACH THE OBOE**

A Teaching Guide for the Non-Oboist

William T. Robinson, III, Presenter

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Assisted by
Mitsuko Hope Ihaza

Kimberly Witek , Band Director
Millennium Middle School
Homewood , Illinois

Addison McDaniel

Rod Ferguson, Jr., Piano Teacher
The Musical Offering School
Evanston, Illinois

LIGATURE PUBLICATIONS
HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA 35810-2506
256-852-5467/508-2057
witajo@knology.net
www.oboeclarinet.com

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This clinic is dedicated to two of my life-long mentors and heroes : **Victor W. Zajec**, (1923-2005) Professor Emeritus and Director of Bands, VanderCook College of Music, Chicago, Illinois, and **Barney E. Smart, Sr.**, (1941-2004) Professor of Music and Director of Bands, Hampton University, Hampton, Virginia.

“A child miseducated is a child lost”
President John F. Kennedy

SELECTING AN INSTRUMENT/THE OBOE KEY SYSTEMS

The key system on the oboe refers to the configuration and number of keys on the instrument. The oboe has three (3) basic key systems. They are as follows:

1. SIMPLIFIED CONSERVATORY SYSTEM

(not recommended)

2. MODIFIED CONSERVATORY SYSTEM

YAMAHA YOB 441
FOX-RENARD 33o
CABART
FOSSATI E3o J1o
HOWARTH S45P-S2oC
PATRICOLA SC 1
HANS KREUL 94o1
BUFFET 4o51
STRASSER
GORDET
LAUBIN

3. FULL CONSERVATORY SYSTEM

YAMAHA YOB-841
RIGOUTAT
PAUL COVEY
LOREE´
MARIGAUX
LUCERNE
LAUBIN
PATRICOLA 56
HOWARTH XL
FOX 400
BUFFET 3613

“Good, better, best; never rest, until your good is better, and your better is best.”

