

LIVING THE LOW LIFE: LOW CLARINET-SPECIFIC REPAIRS

A clinic by:
Miles DeCastro

2023 ICA Low Clarinet Festival





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- ▶ Owner of North Country Winds

MILES DECASTRO

HOW DO YOU KNOW?

- Low clarinets are less common than their soprano counterparts
- Can be difficult to know how well it's working
- "Is it me or the instrument?"
- It plays... but could it play better?



- ▶ If it sounds good immediately?
- ▶ Suction?
- ▶ Have someone else play it?
- ▶ Check the make/model?
- ▶ Selecting a low clarinet has far more challenges than selecting a soprano clarinet
 - ▶ Owned/loaned by institutions
 - ▶ Way less stock
 - ▶ Way more expensive
 - ▶ Can be way out of adjustment and still function at a basic level

THE USUAL STARTING POINTS



YOU'VE GOT THE INSTRUMENT
NOW WHAT?



IT CAN'T LEAK





CHECKING FOR LEAKS: MAG MACHINE



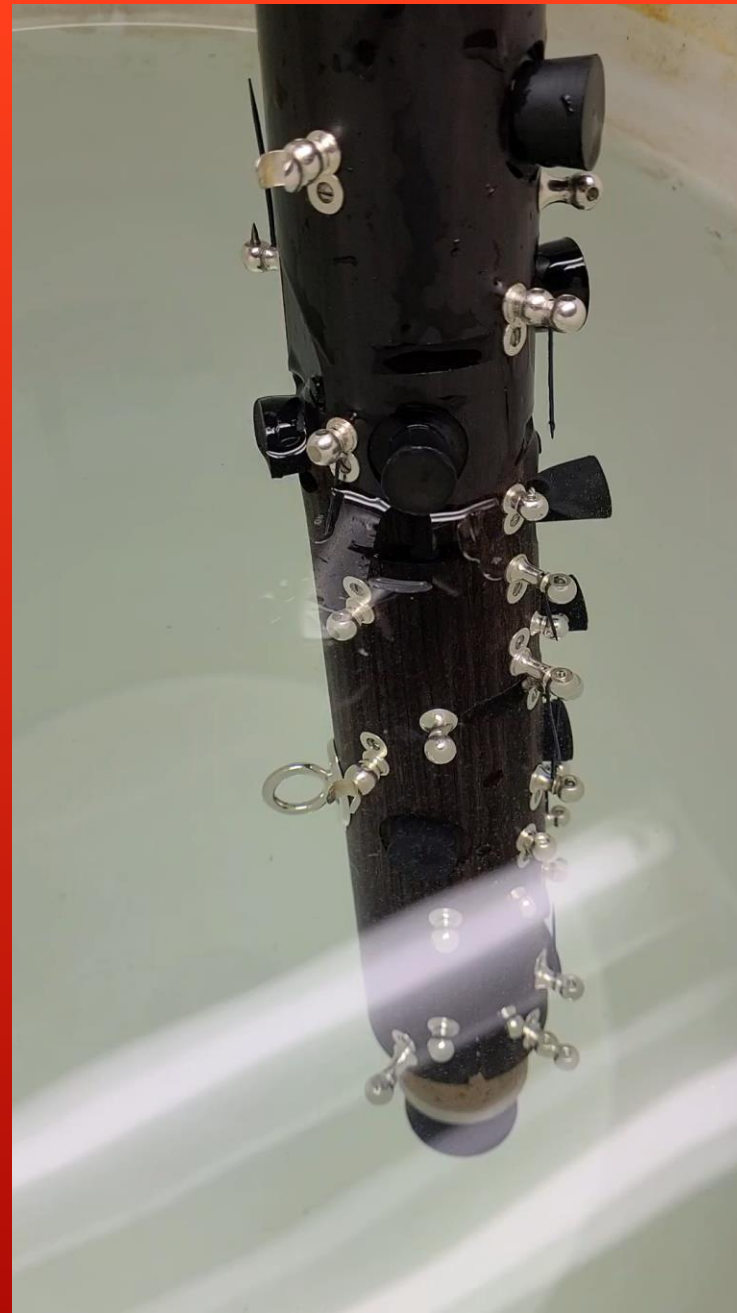
CHECKING FOR LEAKS: LEAK LIGHT

CHECKING FOR LEAKS: LEAK LIGHT





SNEAKY NECK LEAKS



SNEAKY BODY LEAKS

- ▶ Leaky register tube video was posted to Instagram
- ▶ See response from someone who works at the manufacturer in question
- ▶ Body leaks are overlooked at the factory but caught during professional set up of a new instrument

WHO IS LOOKING OUT FOR YOU?

