

# Caring for Your Oboe

In order to continue to work properly, it is very important that your oboe be properly maintained. Not only is a oboe a musically artistic device, but it is also a mechanical tool requiring cleaning and service just as any machine would. Fortunately, maintaining a oboe is not a difficult task when the student follows a few simple procedures on a regular basis. The following steps should be taken to keep your oboe looking and sounding great.

| <b>Every Time You Play</b>   | <b>Once a Week</b>  | <b>As Needed</b>  |
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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Wipe fingerprints clean with a handkerchief.</li><li>2. Swab your oboe thoroughly to remove condensed moisture.</li><li>3. Store your reed in a good reed case.</li></ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Remove old cork grease and apply new cork grease to all joints.</li><li>2. Check the oboe for loose corks, screws and springs. Don't tighten them yourself! Let your teacher know if something needs to be adjusted.</li></ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Have any loose or leaking pads replaced by a professional repair technician.</li></ol> |

## Daily Maintenance

The greatest danger to your oboe is moisture. The condensation that naturally collects inside your instrument as you play can not only cause pads to leak and eventually fall off, but can actually cause a wooden oboe to mildew and rot. Consequently, you absolutely must swab your instrument dry every time you play.

Swabbing a oboe is quite simple. Once you have finished playing, carefully store your reed in your reed case. The rest of the oboe will remain assembled as you swab. Turning you oboe upside-down, gently drop the weighted end of your swab into the bell and allow it to exit through the reed socket. Gently pull the unfurled swab all the way through your instrument. If the swab becomes stuck, do not try to force it through the instrument. Instead, disassemble the instrument at the point where the swab is stuck and gently pull it out. You may use tweezers to grasp the swab if it is out of reach for your fingers. You should pull your swab through the oboe at least three times to make sure you have removed all of the accumulated moisture. See the pictures on the following pages for examples of how to correctly swab your oboe.

## Weekly Maintenance

The corks that seal your instrument should be greased at least once a week. Don't wait until it becomes difficult to assemble the instrument before you apply cork grease, since this means that the corks are already dry and will have begun to wear down. When applying cork grease, always wipe the old grease off with a lint-free cloth that won't be harmed by staining, such as a shop towel. Apply the new cork grease around the entire surface of the cork so that the

entire surface is covered without excessive build-up. Gently twist the greased joints together, wiping of any extra grease.

About once a week you should take a moment to visually inspect your oboe for any loose or missing screws and springs. Never adjust a screw or spring on your instrument yourself. Only your band director, private teacher, or professional repair technician should make adjustments to your instrument. Notify your director as soon as possible if you notice a mechanical problem with your instrument.

### **Occasional Maintenance**

From time to time, your oboe will need repairs and adjustments by a qualified repair technician. Pads will wear out with use, and corks will deteriorate in time. The better you care for your instrument, however, the less frequent and less costly your trips to the repair shop will be. Prevention is the best medicine for your oboe. Proper instrument maintenance is part of your responsibility as a musician.