Kathleen Williams

SELECTING THE STUDENT: TO SWITCH OR NOT TO SWITCH

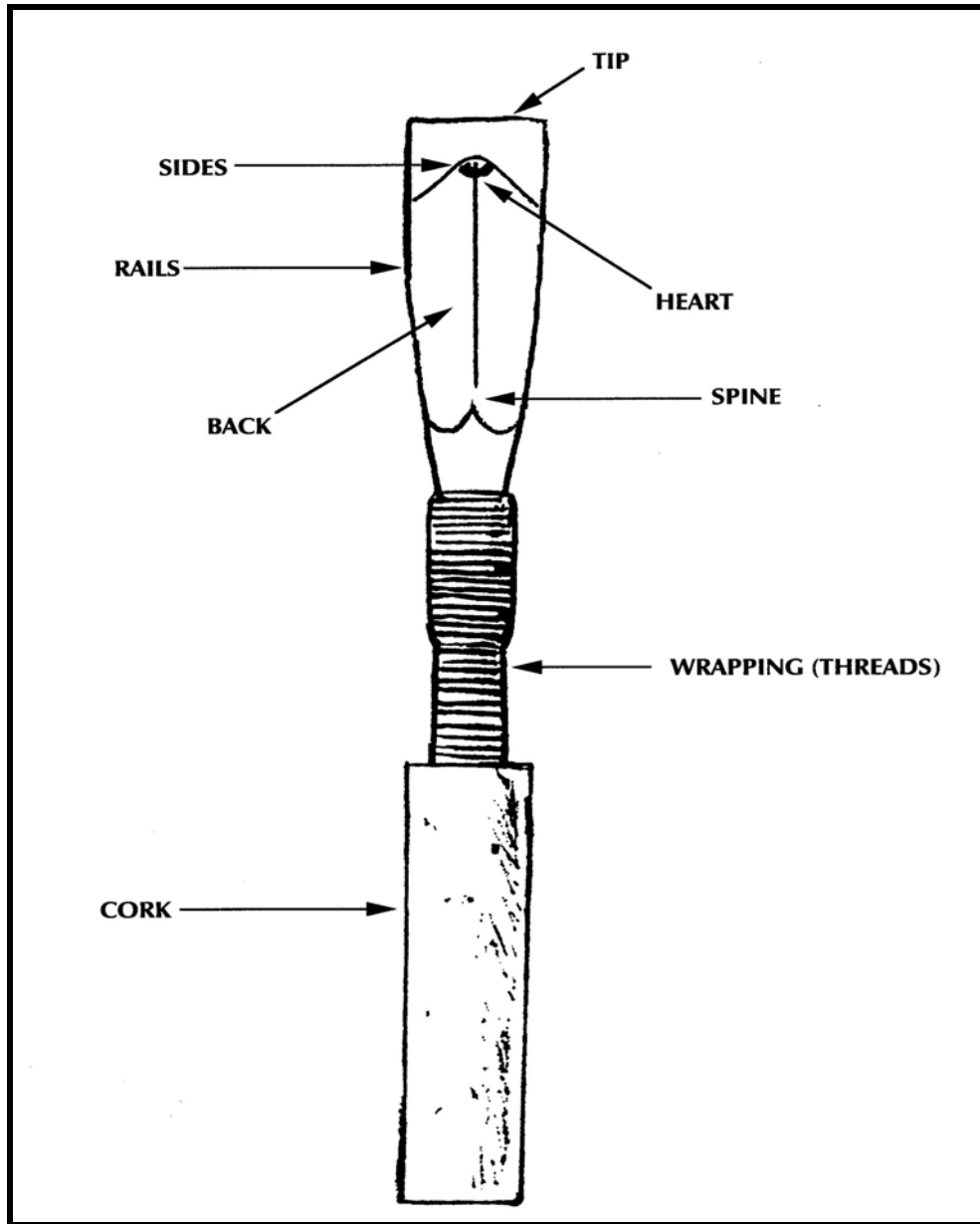
Playing the oboe presents many challenges for the beginning student. For this reason, a student with previous musical experience on another instrument may be a better candidate as a beginning oboist than one starting with no experience.

A beginning oboe student might be:

1. A student who has done well on another instrument.
2. A student who exhibits the patience and willingness to deal with the challenges of oboe playing, which include reed adjustment, key adjustment, care and maintenance of a fragile instrument, and a challenging embouchure formation.
3. A student who has a good academic background will more often possess the above characteristics.
4. One who has no physical abnormalities that might be limiting. However, full lips are generally more advantageous than thin lips for cushioning the oboe reed.
5. Finances– Parents/Director need to be aware of the expense involved in oboe playing.

“Teach everything you know everyday.”

William T. Robinson, III



Parts of the Oboe Reed

"Today, education is perhaps the most important function of state and local government."
Chief Justice Earl Warren

SELECTING OBOE REEDS

Commercial vs. Handmade

One should use handmade reeds. Since that is not always possible, you must find a good quality commercial reed and provider. (see appendix) When purchasing reeds, avoid short reeds (should be 70mm long), fiber cane reeds, reeds held open with wire, French reeds and reeds made with a profiler only.

An oboe player seemingly has adjustment problems at the most inopportune times. Therefore the band director must develop some minor reed adjustment skills. Making minor adjustments on the oboe reed is not difficult. **THE FIRST SCRAPE IS THE HARDEST SCRAPE.** (see appendix)

THE BIG REED TEST——DOUBLE CROW

A double crow is made by forcefully blowing into the reed with a very relaxed embouchure. An ideal crow is a double octave sounding C. A double crow is a good indicator that the reed is vibrating freely.

REED FACT

Each oboe student should have three or more reeds ready to play at all times. These reeds should be played alternately. When a reed is damaged, it should be replaced and the new reed put into rotation.

