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Introduction

The place of the bassoon in the orchestra, band, and especially in the small woodwind ensemble is an important one. It has expressive qualities and tonal colors possessed by no other instrument. In spite of its relatively high cost, its intrinsic value to these organizations is worth the expenditure of funds and the time necessary to develop proficient players. One accepts the tone color produced by the professional ensembles; yet in many potentially fine amateur community orchestras and school ensembles, the bassoon is either misused, poorly played, or not used at all because of a lack of knowledge concerning certain aspects of the bassoon on the part of the instrumental teacher. Since the performance of much of the better orchestral and small ensemble music is dependent upon a bassoonist with an adequately developed tone and technical facility to manage the more difficult passages encountered, the instrumental teacher needs to have more than just an elementary knowledge of the bassoon.

The need for a reference on the advanced teaching problems of the bassoon has long been expressed by students and teachers of the bassoon in both the public schools and colleges. Professional bassoonists and teachers who have made the bassoon their major instrument are usually to be found only in large metropolitan areas and in a few large universities and conservatories. Therefore, opportunities for the student and for the future instrumental teacher to study with a bassoon specialist are limited.

Although the problems of general interpretation and over-all development of musicianship can be dealt with by a fine musician and teacher, regardless of his performing medium, there are nevertheless many details and problems related to teaching and playing the bassoon that require special attention and knowledge. Since the opportunity for individual study with a bassoon specialist is limited, it was felt that a reference of teaching aids and suggestions such as those used by professional bassoonists would be of value. Although there is some information to be found in periodicals and method books about the various problems of bassoon playing and teaching, these materials are not generally available when needed. The teachers of instrumental music have a

tremendous task in learning the very best of teaching methods for every instrument. This is in itself quite an undertaking, but the teacher must also be able to suggest suitable solo and study literature for the student. Even the teachers who are professional bassoonists have a need for a knowledge of a wider variety of solo literature which they can assign to students on various levels of achievement. Many teachers do not have the time, the opportunity, or the knowledge to examine and select from the available literature suitable solo materials to meet the needs of their students in contests, programs, recitals, and for study. Evidence of this can be seen by an examination of recital programs and the music being played in high school contests. Although there are those who feel the bassoon is strictly an ensemble instrument, the writer feels that the study and performance of solos is one of the best means of encouraging an adequate study of the instrument. The practice of using a large amount of etudes and concocted exercises instead of good music should be discouraged.

The purpose of this book is to help meet the above needs by: (1) furnishing for the teacher of the high school and college bassoonist such teaching aids and information as will assist him to know the instrument better, to understand its problems, and to be able to deal with the student's performance problems with more understanding; (2) furnishing a guide for the selection of suitable methods, books and solo material for contests, recitals, and study, with suggestions and aids to assist the student to adequately perform the literature available.

The teaching aids offered are organized under four main headings: the instrument, the reed, production of bassoon tone, and articulation. The problems of each factor are taken up individually, with suggestions of solutions which have been used successfully by many fine teachers. These problems are those that most often appear in remedial work with students in high schools and colleges.

The methods, books and solo literature have been selected with the following criteria in mind: (1) to show the wide variety of music available; (2) to offer a selection of music suitable for various

levels of ability and for various occasions; (3) to present only music originally written for the bassoon; and (4) to include examples of music that are worthwhile in themselves and interesting to study and perform.

The information and teaching suggestions, for the most part, have been gathered and compiled by the writer over a period of years as a result of

experiences gained by playing the bassoon professionally and teaching in elementary schools, high schools and college. Information gained through study with two noted professional bassoonists and teachers (Hugo Fox, Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Simon Kovar, New York City), notes taken at clinics and lectures, interviews and study with many other performers and teachers of voice and wind instruments have also been used.

William G. Spencer

Preface to the Revised Edition

In revising Mr. Spencer's excellent discussions, it has been my aim to bring to the reader's attention the many changes that have recently occurred in bassoon playing, pedagogy, and manufacture. Several bassoon manufacturers and artist-teachers of the bassoon, including Don Christlieb, Alan Fox, Jack Linton, Jr.,

William Polisi, Dr. Eugene Rousseau of Indiana University, and Dr. William Bigham of Morehead State University have contributed their help to this project. My special thanks to Jean Wiggins and Joseph Martin of Morehead State University for preparing the bibliography and discography.

F. A. Mueller

The Instrument

Many of the problems that beginning or fairly advanced bassoonists have can be traced to a poorly made instrument or to one that is in bad repair. Much of the remedial work done in more advanced lessons is a result of undesirable playing habits picked up by the students in attempting to play on such instruments. Teachers everywhere will agree that instruments of fine quality are not only more conducive to fine playing results, but are of exceeding value to the proper progress of the student's musicianship. However, even a casual survey of the bassoons used in the schools leads one to wonder that there are even as many bassoonists coming along as there are. This condition is caused by: (1) the high cost of good bassoons, (2) the relatively poor quality of medium-priced bassoons, (3) the lack of knowledge and experience in choosing a suitable instrument, and (4) a general neglect of the proper care and adjustment of the instrument. Since very little can be done about the cost or quality of the instruments that are available, it remains for the teacher or the student, if he is buying his own instrument, to choose more intelligently. After he has selected a bassoon, the care it receives and the adjustments made will determine how well it will play and how long it will last.

