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1 Pedagogic Methods, 1697–1803

An Oral Tradition

During the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, bassoonists trained without the modern pedagogical aids of method books, tuners, and metronomes. Formal instruction included mimicry and personal interaction with musicians. Professional musicians and bassoonists wrote pedagogic exercises for their students, the most famous being the bassoon concerti of Antonio Vivaldi. These were not concert works but primarily study pieces for the female students of the Ospedale della Pietà.¹

Most texts from this era are descriptive rather than instructive, focusing on character and range and neglecting pedagogic information. They include generalized descriptions of a bassoon's cosmetic appearance, simple tablatures, and brief summaries of use. The earliest known text directly addressing bassoon pedagogy dates from 1697. German Daniel Speer's *Grund-richtige, Kurtz- Leicht- und Nöthiger jetzt Wol-vermehrter Unterricht der Musicalischen Kunst oder Vierfaches Musicalisches Kleeblatt Worinnen zu ersehen wie man füglich und in kurzer Zeit* (Fundamental instructions in the art of music . . .) is a general instruction book for multiple instruments with a fingering chart devoted to the two-keyed dulzian. Speer mentions positioning and provides a few lessons, continuing a custom established in the first woodwind instruction book, a Dutch text on recorders published in 1654. After Speer, instructional books for instruments grew in number, if not in quality, particularly in England. Eighty-two were published between 1654 and 1750. Of these, eight were French; two, German; and the remainder, English.²

The most influential instructional publications between Speer's in 1697 and Pierre Cugnier's in 1780 are Joseph Majer's *Museum musicum theoretico practicum* (1732), Johann Philipp Eisel's *Musicus autodidaktos* (1738), Johann J. Quantz's *Versuch einer Anweisung die Flöte traversiere zu spielen* (1752), François Garsault's *Notionnaire, ou mémorial raisonné* (1761), Jacques Hotteterre's *Méthode pour apprendre à jouer en tres*

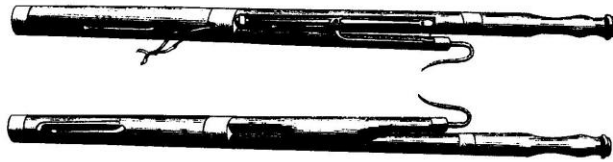


Figure 3.1b. Etienne Ozi's Bassoon, 1787. Extract of the facsimiles edition "Methods and Treatises, Bassoon, France 1600-1800," Anne Fuzeau Productions, www.annefuzeau.com.

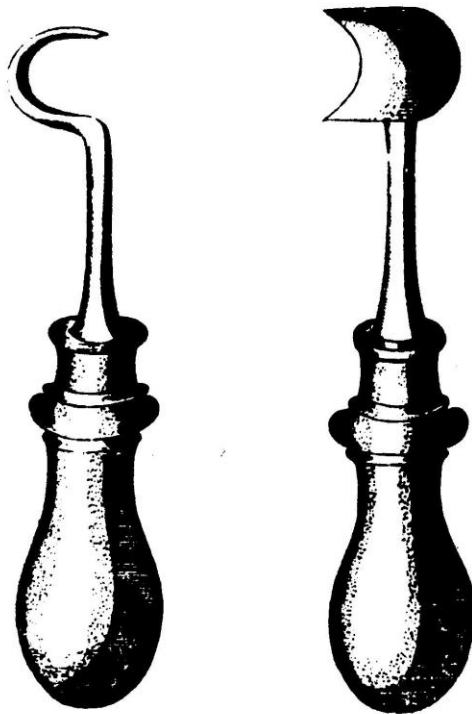


Figure 3.2. Hand Gouger, 1811

less finicky, longer-lasting reed. Almenraeder clar two years for a reed in daily use (figure 3.3).

