

## Tips from the Workbench Ozwind's Brisbane

### Tip #4 – Minimum service requirement

This tip relates to a common problem that can happen if instruments are left in storage or unserviced for too long. The solution is very easy and inexpensive to carry out.

**Here is the tip:** *Always get keywork on woodwind instruments fully oiled roughly once a year.*

This may sound obvious, but there are a few reasons why this may not happen.

Instruments should be completely disassembled to make sure that oil can be applied completely to the inner surfaces of the keys and rods.

Many repairers (to save time) will not do this step and might simply add oil from the outside (all keys still on the instrument) which can be done in a minute or two. The problem is that oil won't always find its way to all the inner parts.

#### **What can go wrong?**

The biggest problem is that the keywork can go rusty. This is not something that is completely predictable, but with particular brands you could expect the climate in hotter and more humid areas to affect the keywork more, or with players who are more likely to perspire a lot.

#### **Why can this happen?**

Different brands use different types of steel inside their keywork. The factors that are balanced or compromised are strength, longevity, and frequency of maintenance.

Some steels may be very soft but never need oiling, for example.

Most companies have switched to using a stainless steel for their rods to reduce maintenance. The brand most susceptible to corrosion is Yamaha, with other brands taking longer to begin this process. Regular yearly maintenance should still be more than sufficient to take care of this type of problem.

If you have students in their teenage years, the perspiration and oils coming from their hands can be much more corrosive at this point in their lives.

You need to think about the environmental factors (humidity) and who has been using the instrument if you are deciding how long to wait before servicing any particular instrument.

#### **What sort of costs are involved?**

For a clarinet or a flute, a simple oiling of the (disassembled) keys with nothing else should be around \$40-50.

Saxophones and oboes may be more, for the extra keywork and to get to the different layers of keywork.

#### **When would you just oil without further servicing?**

There are some instruments that just last longer than others (pad and cork life) and you may not need to have a big service on these so often. (I'll talk about these at another time)



Also, if you know that an instrument will become a spare in the following year, it would be better to leave a big service until just before it is being used. In this case it would be best to make sure the steels are maintained with a view to doing the rest at a later date.

### **Future Tips**

If there is anything that you would like to know, and are looking for an answer, please let me know. I might be able to include it in some tips for teachers.

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