

Common problems and emergency repairs

If an instrument **suddenly** stops playing or will not play below a certain note then check the screws at the **ends** of the key barrels are tight. If the key jams when the screw is fully tightened then loosen the screw slowly until the key operates - the instrument should be repaired as soon as possible because the screw is likely to fall out and get lost. If only one key on the instrument does not play or it plays a semitone flat then check the springs on the adjacent keys are hooked on.

Clarinets: if the instrument just squeaks or will not play then check that when the "A" touch-piece is pressed there is slight play between the A and Ab key. Slightly loosen the adjusting screw on the A key if necessary.

Flutes: if the instrument stops playing at G then check whether the G# touch-piece is bent and obstructing the G key - bend it back if necessary. If it will not play F# or D then check the adjustment screw on the D key - tighten it until F# plays or loosen it until D plays.

Bassoons: if the E pancake key does not close the crook vent pad - try bending the bridge arm down; if the crook vent pad closes, but the pancake key does not, then bend the arm up.

Saxophones: Check the Octave pads: when the Octave thumb key is used up to and including G - lower pad open, upper pad shut; from A upwards - upper pad open, lower pad shut. If the upper pad will not close when playing G, hold down the pad cup and bend the bridge bar slightly up; if the upper pad will not open when playing A, hold down the pad cup and bend the bridge bar slightly down.

Checking that an instrument is operating correctly

The tenons on the instrument should not wobble in their sockets, the keys should operate quietly without wobbling or sticking, and all corks/felts should be in place. Generally you should be able to play the lowest note on the instrument easily. Test particular instruments with the exercises below - you should be able to play the notes without squeezing the keys hard or blowing hard.

Flute - C to Bb with thumb key; B to A; A to G; G to F#; G to F; F to E; E to D Low D to C. Check airtightness of head-joint and head-cork position.

Clarinet - Middle D down to middle B using LH side lever; E to Eb using long Eb/Bb; Low G to E.

Sax - C to B; B to Bb via long Bb; B to A; G# to F; G to F#; G to F; D to Low C; Low C to Bb; Also high G to A.

Oboe - G# to F#; holding LH little finger Eb open play Low C; Low C to B; Low C to Bb.

Bassoon - Low D to C; Low D to B. Check the E pancake key closes the crook vent pad.