The mechanized gouging machine was introduced by Henri Brod in 1834 and modified for bassoon in the 1840s. Although the time involved in gouging reduced, the tapered gouge produced by hand work machine; Triébert's reeds were a parallel gouge residing in the weaker fibers of the cane. Because there were numerous references after 1847 to his preferred method of preparing the cane. Mechanized as a technological leap but rather as a necessary Triébert's method as a pre-gouge before tapering cane (figure 3.4).⁶

Another advance that eased reed making in reeds was the common use of sandpaper in the rush had previously been used to smooth a reed

The advantage of using a 'natural' product like structure of the cane remains relatively undisturbed. Dutch rush tends to pull individual cells clear of each other, thus leaving behind intact cell walls with resistance to water logging, wear, and deterioration. A study demonstrates that at a microscopic level files rip through the cane's cell wall leaving the cane dented and relatively rough. The result is cane that is less water proof; therefore, prone to quick drying in a shorter life span for the reed.

When the life of a bassoon reed stretched into years, it played a less important role in the daily life of a bassoonist. As a result, the pedagogy of reed making did not get adopted as quickly as performance pedagogy.

Changing Demands: The Performer/Reed Maker

With a long-lasting reed crafted by the instrument maker brand and for the intonation of that brand's registers, bassoonists shift to making their own reeds? This question is an interesting study because in it lies the subsidiary link between the instrument maker and reed-making pedagogy.

The decades bridging the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were a turbulent time with regard to demands placed on

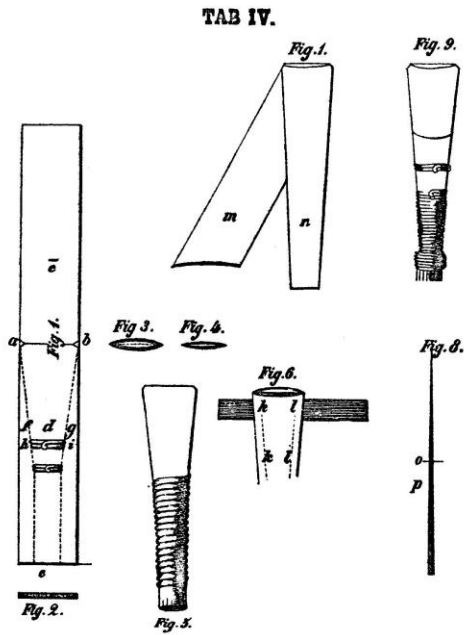


Figure 7.2b. Carl Almenraeder's Reed-Making Diagrams, 1843

minutes. Use shave grass (Dutch Rush) to smooth the gouged side of the cane and next proceed to cut the outline of one side of the reed by using a shape made exactly to the measurement of that shown in the diagram . . .¹¹

Although he does not use headings or subtitles, Almenraeder's writing style marks a shift in how reed-making pedagogy is presented.

8 Pedagogic Methods, 1844–1887

Willent-Bordogni's *Méthode complète pour le basson* (1844) and Jancourt's *Méthode theorique et pratique pour le basson* (1847)

As German pedagogues embraced the emergence of a formalized reed-making pedagogy, French bassoonists struggled to accept reed making as the future of performers. Two French pedagogues, both associated with the Paris Conservatoire, best personify the outlook of the greater whole: Jean Baptiste Joseph Willent-Bordogni and Eugène Jancourt. The treatment given to reeds and reed making in their methods are typical of growing French thought regarding the role of the performer/reed maker since the publication of Ozi's *Nouvelle méthode* in 1803.

Jean Baptiste Joseph Willent-Bordogni is the only pedagogue not discussed in part I of this book. A bassoon virtuoso, he taught at the Paris Conservatoire from 1849 to 1852, publishing his *Méthode complète pour le basson* (Complete method for bassoon) in 1844. Will Jansen cites Willent-Bordogni's method as a supplement to Ozi's. The inclusion of so many articles directly lifted from *Nouvelle méthode*, including the one on reed making, makes this possible. A method by a rising Paris Conservatoire professor, 41 years after Ozi's *Nouvelle méthode*, was an opportunity for pedagogic growth, but that opportunity was lost.¹

The contrast between the barely altered reed-related articles in Willent-Bordogni's *Méthode complète pour le basson* and Fröhlich's forward-thinking revisions and Almenraeder's revolutionary new ideas is stark. Still, Willent-Bordogni does include reed making. Eugène Jancourt, on the other hand, whose famed *Méthode theorique et pratique pour le basson* (Theoretical and practical method for the bassoon) was published in 1847, provides no reed-making instructions at all. Furthermore, he neglects any mention of the craft, referring instead to a return to the instrument-maker/reed-maker model.