An oboist should make every effort to have a well adjusted reed. The reed is as central to the oboe as the mouthpiece is to a brass instrument. An oboist **MUST** learn and practice the art of adjusting and making reeds. Always be patient, and remember it is a **PROCESS** that improves with experience.

REED CANE IS ALWAYS ALIVE. Humidity affects the reed. The circulating air in a reed case or under a reading lamp, for example, will affect the way a reed dries.

“Where words fail, music speaks.”

Hans Christian Andersen

TOOLS FOR REED ADJUSTMENTS



NAME AND FUNCTION OF EACH TOOL

1. A **double hollow ground** knife is used to cut and scrape the cane. The Vitry brand is suggested because of its quality and small handle that fits well in the young oboist's hand.
2. A quality **mandrel** is an important tool. The mandrel fits inside the staple and is used to hold and support the reed while making adjustments. The French type is preferred. The mandrel and staple (the brass tube on which the reed is tied) should match.
3. The **plaque** is a blued piece of metal about 8mm wide and 38mm long which is inserted between the tip of the oboe reed blades.
4. **Gold-beater's skin**, sometimes referred to as "fish skin," is a thin membrane material which is used to stop air leaks on the sides of the reed. (Note: "Plumber's tape" will also work readily.)
5. A **billot**, sometimes referred to as a "cutting block," is a small block of wood approximately 30mm wide and 10mm high. Grenadilla is preferred. The billot should be curved on the top and flat on the bottom. A small piece of cork glued to the bottom will keep the billot from sliding. The billot is used when cutting off the tip of the reed.
6. A **case** is necessary for protection and dehydration of the reeds. Most any style case designed for this purpose will suffice.
7. A **sharpening stone** is used to sharpen the edge of the knife when making adjustments.
8. A **reading lamp** is helpful to provide adequate lighting during the adjusting process.

"BE in the RIGHT PLACE at the RIGHT TIME with the RIGHT EQUIPMENT ready to CONCENTRATE. TALKING, TOOTING, or MOVING AROUND makes CONCENTRATION difficult."

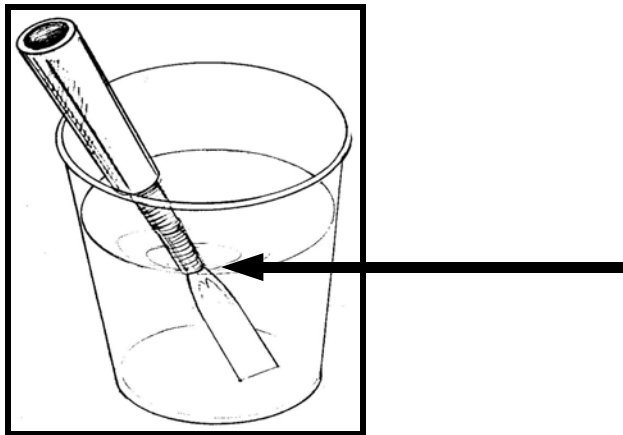
H.E. Nutt

MINOR REED PROBLEMS

REQUIRED TOOLS FOR PROPER REED PREPARATION

1. 35mm PLASTIC FILM CASE
2. BEGINNING OBOE REED MAKING KIT

- Place the reed in the cup of water up to the thread.
- Let the reed soak for three minutes.
- Do not let the water cover the thread.



REED FACT

One may wonder why a good reed needs to be adjusted. Reasons include the humidity of the surrounding air, individual embouchure differences and the changing character of the cane.

A GOOD REED IS ONE THAT VIBRATES FREELY, RESPONDS IN ALL REGISTERS AT ANY DYNAMIC LEVEL AND PLAYS IN TUNE WITH ITSELF.

"You better make yourself the kind of person that you want to be with, because you are a companion to a person you can never escape."

