JUST FOR BASSOONISTS:  
A COMPANION METHOD TO BEGINNING BAND CURRICULUM

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For all of my students and all of my teachers—past, present, and future.
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INTRODUCTION

The beginning band classroom offers many advantages to young musicians. The heterogeneous ensemble setting exposes students to a variety of timbres, teaches them valuable listening and collaborative skills, and offers a sense of camaraderie while learning fundamental concepts of music. For beginning performers on the less common double reed instruments, however, that same heterogeneous nature can often lead to pedagogical lapses in instrument-specific skills. Double reed students often find themselves struggling with instruments more often than their peers who play more popular instruments, and oftentimes even their teachers, who do not fully understand these struggles. As a result, private teachers of beginning bassoonists often encounter students who demonstrate strong general musicianship but exceptionally weak technique.

I have created this document to aid in bridging these pedagogical gaps and to ease the frustrations not only of beginning bassoonists but also of their band directors and private instructors alike. Specifically this paper concerns how to teach fundamental setup, half-hole and vented fingerings, and comprehensive musicianship to beginning students. The first two chapters focus on introductory student methods both for general classroom instruction and bassoon-specific lessons for the beginning student. I will first compare the presentation of bassoon techniques and educational priorities of frequently used classroom instructional series with those in two traditional bassoon method books and several new approaches.
In the second chapter, I will use these findings to teaching beginning bassoon to identify specific pedagogical gaps—areas in which the curricula do not overlap and therefore underserve young bassoonists. Several of these gaps exist as a result of the approaches taken towards pitch introduction sequences that develop students’ skills in different keys and within different ranges than each other. Other gaps relate to rhythmic complexity, exercises devoted to complicated half-hole and vented fingerings, and the specificity of introductory fundamentals.

In the third chapter I focus on materials used in teacher training and by advanced bassoon students. I will analyze the treatment of bassoon skills in teacher training texts, bassoon pedagogy books, and articles in woodwind and band journals. Having studied the problems of teaching bassoon fundamentals from both the materials used by beginning students and the materials teachers prepare from, the final chapter will present my design for a new approach, a self-taught bassoon method to be used in tandem with classroom curriculum.

By aligning prominent approaches in bassoon pedagogy with the sequencing and multidisciplinary aspects found in the beginning band texts, my new companion method will help young bassoonists learn technical skills and musical concepts that are immediately applicable to their performance demands. I achieve this by writing a method that progressively develops their bassoon technique in the contexts of the range, tonality, and rhythmic complexity of their band methods and music. Students who learn the bassoon by this method will no longer need to compartmentalize their practice efforts for individual bassoon and band instruction, yet they can still achieve great results in both settings.
CHAPTER ONE:
CLASSROOM AND BASSOON METHODS

Bassoon teaching methods can be divided into two large categories. What I will call “classroom series” are bassoon student editions of band methods designed for heterogeneous classroom instruction. Bassoon-specific methods are those which are designed for private study, without the parameters of playing in a band setting. This document will examine the skill progression for the classroom band series *Tradition of Excellence, Essential Elements*, and *Sound Innovations*, focusing primarily on the instrument introductions, treatment of half-hole and flicking techniques, and potential errors in fingerling charts and additional resources.

The findings will then be compared to the manner in which these concepts are presented in two traditional bassoon instructional methods, henceforth referred to as “bassoon-specific methods”: *Practical Method for the Bassoon* by Julius Weissenborn and *Rubank Elementary Method* by Joseph Skornicka. I will also explore the same issues in newer bassoon methods such as Doug Spaniol’s revised *New Weissenborn Method*, Michael Curtis’ *New Millennium Bassoon Method*, Cheryl Huddleston’s *Foundations for Success*, Kristin Wolfe Jensen’s “Music and the Bassoon.” Through this comparison, this chapter will conclude by deducing the pedagogical priorities of each teaching community in regards to beginning bassoon.

**Introductory Skills**

Each classroom series begins the bassoon student book with an introductory spread addressing instrument assembly, posture, hand position, and embouchure
formation. *Sound Innovations* also includes a brief explanation of the articulation process as specific to bassoon, including instructions to lift the tongue gently to the tip of the reed, rather than the harsher alternative of approaching the reed directly at the tip opening.¹ For the instrument assembly component, all three methods include a DVD lesson, and *Tradition of Excellence* does this to entirely replace prose instruction. Additionally, all three methods include a picture or illustration of a student demonstrating ideal posture—*Tradition of Excellence* with a neck strap², *Essential Elements*³ and *Sound Innovations*⁴ with a seat strap—and a postural checklist including sitting up straight on the edge of the chair and having feet flat on the floor.

Each method, however, features slight differences in postural priorities. *Tradition of Excellence* includes descriptions of specific placements of the chin, elbows, wrists, and thumbs.⁵ *Essential Elements* includes significantly more detail via the DVD lesson, particularly in reference to hand and finger position. *Sound Innovations* also focuses on finger placement, but in a much more tactile manner by


⁴ Sheldon, 3.

⁵ Pearson and Nowlin, 3.
highlighting the contact of finger pads with keys and “hovering” of thumbs over potential keys.⁶

To form the basic embouchure and produce a stable tone, the methods again vary slightly. All three highlight the importance of maintaining an overbite, typically with the phrase “pull jaw back,” and emphasize rolling the lips over both lower and upper teeth. Essential Elements is the only method of the three reviewed that addresses impact of embouchure on pitch and tone.⁷ To teach embouchure support without encouraging biting or unnecessary compression of the reed blades, each method uses different terminology: Traditions of Excellence instructs students to “close lips like a drawstring,”⁸ Essential Elements uses the phrase “firmly close lips around the reed,”⁹ and Sound Innovations teaches students to “tighten the mouth all the way around.”¹⁰ Despite having the same ideal result, these three instructions could create three very different fundamental concepts of embouchure support.

None of the classroom series label the skill of producing the first tone as “articulation,” though the descriptions of tone production inevitably shape students’ fundamental understanding of how to begin every note. Tradition of Excellence does not address this in any way, and Essential Elements only does so via the accompanying DVD lessons, including no prose explanation in the actual student

⁶ Sheldon, 3.
⁷ Lautzenheiser, 2.
⁸ Pearson and Nowlin, 3.
⁹ Lautzenheiser, 2.
¹⁰ Sheldon, 3.
book. *Sound Innovations* writes that the student should "take a deep full breath from the corners of [the] mouth, lift [the] tongue gently against tip of reed, [and] exhale quietly."\(^{11}\) Both DVD lessons for *Essential Elements* and *Sound Innovations* suggest thinking of the syllable "too" while exhaling. Finally, all three classroom series encourage beginning students to first practice forming the embouchure and articulating on the reed alone, and both *Tradition of Excellence* and *Essential Elements* identify the resulting sound as a "crow."\(^{12}\)

In contrast, the review of the three bassoon instructional methods suggests that the fundamental concepts of posture and tone production may be relegated primarily to private instructors, rather than taught exclusively through the books alone. The Weissenborn method is the only to include labeled sections dedicated to instrument assembly and care, and the complex language used suggests its appropriateness only for older students.\(^{13}\) The Weissenborn dedicates short paragraphs to each of these fundamental skills, with similar embouchure steps as presented in the classroom series. Instructions emphasize the role of the lips in holding the reed, rather than the teeth and recommends drawing the upper and lower lips over the teeth to enable this. Additionally, the method focuses on breath control in articulation, also using the syllable “tu” (or “ta,” alternatively) as a default

\(^{11}\) Sheldon, 3.

\(^{12}\) Pearson and Nowlin, 3.

\(^{13}\) Julius Weissenborn, *Practical Method for the Bassoon* (New York: Carl Fischer, 1887), 4-6.
setting.\textsuperscript{14} The \textit{Rubank Elementary Method} omits any instruction for embouchure formation and articulation process or tone production.

Upon analyzing the three band classroom series listed, the resources provided to students via the band classroom do not correlate to the weaknesses in fundamental skills frequently observed in students. At the very least, classroom band series attempt to clearly and accurately address instrument assembly, basic care and maintenance, posture, hand position, and embouchure formation. In many cases, this also involves a visual component of a DVD private lesson with interactive prompts. None of the fundamental information presented via classroom series directly conflicts with that found in bassoon methods, suggesting that student struggles with posture and tone production stem from a miscommunication or lack of reinforcement elsewhere in their music education.

\textbf{Bassoon-Specific Skills}

With such an observable lack of student skill specific to playing the bassoon, the logical finding in a literature review would be for these techniques to be underrepresented or absent in classroom band series. In parallel, one might expect to find dedicated sections or specialized exercises in the bassoon methods. In the examples studied here, however, this was not the finding. This document examines only the most prominent and unique bassoon-specific skills encountered in the first year of study: half-hole fingerings and venting, more frequently called “flicking.”

\textsuperscript{14} Weissenborn, 7.
Usage of the half-hole in the left hand index finger appears first in all methods, as it is required slightly lower in the register than flicking or venting. The three band series list the half-hole in the included fingering charts, with a symbol of the first finger tone hole half filled in black and half left empty. None include a prose explanation or note in the chart of how to achieve this half fingering with any more detail than “half hole” (Figure 1) or “half hole covered” (Figure 2).

![Bassoon Fingering Chart](image)

**Figure 1:** “Half hole” indication in *Tradition of Excellence* fingering chart.\(^{15}\)

![Bassoon Fingering Chart](image)

**Figure 2:** “Half hole covered” indication in *Sound Innovations* fingering chart.\(^{16}\)

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\(^{15}\) Pearson and Nowlin, 1.

\(^{16}\) Sheldon, 48.
*Essential Elements* labels this symbol as the “half-hole key” (Figure 3), which implies the use of some sort of key, rather than a specific method of approaching the tone hole itself.

![Figure 3: “Half-hole key” indication in *Essential Elements* exercise.](image)

Though not addressing it in the student book, *Tradition of Excellence* devotes one DVD video lesson to half-hole technique. In this video, the bassoonist models slurring up to the note G at the top of the bass clef staff, which is typically the first half-hole note students encounter. The camera zooms on his left index finger, and he emphasizes using a rolling motion, rather than sliding, to allow air to vent from the top half of the tone hole. Of all methods, including the three bassoon books, this is the most detailed approach to teaching this skill. *Tradition of Excellence* also includes two exercises labeled “Bassoon Private Lesson” to accompany the DVD lesson, and these exercises feature slurs to and from the notes G\(^\text{18}\) and A-flat\(^\text{19}\), which feature use of the half-hole. Both include an accompanying note asking “Are you rolling to the half-hole finger position?” *Essential Elements* and *Sound Innovations* do not include comparable exercises.

\(^{17}\) Lautzenheiser, 8.

\(^{18}\) Pearson and Nowlin, 10.

