

# DOUBLE REEDS

## JUNIOR CLINIC

### ★ Breathing

- How to breathe before playing
  - Good posture, exhale **before** inhaling while expanding your entire lungs
- Getting your 'air moving'
  - "SHH!:"  $p > f < p$  over 9 beats, then 5, then 3
  - "SHH!:"  $f > p < f$  over 9 beats, then 5, then 3
- SUPPORT: *the quantity and quality of air you are giving each note*
  - You always need to be supporting from your **diaphragm**.
  - The diaphragm is a muscle that sits just below your lungs at the bottom of your rib cage, so when you have just taken a good, full breath, you can engage it by thinking about tightening your ab muscles. This increases the air pressure as it leaves your lungs, which keeps your air flow consistent.
- \*\*\*If you are having trouble with intonation or notes not sounding, first make sure you are supporting by pushing the air from your abdomen, not your throat or mouth.

### ★ Practicing

- Have on your stand: mirror, pencil, tuner, metronome
- Warm up: Breathing exercises, long tones (with a tuner), Scale & Arpeggio of the Day
- Etudes/'Spot' practicing:
  - Etudes are great for learning common melodic patterns and phrasing and practicing individual intonation.
  - 'Spot' practicing is for when you come across a difficult passage in a piece you are playing that needs more work than other, less difficult parts. If it is over a line of music especially, it is often helpful to break it down into smaller sections ('spots') to focus on one at a time.
    - Figure out why it is difficult - is it the rhythm? tricky fingerings? - and find a **slower** tempo where it feels comfortable to play it (preferably with a metronome!) and gradually increase your tempo, but be sure to never try to practice it at a speed where you cannot be consistently accurate - just sloooow it back down.

### ★ Taking Care of Reeds

- Reed cases vs reed 'coffins'
- Effects of temperature and humidity
- Rotating reeds
- Be careful! Reeds will eventually get 'blown out' or 'die' and not vibrate as well, but to be able to play on them for as long as possible, just always be aware of where your reed is when it is not in its case.

## ★ High Notes & Low Notes

- **Upper Register:** slide/roll in on the reed, tighten embouchure, but don't bite down on the reed (oboe)!!! faster air with more support (from the diaphragm).
- **Lower Register:** slide/roll out on the reed, loosed embouchure and drop jaw, increase air support and think of blowing the air down the back of the instrument.

## ★ Why Won't That Note Come Out?

- **Check fingers:** *practice in front of a mirror!*
  - Are they covering all the tone holes and pressing down all the keys they should be (whisper key)? Are they accidentally hitting any keys they *shouldn't* be (trill keys)?
- **Check air:**
  - Are you supporting from your diaphragm? Did you increase your airflow too suddenly and overblow the note (squeaking)?
- **Check reed:**
  - Has it been soaked (in water) or has it dried out? Is it particularly closed or open? Has it split? Are you able to play the note(s) on your instrument with a different reed? Can you play with that reed on a different instrument?
- \*If you still are unable to get the note to sound, talk to your teacher or bring it to a professional repair person - don't try to fix it yourself; if there is a problem with your instrument, it can be very easy to make it worse!

