

## **BASSOON REEDS FOR BAND DIRECTORS**

---

### **Purchasing a Bassoon Reed**

1. The tip opening should be symmetrical and moderately open.
2. Blades should meet evenly at the sides, without gaps or warps.
3. There should not be deep cracks above the first wire in the blade.
4. Side view of blades should be symmetrical top and bottom.
5. Wires should be straight, and not too loose.
6. Ball should be snug on bark of cane (glued down).
7. Grain of cane should be fine and color should be golden (not green or brown).
8. Medium strength – good for beginning/intermediate bassoonists

### **The Crow**

1. Place entire reed (up to first wire) in mouth and blow.
2. Several pitches should sound, with a predominant pitch of D - F (Eb is said to be ideal).
3. If pitch is too high, reed is unbalanced.
4. Reed should gradually become thicker from tip to collar (shoulder) and from rail to spine. Look for imbalances and correct.
5. Crow reed (and then play on bassoon) after each minor adjustment to the reed.

### **Reed Maintenance**

1. Wipe lipstick/chapstick off lips before playing.
2. Soak reeds in water before playing (only soak up to wrapping in case wrapping is not waterproofed).
3. Keep reeds in ventilated container; poke holes in end of plastic tube to store.
4. If first wire becomes loose, slip it into indentation in bark before soaking thoroughly.
5. If ball becomes loose, position it properly, then glue in place with Duco cement/nail polish.
6. Periodically scrape residue on outside of reed blade using fingernail or knife.
7. Carefully clean inside of the blades with a soft pipe cleaner.
8. If trying to resuscitate an old reed, soak in a diluted hydrogen peroxide and water solution or Listerine/water solution.

### **Other**

1. Have a back-up reed for your band. Although plastic reeds are not recommended for regular use, they are very practical to have in case a student's reed breaks at the last minute. They are sturdy, long lasting, and rarely break.