

tip, thinner heart, thicker back. In addition, the difference in thickness between the top of the back and the lower portions is not as pronounced. If viewed from the side, the “waistline” of the reed that appears just below the heart is lower down. If you want to think in terms of oboe reeds, make a reed that plays well but is not “refined.”

The wire is not used to control the opening of the reed. If the opening is wrong, the reed will have the same problems with or without the wire. Rather, the wire stabilizes and focuses the tone of the notes above the staff. Often, this allows you to remove more wood from a reed that was sagging slightly before the wire.

Many reed makers put the wire (#24 gauge brass wire from the hardware store, wound round the reed twice with pliers) on the blank before scraping at all. I prefer to add the wire later so it doesn't interfere with scraping the lower part of the back. Don't wind it on so tightly that it grips all the way around the reed; stop as soon as you feel it gripping the sides. Don't put it up too high on the reed – 5-6 mm from the string (in other words, just into the beginning of the scraped area) is high enough. The wire will usually slide around when the reed is dry, but return to its proper position when the reed is soaked. Some players prefer English horn reeds with no wire;

this will give more resonance, but requires very careful balancing to avoid losing stability.

English horn reeds should crow a “C.” Even C-sharp is acceptable. English horn reeds are the opposite of oboe reeds in this regard: oboe reeds with a crow higher than “C” almost never work, while English horn reeds with a crow lower than “C” rarely play.

SUMMARY

1. Sharpen your knife.
2. Make no mistakes.
3. Think through what you intend to do.
4. Adjust function first, not tone.

About the Author ...

Martin Schuring played oboe and English horn in orchestras around the world before joining the faculty of Arizona State University, where he co-hosted the 1998 IDRS conference. A regular performer at the Grand Teton Music Festival, at IDRS conferences, and at other national and international venues, he can also be heard on recordings for Koch International, Philips, and Summit Records. He studied with John de Lancie at the Curtis Institute of Music.

Letter to the Editor

By **Lisa Silver**
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I wanted to let *Double Reed* readers know about a couple of errors in the “Alternate Oboe Fingerings” article from the Winter 2001 issue. The fingering for #17 under “Fingering Examples” uses the FIRST octave key, NOT the second octave key. Also, English oboists “tend to use” the Eb fingering for #14. I also wanted to give credit to Eileen Cohen for Dr. Fossner's 1999 photograph.