



Wood Clarinet Care and Preservation

Understanding Wood

Cracking

Perhaps the most generally misunderstood problem in connection with wood clarinets is that of cracking. It is impossible to guarantee that wood will not crack. Despite its great density, Grenadilla, like any other wood, absorbs and releases moisture. It is hygroscopic. Moisture may be absorbed from the players' breath and from the resulting condensation in the tube as well as from the atmosphere itself. When moisture is absorbed or released too rapidly or unevenly, internal stresses are set up within the wood. If these stresses are too great, cracking can occur.

When properly seasoned wood is given proper care, the occurrence of cracks is statistically very low—generally well under 1% during the first year with negligible risk thereafter.

Care and Preservation

Break-In Procedure

Breaking in your new clarinet can be the most important step you take in the prevention of developing wood problems over the life of your instrument. We recommend following the below procedure to ensure the best chance of a "slow change" that your clarinet will need to maintain optimum performance and lessen the chances of cracking.

1. Play the instrument for only 15 minutes a day for the first week.
2. Play for 15 minutes twice a day the second week.
3. Add 5 minutes to each playing session until you have reached your regular session length.
4. If you take a day off during the first few weeks, start the process over again from the beginning.
5. **Swab Often!** We recommend swabbing every 5 minutes for the first two weeks of the process and then periodically throughout the session thereafter. For the best results, use a micro fiber or silk swab. When finished playing, wipe out the sockets with a clean, lint free cloth. (As the sockets usually contain cork grease, do not use your swab for this task).

General Care & Maintenance

1. Always swab, disassemble and return your clarinet to its case when not in use.
2. Avoid extreme and rapid changes in temperature. The optimal temperature for a wood clarinet is 65° to 75°. Never play a clarinet that is cold to the touch.
3. Maintain a consistent relative humidity in between playing sessions. The ideal humidity for wood clarinets is 45% to 55%. Case humidifiers are the easiest way to maintain this humidity, especially in dry climates.
4. Always wipe down the keys after playing with a good cloth. This removes the acids and oils left on the keys by your fingers and will help prevent premature wear or tarnishing.
5. Oil the bore of the clarinet as prescribed by a local teacher or repair professional.