\(^{19}\) Pearson and Nowlin, 16.
In the bassoon methods, the approaches to teaching this skill vary widely, which possibly speaks to the degrees to which the approaches rely on a private instructor. The Weissenborn method does not mention it at all, nor does the book come with a fingering chart to list the half-hole in any way. The Rubank method also does not address special treatment of the half-holed notes, but it does include multiple exercises featuring various intervallic approaches up to G.

![Difficult Intervals](image)

Figure 4: “Difficult Intervals” exercise in *Rubank Elementary Method.*

This implies a focus on achieving half-hole accuracy, most likely with the help of an instructor. Despite expressing discontent with the focus on appropriate half-hole technique in their students’ education, private bassoon instructors regularly—and often exclusively—assign repertoire and provide the same students with resources that do not include instructions on this skill outside of the lesson setting.

The approach to flicking and venting differs slightly between individual methods in each teaching field. The band series reviewed represent three drastically different approaches. *Tradition of Excellence* teaches flicking only, mentioning it in the student book first with the note A on top of the bass clef staff and referring students to a DVD lesson (Figure 5).

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It is notable that flicking is a standard technique beginning with the note A, but this method does not introduce the technique until over 40 exercises after the student has learned the note. In the DVD lesson, the bassoonist explains the physics behind flicking, models it, and mentions that different thumb keys should be used to flick different notes. *Essential Elements* lists the thumb flick keys as optional additions to the notes A, B-flat, B, C, and D above bass clef and refers to flicking and venting as synonyms. *Sound Innovations* does not address flicking or venting at all.

As compared to the treatment of fundamental skills, classroom band series demonstrate significantly less specificity in their inclusion of the bassoon-specific skills of half-hole and flicking techniques than other skills. A bit surprisingly, the bassoon private methods again offer even less focus on the presentation of these skills independent of a private instructor. None of the three examined, for example, include any description of flicking or venting technique, though a high percentage of bassoon resources report this as an important fundamental skill, as addressed in the following resources chapter. Without the benefit of a private instructor or a bassoon savvy band director, beginning bassoonists may struggle with interpreting the

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21 Pearson and Nowlin, 23.

22 Lautzenheiser, 47.
convoluted flicking instructions included in their band books. Perhaps more important to the future of this project, however, are the factual errors or inconsistencies in bassoon-specific elements. Examples of this include half-hole and flicking techniques, as listed above, or fingerings and other supplementary information, as addressed next.

**Fingering Charts and Additional Resources**

One of the most visible issues with student experiences in band classrooms is a lack of correct fingering charts. Despite persistent teacher concerns about a few notes—E-flat in the staff and half-hole G, for example—no one fingering is consistently incorrect in the three series reviewed. *Sound Innovations* includes the most accurate chart of the three, with only one fingering as incorrect (the aforementioned E-flat) and one lacking a simpler, but still standard, alternative (middle C-sharp) (Figure 6).

![Fingering Chart](image)

*Figure 6: C-sharp and E-flat fingerings in Sound Innovations.*

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23 Sheldon, 48.
*Essential Elements* includes one special case fingering as standard (muted option for low F-sharp), one trill fingering as standard (F-sharp above the staff,), and one fingering for a very common note that is not present in any standard bassoon method chart (B-flat on top of the staff, Figure 9).

![Muted F-sharp fingering in Essential Elements.](image)

Figure 7: Muted F-sharp fingering in *Essential Elements.*

![Trill F-sharp fingering in Essential Elements.](image)

Figure 8: Trill F-sharp fingering in *Essential Elements.*

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24 Lautzenheiser, 46.

25 Lautzenheiser, 47.
While not ideal resources, these two charts would serve beginning bassoonists well enough to reach additional methods without the help of a private instructor.

The fingering chart provided with *Tradition of Excellence*, however, includes an excessive number of errors, including editorial issues of mislabeling note names: F-sharp and G at the bottom of bass clef listed as G and G-sharp (Figure 10).

![Diagram](image)

Figure 10: G and G-sharp fingering mislabel in *Tradition of Excellence* fingering chart.  

The common error with the fingering of E-flat in the staff is present in this chart, as well, as is the upper F-sharp trill fingering in place of a full tone option. Additionally,

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26 Lautzenheiser, 46-47.

27 Pearson and Nowlin, 1.
“optional” resonance keys are entirely omitted in the upper register, beginning at G above the staff. Perhaps the most shocking, however, is the teaching of a trill fingering for B-flat in the bass clef staff as a standard alternate fingering. This note is the twelfth note learned via *Tradition of Excellence*, and the method introduces the trill fingering roughly halfway through the book. To learn this alternate fingering, a “Bassoon Private Lesson” (Figure 11) drills the pitch chromatically and refers the student to a DVD video lesson, which shows the bassoonist model playing the exercise and emphasizing the usefulness of this alternate fingering.

![Figure 11: Alternate B-flat exercise in *Tradition of Excellence*.](image)

To highlight this oddity, it is helpful to know that the standard bassoon fingering charts included in instrument-specific methods list this as an optional trill fingering. Despite the inclusion of fingering charts in all band series, the two most widely used methods (Weissenborn and *Rubank*) do not include a fingering chart or suggestions for how to locate resources for fingerings. Beyond the factual errors and pedagogical preference differences in these fingering charts, none of the band series include incorrect bassoon information.

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28 Pearson and Nowlin, 26.
Comprehensive Musicianship

The concept of comprehensive musicianship roots students’ experiences with the bassoon in the general music discipline while also connecting musical concepts to other fields. Currently, the national approach to comprehensive musicianship is summarized by the National Standards, which include the following nine expressions of musical understanding:

1. Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
2. Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music.
3. Improvising melodies, variations, and accompaniments.
4. Composing and arranging music within specified guidelines.
5. Reading and notating music.
6. Listening to, analyzing, and describing music.
7. Evaluating music and music performances.
8. Understanding relationships between music, the other arts, and disciplines outside the arts.
9. Understanding music in relation to history and culture.29

Classroom series reflect this in their inclusion of sporadic pieces of information or exercises, often in highlighted boxes between performance exercises. Occasionally, series mention singing (standard one) as an introductory exercise. Other than the most obvious standards two and five, the most common of these is standard eight, particularly in reference to music history. Tradition of Excellence’s

“Resources” page is located in the back of the book and features a world map (which oddly omits Switzerland and Portugal in its Western Europe highlight box), two paragraphs of bassoon history, and a bulleted list of bassoon “fun facts.”

30 Essential Elements adds a history of the bassoon to its title page and proceeds to disperse extra-musical facts throughout the book without a distinct resources section. Sound Innovations includes a section labeled “How to Practice” in its instrument assembly and notation introduction, making it the only method reviewed to address practicing. All three classroom series include an indexed glossary.

In contrast, the bassoon methods address almost none of these, arguably a result of being written much earlier than the National Standards and the beginning of the comprehensive musicianship trend in the 1970 and 80s. Neither of the bassoon methods includes glossaries or specialized resource sections. All include introductory pages and forewords, however, whose pedagogical prioritizations will be addressed in the next chapter.

New Bassoon Methods

Three fundamental approaches to teaching beginning bassoonists are currently rising in popularity in the world of private bassoon teaching:

30 Pearson and Nowlin, 47.

31 Lautzenheiser, 1.

32 Sheldon, 4.

contemporary editions of traditional methods, such as Doug Spaniol’s *New Weissenborn Method*; entirely new print-only methods, such as Michael Curtis’s *New Millennium Method* and Cheryl Huddleston’s *Foundations for Success*; and online video series such as Kristin Wolfe Jensen’s “Music and the Bassoon.” Each of these approaches presents a different progression of pitch introduction, treatment of bassoon-specific techniques, and attitudes toward comprehensive musicianship.

For the *New Weissenborn Method*, Spaniol adds a substantial introductory section to discuss many of the topics omitted in the original *Practical Method*. Several pages include prose instructions and detailed picture sequences to teach instrument assembly and care, posture, hand position, embouchure formation and manipulation, articulation process, and reed care and adjustment. Notably, this is the only method to address the details of reed making and adjustment, as it is the only book designed exclusively for older students transferring to bassoon from other instruments. When topics of half-hole and venting techniques appear, Spaniol adds descriptive instructions for the execution of each and repeats them when the technique appears for subsequent notes, such as half-holed F-sharp and G-sharp and vented B, B-flat, and C. In terms of comprehensive musicianship, the *New Weissenborn* still focuses exclusively on developing technical proficiency and preparedness for a career in bassoon playing. Therefore, it includes only historical information as relevant to the development of the instrument and does not incorporate any extra-musical skills or concepts.

Curtis emphasizes the importance of taking private bassoon lessons and uses an assumption of such to justify omitting instructions for instrument assembly and
care, posture, hand position, embouchure formation, and articulation process in his *New Millennium Method*.

To address the fingering issue of the half-hole, Curtis labels for the notes G and A-flat citing “½ hole” and “¼ hole,” respectively, but does not address the manner by which the student should achieve these fingerings (Figure 12).

![Figure 12: “1/4 hole” indication in New Millennium Method exercise.](image)

The *New Millennium Method* includes an introductory chart, which offers only one option for each pitch. As the progressive etudes mandate alternate fingerings, the method introduces them on a need-to-know basis, establishing a solid concept of the “standard” and “alternate” fingerings for every note. Finally, Curtis emphasizes the difficulty and demands of playing the bassoon and encourages regular private

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35 Curtis, 7.

36 Curtis, 12.
instruction and joining the bassoon community to have access to continual resources, specifically via the International Double Reed Society.  

Following similar pedagogical assumptions, Huddleston omits many introductory skills in *Foundations for Success*. This approach does, however, include an appendix for private instructors to offer tips for teaching students to sit, breathe, and articulate in a natural, relaxed manner. To teach half-hole and flicking techniques, however, *Foundations for Success* diverts from the sequencing of *New Millennium Method* and dedicates prose and exercises to learn and drill both. In addition to addressing the specifics of finger motion, Huddleston offers suggestions for alterations to embouchure, changes in air speed, and practice methods to increase accuracy. Similar to—and also suggested as a complementary method to—the Weissenborn method, *Foundations for Success* intends to teach only technical proficiency. As a result, no emphasis whatsoever is placed on developing comprehensive musicianship.

Kristin Wolfe Jensen takes a significantly different approach with her online method, “Music and the Bassoon.” This method is an entirely online approach, complete with a series of 50 units with multiple video lessons and play-along mp3s for each. She has written and transcribed many “tuneful” exercises for beginning

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37 Curtis, 1.


39 Huddleston, 52.

40 Huddleston, 30-37.
students, emphasizing in her introduction the importance of teaching via fun, memorable tunes as opposed to “boring” exercises.41 She incorporates specific video lessons with young student models to explain and demonstrate both half-hole and flicking techniques. Finally, Jensen’s teacher, parent, and student introductions more strongly emphasize comprehensive musicianship than other resources. She places great importance on listening, problem solving, singing, exploring “intuitive expression” and appropriate style, memorizing and playing by ear, behaving professional, experimenting, goal-setting, and self-reflecting.42 Through this approach, Jensen aspires to firmly place the techniques of playing the bassoon in a greater realm of musical, academic, and human knowledge, but her approach includes no print materials and follows the most bassoon-friendly pitch introduction progression, which makes it less useful for students whose primary musical outlets are contemporary band classes.

