

STORING, HANDLING AND REPAIRING INSTRUMENTS

Storage Compartments. To protect instruments from theft and damage, it is recommended that each instrument have its own storage compartment. Large instruments should have large compartments near the floor, the small instruments should have smaller compartments above them. Each compartment should have a door covered with about half-inch wire mesh and it should be locked with a good lock. The wire mesh allows ventilation, especially desired for woodwinds. The lock protects each instrument from theft and places responsibility on the student to whom it is assigned. The student is given the key to an instrument compartment and this instrument is his responsibility. If he keeps it locked when not in use, it will not be stolen. Instruments left in open shelves to which any and all members of the band or orchestra have access, are the responsibility of no one student. Instruments in open shelves mysteriously disappear sometimes, and it is difficult to place guilt.

Location of Storage. Considerations to keep in mind in locating storage for instruments are convenience to rehearsal rooms, band or orchestra rooms and auditorium, excessive dampness, excessive dryness. Try to locate storage compartments for large and heavy instruments, such as tympani, bass drums, bass horns, bass viols, harps, near the place where they will be used in the band or orchestra. Don't, for instance, place the compartments for the violins ten steps from the front of the orchestra but ask the bass viol player to walk through two swinging doors and clear to the other end of the building to reach the bass viol compartments. Also, if possible, locate the rehearsal rooms for these larger instruments near their playing location in the band or orchestra and near their storage compartments. The less the large instruments have to be carted around, the better for the instruments and for the disposition of the players and director.

Watch Your Temperatures. Don't store woodwinds, drums, violins and other string instruments in damp basements. Avoid placing them near radiators, hot air registers, or in hot attics or lofts. Strive for even temperature and humidity. A thermometer and humidity gauge are good investments. Try to maintain 72 degrees Fahrenheit and 50% humidity as closely as possible. Avoid placing string instruments and woodwinds against outside walls, as they are liable to be subjected to wide changes in temperature. Avoid storing brass instruments near the heating plant. Fumes from the furnace are liable to corrode and tarnish the instruments.

Handling on Trips. Much damage to instruments can be avoided by observing some simple rules on systematic handling. Assign to the band manager and his crew all the work of transporting instruments. Train this crew so they will learn to put the heavy instruments on the bottom and the lighter ones on top, so they will know what side or end of a trunk or case to face up in order to give greatest protection to the instrument, so they will know how to pack a truck or car with instrument cases or trunks so they will ride with the least shifting around and scuffing against each other. When entire responsibility is placed in these "property men," traveling schedules will go more smoothly, fewer instruments will be left behind, and less damage will be done to them.

Repairing and Overhauling. No definite schedule can be laid down for repairing and overhauling instruments, for the treatment given them by different players and their quality of construction vary too much. In general, the solo instruments such as cornet, trumpet, Bb clarinet,

oboe, flute, alto or tenor saxophone, trombone, and French horn, should be given a complete overhaul annually. The bass and harmony instruments, such as bass tuba, sousaphone, euphonium, alto horn, baritone horn, alto clarinet, bass clarinet, and bassoon, should be completely overhauled at least every two years. Some contend that *all* reed instruments, including alto and bass clarinet and bassoon, should be overhauled annually, and we do not disagree. Any schedule can be criticised from individual standpoints, and only very rough and flexible recommendations can be laid down.

Necessary repairs should be taken care of at once. Keep the instrument in top playing condition. This will save overhauling charges and total amount of repairing, to say nothing about prolonging the life of the instrument. It is good practice to have instruments checked over and adjusted often. This prevents unnecessary wear, breakage, and major repair bills.

There are some Conn sousaphones still being played in a certain school after 15 years of constant school use. They are in first class condition. If you were to guess how long they had been in service, you might guess all the way from six months to two or three years. These instruments have had intensive usage but also have had excellent care. The players are instructed on how to take care of them and how to clean them and keep them in playing condition. They are sent to a repairman at the end of every school year for check-up and such overhauling as is needed. A good instrument's life depends a great deal upon the care it receives. The same instrument may last 5 years, 15 years, or 25 years, depending upon how it is treated and kept in repair.

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