4:43 4G 52%

← **Comments**

 **northcountrywinds37** This
#bassclarinet was losing over 10% of its air because the register tube wasn't properly sealed to the body. It's a relatively simple fix that gets missed a shocking amount at the factory and at big retailers
#shops small #shopindependent
#clariniice #itsalldownstatefromhere
29m

 That's one way to look at it but we also do a ton of work at the factory that you don't see 😊 

19m Reply Send Message

 **northcountrywinds37** 
I didn't say you don't. I don't think there's any denying this is a problem that should have been caught. 

10m Reply Send

- ▶ Your technician should be using modern tools to inspect your clarinet

INSPECTION



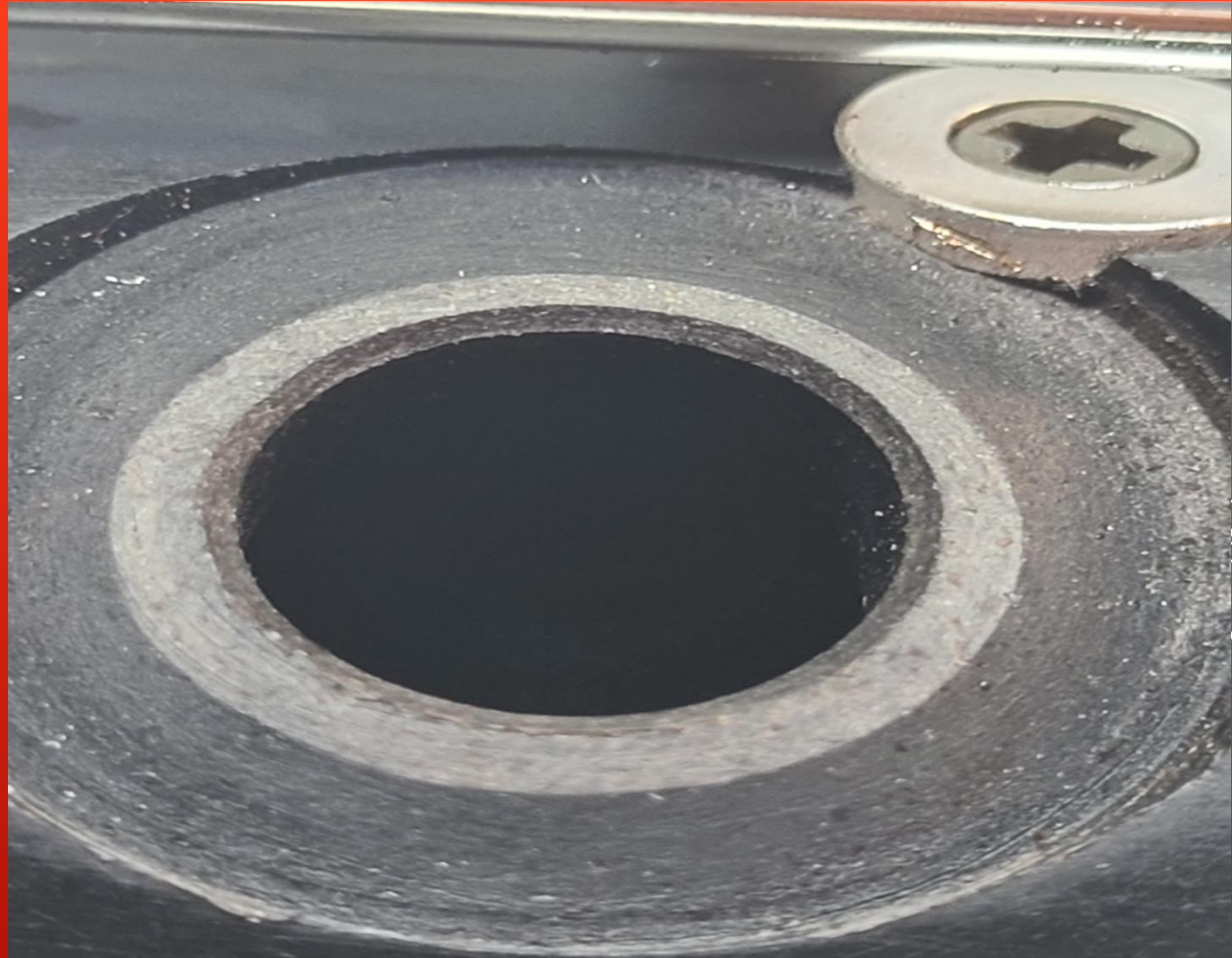
- ▶ Tone holes need to be perfect
- ▶ Don't assume it came perfect from the factory