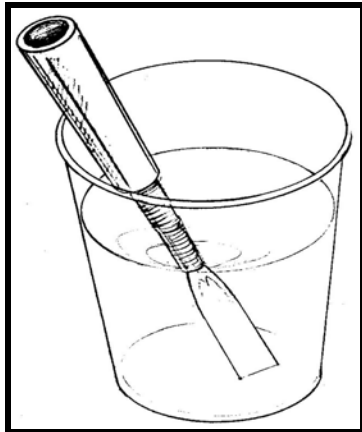
Barney E. Smart

MINOR REED ADJUSTMENTS AND SOLUTIONS

- 1. REED WILL NOT CROW**
Solution: scrape the entire reed



- 2. REED TOO OPEN ON THE SIDES WHEN DRY**
Solution: soak reed in a cup of water for about three minutes.



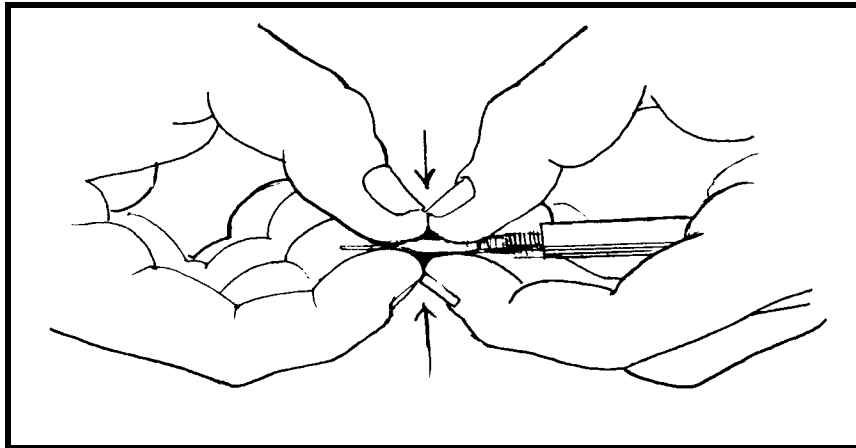
“Ability may get you to the top, but it takes character to keep you there.”

Anonymous

MINOR REED ADJUSTMENTS AND SOLUTIONS

3. REED TOO OPEN

1. If the reed is too open, hold the tip with the thumb and first finger of the L.H. and the back of the reed with the thumb and first finger of the R.H.
2. Squeeze gently on the top and bottom of the reed until an oval shape is achieved.



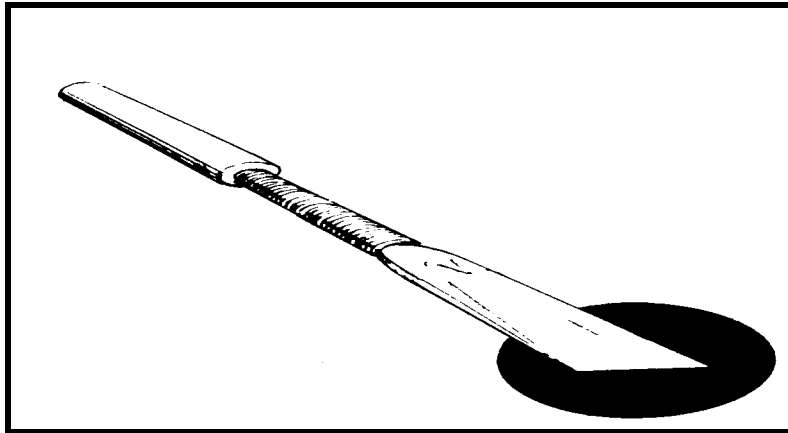
"There is nothing so unequal as the equal treatment of students of unequal ability."