In conclusion, the general scope of resources used in band classrooms and private instruction differ greatly and result in pedagogical gaps that could frustrate both teachers and students. Exclusive instruction based on classroom series fails to equip students with appropriate fingerings and bassoon-specific techniques, but succeeds in establishing music as a life activity and relating performance aspects to music theory, music and world history, and audience interaction. Contrary to this,


42 Jensen.
exclusive instruction via bassoon methods enables students to be more technically proficient, but does so in a musical, academic, and oftentimes expressive vacuum.

The most viable and highly recommended solution is to use both approaches simultaneously by participating in school band programs and taking additional private lessons. This, however, results in issues with the compatibility of skill and concept sequencing, as addressed in the next chapter. With these gaps in mind, there exists a need for a companion method for beginning bassoonists to use alongside their classroom band series. Ultimately, there is a way to bridge the gap between the classroom and private instruction approaches to ease the process of teaching beginning bassoonists.
CHAPTER TWO:
IDENTIFYING PEDAGOGICAL PRIORITIES AND GAPS

The curricular methods available to beginning bassoonists vary greatly in their priorities of sequencing instrument-specific skills and general musical concepts. The differences in these sequences results in pedagogical gaps, areas in which students are underserved by either approach alone. This chapter organizes musical skills and concepts into the following categories: introduction of new pitches in relationship to assumed range and metric and rhythmic complexity, treatment of bassoon-specific half-hole and venting techniques, and emphasis on comprehensive musicianship.

Pedagogical Priorities

The extent to which each method dedicates space, prose, and video lessons reveals a great deal about both the perceived weaknesses of young bassoonists and also the pedagogical priorities of the authors. The focuses of the introductions and forewords, topics included in musical and cross-disciplinary sections, and skills highlighted in video lessons differ between the two fields, resulting in pedagogical gaps between classroom band and instrument-specific method approaches to teaching beginning bassoonists.

The introduction to each band series highlights the joy of music and the book as a beginning of a long-term musical life, but none are particularly specific. *Tradition of Excellence* cites the “rewards and challenges” that lead to “many
rewarding years of bassoon playing.”\textsuperscript{43} and \textit{Sound Innovations} suggests that a life in music is beyond the book and classroom—“attending concerts, playing in a community band, and supporting the arts... pursue a career in music as a performer, teacher, composer, sound engineer, or conductor.”\textsuperscript{44} \textit{Essential Elements} does not reference the bassoon at all, but rather lists only an acrostic for “MUSIC” written by Tim Lautzenheiser (Figure 13).

![Figure 13: “MUSIC” acrostic in \textit{Essential Elements} introduction.\textsuperscript{45}](image)

The video lessons are a great deal more specific and unified across the series. All three include lessons teaching instrument assembly and daily care, posture and hand position, embouchure formation, and tone production. This is the extent of the lessons for \textit{Essential Elements}, but \textit{Tradition of Excellence} includes additional lessons on half-hole and flicking techniques and the “alternate B-flat,” as mentioned in the previous chapter. \textit{Sound Innovations} includes the most lessons, with additional instruction on breathing, dynamics (crescendo and decrescendo), articulation (slurs,

\textsuperscript{43} Pearson and Nowlin, 1.

\textsuperscript{44} Sheldon, 1.

\textsuperscript{45} Lautzenheiser, 1.
staccato, legato, and accents), tone quality, maintenance (corks, pads, springs, and screws), and reeds.

In contrast to these, the bassoon methods feature technically specific and practical forewords and no multimedia resources. The Weissenborn *Practical Method* emphasizes the need for prospective students to have “a working knowledge of the rudiments of music” and encourages previous instrumental study, preferably on piano or cello. Additionally, this method specifies that practice should occur in three short periods daily, increasing over the first year to total two hours every day.\(^\text{46}\) The *Rubank Elementary Method* focuses on the importance of ear training, followed by highlights of the role of singing and long tones,\(^\text{47}\) but makes no mention of practice goals or techniques.

**Pitch Introduction, Range, and Rhythmic Complexity**

One of the most apparent differences between classroom series and bassoon methods is the order of pitch introduction. As most bassoon methods are created with ease of playing in mind, beginning exercises tend to focus on notes in the bass clef staff and in the keys of C or F Major. This enables students to focus on the mechanics of playing the instrument with more simplistic fingerings, the majority of which involve moving only one finger at a time. In contrast, concert band approaches must appeal to the majority of students in a heterogeneous instrumental setting, thus fixating on keys of B-flat and E-flat Major, which have the

\(^{46}\) Weissenborn, 3.

\(^{47}\) Skornicka, 2.
same technical advantages as above but for the more common woodwind instruments such as clarinet and saxophone. Thus, beginning bassoonists are ill-served by their band books alone, which, as addressed in the previous literature review, offer little to no assistance with the specific issues of playing the bassoon. Students are left to struggle with fingerings that are inherently more complex than those their band companions face.

To combat these struggles, many band directors require beginning bassoonists to take private lessons. In these lessons, bassoon instructors rely on the staple methods of the field, the Weissenborn Practical Method and the Rubank Elementary Method. Instructors frequently select exercises from these methods out of order to parallel the range and tonal demands of their students’ band classes. Appendix A lists the order of pitch introduction both in the three classroom band series and also in the three bassoon methods.

As indicated in Appendix A, the classroom band series progress initially through pitches involved in the keys of B-flat, E-flat, and A-flat Major, while bassoon methods introduce those belonging to C and F Major. In addition to moving out of sequence in their method books, bassoon instructors often adapt exercises to the student’s current range or rhythmic understanding. Depending on which bassoon method students use in private instruction, their private instruction range differs greatly from that of their band classes. The Weissenborn generally remains in and below the bass clef staff for a longer period of time than classroom series, and the Rubank moves above the staff and into the tenor register much faster. Many
instructors have also been known to write their own exercises to supplement their meager findings of appropriately overlapping repertoire.

Appendix B illustrates key pitches on the bassoon in the general order that classroom series introduce them. For each pitch, the chart lists the student’s assumed range at the moment of introduction in classroom series, the Weissenborn method, and the *Rubank* Method. After comparing these sequences, a clear lack of bassoon repertoire is visible for teaching the following pitches to a student with limited range:

- B-flat 2
- E-flat 2
- G 2
- B-flat 3
- C 3

Additionally, teaching the pitch E-natural using bassoon methods frequently involves either of the following: 1) teaching B-natural, in order to remain in C Major; or 2) relying on use of the low F-natural, to cadence in F Major. Neither of these pitches is covered in common first year band curricula.

Appendices C and D list the same pitches as Appendix B, but now in reference to the student’s assumed understanding of rhythmic and metric complexity for all three pedagogical approaches. In this comparison, the lack of bassoon repertoire arises in teaching students the following pitches with subdivisions at the eighth note level and in simple meter only:

- A-flat 1
- A-flat 2
- C-sharp or D-flat 2
It is worth noting that the Weissenborn method takes a significantly more advanced approach in its inclusion of compound meters and meters with half note basis. As a result of this, useable exercises for students with more basic metric understanding are sporadic, and instructors risk overwhelming young students with a text that includes many unknown symbols so early on.

Ultimately, classroom series move quickly through the flat half of the circle of fifths, typically B-flat, E-flat, and A-flat major first, while bassoon methods begin with notes that are easiest to produce on the instrument, starting students in C, F, and G major. This creates a curricular gap of exercises that are rhythmically basic and narrowly ranged. For example, bassoon method exercises designed to help a student practice the note A-flat requires them to know sixteenth note subdivisions, complex meter, and a range of well over an octave. This note can be found in the classroom series in eighth note subdivisions, simple meter, and after developing a range of a minor seventh. Similarly, a band director teaching single eighth note rhythms requires his beginning bassoonists to consistently articulate notes in the half-hole and flick registers, uncomfortably high and generally awkward for many beginners. Currently, no approach in either the most popular concert band or private bassoon methods addresses these repertoire gaps, and treatment of even just these first year issues could ease many frustrations of many beginning bassoonists and prepare them for greater success in subsequent years.
**Half-hole and Venting Techniques**

As addressed in the previous literature review, the introductions of certain notes involve bassoon-specific techniques of half-hole fingerings and venting. Treatment of these introductions and exercises included to develop the corresponding skills also varies across approaches and identifies another gap. In both the Weissenborn and *Rubank* methods, the first half-holed pitch (G2) is presented with no mention of the fingering technique required, a considerably less conscientious approach than even in the classroom series that attempt to provide basic approaches to the new skill.

Many of these findings hold true with venting techniques as well. Most students encounter this first via the top line A on the bass clef staff, and the fingering provided in their classroom book is often identical to the lower octave with the exception of a removed whisper key. If venting is mentioned, rarely does the book duplicate this information in the fingering chart, where most students are likely to look when struggling. Additionally, the few resources that include DVD lessons for this topic teach flicking only, a much faster technique with generally less accuracy than venting. If students do not watch the supplementary lesson, neither skill is taught in any way.

The pedagogical gap for these topics, then, arises in the accuracy and depth of pedagogy in the classroom series and the lack of a printed record of field-accepted teachings in the bassoon methods. Without the benefit of a private instructor who consistently reminds students of the key elements in developing these bassoon-specific skills, beginners are unlikely to ever engrain accurate
execution. An ideal method would combine the concept of written reminders and fingering chart notes as presented in some classroom series with the practice techniques and attention to detail common in the world of private instruction.

**Comprehensive Musicianship**

Comprehensive musicianship is perhaps the largest and most easily observable pedagogical gap explored in this document. As discussed previously, public school music programs prioritize the non-performance musical skills of composition, improvisation, and awareness of music history and theory while bassoon methods frequently omit them. This gap highlights the philosophical difference between public and private bassoon instruction: to what extent should a method prepare students for more than technical achievement on the instrument? Creating a method to bridge between the two fields requires adopting the broadest philosophical goals, mandating the inclusion of comprehensive musicianship in a new bassoon method.

Despite the pedagogically sound and appealing approaches of many classroom and bassoon methods, none succeed in fully addressing these pedagogical gaps of pitch introduction as related to assumed range and metric understanding, bassoon-specific half-hole and venting techniques, and comprehensive musicianship. In an ever-developing educational environment, beginning bassoonists must have access to materials emphasizing comprehensive musicianship while still teaching concrete skills via appropriate pedagogy.
CHAPTER THREE:
TEACHER TRAINING AND RESOURCES

School band directors have at least three written resources for teaching beginning bassoonists: texts on general woodwind pedagogy, bassoon-specific books written by professional bassoonists and pedagogues, and articles written by college bassoon professors and published in either music education or double reed journals. The following chapter will explore how these types of resources teach the primary beginning bassoon concerns: introductory skills such as posture, embouchure formation, and articulation and quantity and quality of instruction dedicated to skills of venting and half-holing.