TONE HOLES



- ▶ Tone holes can be perfected
 - ▶ Seal with cyanoacrylate
 - ▶ Dress with special tools
 - ▶ Dress inside and outside edges

TONE HOLES





TONE HOLES (INSIDE EDGE)



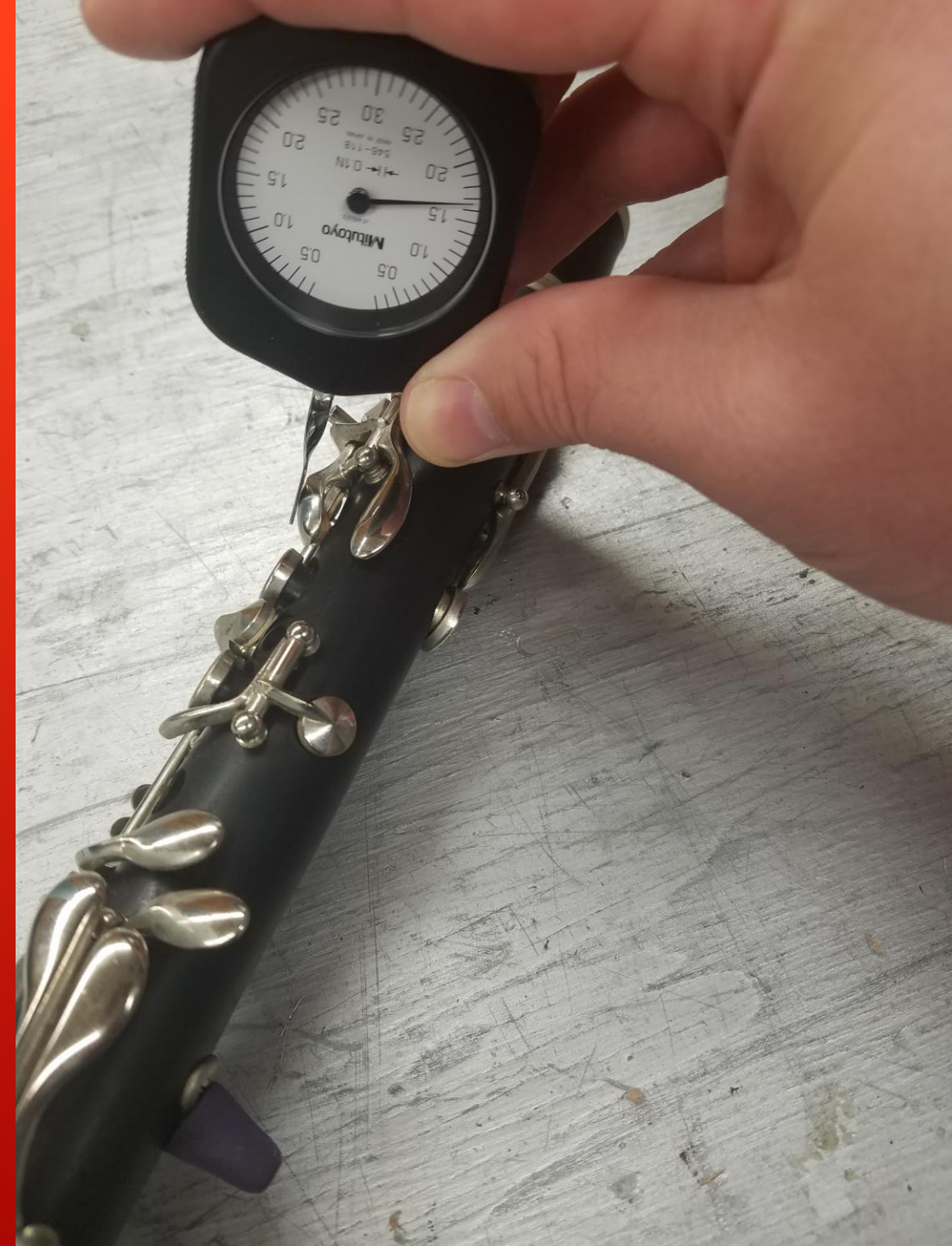
STONE HOLES (OUTSIDE EDGE)