Plato

MINOR REED ADJUSTMENTS AND SOLUTIONS

4. REED TOO CLOSED

1. In one hand, hold the reed by the cork.
2. Take the first finger and thumb of the other hand and gently squeeze the sides of the blades to open the tip to an oval shape.
3. This procedure may have to be repeated several times to achieve the desired result.
4. **REMEMBER TO KEEP THE REED MOIST.**



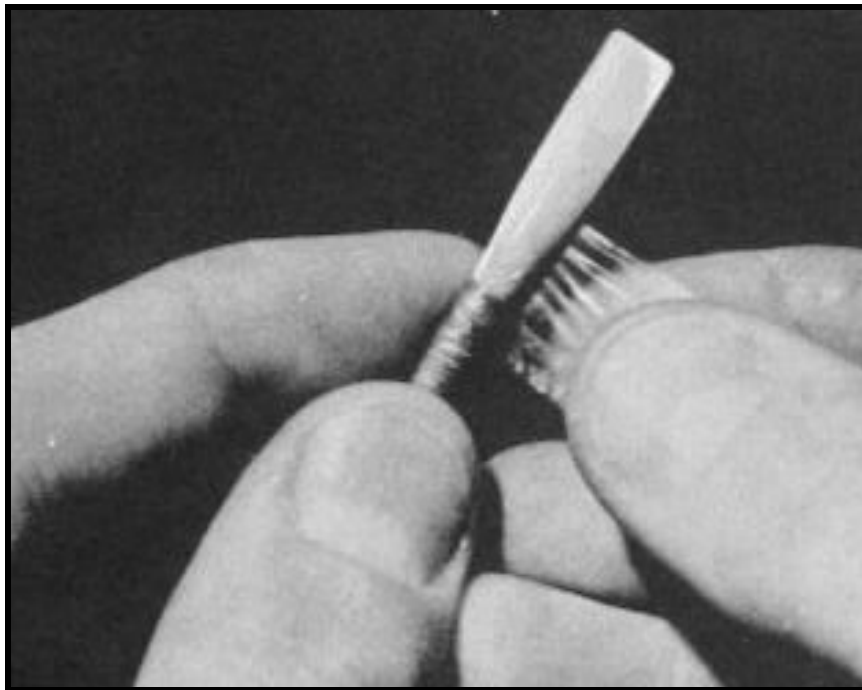
"Teach everything you know everyday."

William T. Robinson, III

MINOR REED ADJUSTMENTS AND SOLUTIONS

5. Reed is leaking on sides

Solution: wrap the reed with fish skin or plumber's tape.



“ If you have a purpose in which you can believe, there's no end to the amount of things you can accomplish.”

Marian Anderson

EMBOUCHURE FORMATION

Embouchure is the way the mouth is shaped around the reed. Work on establishing the embouchure with the reed alone before placing it in the oboe well. The oboe embouchure is very simple to form with the aid of a mirror.

A teacher must remember that all embouchures are not equal, they come with their own set of variables. Every embouchure will not look the same.

- A. Place the tip of the reed on the lower lip.
- B. Close the lips in a natural manner.
- C. Move the upper and lower teeth apart without opening the lips
- D. Pucker and pull the lips around the reed similar to a draw string around a purse.
- E. Keep the lip pressure even and firm around the oboe reed. Avoid pinching and using too much lip pressure. Think round and firm.

EMBOUCHURE FACT

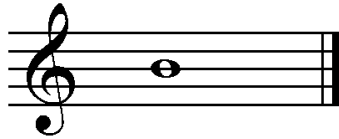
Try to get the student to understand how the body feels when you are forming the embouchure. Use anything visual that will help students understand, such as— think round, use the vowel “O”, blow easy on a balloon, use a drinking straw, small pout, coin purse (pressure the same on all sides).

“No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.”

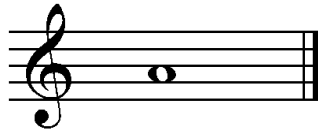
Eleanor Roosevelt

TEACHING THE FIRST THREE TONES

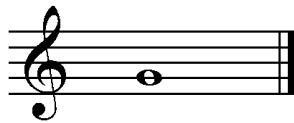
1. The first tone produced on the oboe should be third line B.