A new mechanism made in more exact proportions and complying with all the requirements was finally invented by Frederic Triébert, our excellent Bassoon manufacturer; the inner side of the reed is

during the finishing process. Again, a pedagogic difference: whereas Christlieb and Herzberg seek to shorten the reed-making experience, Cooper elongates it.¹¹

This amplification of the process extended to reed formation. Following wrapping, blanks were seasoned one year to secure shape and formation. This once more returns Cooper's pedagogy to botanical properties. *Arundo donax* wants to return to its original shape. The longer it is allowed to adapt before further changes are made, the more stable and accurate the resultant reed. Cooper declared that cane's memory lasts for three weeks.¹²

The reed-making process lengthened further in Cooper's preference for traditional tooling over modern technology. His reed pedagogy deviates most dramatically from Herzberg's and Christlieb's in the use of tools. He was adamant in teaching hand profiling because the flexibility of hand tools allows experimentation with various blade contours and reed designs—another direct alignment with his advocacy of a personalized reed curriculum. Cooper taught tool usage as well as tool types. He recommends the use of a penknife and a curved-tip knife and instructs his students to scrape parallel to, as well as laterally against, the grain. This flexibility in tools and their use indicates a significant move in pedagogy and reed making toward multiple and specialized implements. Cooper mirrors Lou Skinner in his use of and pedagogy with tools.¹³

Cooper also taught hand shaping, although he did not discourage shapers. He preferred the foldover shaper because he believed that a shaper with two sides (verses four quadrants) presented half the opportunity for machine inaccuracy in construction. This is in stark contrast to the West Coast mechanization of reed making spearheaded by Christlieb and Herzberg. Cooper further advocated folding the cane prior to shaping to support the degenerative (dampened)/regenerative (undampened) tip function in finished reeds (refer to figures 10.3 and 13.1). Narrowing the cane prior to folding (as with a straight shaper) blocks necessary distortion of cane fibers. Cooper's reed-making pedagogy is intellectually derived but grounded in research and experiment. His intellectual approach is consistently presented in prose with accompanying diagrams.¹⁴

The role of the degenerative/regenerative tip opening is a critical component of Cooper's acoustic theory. A tip aperture that cannot be corrected belongs to a failed reed.¹⁵ Almenraeder was the first to examine the tip aperture's relationship to response and tone, but modern

Reed Blade Functional Topography

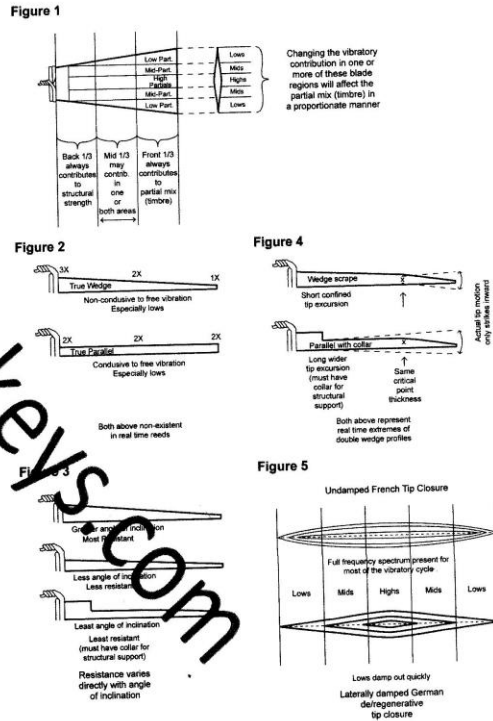


Figure 13.1. Lewis Hugh Cooper's Basic Reed Dynamics