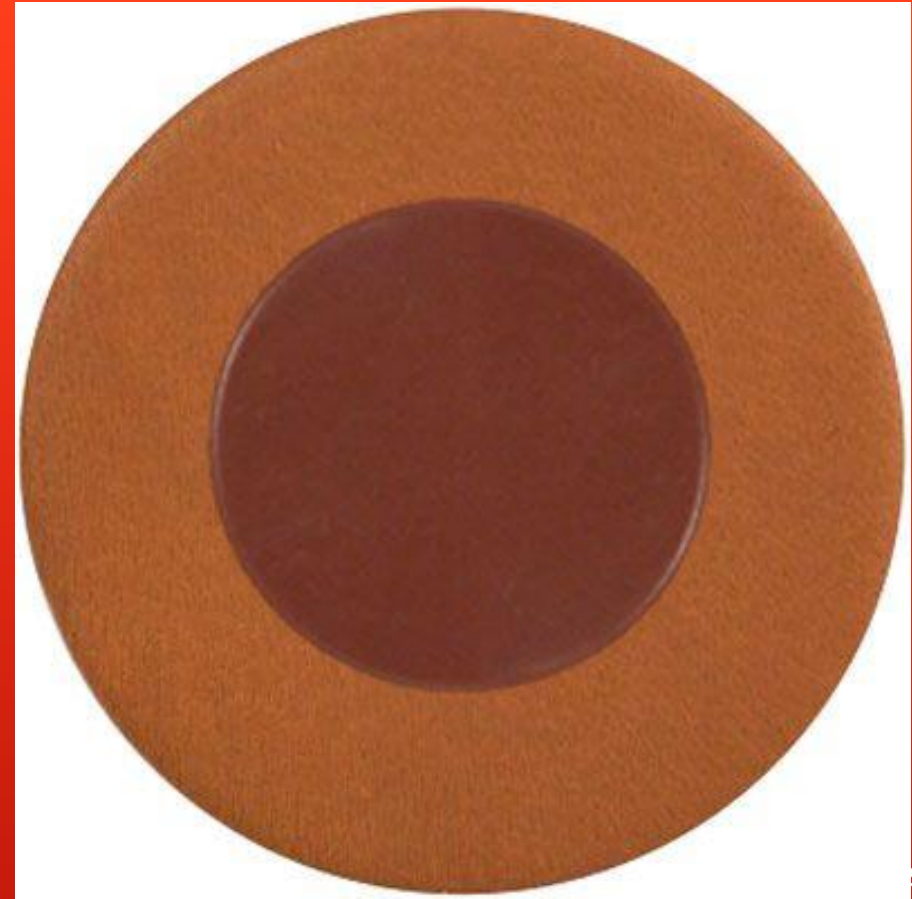
TRUING TONE HOLES

- ▶ Spring tensions should be measured
- ▶ All springs should be lubricated

SPRINGS



- ▶ High-quality leather pads
 - ▶ I use MusicMedic (but there are other good choices)
 - ▶ I prefer resonators whenever possible