2. The second tone produced should be second space A.



3. The third tone produced should be second line G.



The tones B-A-G should be referred to as the first tone, second tone and third tone, not by their letter names.

Practice these new tones, B-A-G, and all new tones as long tone exercises to aid in the development of tone control and embouchure development.

Once you have mastered the B-A-G tones you can play any of the B-A-G songs on pages 16 and 17. **Teach all of the B-A-G Songs in one measure phrases, by rote.**

"The will to win is not as important as the will to prepare to win."

Bobby Knight

B-A-G SONGS

Hot Cross Buns

English Folk Song



Notes

U.S.



Down By The Station

American School Song



Stepping and Skipping

U.S.



Fais do do

French Lullaby



Hot Cross Buns

English Folk Song



Rocket Cruiser

U.S.



"Progress always involves risk; you can't steal second base and keep your feet on first."

Frederick Wilcox

B-A-G SONGS

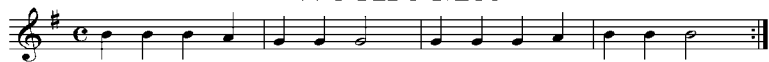
More Notes

U.S.



We Are Met

Samuel Webb (c. 1680)



Hot Cross Buns

English Folk Song



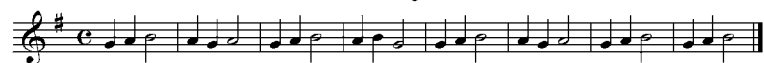
Merrily We Roll Along

Traditional Folk Song



Lullaby

U.S.



Mary Had A Little Lamb

Traditional Folk Song



“We should all seek to lead that which we touch.”

Benjamin E. Mays

FIVE FUNDAMENTAL FINGERINGS

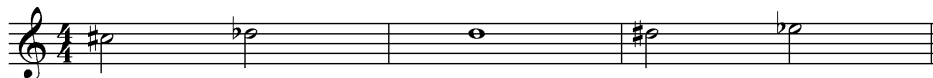
There are five (5) fingerings on the oboe that **should be mastered** at the beginning stages.

1. Regular F should be learned before the forked F.

2. Forked F should be used when F comes before or after D, D#/Eb and C#/Db.



3. Half-Hole is made by rolling the left first finger off the top of the finger plate so the complete diamond shaped hole of the first finger is exposed. Use the half hole when playing C#/Db, D and D#/Eb. **AVOID SLIDING** the first finger of the left hand to activate the half hole. **AID:** “Rock and Roll” the left first fingers to half-hole.



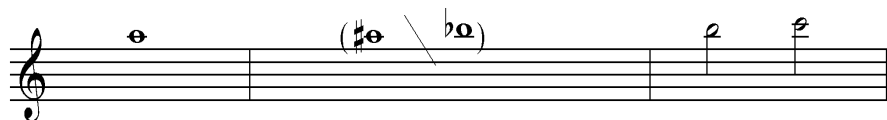
“Only he can benefit from praise who can appreciate criticism.”

Robert Schumann

- 4. First Octave Key (thumb)** is located on the back of the left hand joint. Start using the first octave key with fourth space E, continuing up chromatically to G#/Ab. **Hint:** — when the L thumb is resting just below the octave key, roll it upwards to activate the key. **Alternatively**, let the L thumb “float” above the key. **Avoid** lifting the thumb from the octave key and placing it back on the oboe.



- 5. Second Octave Key** is located on the side of the left hand joint. The second octave key is used with A, A#/Bb, B and C above the staff.



“Be patient, methodical, have perseverance, musical sensitivity, listen to a great deal of good music and pray.”