Teacher Training

For the purpose of analyzing teacher training, this document will assume that classroom band directors have completed a music education program through an accredited higher education institution and therefore have completed some form of woodwind techniques or methods course. In his dissertation, Daniel Duncan found that the majority of music education programs covered all woodwind instruments in a single class\(^48\), with the bassoon being taught for a median of four weeks\(^49\). In


\(^{49}\) Duncan, 44.
10.5% of his results, however, the bassoon was not taught at all in the combined woodwind techniques course.50

Specific to the two categories of introductory and bassoon-specific skills, Duncan’s survey found that 97% of programs listed “discuss[ing] good embouchure” as important while only 72% found it important to “play with good embouchure”. Similarly, to “discuss good tonguing” and “good hand position” were important to 89% of programs, but the importance of “demonstrat[ing] tonguing styles” dropped to 30%. This lower prioritization of demonstrating bassoon skills may explain directors’ future discomfort with teaching them. Few woodwind techniques courses revealed that demonstrating good hand position or discussing and demonstrating posture were of high priority.51 Additionally, the courses appeared to not cover the half-hole or venting techniques in any way.

Perhaps, then, teacher education programs rely on their texts to cover such skills. One of the most frequently utilized teacher training materials is Richard Colwell and Michael Hewitt’s *The Teaching of Instrumental Music*. In this text, Colwell and Hewitt include a bassoon chapter with subsections for the following topics: history, selecting an instrument, assembly, holding position, embouchure, intonation, “tone and effects,” vibrato, “tonguing,” fingering, reeds, care and maintenance, health issues, and “troubleshooting.”52 When considering the topics

50 Duncan, 46.

51 Duncan, 64.

selected for the purposes of this project, the instrument assembly and care and posture sections are of the least concern. Instructions are clear, detailed, and accurate. Pictures are provided for seated posture and the front and back of each hand position, with the only concern being one collapsed right wrist depicted.\textsuperscript{53}

The treatment of embouchure formation and articulation process creates more pedagogical issues, however. While addressed in detail and with emphasis on avoiding biting, the description of embouchure is prose-driven and convoluted. Ultimately, Colwell and Hewitt recommend encouraging young students to experiment with reed and lip placement and to use "acceptable tone" as an aural indicator of embouchure success,\textsuperscript{54} which offers almost no pedagogical consistency. In terms of articulation, ideal tonguing location is identified as "one-quarter to one-eighth inch from the tip" on the underside of the reed with the area on the tongue "about a half inch from the tip on the top side."\textsuperscript{55} The overarching issue with such a specific physical description lies in interpretation. Although recommending use of the very tip of the tongue may establish habits of tension and overly harsh articulation in students, too much emphasis on the tongue center and reed blades encourages imprecision and inaccuracy.

For the bassoon-specific techniques of half-hole fingerings and venting, this text offers little to no information. Colwell and Hewitt dedicate one sentence to the use of half-holing on F-sharp, G, and G-sharp, but then proceed to note that these

\textsuperscript{53} Colwell and Hewitt, 161.

\textsuperscript{54} Colwell and Hewitt, 162.

\textsuperscript{55} Colwell and Hewitt, 165.
notes also sound (if with harsher tone quality) when the student lifts the left hand index finger entirely,\textsuperscript{56} a technique used only in extreme situations in the bassoon community. Neither venting nor flicking are mentioned whatsoever. Despite these oversights, a great strength of this resource is the “troubleshooting” section, which categorizes several common student errors by the type of sound produced—gurgling, “raucous,” “pinched,” “strident,” uncontrolled, flat, and sharp.\textsuperscript{57}

Another potential resource for classroom teachers is Gene Griswold’s 2012 \textit{Teaching Woodwinds}. Of particular note in this text, Griswold dedicates a full page with photographs to developing the bassoon embouchure, in which he labels the bassoon embouchure as “the most unrestrained” when compared to that of oboe, clarinet, and saxophone. He also lists several exercises to develop embouchure musculature, though the exercises are simply listed, with no significant commentary or goals.\textsuperscript{58} Similarly, half-holing is presented in exercise format, via slurred octave Gs, but no prose is present to describe the technique or its significance.\textsuperscript{59} Flicking is listed in fingering chart format with the instruction “tap designated flick keys for upper notes.”\textsuperscript{60} Despite the brevity of these presentations, the information is generally that which is taught in bassoon methods.

\textsuperscript{56} Colwell and Hewitt, 166.

\textsuperscript{57} Colwell and Hewitt, 170-171.


\textsuperscript{59} Griswold, 88.

\textsuperscript{60} Griswold, 99.
One final contemporary resource may be J. Si Millican’s *Starting Out Right: Beginning-Band Pedagogy*. Written in 2012, this book’s chapters on “First Sounds on Wind Instruments” and “Advanced Instrumental Pedagogy” should theoretically include the most contemporary bassoon teaching approaches. In this resource, posture is presented in a universal approach, not specific to any one instrument. Millican presents the ideal posture with five basic components: feet shoulder width apart, weight balanced evenly, standing tall, slightly lifted upper body, and relaxed and rounded shoulders. The bassoon is taught tone production in tandem with the oboe, not differentiating between the fundamental approaches to embouchure. Millican’s approach to embouchure involves the following: rolling the bottom lip over the bottom teeth, placing the tip of the reed on the bottom lip, rolling the top lip in line with the bottom, supporting the reed with pressure from all sides, keeping the corners of the mouth firm, and keeping the teeth open. This resonates well with the general schools of embouchure taught in traditional bassoon pedagogy. Additionally, the bassoon is highlighted later in the book, and a paragraph is dedicated to each half-hole and flicking techniques. The half-hole section emphasizes rolling the left hand index finger, rather than lifting and placing or


63 Millican, 60.
sliding, and insisting that students use this technique from the first day they encounter one of the three half-hole notes.\textsuperscript{64} The flicking paragraph also recommends insisting student execution for each of the four flicked notes from their introduction and assigning exercises involving large upward slurs to those notes.\textsuperscript{65}

With this level of detail present in teacher training resources, it is surprising to still perceive a widespread lack of bassoon-specific fundamental skills. Perhaps teacher education programs do not use resources such as these on a regular basis, leaving teachers not only unaware of the issues identified as in the pedagogical gap, but also of many fundamental aspects of bassoon playing. This project will therefore also take into consideration the potential lack of knowledge the average beginning bassoonist’s public teacher may have regarding the specifics of sound production.

\textbf{Bassoon-Specific Resources}

Although quite old by today’s reference standards, \textit{The Bassoon and Contrabassoon} (1965) by Lyndesay Langwill and William Spencer’s \textit{The Art of Bassoon Playing} (1958) are arguably the most common resources for bassoonists studying bassoon pedagogy. These two resources summarize many fundamental concepts of traditional bassoon playing and could potentially be a resource for band directors, as well. Langwill dedicates one chapter to “Technique, Capabilities, and Tutors,” in which he encourages William Waterhouse’s approach to embouchure as

\textsuperscript{64} Millican, 152.

\textsuperscript{65} Millican, 153.
one allowing the reed to enter the lips “lay of jaw.”

Continuing with the concept of tension release, Langwill supports removing the weight of the bassoon from the hands and neck however possible, thus enabling the performer to achieve a “larger and better tone.” This source, however, does not address specific techniques such as half-holing or venting, likely relegating it to private instruction.

Much like the other books in its series, The Art of Bassoon Playing includes chapters for “the instrument,” which includes information on selecting appropriate equipment, checking and adjusting key work, instrument care, and basic playing posture; the reed; tone production; articulation; “innovations,” which highlights the use of extended techniques and key work advancements; and “selected literature and discography.”

The book is designed as a resource for high school and college bassoon teachers, but it is often a required reference for performers, as well. This resource would be of great value to band directors, particularly for its detail in sections such as “Selecting the Reed,” “The Embouchure,” and “Fingering.” William Spencer dedicates several pages to half-hole and flicking techniques,

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67 Langwill, 162.


69 Spencer, 5.

70 Spencer, 29-34.

71 Spencer, 48-52.

72 Spencer, 56-64.
describing instances in which the student should use each and accompanying the descriptions with musical examples. One passage differentiates the opening of the whisper key, which does not break the air column to automatically speak upper octave notes, from pressing an octave key as on a clarinet or saxophone, which does.

Ultimately, there exist multiple bassoon-specific resources that address the issues experienced most frequently by beginning bassoonists and not covered in classroom method books. As evidenced by the general lack of consistent instruction in agreement with accepted bassoon pedagogy, however, these resources are either not available to or not understood by the majority of public school band directors. Additionally, these resources are quite outdated— the most recent of the two addressed in this document was published in 1965, thus opening the door for contemporary, more audience-aware approaches to these bassoon-specific topics.

**Periodical Publications**

In addition to many general instrumental textbooks and bassoon-specific references, teachers of beginning bassoonists can find pedagogical articles published in field-specific journals, including those of the International Double Reed Society, *The Double Reed*, and those created for audiences of public school teachers, such as *North Carolina Music Educator, Bandmasters Review*, and *The Instrumentalist*. Typically, these articles are written by bassoon professors from around the United States. Issues relating to tone production are much more frequently addressed in peer-reviewed articles than fingering techniques, but assistance with fingerings are still emphasized to a much greater degree than in
teacher training materials and classroom instructional series. Professional
dassoonists from geographically and pedagogically diverse backgrounds have
published several recent articles to address these common topics. The following
section will briefly compare the advice given in these articles as related specifically
to fundamentals of posture and tone production and introduction of half-hole and
vented fingerings.