BASS CLARINET PADS

▶ RooPads

- ▶ Made from Kangaroo leather (instead of goat leather)
- ▶ Unlikely to get sticky



BASS CLARINET PADS (GETTING FANCY)

- ▶ Synthetic is superior
 - ▶ Synthetic key corks
 - ▶ Synthetic key felts
 - ▶ Teflon
- ▶ Natural cork
 - ▶ For tenon corks only

MATERIALS



▶ Natural cork

- ▶ Particularly terrible for sliding mechanisms
- ▶ Brand new instrument

MATERIALS



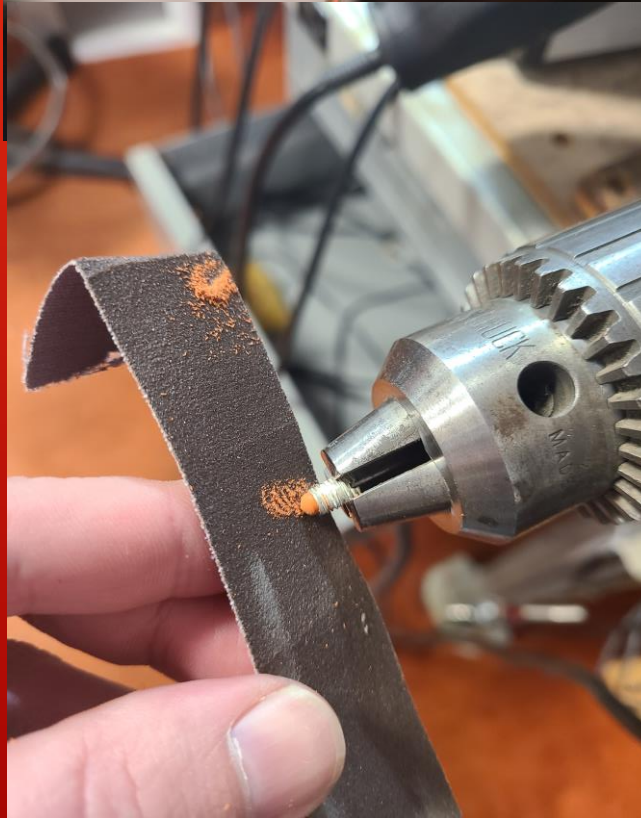
► From the same instrument...

MATERIALS



- ▶ Adjustment Screw Bumpers
 - ▶ Orange Silicone
 - ▶ Bevel for better adjustment
 - ▶ Bevel for better feel

MATERIALS



- ▶ Register pad #1 opens when just register key is pressed (no thumb key)
- ▶ Register pad #2 opens when register key and thumb key are pressed
- ▶ Poor compromise- middle line B and above all need to use the same register hole
- ▶ Requires lots of voicing/embouchure adjustments
- ▶ Articulation on some notes can be difficult, if not impossible
- ▶ Both register pads should never open at the same time

STUDENT BASS CLARINET REGISTER MECHANISM



- ▶ Register pad #1 opens when register & G/D key are pressed OR when register & throat A key are pressed
- ▶ Register pad #2 opens when register key and anything except G/D or throat A keys are pressed
- ▶ Better compromise- middle line Bb – 4th line D# share body register hole, 4th space E and above share neck register hole
- ▶ Requires less voicing/embouchure adjustments
- ▶ Facilitates articulation
- ▶ Spring tensions need to be in balance, especially on the 2nd bridge mechanism
- ▶ Both register pads should never open at the same time

PRO (AND PRO-STYLE) BASS CLARINET REGISTER MECHANISM



- ▶ Don't put a pad here
- ▶ I will find you...