William T. Robinson, III

INSTRUCTIONAL CD'S

Orchestral Excerpts for Oboe

John Mack, oboist
Summit Records DCD

Classic Oboe Etudes

Marilyn Zupnik, oboist
DLM Records

SOLO CD'S

W. A. Mozart Quartet in F for Oboe and Strings

John Mack, oboist
Crystal Records CD323

Telemann-Handel Oboe Sonatas

Marilyn Zupnik, oboist
DSV Digital Audio CD DCA 663

Baroque Oboe Sonatas

Ray Still, oboist
Nimbus Records NI 5672

New York Legends: Joseph Robinson

Principal Oboe, NY Philharmonic
Label: Cala Records

Schumann: The Complete Works for Winds and Piano

Joseph Robinson, oboist
Label: Elysium

INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEOS

United States Army Field Band

Video Clinic Series
"Understanding The Oboe"

The Reed Maker's Video

Ferald B. Capps and David B. Weber
P.O. Box 1807
Chandler, AZ 85244

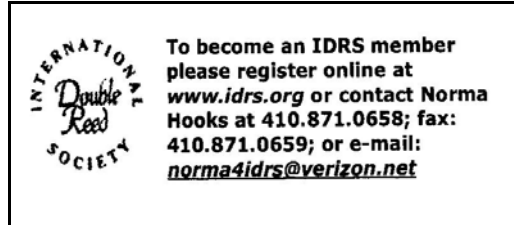
"Bloom where you are planted and plant yourself where you can bloom."

Paula McGee

SELECTED SOURCES FOR TOOLS, EQUIPMENT, METHOD BOOKS AND REEDS

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Oboereeds@aol.com
http://www/members.aol.com/oboereeds/ntor.htm

"If you don't know where you are going; anywhere will do."

Army Daniel

RECOMMENDED METHOD BOOKS

Robinson, III, William T. The Embryonic Oboist: An Illustrated Guide for Beginning Oboe Players. 1st ed. Huntsville: Ligature Publications, 2001.

“The Embryonic Oboist...In a very easy-to-use, quite handsome spiral bound format this handy guide belongs in the studio or music room of every band and orchestra director who has the pleasure and the serious responsibility of guiding beginning oboe students. Libraries of schools with music education programs will want to add this book to their collections. As the author is quick to reiterate, while nothing can take the place of study with a fine oboist-teacher, this book can certainly provide a lot of advice and encouragement for both the student and teacher until such an ideal situation becomes possible.”

THE DOUBLE REED

Journal of the
International Double Reed Society

Robinson, III, William T. Fun With the Oboe. 1st ed. Pacific: Mel Bay Publications, Inc., 2002.

Robinson, III, William T. Beginning Oboe Solos. 1st ed. Pacific: Mel Bay Publications, Inc., 2005.

Robinson, III, William T. Intermediate Etudes for Oboe. 1st ed. Huntsville: Ligature Publications, 2005.

Gekeler, Kenneth. Gekeler Method for Oboe Part One. 1st ed. New York: Belwin, 1940.

Sprenkle, Robert and Ledet, Davis . The Art of Oboe Playing. Evanston: Summy - Birchard Co., 1961.

Weber, David B. and Capps, Ferald B. The Reed Maker's Manual. 1st ed. Birmingham: David B. Weber and Ferald B. Capps, 1990.

“Until you spread your wings, you’ll have no idea how far you can fly.”

Anonymous

AUTHOR'S BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

William T. Robinson, III, is well known for his outstanding work with junior and senior high school bands in Alabama and Tennessee. He directed bands in public and private schools in Huntsville, Alabama, for 32 years and Cowan, Tennessee, for seven years. He has served on the faculties of Oakwood College, Alabama A & M University and Catholic High School, and currently serves as adjunct faculty at Calhoun Community College and the University of Alabama in Huntsville. He also maintains an extensive private studio of oboe and clarinet students.