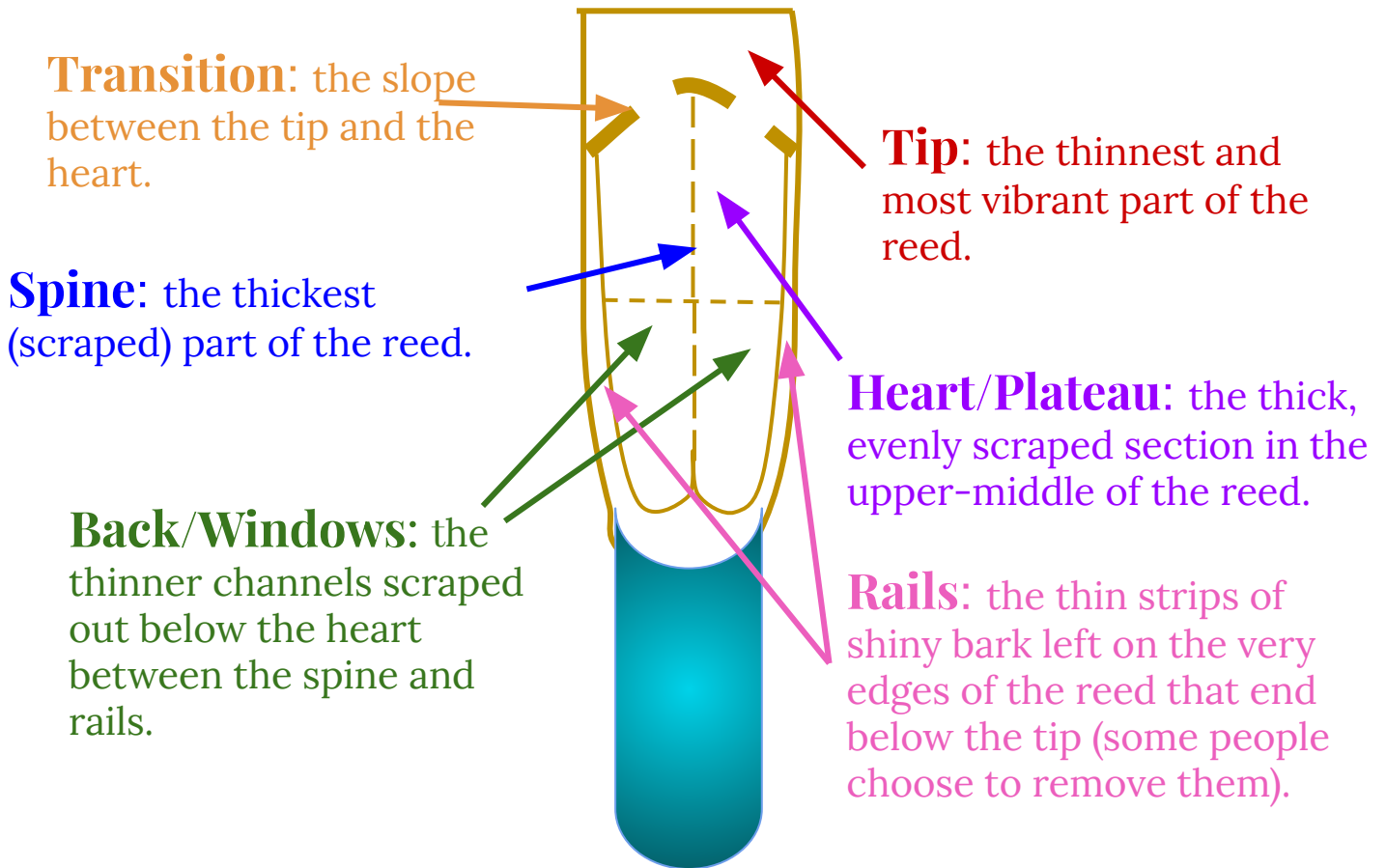
## ★ Intonation

- **Individual Intonation:** *being in tune with yourself/the tuner.*
  - Learn the effect of physical changes you can make on your intonation (dropping your jaw, loosening your embouchure, increasing air support, etc.)
  - Pay attention to the weather - temperature and humidity can have very big effects on reeds (and wooden instruments); in the summer, we tend to sound sharper while we trend more flat in the winter.
- **Section/Ensemble Intonation:** *being in tune with others.*
  - Listen to those around you - you may or may not be playing the same notes, but can you hear instability (waves) in the harmonies?
  - If you can tell whether you are higher/lower, that's great, but if you cannot try raising your pitch, if it starts sounding better, keep it up; if it sounds worse, lower your pitch instead!



# OBOE REEDS

There are almost as many styles of making oboe reeds as there are reed-makers, so your reeds will probably look different from other oboists, but as long as they work for the person playing on them, that's totally fine!



# BASSOON REEDS

Similarly, there is more than one style of bassoon reeds! For example, some people might wrap the end with thread or leave it unwrapped; some people choose to use four wires instead of three. They are just matters of preference, but here are the main parts.

