

# TRANSFERRING TO BASSOON

by *Scott Bleau*

*Designed as a transitional method to help another woodwind player switch to bassoon, Scott Bleau's project is far too extensive to include in its entirety in Bandworld Magazine. The segment included here covers basic startup issues, finger placement and clef. Not included are the many simple examples to help the student learn the new clef, etc. BW Editor*

Welcome to the wonderful world of the bassoon! This instrument, while very challenging at times, will give a lifetime of playing enjoyment. As with any challenge, the keys to success are diligent practice, patience, and enthusiasm. The only way to get better at something is to do it. Above all, have fun!

## LEARNING TO CROW

Our first goal is to get the mouth set right. Start by placing your reed into a small container of water. This will give it time to soak while we work on setting the embouchure (mouth muscles). Take your pinky finger and do the following steps:

1. Place your pinky in the center of your bottom lip.
2. Curl your bottom lip back over your teeth taking the pinky with it.
3. Bring your top lip down over your pinky and bottom lip

Now check yourself in the mirror and have your band director check for you. There should still be a little bit of the nail showing and your pinky should be in the middle of your mouth. If you can feel your teeth then your pinky is 'in too far.' Once everything looks good try it with the reed. Again here are the steps:

1. Place the reed in the center of your bottom lip.
2. Curl the bottom lip back over the teeth taking the reed with it.
3. Bring the top lip down over the reed and bottom lip.

Check yourself again to make sure everything looks OK. The reed is in the center of the mouth and you can't feel it with your teeth. Now you're ready for the next big step—breathing.

1. Place the reed in the center of the bottom lip.
2. Curl the bottom lip back over the teeth taking the reed with it.
3. Take a big breath in.
4. Bring the top lip down over the reed and bottom lip.
5. Blow out.

The sound you just heard probably sounded

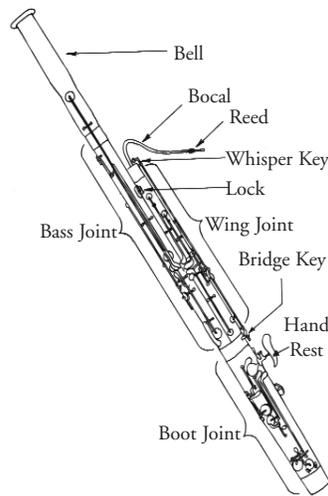
awful, maybe like a bird call with a bunch of notes all together at once. If it did, great! You're well on your way to playing bassoon. This sound is called the crow and it means your embouchure is right on.

If the sound you heard sounded like one note then here are some things to check for.

- If the note was too low, then use more bottom lip pressure and push more air into the reed.
- If the note was too high, then use less bottom lip pressure and push less air into the reed.

## ASSEMBLING YOUR BASSOON

The bassoon has six parts, so our next lesson is to show you how to put the bassoon together. The six parts of a bassoon are reed, bocal, wing



joint, boot joint, bass joint and bell:

Before you begin, read all the following directions first. It also helps to have your band director around the first few times you put the bassoon together. Do not force any of the parts together. If the parts do not fit easily, then check with your band director. If the ends have cork in them, then your band director will teach you how to use cork grease. If the ends have string, then your band director will show you how to adjust it, use parafin wax, etc.

1. Place the reed in your container of water. We'll let it soak while you put the rest of the bassoon together.
2. Take the wing joint and put it inside the small bore (hole) on the boot joint. The hollowed out part should be facing the other bore.
3. Place the long joint next to the wing joint and into the large bore of the boot joint.
4. The bell then fits on top of the long joint.

Before we add the bocal, there are a couple of things you must know. First of all, the bocal is very soft and easy to bend. Second, it sticks out from the bassoon so it is very easy to bump accidentally. Make sure you have the bocal in the bassoon only when you are playing. If you have to walk somewhere, for example, from your case to your chair, stick the bocal inside the bell until you sit down to play. Then holding it near the corked end, fit the corked end of the bocal inside the top of the wing joint. Make sure the pad at the top of the wing joint is lined up with the little hole in the bocal (this is called the whisper key, but that's our little secret for now). All you need to do now is place the reed on to the end of the bocal and we're ready to play the bassoon!

## FINGER PLACEMENT

Here are some pointers on finger placement. Following the description there will be a picture to show you where to place your fingers. On the wingjoint you should find three holes that are drilled into the wood. Your left-hand fingers cover these holes when playing a note. The top hole is for your index finger, the second hole for the middle finger, and the bottom hole for the ring finger. The pinky hovers around the two keys next to the bottom hole and the thumb moves around all nine keys in the back on the long joint.

Place your right hand on the boot joint so that your fingers rest on its keys and holes. The index finger gets the top hole and the middle finger gets the bottom hole. The ring finger moves between the two keys underneath the bottom hole and the pinky moves between the three keys below that. The thumb again has more keys to play with than any other finger. If there seems to be a lot of left over keys right now that's ok We'll worry about those much later.

## BASS CLEF

To play the flute, you learned how to read the treble clef

Bassoon players read bass clef for their notes. The picture below shows the difference between



treble clef staff and the bass clef staff.

*Watch future issues of Bandworld Magazine for music examples that compare bassoon with other woodwinds to help learn fingering similarities.*



# Instrument Transfer



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