Webinar for ICA 14.03.2026
Reed Adjusting with Kilian Herold and Hanstoni Kaufmann

1. What are the best tools for reed adjusting collegiate level students or adult amateurs can explore and use to get started?

Reed adjusting can be started as early as the second year of clarinet playing. Many of the adjustments are esay to do and are very helpfull also for the beginners. It will accompany clarinetists throughout their musical life.
Tools: We need two glass plates: one measuring approximately 22 x 22 x 0.6 cm to apply the improvement to the vamp, and the second measuring 30 x 25 x 0.6 cm to work on the underside. The larger glass plate has a glued covered 400-grit sandpaper.
And we need sandpaper with grit sizes 100, 240, and 1000. Sandpaper is the best tool because you can work against the xylems. If you sand with the xylems, the fibers will tear and you won't know exactly where you've sanded.

2. How do you recommend storing reeds?

For me, it is more important to treat the reed properly after playing than how it is stored.
After playing, the reed should be rinsed with clean water. It should be laid on its barkside to dry so that it dries evenly. Only then should the reeds be stored in their cases. For me, the best place to store them is on a polished stone slab. The stone can absorb any remaining water.

3. How do you recommend going about breaking in reeds, especially for collegiate students or amateurs?

There are so many different ways and opinions on how reeds should be broken in. Any method that someone is convinced of and that works for them is fine.
An interesting option is to have three cases with reeds at different stages of break-in. The third case contains the reliable concert reeds. The second case contains the reeds that are on the shortlist. The first case contains a larger quantity that feel reasonably good.
I find Kilian's approach very interesting. He travels a lot from Freiburg to Berlin, and the playing conditions are not the same in both places. I think he can explain his method.
After one to three minutes of playing, a perfectly adjusted reed should have reached its top form and be following the musical intentions of the player.

4. How do you recommend adjusting reeds in more extreme climates (e.g., hot, humid, cold, dry)?

In my opinion, hot and cold climatic influences have a greater effect on our physical condition than on the reeds.

However, humidity and dryness have a very strong effect on the cane, and we often don't have enough options to respond to this. When it is very humid, it is helpful to have several reeds with similar characteristics. In dry weather, you have to be careful to moisten the reeds more often. There is a risk that the reeds will dry out unevenly when playing.
The thicker parts of the reed are still wet, while the thinner parts are already dry. Then the reed can no longer vibrate properly.

5. When you first evaluate a reed, what physical or acoustic indicators help you determine whether it's worth adjusting? With advanced adjustment skills, can most reeds be made playable, or are some simply beyond saving?

I would like to add to this question measurable components that prevents good sound.

- Reeds that have different thicknesses on the left and right side at the beginning of the vamp are unusable and cannot be corrected.
- Reeds with irregularly arranged xylems cannot be corrected.
- Reeds where the scar is visible on the bark side will not produce good sound and cannot be corrected..
- Reeds with curved xylems will not be able to swing properly and cannot be corrected.
- Reeds made from brown or patchy reed wood do not sound satisfactory and cannot be corrected..
- Reeds where the bark arc is not centered sound poor and cannot be corrected.
- Reeds that do not return to their original position after a short playing time cannot be corrected. These reeds can be identified with the fingernail test and when you play staccato. The sound is dull and the response becomes increasingly delayed.
- Similarly, reeds that sound dull cannot be improved because the quality of the cane is too soft.

6. Do you approach reed adjustments differently based on the dimensions of the mouthpiece, especially if a facing is asymmetric?

No, the procedure is the same and in the same order for all types of mouthpieces.
In my book, I have a set order for visual adjustments and a set order for audio adjustments.

7. In your book, you describe how to diagnose a reed. Would you be able to show us how this is done?

Yes, I'm happy to do that. I'll show you the procedure and how to do it in practice. I'm very happy that Kilian has agreed to help with this experiment.

Sandpaper I use: Recommended sandpaper: SIA siarexx: grits 100, 240, and 400, as well as SIA siawat waterproof, grits 800 or 1000 (Made in Switzerland)
Spray adhesive: UHU permanent, repositionable