In a 2013 article in The Bandmasters Review David Rachor, former bassoon
professor at the University of Northern Iowa, advises against allowing students to
use a neck strap in order to avoid a collapsed, tense posture.73 Nathan Koch of Sam
Houston State University addresses the concept of tension in another issue of the
same journal, instead focusing on the value of lower expansion when breathing, as
opposed to a rising chest motion.74 In addition to postural tension, many articles
offer tips on teaching a successful embouchure. The University of North Carolina–
Greensboro’s Michael Burns writes in the North Carolina Music Educator that
analogies of drinking from a straw or whistling help beginners train proper lip
support, and excessive embouchure relaxation exercises avoid later issues of biting
the reed.75 In The Double Reed, Terry Ewell, formerly of Towson University, also

73 David Rachor, “Director’s Guide: The First Bassoon Lesson,” The

74 Nathan Koch, “Halt! Step Away from the Bassoon!” The Bandmasters

75 Michael Burns, “Strategies for Teaching the Bassoon Embouchure,” North
Carolina Music Educator 54, no. 4 (Raleigh: North Carolina Music Educators
advocates whistling, but is specific about having the student whistle a low pitch then roll in the lips manually with his or her finger.\textsuperscript{76}

In order to demystify the fingering skills of half-holing and flicking, several of these bassoon articles devote a small amount of space to explaining teaching techniques. Ewell suggests easing the downward rolling motion of the left index finger for half-holing by covering the tone hole with the upper portion of the finger, closer toward the thumb.\textsuperscript{77} Rather than focusing on teaching techniques to help beginners, Ewell addresses flicking by simply stressing the importance of explaining the need for the technique. This can be done by comparing attack qualities of repeated articulations on top line A, which will crack or speak indistinctly, with those of a vented A, which will speak cleanly.\textsuperscript{78} Similarly, Burns describes the specifics of half-hole technique and the varying degrees to which the hole must be opened, but flicking is addressed only by comparing it to venting and describing students’ general opposition to learning it.\textsuperscript{79} In contrast, Koch suggests transposing bass clarinet parts for beginning bassoonists rather than require them to cross the break so early in their training.\textsuperscript{80} Rachor and Polk do not address half-hole or

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{76} Terry Ewell, “Teaching the Beginning Bassoonist,” \textit{The Double Reed} 23, no. 2 (East Lansing: International Double Reed Society, 2000): 37.
\item \textsuperscript{77} Ewell, 39.
\item \textsuperscript{78} Ewell, 40.
\item \textsuperscript{80} Koch, 18.
\end{itemize}
flicking techniques at all, but bassoonists have been producing articles to address these bassoon-specific techniques for decades.

Despite being written by bassoonists from various locations and pedagogical schools around the country and separated in publication date by years, all of these articles address the same two issues: tone production and bassoon-specific fingering issues. This suggests that the field of professional bassoonists universally perceives a lack of proper instruction for these topics. The continuous production of new resources to address this issue combines with the existing bassoon-specific texts and teacher training materials to create an ever-expanding bank of pedagogical material for teachers of beginning bassoonists.

In briefly exploring these three categories of teacher resources—teacher training programs and materials, bassoon resources, and recent publications—interesting trends arise. Generally, teacher training programs align with classroom instructional series in that they do not adequately address the fundamentals of bassoon tone posture and production or the fingering specifics of half-holing and venting. Seemingly in order to compensate for this lack of information, numerous bassoon-specific pedagogical materials, woodwind techniques texts, and journal articles present a variety of solutions to these teaching problems. With many band directors and students still not demonstrating knowledge of these, however, the true gap must lie within the communication of these techniques from the bassoon world into the heterogeneous classroom.
CHAPTER FOUR:
A PROPOSED SOLUTION

The best venue by which to address the above pedagogical gaps may truly be the student’s individual band book. This book is his or her individual access point to valuable instrument-specific information, and a new method addressing the issues above would improve the quality and clarity of that information. Creating a method to best align with current trends in classroom instructional series involves writing for a particular assumed student and teaching situation. For the purpose of creating *Just for Bassoonists*, the following assumptions have been made:

1. The student is a beginning bassoonist with no previous instrumental experience.
2. The student does not have access to a private bassoon instructor.
3. The student is enrolled in a public school band program with regular (daily or bi-daily) rehearsals with a certified music teacher.
4. Said band program utilizes a single classroom instructional series and teaches skill and concept development in the same progression as that.

In order to focus on fundamental skills, *Just for Bassoonists* parallels public school band curriculum only for the first year of study, as presented in book one of the average classroom series.

This new companion method focuses on development of the following skills in a bassoon-specific context: seated posture, hand position, embouchure formation, role of the embouchure in adjusting pitch and tone, articulation process and tone production, half-hole fingerings, and venting. *Just for Bassoonists* includes prose and
photographic reminders of the ideal fundamentals of physical setup and tone production, thus taking on a partial role of a private instructor.

*Just for Bassoonists* includes its own icon-based fingering chart and units dedicated to half-holing and venting to correct many fingering-related mistakes in typical classroom instruction. This method teaches students to half-hole in great technical detail, emphasizing awareness of finger placement and mindfulness in the rolling process. To reach the tenor register, the student is first introduced to the concept of venting, where the corresponding left thumb keys are taught as part of the basic fingering for A through C above bass clef. After several exercises to enable fluidity with these fingerings, the student is introduced to flicking as a “subtractive” skill from venting. In essence, flicking then can be perceived as easier than the regular fingering, which is quite the opposite of many young students’ experience with this skill. Exercises written specifically to drill each of these techniques in appropriate ranges accompany the prose instructions, photographs, and future videos.

To address another one of the more frustrating issues for double reed players and their teachers, *Just for Bassoonists* includes an appendix specifically designed to teach students how to identify and secure quality reeds and make minor adjustments, as is often necessary with store-bought beginner reeds. This section may be of interest to both the students and their directors, but it is crucial for beginning bassoonists to develop fluency and independence in reed selection and adjustment as soon as possible, as it plays a significant role in basic tone production.
Finally, the method also concludes with a list of supplementary printed and online bassoon resources accessible to beginners.

In addition to bassoon-specific skills, *Just for Bassoonists* emphasizes the students’ development as a complete musician. As public music education as a whole moves toward the new Core Arts Standards, drafts reveal a new conceptual division of musical knowledge into four “artistic processes”: creating, performing, responding, and connecting.⁸¹ Via this model, music students learn three approaches to music independent of performance, and with the public school emphasis on these nonperformance and extra-musical connections, any new method should incorporate these, as well. As the method progresses, *Just for Bassoonists* strategically introduces comprehensive musicianship exercises to develop fluency in non-performance skills such as composition, improvisation, critical listening and evaluation, and connecting across other arts and aiding in the development of intellectual skills useful in all academic disciplines.

The future of *Just for Bassoonists* will be in the form of a printed (and optional downloaded electronic) book with supplementary videos online. The book as exists for the purposes of this document does not yet include the forthcoming supplementary videos, but does indicate where they will occur and what they will address along the course of instruction. The videos will draw inspiration from both DVD lessons as accompanying existing classroom series and Kristin Wolfe Jensen’s “Music and the Bassoon” website to create a bank of reference videos. These will

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review fundamentals and also provide opportunities for students to not only hear, but also play with a model bassoonist via a collection of progressive duets.

The curriculum for *Just for Bassoonists* follows the pitch and rhythmic introduction sequences most common in contemporary classroom series but with exercises designed to develop strong habits in bassoon-specific techniques and usage of appropriate fingerings. Appendix E reflects the curricular sequencing for the series. Note the departure *Just for Bassoonists* makes from the classroom series as represented in Appendices A, B, C, and D: a slightly expanded range. This is done to allow students to reinforce freedom of airflow and relaxed embouchure by exploring the bassoon’s middle and lower registers, where students employ these skills more naturally.

Ultimately, *Just for Bassoonists* accompanies the current leading texts for the first year of beginning concert band programs without undermining the numerous benefits to individual private instruction. By marrying contemporary bassoon pedagogy with the sequencing and multidisciplinary approaches found in heterogeneous instrumental group classes, this method will better prepare beginning bassoonists for a successful career with the bassoon while molding their instrument-specific skills not in a vacuum, but rather in a manner applicable to their band participation. Through this approach, bassoonists and their teachers will avoid many of the aforementioned frustrations, and the bassoon can become as approachable and accessible a beginning instrument as any other member of the woodwind family.
APPENDIX A:
PITCH INTRODUCTION SEQUENCES

The chart below lists the order of pitch introduction in the typical classroom method series. The pitches can generally organized into categories labeled “First Range,” representing the first group of pitches used for an extended period of exercise, followed by a progressive series of “Extensions,” representing notes expanding the students’ range or adding chromatic alterations to pitches already known. For the purposes of this chart, octaves are labeled as they appear in the bassoon’s range. For example, C3 is middle C, as it is the third possible octave of C on the bassoon.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Classroom Series</th>
<th>Weissenborn</th>
<th>Rubank</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Range</td>
<td>Bb2 – F2</td>
<td>F1 – F2</td>
<td>G1 – F2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extension 1</td>
<td>G2</td>
<td>Bb2</td>
<td>G2</td>
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<td>Extension 2</td>
<td>A1, Ab1</td>
<td>Ab1</td>
<td>A2, B3, C3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extension 3</td>
<td>A2, Ab2</td>
<td>Eb2, Db2</td>
<td>F1</td>
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<td>Extension 4</td>
<td>Bb3</td>
<td>G2, F#2</td>
<td>Bb2</td>
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<td>Extension 5</td>
<td>E2, Db2</td>
<td>F#1</td>
<td>D3</td>
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<td>Extension 6</td>
<td>C3</td>
<td>A2, Bb3</td>
<td>Eb2</td>
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<td>Extension 7</td>
<td>F#2/Gb2</td>
<td>E1, D1</td>
<td>E3, F3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extension 8</td>
<td>C#2</td>
<td>B3, C3, Db3, D3</td>
<td>F#1, F#2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extension 9</td>
<td>(End of range.)</td>
<td>Eb1, C1, B1, Bb1</td>
<td>E1, Eb1, D1, C1, Bb1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extension 10</td>
<td></td>
<td>Eb3, E3, F3, F#3, G3, Ab3, A3, Bb4</td>
<td>Ab2, C#2, C#3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Extension 11</td>
<td>(End of range.)</td>
<td>Gb3, G3, Ab3, A3, Bb4</td>
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APPENDIX B:
METHOD RANGE ASSUMPTIONS

The chart below compares the student range assumed at the introduction of the pitch in the first column based on the exercises first utilizing that pitch. Pitches are presented in the same order as presented in classroom band instructional series. For example, the first pitch compared is third space E-flat: classroom series incorporate this note when students have the range of a perfect fifth, as compared to its later introduction in the Weissenborn Practical Method and Rubank Elementary Method, when students need a functional range of an octave or major tenth, respectively, in order to perform the exercises utilizing that same E-flat.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pitch</th>
<th>Classroom Range</th>
<th>Weissenborn Range</th>
<th>Rubank Range</th>
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APPENDIX C:
METHOD METRIC ASSUMPTIONS

The chart below compares the student metric understanding as assumed at the introduction of the pitch in the first column based on the exercises first utilizing that pitch. Pitches are presented in the same order as presented in classroom band instructional series. For example, the first pitch compared is third space E-flat: classroom series incorporate this note when students have a functional understanding of simple duple meters, as compared to its later introduction in the Weissenborn *Practical Method*, when students must also know simple triple, compound duple, and compound triple meters in order to perform exercises utilizing that same E-flat.