By far the most widely-used bassoon in the schools today is the German or Heckel system bassoon. This is true in the symphonies also, although many years ago the French or Conservatory system bassoon was in general use. This was probably due to the fact that most of the woodwind players in the early development of the symphony orchestras in this country came from France. The French bassoon is by no means outdated, since it is still used in many countries, including France,

Spain, Italy, and in the military bands in England. The teacher will not have to concern himself with the French bassoon for the most part except to be able to recognize it. (See Illust. 1.) He may encounter one which was purchased many years ago in a school system or one which was purchased by mistake. Although the bassoons look somewhat similar, there are a great many easily discernible differences. Perhaps the most outstanding one is the number and the arrangement of the keys. The German bassoon has a great many more keys, particularly on the boot joint. Although it has been said that one could tell the difference by the ring and the color of the instrument, this is no longer true. The German bassoon was traditionally made with an ivory ring and a mahogany finish, while the French bassoon used a metal ring and was stained ebony. In recent years, some professional bassoonists have had German bassoons made with a metal ring and stained ebony. There are, of course, many other differences; the size of the bore, the quality of the sound, the fingering system, the shape of the bell, and the type of reed used. (For a more detailed discussion of the German and French reeds, see Part II.)

Among those who are not bassoonists, there has often been some misunderstanding as to the use of the name "Heckel" in connection with the German bassoon. One hears and reads of the "Heckel system bassoon" and of the "Heckel bassoon" without realizing that they may not be the same thing. The German bassoon had its beginning when Carl Almenraeder and J. A. Heckel entered into a partnership in 1831. Since that time, the German bassoon has been developed to its present form in the Heckel factory and bassoons made by the Heckel family have been recognized the world over as the finest available.

Articulation

The term "articulation" is used here to designate the general manner in which the tongue, the breath and the fingers are used--separately or in combination--to group a series of notes into rhythmic patterns. The problems of articulation will be discussed under two headings, tonguing and fingering, with the idea of helping the student develop these skills to the point needed for the performance of the more advanced literature encountered in solo and ensemble playing.

Tonguing

Many of the student bassoonist's articulation problems are due to an incorrect use of the tongue. In order to operate freely, the tongue should feel very relaxed and loose in the mouth. Only the tip should be involved in the tonguing action: The faster the tongue is required to move, the shorter the distance it should travel and the lighter its action should be. A great many students unconsciously tense the tongue in attempting to develop velocity, and therefore lose all control.

The exact place on the tongue that should come in contact with the end of the reed will depend upon the individual and also on the particular style of tonguing desired at the moment. To say that everyone must tongue in exactly the same manner is failing to recognize that some may have different sized tongue and mouth formations. Each person must experiment to find which method is best for him. In general, the very tip of the tongue contacts the end of the reed quite directly for definite accents and the *marcato* style of tonguing as used in a sharp, brittle staccato. As the style of tonguing progresses from the sharp, definite sound to the soft, legato style, the part of the tongue used may shift to either the top of the tongue or just underneath the tip. At the same time, less and less of the reed will be touched by a continually lighter action of the tongue until, in the execution of the very softest legato, the tongue barely touches the reed at all.

One of the problems that most students have at this point is to try to separate the tonguing action from the breath support and the embouchure. The usual tendency is to increase or decrease the breath pressure with the change in tonguing style. The student must learn to keep the breath support constant, regardless of the action of the tongue. The action of the tongue will also interfere with the set of the embouchure. One of the worst possible habits is to tongue in a "chewing" fashion. The

movement of the jaw and lips not only distorts the tone each time they move, but actually slows down the action of the tongue.

In working to correct these two errors, the student should practice in front of a mirror in order to observe any movement of the embouchure. Because breath and the embouchure must be under control before the tonguing problem can be solved, it is best to have the student concentrate on long, sustained passages and slurred exercises until these factors become automatic.

The attack is generally accomplished with the tongue, especially if a clean, definite starting of the tone is desired. The use of the word "attack" has misled some into thinking that the tongue must hit or strike the reed and that all notes must start with an explosive use of the breath. In view of this misunderstanding it would be better to use another word, such as "start," "begin," or "commence," in order to get away from the idea that the beginning of each tongued note must necessarily be forceful.

The tongue action in starting any tone is merely that of placing it gently against the tip of the reed and pulling it away quickly. At the same time, the breath pressure builds up behind the stopped reed. A proper attack is more a matter of preparation and timing of the entire tone-producing mechanism than anything else. The reed, of course, must be properly adjusted to respond instantly. In the very low register it is actually an aid in producing a good attack to drop the jaw slightly. This, however, is the only exception to the rule that the jaw or lip should not move other than in the very sharp, brittle staccato style of tonguing. When producing the sharp staccato, particularly at a rather slow tempo, it is almost impossible to keep the jaw motionless, but it should not be allowed to move excessively.

Although each tone is started with the tongue, a tone may be stopped with either the tongue (as in saying "tut") or with the breath (as in saying "tuh"). Not all notes which are marked staccato should be played with the "tut" style of tonguing. It should only be used in passages in which the composer seeks to use the rather humorous, dry effect of the bassoon's sharp staccato. Two quite typical examples are the bassoon solos in Beethoven's *Symphony No. 4*, First movement, measure 64, and in Dukas' *Sorcerer's Apprentice*.

All other notes which are marked staccato, marcato, and accent should be stopped with the breath,