



Care of Flutes at High Pitch

The Alpha Omega range of band flutes are made by Tony Millyard and Sophie Matthews from various seasoned hardwoods with Nickel Silver keywork and rings when fitted. Woods typically used are African Blackwood and Mopane from Africa or English Boxwood.

All musical instruments prefer a moderate climate. Do not leave your instrument near any form of direct heat such as above a radiator or near a fire or in direct sunlight and never leave it in a car on a hot day. Poorly adjusted central heating is also bad for any wood and can cause shrinkage in woodwind instruments, so either move house or turn down the thermostat to a reasonable temperature, whichever is easier! If the instrument is kept in hot conditions it will result in cracks in the head joint and barrel and as the wood shrinks the end rings may also become loose. If this should happen please contact me as these problems are easily repaired.

Bore Maintenance

After playing it is important to use a pull through to remove excess moisture from the bore. If this is not done the bore will become a breeding ground for all sorts of bacteria and the pads will be more inclined to rot and require earlier replacement.

It is also important to oil the bore occasionally, perhaps every two or three weeks if the instrument is being played regularly. I recommend using almond oil as it does not dry to a sticky residue as some other oils such as linseed oil do. The best way of oiling the bore is to have a pull through cloth that is very lightly impregnated with oil. By pulling this through the instrument regularly it will impart a thin layer of oil to the bore surface as it also removes moisture after playing. Little and often with oil is much better than soaking the bore occasionally and also thereby getting the pads soaked in oil which is not desirable. Almond Oil is obtainable from all high street chemists.

External Maintenance

It is also good to occasionally clean and oil the outside of the instrument. For the keys, any light metal polish will always make them sparkle as Nickel Silver will dull a little over time as it oxidises slightly. For the wood, cleaning with a white linen cloth and warm water with a very small amount of detergent in it is the best plan. The reason for using white cloth is that you can see when you have removed all the dirt as it shows up on the cloth. After cleaning, a light oiling with a lightly impregnated cloth will always be good for the wood and will especially help prevent cracks appearing in the head and barrel.

Key Maintenance

A little key oil occasionally applied between the axle tubes and the pillars on each key will help keep the keys running in good order. If keys need to be removed should they become sticky or very dirty, then care should be taken to ensure that no dirt is on the axle when the

key is replaced. A particular note on piccolos that care should be taken when removing keys as the springs are not affixed to the keys and they are very small and very easily lost!

The Embouchure Hole

When cleaning the instrument, be especially careful not to damage the edge of the embouchure hole. If the embouchure hole needs cleaning then use a soft linen rag with warm soapy water to do this taking care not to work on the edge of the hole more than is necessary. If the edge of the hole is modified it will effect the way in which the instrument overblows, usually making it more difficult to play into the third register. If the embouchure hole becomes damaged please return the instrument to me for repair.

Tuning

You instrument is tuned to High British Band Pitch (a=452hz). They are also tuned to a temperament to suit the key of the six fingered note, unless an Equally Tempered instrument was especially ordered. The temperature of the day and how warm the instrument is and the playing style of the player will however change how much the player should pull the head joint out to be at correct pitch.

The head cork position is critical for correct tuning of the octaves when overblowing from the lower to the upper two registers. The head cork can be finely adjusted by screwing the head cap in or out. If set too near to the embouchure hole then the notes in the second register will become sharp in relation to the notes in the lower register. If the cork is set too far from the embouchure hole then the reverse will happen. [There is a mark near the end of the pull through stick which should show in the middle of the embouchure hole to give the position of the head cork when it left our Workshop](#) . If the cork gets moved for any reason then reset back to this position as a start point and then check how the octaves work.

Leaking Pads

The most common problem resulting in flutes not playing well is leaking pads. The slightest leak on any pads will immediately result in the low notes in the bottom register playing weakly or not at all. To check for leaks, I block up the end of the flute (a friend's finger can be called to help here) and having removed the head and barrel and with lips closed around the tennon I pressurise the flute main joint with the six finger holes covered. If there is the slightest leakage of air then a repad is required to resolve the problem. Note that not too much pressure should be blown into the flute as this will just result in the pads being lifted off with the excess pressure. You are looking for a low pressure that does not leak.

Contact details

For further information or servicing of your instrument please contact:-

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See also www.tonymillyard.com for general information about the flutes.