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<th>Weissenborn Meter</th>
<th>Rubank Meter</th>
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<td>3:2</td>
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<td>3:4</td>
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APPENDIX D:
METHOD RHYTHMIC ASSUMPTIONS

The chart below compares the student rhythmic understanding as assumed at the introduction of the pitch in the first column based on the exercises first utilizing that pitch. Pitches are presented in the same order as presented in classroom band instructional series. For example, the first pitch compared is third space E-flat: classroom series incorporate this note when students have a functional understanding of whole, half, and quarter notes, as compared to its later introduction in the Weissenborn *Practical Method*, when students must also know eighth and sixteenth note patterns and be able to subdivide at the sixteenth note level in order to perform exercises utilizing that same E-flat.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pitch</th>
<th>Classroom Rhythm</th>
<th>Weissenborn Rhythm</th>
<th>Rubank Rhythm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>(Quarter note subdivision.)</em></td>
<td><em>(Sixteenth note subdivision.)</em></td>
<td><em>(Quarter note subdivision.)</em></td>
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<td>( \text{Note} )</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<td>( \text{16th} )</td>
<td>(32\textsuperscript{nd} note subdivision.)</td>
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<td>( \text{8th} )</td>
<td>(Eighth note subdivision.)</td>
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<td>( \text{4th} )</td>
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APPENDIX E:

JUST FOR BASSOONISTS CURRICULAR SEQUENCE

The chart below lists the order of pitch introduction in *Just for Bassoonists*, and for each pitch, the corresponding columns reveal the student’s assumed functional range and rhythmic and metric understanding. For the purposes of this chart, octaves are labeled as they appear in the bassoon’s range. For example, C3 is middle C, as it is the third possible octave of C on the bassoon.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pitch</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Meters</th>
<th>Rhythms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>First Range</strong></td>
<td>Bb2 – F2</td>
<td>![Music Note]</td>
<td>![Music Note]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Extension 1</strong></td>
<td>A1, G1, F1</td>
<td>![Music Note]</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Extension 2</strong></td>
<td>E2</td>
<td>![Music Note]</td>
<td>![Music Note]</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Extension 3</strong></td>
<td>Ab1</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>(No added complexity.)</em></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| **Extension 4** | G2, Ab2 | ![Music Note] | }
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extension</th>
<th>Notes/Attributes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extension 5</td>
<td>A2, Bb3, C3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extension 6</td>
<td>Db2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extension 7</td>
<td>F#1, F#2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extension 8</td>
<td>B2, B3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BIBLIOGRAPHY


JUST FOR BASSOONISTS

A Companion Method to Beginning Band Curriculum

Cayla Bellamy
Preface:

Welcome to the wonderful world of the bassoon!

This method book is designed to help you grow as a bassoonist and musician. There are technical exercises, guiding concept questions, reflection prompts, and tactile descriptors for how playing the bassoon looks, feels, and sounds.

As you progress through this book, keep in mind that many of these topics are lifelong processes - you will meet many professionals and teachers who do some of these exercises everyday in their own practicing. Beginning to learn the bassoon can sometimes feel like a lonely process, especially if you are the only one in your band program. Just remember that there are many out there like you, and you can be in touch with many of them via the societies and websites listed at the end of this book.

If you move through the videos and exercises in order, you will encounter all of the notes and rhythms as in your method book, in very close to the same order. These exercises are “just for bassoonists,” and they will help you through some of the technical hurdles we bassoonists reach at different times than our peers.

Should you have any extra questions as you are practicing, feel free to contact me via www.caylabellamy.com

Best wishes, and happy bassooning!

Throughout this book, you will encounter the following symbol:

This indicates that a teaching video is available online at www.caylabellamy.com/method.
Activity Types:

*Introductions* - new notes, concepts, activities, or labels

*Exercises* - activities for you to practice skills and concepts

*Thoughts* - reflections, questions, and mental connections

*Sight, sound, touch* - focus on your senses to help you learn

Contents:

- Posture and Breathing .................. 3
- Assembly ............................... 5
- Holding Your Bassoon ................... 7
- Forming the Embouchure and Playing ... 9
  - First Notes (Bb-F) .................... 13
  - Moving Downward (A-F) ............... 23
  - Rolling over the Break (G, Ab) ........ 35
  - Venting and Moving Up (A-C) ......... 40
  - Soaring High (D-F) .................... 51
- Final Solo: The Star Spangled Banner .. 55
- Vitamins: Everyday Exercises .......... 56
  - All About Reeds ....................... 57
  - Taking Care of Your Bassoon ........... 61
  - Additional Resources .................. 62
  - Fingering Chart ...................... 63

*All exercises are original compositions written by Cayla Bellamy, unless otherwise indicated.*
Thoughts:
Notice how the bore - or hole through the middle - of each joint gets larger. This means the bassoon is a conical instrument, like a euphonium or tuba.

What do you think this means about the shape of the space inside of your reed?

Exercises:

Video #1: Sit, Float, Breathe
Sitting comfortably is very important to being able to play your bassoon with confidence. Watch the video, then follow these steps (without your bassoon) to find your best posture.

Sit with your feet flat on the floor and your knees below the level of your waist.

Pretend there is a string tied from your seat up through your spine and out the top of your head. Your whole body floats up along this string, like your head is a balloon.

Drop your jaw and breathe in slowly through your mouth. Make sure to let your belly and your back expand away from each other.

Sight, sound, touch:

*Feel* your shoulder blades sliding down your back when you sit up tall.

*Hear* a low rushing sound when you breathe in.
Exercises:

Video #2: Assembly

Now that you know all of the parts of the bassoon and know how to breathe well, watch the video and follow these steps assemble your bassoon and get ready to play.

Sit with your bassoon case on the floor and your seat strap on the front half of your chair. It should cross the chair about one hand's width away from the front edge.

Open the lid and remove the boot and wing joints. The wing joint fits inside the smaller hole of the boot joint so the keys line up.

Place the boot and wing joint solidly on the floor and remove the long joint from your case. The long joint fits inside the larger hole in the boot joint with the arc of keys facing upwards and forming a circle with the arc of keys on the wing joint.
Remove the bell from your case and hold down the pad with your thumb as you line the key up with the bridge from the long joint.

Hold your bocal as shown here and direct all pressure toward the cork while attaching the bocal to the wing joint.

Sight, sound, touch:

*Feel* the joints sliding together easily when you put your bassoon together.

Thoughts:

Which other instruments in your class have bells? What about reeds? What about a bend where the airstream changes direction, like in the boot joint?

Are there any parts of the bassoon that no other instruments have?
Exercises:

Video #3: Holding Your Bassoon

Along with the video, use the following questions and pictures to evaluate your playing position:

Is the bassoon balanced over your right leg?

Does your left hand touch the bassoon with the bottom knuckle of your first finger?

Does the reed naturally touch your bottom lip when you bring the bassoon to you?
Are your fingers curved gently, as if holding a tennis ball?

When you are in playing position, you should feel just as relaxed and natural as if you were not holding your instrument. If you feel tense, you might need to adjust your seat strap so the bassoon comes to you easily.

Sight, sound, touch:

Feel the bassoon touching only your right leg and your left hand.

See your music over the right side of your bassoon.

Thoughts:

Can you bring the bassoon to your mouth with just one hand?
What about two fingers, like the video?

Who else uses balance to hold their instruments?
Introductions:

- tip
- blade
- wrapping
- butt
- first wire
- second wire

Exercises:

Video #4: Forming the Embouchure

The term “embouchure” comes from the French word “bouche,” meaning “mouth.” When we form an embouchure, we use the muscles of our face and mouth to form a seal around the reed and direct the air through the bassoon.

Watch the video above and follow these steps to form your embouchure.
Try these steps first with a straw, like in the video. Then try them with your reed and bocal together. Finally, use these steps with your entire instrument in playing position.

Let your jaw drop and relax your lips.

Place the tip of the reed (or straw) in the middle of your bottom lip. Use the reed to push your lip into your mouth and just over your bottom teeth.

Draw the corners of your mouth inward so that your bottom lip is hugging the reed.

Lower your top lip gently onto the reed. Use the corners of your mouth to help the top lip hug the reed, too.

When your embouchure is formed, your mouth should be relaxed and open inside, as if you had ice cube on top of your tongue.
Thoughts:

Forming a bassoon embouchure uses specific muscles in your lips and at the corners of your mouth. Some other times you use the same muscles are when you are:

- blowing out a candle,
- making a fish face,
- drinking through a straw,
- and whistling.

Can you think of any more?

Exercises:

**Video #5: Expand and Play**

Now you are sitting with great posture and know how to form your embouchure. Review those, watch the video above, then follow these steps to play your first notes!

Practice a few expanding breaths by placing your hand on your stomach:

Your stomach should push your hand away with every breath.
Form your embouchure around your reed, making sure that your lips touch the reed all the way around.

Drop your jaw and breathe in through your mouth shaping the syllable “ah”.

Remember to expand!

Place your tongue lightly on the tip of the reed and speed up your air behind it. Release your tongue away from the reed to articulate a note.

**Sight, sound, touch:**

*Hear* the same pitch and dynamic for every note.

*See* your embouchure focusing inward.

*Feel* your chin and tongue relax toward the ground.
Introductions:

C  D  F

Sight, sound, touch:

*Feel* your belly expand first when you breathe in.

*See* your fingers staying close to the bassoon.

*Hear* a consistent sound for the beginning, middle, and end of each whole note.
Exercises:

Thoughts:

Can you repeat each exercise without mistakes three times?
Five times?
Ten times?
Sight, sound, touch:

*Feel* the top of your tongue touching the tip of the reed before you articulate.

*Feel* your fingertips gently resting on the tone holes and keys.

*See* your embouchure staying steady for the beginning, middle, and end of each note.

Exercises:
Thoughts:

Notice how E-flat is basically B-flat minus two fingers - middle finger of your left hand and index finger of your left.

Try playing E-flat without the left hand pinky key. How does the tone sound different? The pitch?
Sight, sound, touch:

*Feel* your stomach pushing out to support the airstream through every note.

*Hear* each note at the same dynamic.

Exercises:
**Introductions:**

*Composition* - the process of creating a new piece of music

*Compose* two new exercises using the notes we have learned so far!

---

**Thoughts:**

What do you think makes a composition good? What makes one bad?

---

**Video #6: First Duet**

Play this solo with the duet accompaniment on the video!

Adapted from the Rubank Elementary Method.
Review!

Use this checklist to make sure you still have perfect posture, hand position, and embouchure, and you will be ready to learn a few new notes!

Are your knees below your waist?

Is your head floating like a balloon?

Are your belly and back expanding when you breathe?

Is the bassoon balanced over your right leg?
Is your left hand touching the bassoon with the bottom knuckle of your first finger?

Does the reed naturally touch your bottom lip when you bring the bassoon to you?

Do the corners of your mouth move in to form a seal around the reed?

**Thoughts:**

How are your posture and embouchure like others in your band class?

How are they different?
Exercises:
Sight, sound, touch:

*Feel* your airstream flowing during and in between every note.

*Hear* every note at the same dynamic.

*See* the patterns in the music. Patterns can be rhythms, notes, or measures.

Thoughts:

By this point, you have probably noticed that time signatures look like fractions:

\[
\text{number of beats per measure} \div \text{which note represents one beat}
\]

And that they work like them:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\frac{3}{4} \\
\text{means two quarter notes, which is half of } \frac{\text{4}}{\text{4}}
\end{array}
\]

Similarly, the fraction \(2/4\) reduces to \(1/2\) and \(4/4\) reduces to 1, and \(1/2\) is exactly half of 1.

