

Health and Hygiene for Reed and Wind Musicians

One of the largest hygiene issues for musicians that play either reed instruments or brass instruments is based mainly around the mouthpiece of that instrument.

The mouthpiece continuously has saliva or spit forced onto or inside the mouthpiece during the playing, performing and practicing times. Although wiping it down regularly during playing and after will to some degree help to keep the germs at bay, it is unfortunately not enough.

There probably isn't a better time to raise this issue. We are now all living in times where a virus pandemic is actually killing thousands of people every week and it's transmitted to everyone via droplets from our mouths.

In normal times, students are encouraged to properly clean their mouthpieces at least once each month and after any kind of illness (i.e. colds, coughs and flu symptoms). Reed players, clarinet, oboe or similar, should also dispose of their used reeds on a regular basis. Not only to help maintain a good sound quality but for hygiene reasons too. It is unfortunately the case that saliva will soak into the wood of the reed and any germs will linger their too. This process during these times should be completed weekly.

The sanitisation process is really quite simple, you will need to acquire a few household items to begin.



Boiled but cooled water



It is important that you do not use boiling water, particularly if you are cleansing a mouthpiece that is generically plastic. However, the water does need to have been boiled as water from a tap could contain germs from its source, e.g. water tank that's rusty inside.

The solution is as follows: -

3 parts of water

1 part TCP

For example: - if you are using a tea cup for measuring you would put 3 cups of water in the container with 1 cup of TCP.

Method:

1. Allow the solution to cool down from boiling point but remains quite hot
2. Submerge the mouthpiece or multiple mouthpieces into the solution
3. Leave them soaking for about 30 minutes
4. Rinse off with clean hot water (ideally boiled and cooled a little)
5. Dry with a clean lint cloth thoroughly.