Mr. Robinson earned his B.A. from Clark Atlanta University, the M.M. Ed. from VanderCook College of Music, and the Ed.S. from the University of North Alabama. He has served as an exchange teacher at the Interlochen Arts Center in Michigan, as Chairman of the Alabama National Band Association, Chairman of the Alabama Minority Concern for Music Education National Conference, and President of Alabama Chapter of Phi Beta Mu. Mr. Robinson received the National Band Association's Citation of Excellence in 1986. Mr. Robinson has been the host and producer of the public radio program "Nuances in Black Music," a program devoted to Black Classical Music and Composers. His books, *Fun with the Oboe* and *Beginning Oboe Solos*, are published by Mel Bay. He is also the author of *The Embryonic Oboist: An Illustrated Guide for the Beginning Oboist* and the editor of *Ten Intermediate Phrasing Etudes for Oboe*, *Ten Intermediate Phrasing Etudes for Clarinet* and *Intermediate Clarinet Solos*. He has conducted honor bands and workshops in Tennessee, Alabama, Virginia, Georgia and Mississippi.

"We must insure that the present 'back to basics' mentality includes access to art and music education."

U. S. Senator Paul Simon

“Two Great Names In Music”

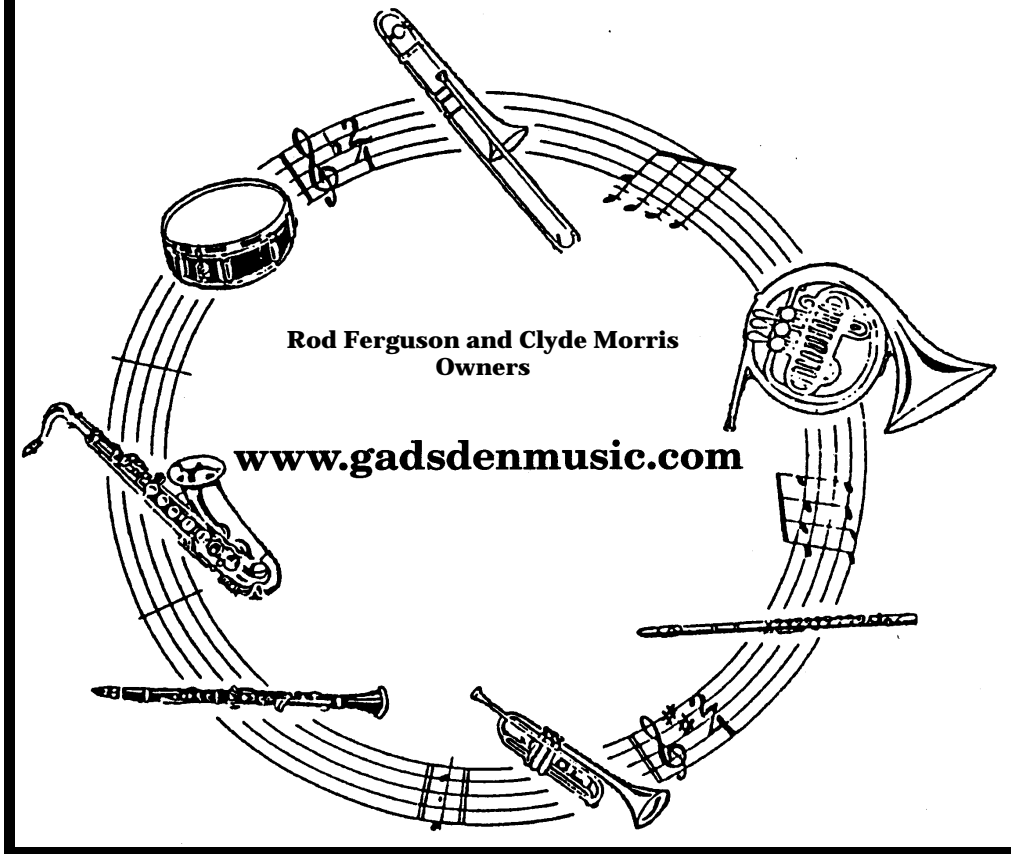
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Yamaha Corporation of America.**