But did you know that rhythms work like fractions, too?

One whole note can be divided into four quarter notes:

\[1 \div 4 = 1/4 \text{ (quarter)}\]

One quarter note can be divided into two eighth notes:

\[1/4 \div 2 = 1/8 \text{ (eighth)}\]

What would come next?

\[1/8 \div 2 = \ldots \text{ (eighth)}\]
Introductions:

A

G

F

Exercises:

Video #7: Walking Down
Play along with this video and walk down to even lower notes.
Sight, sound, touch:
Feel your low stomach supporting outward as you play lower notes.

Hear your full, rich tone in the lower register.

Exercises:
Thoughts:

Did you know that sound is a wave? When you blow air through your bassoon, you are creating a wavelength that is linked to the length between your reed and the lowest tone hole you have covered.

Longer wavelengths relate to slower frequencies, or wave speeds, and sound like lower pitches.

As you add more fingers to play lower notes, you are actually making the bassoon (and your sound’s wavelengths) longer!

Introductions:
Exercises:

Adapted from the Rubank Elementary Method.
Introductions:

*Tonality* - the musical system used to define hierarchies of notes and chords

In every piece of music, there are certain notes that are used more often than others and form the musical vocabulary of the piece. These vocabularies allow the feelings of tension and relief we hear in music. They are often based on musical scales and known as *keys*.

Keys are usually named after the first note of the scale forming them. This is also the note that causes the melody to feel at rest. Often, that note is the first and last note of the melody.

The following simple melody is written below in three different keys. Can you identify the key for each one?

**KEY OF _____**

```
\[\text{Music notation image}\]
```

**KEY OF _____**

```
\[\text{Music notation image}\]
```

**KEY OF _____**

```
\[\text{Music notation image}\]
```
Thoughts:
Do you like some keys more than others? Why?

Introductions:

Sight, sound, touch:
*Feel* your right pinky resting on top of the A-flat key before and after you play.

*See* your belly and chest expand when you breathe in.
Exercises:

A key signature of three flats - B-flat, E-flat, and A-flat - often indicates that the piece of music is in the key of E-flat. Use this information and the explanation of tonality on page 27 to check the keys of the following exercises.

KEY OF ____

Sight, sound, touch:

*Feel* an open, relaxed space inside your mouth, like you are holding an ice cube on top of your tongue.

*Hear* a rich, even tone as you move from the lowest note up to the highest note you know.
Introductions:

*Sight-reading* - the process of playing a piece of music for the very first time

Follow the following STRAP steps to help you practice *sight-reading*:

**SIGNATURES** What are the key and time signatures?
Do they stay constant the whole way through?

**TEMPO** What is the tempo?
What is a reasonable tempo for you to play right now?

**RHYTHMS** Are there any especially tricky rhythms?

**ACCIDENTALS** Are there any *accidentals* (notes that are different from the key signature)?

**PATTERNS** Do you see any rhythmic or melodic patterns?
Do any sections repeat themselves later in the piece?

Use these steps to *sight-read* the exercise below.

With all of your great work so far, you may be surprised by how well you play this melody on the very first try!

*Adapted from the Rubank Elementary Method.*
Exercises:

Video #8: Duet in the Key of ___

Use the explanation on page 25 to figure out the key of the following duet, then play your solo line along with the video accompaniment.
Thoughts:

Do you recognize the tune of the duet? What is it called?

Can you figure out the notes for any other tunes you know?

Why would it be useful to be able to do this?

Introductions:

_Improvisation_ - the act of creating without planning or preparation

In music, _improvisation_ is usually associated with jazz, but we can improvise in all different styles. For example, another era in which improvisation was very popular was the Baroque Era of the early 1700s, where performers would change aspects of melodies to make them their own.

One way to _improvise_ is to change the rhythm of a melody while still keeping the same time signature and notes. Try some of the following substitutions in the melody below to improvise a new rhythm.

\[\text{\begin{music}\ \text{ \ \becomes \ \}}\end{music}}\]

\[\text{\begin{music}\ \text{ \ \becomes \ \}}\end{music}}\]
Thoughts:
Record yourself playing the exercises on these two pages, and answer the following questions to evaluate different aspects of your performance:

GENERAL  What are you happy about with this performance?  
What would you like to improve upon?

PHYSICAL  Is your bassoon naturally coming to your mouth?  
Does your belly expand when you take a breath?  
Are your fingers curved and relaxed?  
Are the corners of your embouchure focused inward?

ACCURACY  Is the pulse steady?  
Are the rhythms correct?  
Are the notes correct?

TONE and  Is your tone full and even throughout?  
INTONATION  Do the same notes sound at the same pitch level every time?

Did you notice anything surprising?

Why is it important to evaluate ourselves like this?

Exercises:

Russian Folk Song (Tchaikovsky, arr. Bellamy)
After you are comfortable with the fingerings, try improvising new articulations and dynamics in the repeated sections of the next two exercises.
Introductions:

**Video #9: Rolling over the Break**

*Break* - the point on any woodwind instrument where the fingerings shift from many open tone holes to many closed keys.

On the bassoon, the break exists between F and F-sharp (or G, which we learn first).

Watch the video above then follow these steps to cross the *break*.

While fingering E-natural, focus on the feeling of your finger against the bassoon. Try to feel the edges of the tone hole with your fingertip.

To know for sure where this point is, hold your bassoon in normal playing position then press your first finger down hard into the bassoon. When you lift your finger off, you will be able to see the outline of the tone hole on the pad of your finger.

Drop the knuckle of your first finger toward your second finger. This will feel and look like your fingertip is rolling away to uncover about half of the tone hole.

This is where the term “half-hole” comes from - we play the next notes with only half of the first tone hole covered.
Exercises:

Remember to roll your index finger down to achieve the half-hole!

\[ \frac{3}{4} \text{ G major} \]

\[ \frac{3}{4} \text{ Ab major} \]
Sight, sound, touch:

*Feel* the knuckle of your index finger dropping down when you half-hole.

*See* the tip of your finger rolling downward, rather than sliding or jumping.

*Hear* a smooth transition over the break, without bumps or cracks.

Exercises:

```
\f:\b \f:\b \f:\b \f:\b \\
\m:\f:\b \m:\f:\b \m:\f:\b \m:\f:\b \\
\nLong, Long Ago (Traditional, arr. Bellamy)

\m:\f:\b \m:\f:\b \m:\f:\b \m:\f:\b \\
\m:\f:\b \m:\f:\b \m:\f:\b \m:\f:\b \\
\m:\f:\b \m:\f:\b \m:\f:\b \m:\f:\b \\
\m:\f:\b \m:\f:\b \m:\f:\b \m:\f:\b \\

“Morning” from the Peer Gynt Suite (Grieg, arr. Bellamy)

\m:\f:\b \m:\f:\b \m:\f:\b \m:\f:\b \\
\m:\f:\b \m:\f:\b \m:\f:\b \m:\f:\b \\
```
Thoughts:

Just like there are different ways you can speak to express different things, there are many things musicians can change about how they play in order to express certain ideas and emotions. Let’s explore some expressive options.

Play the following tune as plainly as you can, as if you were speaking a sentence with no inflection:

“I am going to the store.”

Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star (Mozart, arr. Bellamy)

What dynamics did you play with?
What articulations?

Now play the line as if you are shouting:

“I am going to the store!”

Did you play louder or softer?
Was your articulation more smooth, more separated, or more accented?

Write in your decisions under the music.

Finally, play the line as if you are very sad:

“I am going to the store…”

How did your dynamics and articulation change?
Write in your decisions under the music.

What are some other expressive options you can think of?
Exercises:

Adapted from the Rubank Elementary Method.

Carnival of Venice (Traditional, arr. Bellamy)

Theme from Symphony No. 1 (Brahms, arr. Bellamy)

Bile Them Cabbage Down (Traditional, arr. Bellamy)
Introductions:

Video #10: Venting and Moving Up

There are several notes on the bassoon that require a little bit of extra help to speak properly, much like the half-holed notes. For these next notes, we will use two new thumb keys to help start the notes without cracks to squeaks.

Venting - the process of holding a key open to allow air to escape from a small tone hole in order to create clean slurs and attacks on certain notes.

On the bassoon, the vented notes are A, B-flat, B, and C.

Watch the video above then follow these steps to learn how to vent these notes.

Play the lower octave (bottom on bass clef) version of the note you are aiming for. Listen for a full, rich sound with the normal fingering. This is step one.

Lift your thumb from the whisper key. This is step two.
One particular vent key works best for each note. Look at the fingering chart below to determine which vent key you should be using for each note.

Depress the vent key with your thumb. This is step three.

Lift your thumb from the vent key to hover above the keys. This is step four.
Exercises:
Remember to follow the 1-2-3-4 process to vent the upper notes!

Adapted from the Rubank Elementary Method.

Frere Jacques (Traditional, arr. Bellamy)

Thoughts:
How do you think half-holing and venting relate to what we learned earlier about sound and wavelengths?

Sight, sound, touch:
See your thumb lift smoothly from the whisper key and glide up to the vent keys in the 1-2-3-4 process.

Feel your airstream speed up from your stomach and your embouchure focus inward to support the upward leaps to these new, higher notes.
Exercises:

Adapted from the Rubank Elementary Method.

Introductions:

Scale - ordered arrangement of pitches that belong to a given tonality

In music, scales align the notes in a given key in ascending and descending order. This means that every note is only one step away from the notes before and after it. Scales are often present in melodies, sometimes as a complete unit and sometimes in fragments.

Arpeggio - the first, third, and fifth notes of a scale, usually played in that order

The arpeggio of a given scale also outlines the chord most important to creating harmonies in the same key as that scale.
Thoughts:

Why is it important to work on scales and arpeggios?

How would knowing your scales and arpeggios help you in sight-reading? What about composing or improvising?

Can you find examples of scales and arpeggios in your band music? What about in this book?

Introductions:

![Introductions Diagrams]

B

B
Exercises:

C Major Scale and Arpeggio

F Major Scale and Arpeggio

B-flat Major Scale and Arpeggio

Sight, sound, touch:

Hear the same patterns of notes for the scales and arpeggios of each key.
Introductions:

Notice that there are two fingering options for this note.

Use the thumb option when you need your pinky next (ex: to play A-flat or low F), and use the pinky option when you need your thumb next (ex: to play B-flat or E-flat).

These are both half-hole fingerings!
Exercises:
G Major Scale and Arpeggio

Sight, sound, touch:

Feel your left index finger rolling down to half-hole the F-sharp and G fingerings.

Introductions:

Enharmonic - a note that has the same pitch level but is referred to by a different name, often in order to fit within a particular key or scale

Pairs include: F-sharp and G-flat, C-sharp and D-flat, G-sharp and A-flat

Since keys and scales should have exactly one use for every letter name (not two or zero), the same notes can appear in multiple scales and keys under different names.
For example, the note below may be called C-sharp when in the key of D:

D E F# G A B  C#  D

and D-flat when in the key of A-flat:

Ab  Bb  C  Db  Eb  F  G  Ab

C# or Db

Thoughts:

What other notes do you know that probably have enharmonic versions?
Exercises:

A Major Scale and Arpeggio

A-flat Major Scale and Arpeggio

Introductions:

Just like singers, we can change the shape of the inside of our mouths to affect the timbre and pitch level of a note. This is easiest to do if we think about assigning syllables to different notes.

Without your bassoon, shape your mouth as if you are saying the syllable “OH.” How is that different than if you are saying “AH” or “AY”?  

Try thinking about these syllables as you play different notes on the bassoon.

Which notes sound best with lower syllables like “OH” or “AH”? How do higher syllables like “AY” change the tone and pitch of a note?
Sight, sound, touch:

*Feel* your back of your throat relaxing, even when using higher syllables.

*Hear* your tone and dynamic level stay consistent through the low register, over the break, and up into the tenor register.

Exercises:

“In the Hall of the Mountain King” from the Peer Gynt Suite (Grieg, arr. Bellamy)

Largo from “New World” Symphony No. 9 (Dvorak, arr. Bellamy)

Overture to The Marriage of Figaro (Mozart, arr. Bellamy)
Introductions:

Video #11: Soaring High

Playing above the bass clef staff in the tenor register of the bassoon’s range requires a faster airstream, more focused embouchure, and more intense abdominal support. Watch the video above then try the fingerings below to soar high into your new upper register!
Sight, sound, touch:

Feel your abdominal support and airspeed increase when you use higher syllables for the tenor register.

Hear your tone stay full and open as you play ascending notes.

See your embouchure drawing inward in the upper register and softening as you descend.

Exercises:

D Major Scale and Arpeggio

E-flat Major Scale and Arpeggio

Try each of the scales covered in this book in the patterns you find in your band book. Some of these patterns include scales in thirds and with different rhythms.
Thoughts:
How do you need to change your airstream, embouchure, and oral cavity (space inside your mouth) to approach different registers?

Exercises:
F Major Scale and Arpeggio

Add this second octave to your original F Major exercises.

Introductions:
Transposition - the act of playing or rewriting music in a new octave or key

Try transposing this F Major exercise from earlier into B-flat Major:

Look back through this book and transpose your favorite tunes to use new notes.
Review!

Use this checklist to make sure you remember all of the things that go into playing the bassoon.

☐ Are your knees below your waist?

☐ Is your head floating like a balloon?

☐ Are your belly and back expanding when you breathe?

☐ Is the bassoon balanced over your right leg?

☐ Is your left hand touching the bassoon with the bottom knuckle of your first finger?

☐ Does the reed naturally touch your bottom lip when you bring the bassoon to you?

☐ Do the corners of your mouth move in to form a seal around the reed?

☐ Can you feel an open, relaxed space inside your mouth, like you are holding an ice cube on top of your tongue?

☐ Can you hear a rich, even tone throughout your entire range?

☐ Does your left index finger roll downward when you play half-hole notes?

☐ Does your left thumb glide gently to vent the notes above the bass clef staff?

Congratulations! You are set up for bassoon success!
Thoughts:
Which do you think affects your bassoon sound the most?
Posture?
Hand position?
Breathing?
Embouchure?
Syllables and oral cavity?

Which affects it the least?
What do some of the other people in your band class think?

Final Solo: The Star Spangled Banner
The piano accompaniment for this piece is available for download at www.caylabellamy.com/method.

John Stafford Smith, arr. Dewogtene
Vitamins: Everyday Exercises

Repeat these exercises in all keys and registers.

Focus on:
- consistent dynamic levels
- solid beginnings, middles, and ends to each note

Focus on:
- even airstream through the crescendo and slur
- stable pitch leaving and returning to the lowest note

Focus on:
- precise attack and release control
- variety of articulations

Focus on:
- relaxed finger motion
- steady airstream through and between every note
All About Reeds:

The bassoon reed is where your sound begins, and there are many different aspects to the reed that can affect the quality of that sound.

Before we begin, let’s review the parts of the reed:

Knowing how each part of the reed affects your bassoon sound can help you figure out how to adjust for any problems that you may be having.

ASSESSING YOUR REED

When you are assessing your reed’s health, there are three things to consider:

1. the cane, or wood
2. the shape
3. the crow

Cane  When looking at your reed, the cane should be tan in color with no spots or cracks. Playing on a reed that has started to mold or mildew means that you are putting mold in your mouth with every note. At this point, the reed is beyond fixing and should be thrown away.

Your reed should always be soaked for 1-3 minutes before you try to play on it. Soaked reeds are more responsive and flexible.
**Shape**  Looking at the shape of your reed can mean the shape of the first and second wire – how round or flattened they look – or the shape of the tip.

In general, the first wire should look somewhat more flattened than the rounded second wire. These wire shapes may change as you adjust the reed to make a better sound, but avoid over-rounding in either wire. Wire shapes are relatively easy to adjust, and very few shapes mean the reed needs to be thrown away. The pictures below show flattened, round, and over-round wire shapes.

![Flattened Wire](image1)
![Round Wire](image2)
![Over-Round Wire](image3)

To check the shape of the tip, look at the reed as if you were the air going into it. The top and bottom halves should mirror each other and look like gentle arcs. The pictures below show good and bad tip shapes.

![Good Tip](image4)
![Good Tip](image5)
![Bad Tip](image6)
![Bad Tip](image7)

**Crow**  To hear the crow of your reed, put the reed in your mouth further than you would to play normally, with your lips almost all the way to the first wire. When you blow air through the reed, the resulting sound should have both high and low sounds. If the crow is only low, rattling sounds, the reed is likely too soft. If the crow is only high, the reed is likely too hard.

On the next pages, you can read about how to fix all of these problems.
ADJUSTING YOUR REED

You will need the following materials to make basic adjustments to your reeds:
- Needle nosed pliers
- Wet/dry sandpaper (240 and 600 grit)

If there is nothing visibly wrong with your reed but you are not happy with the sound it is producing, the reed is likely either **too soft** or **too hard**. Problems you may be experiencing are problems with:

1. intonation – playing overall very flat or sharp
2. tone – sounding very muffled or very buzzy
3. response – not making sound immediately when you articulate or only being able to play very loudly

**Too Soft** If the reed is too soft, it will:

- sound flat
- sound buzzy or overly bright
- respond easily

Try the following steps. Make sure to test the reed in between each adjustment to see if you have fixed the problem.

1. Slightly open both the first and second wires with your needle-nosed pliers.

2. Fold a piece of your 600 grit sandpaper in half and slide it into the reed. Gently hold the tip closed with your fingers, then slide the sandpaper out to remove soft cane from the inside of the reed.

3. Lightly sand both edges of the front half of both sides of the reed with your 240 grit sandpaper.

If these solutions do not work, the reed may need to be cut shorter or scraped in one of the other areas with a reed knife.
Too Hard  If the reed is too hard, it will:
    sound sharp
    sound muffled or overly dark
    not respond well

Try the following steps. Make sure to test the reed in between each adjustment to see if you have fixed the problem.

1. Slightly close both the first and second wires with your needle-nosed pliers.

2. Lightly sand the entire blade on both sides of the reed with your 600 grit sandpaper.

3. Fold a piece of your 240 grit sandpaper and gently sand the back third of both sides of the reed, focusing on the center.

If these solutions do not work, the reed may need to be scraped more precisely in one of the other areas with a reed knife.

BUYING AND KEEPING REEDS

Although they seem more expensive at first, you should buy bassoon reeds that are handmade by professional bassoon teachers and performers. They will be more consistent, in tune, and responsive, and they will last much longer than a cheaper reed made by a machine. Reeds are available from many of the vendors listed in the Resources section of this book and also online at www.caylabellamy.com.

Once you have your two or three working reeds, you should keep them in a reed case (also available online) or in a homemade case from a small metal tin. Your reed case should have small holes punched into it to allow air to flow through the case, and it should be lined with tissues to keep the reeds protected as you move the case around.

Taking care of your reeds will make playing the bassoon much easier!
Taking Care of Your Bassoon

Your bassoon is a fragile instrument with a lot of moving parts and pieces. It is very important to make sure that you keep it as safe and clean as possible so you have no problems playing.

STORING

Always keep your case on the floor when you are assembling or disassembling your bassoon. The joints fit loosely in the case, and falling off of a chair or desk can seriously damage your keys.

If you need to leave your bassoon without packing up, prop it standing in a corner and never lying on its side on the floor or a chair. It is even better to stand it on the ground and have a friend hold it upright until you return.

CLEANING

Swab the wing and boot joints every time you pack up your bassoon. If there are two cotton swabs in your case, the larger one should be used for the boot joint only - it will get stuck in the wing joint!

Make sure to blow the excess water out of your bocal before storing it, too.

CHECKING

Your bassoon should be checked by a professional repair person every summer, if possible. Ask your band director to make sure your school’s repair person checks your bassoon for cracks, leaks, and loose keys.
Additional Resources

Resources are continually updated at www.caylabellamy.com

SUPPLIES

Books and Music:
  Trevco-Varner Music - www.trevco-varnermusic.com

Tools, Instruments, and Accessories:
  Miller Marketing Company - www.millermarketingco.com
  Kirker Bassoon Repair - www.kirkerbassoonrepair.com
  Midwest Musical Imports - www.mmimports.com
  Forrests Music Company - www.forrestsmusic.com
  Charles Double Reeds - www.charlesmusic.com

Reeds:
  Cameron Bassoon Supply - cameronbassoonreeds@gmail.com
  Vigder’s Bassoon Supplies - www.vigderreed.com

ORGANIZATIONS

International Double Reed Society - www.idrs.org

Midwest Double Reed Society - www.mdrs.org

BLOGS

Cayla Bellamy - www.caylabellamy.com

Bulletproof Musician - www.bulletproofmusician.com

Musician’s Way - www.musiciansway.com
Fingering Chart

\[\begin{array}{cccc}
\text{Root} & \text{Minor 2} & \text{Major 2} & \text{Perfect 4} \\
\hline
\text{Root} & \text{Minor 2} & \text{Major 2} & \text{Perfect 4} \\
\end{array}\]
Congratulations!

You have developed many of the fundamentals you need to play the bassoon confidently and beautifully!

Many of these topics are lifelong processes - you will meet many professionals and teachers who do some of these exercises everyday in their own practicing.

As you have probably noticed, many things that are special about the bassoon are quite difficult to learn on your own. As you move forward in your bassoon training and career, it is best to find a private teacher who is a bassoonist to help you master some of these things and approach the new and exciting challenges that you will face as a musician. Ask your band director, local youth orchestra director, nearby college music professor, or respected music store for help finding the best teacher.

I wish you many more years of wonderful music-making with your bassoon!

Sincerely,

Cayla Bellamy

www.caylabellamy.com