BASS CLARINET G/D MECHANISM





PROFESSIONAL CLEANING

- ▶ Obtain high-quality swab
 - ▶ Apply a few drops of oil to the swab
 - ▶ Run the swab through several times
 - ▶ Repeat 4x per year

- ▶ Recommended oils

- ▶ Backun Almond Oil
- ▶ Pure Almond Oil
- ▶ Valentino #18
- ▶ Naylor's

BORE OIL



- ✓ Clean tone holes
- ✓ Bore oil
- Oil keys
- Recommend Ultimax or Hetman
 - Light/Low if disassembling
 - Heavy/High for key noise



MAINTENANCE YOU CAN DO

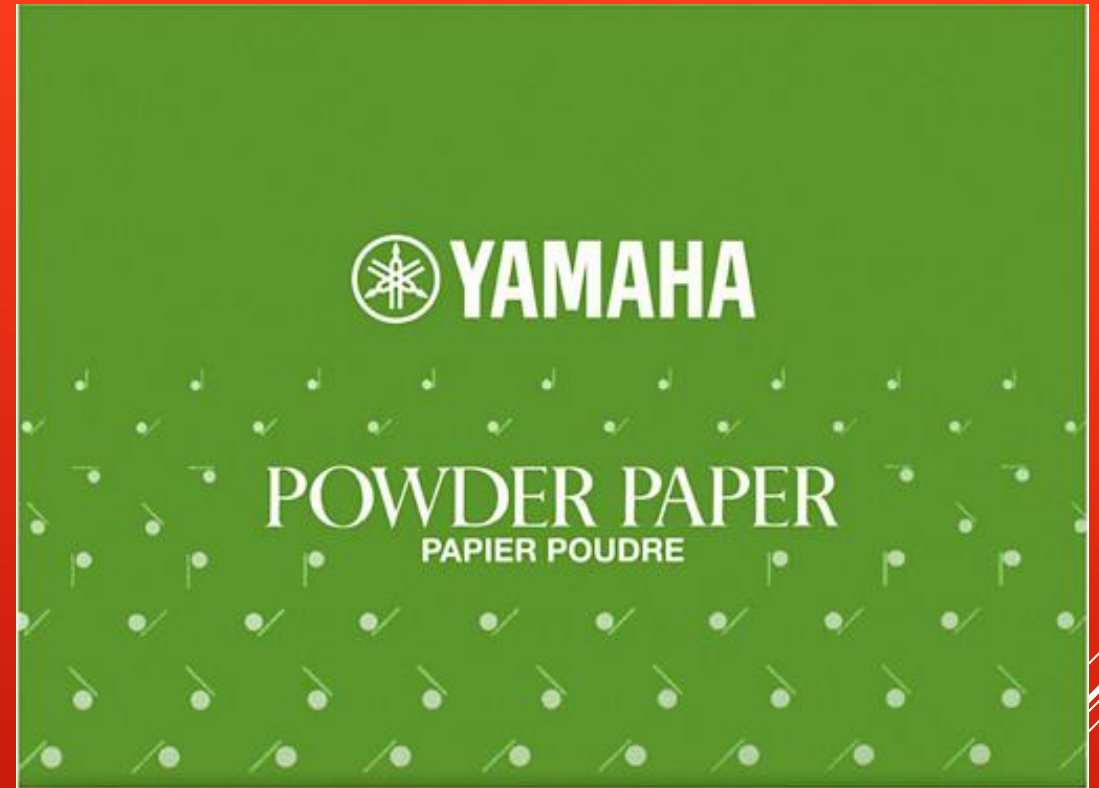


- ▶ Super glue gel
 - ▶ NOT REGULAR SUPLER GLUE
 - ▶ SERIOUSLY, not regular super glue
 - ▶ Use to re-apply key corks, felts, and pearls

MAINTENANCE YOU CAN DO



- ▶ Yamaha Powder Paper
 - ▶ Use on sticky keys



MAINTENANCE YOU CAN DO

- ▶ Emergency repair kits
 - ▶ Musicmedic.com
 - ▶ Jsmithco.com



MAINTENANCE YOU CAN DO

- ▶ Amber Melt Pellets
 - ▶ Glue pellets for pads



MAINTENANCE YOU CAN DO

▶ Teflon Tape

- ▶ AKA- Plumber's tape, Thread seal tape, PTFE tape
- ▶ Wrap around loose tenon corks



MAINTENANCE YOU CAN DO

- ▶ Alligator forceps for stuck swabs



MAINTENANCE YOU CAN DO

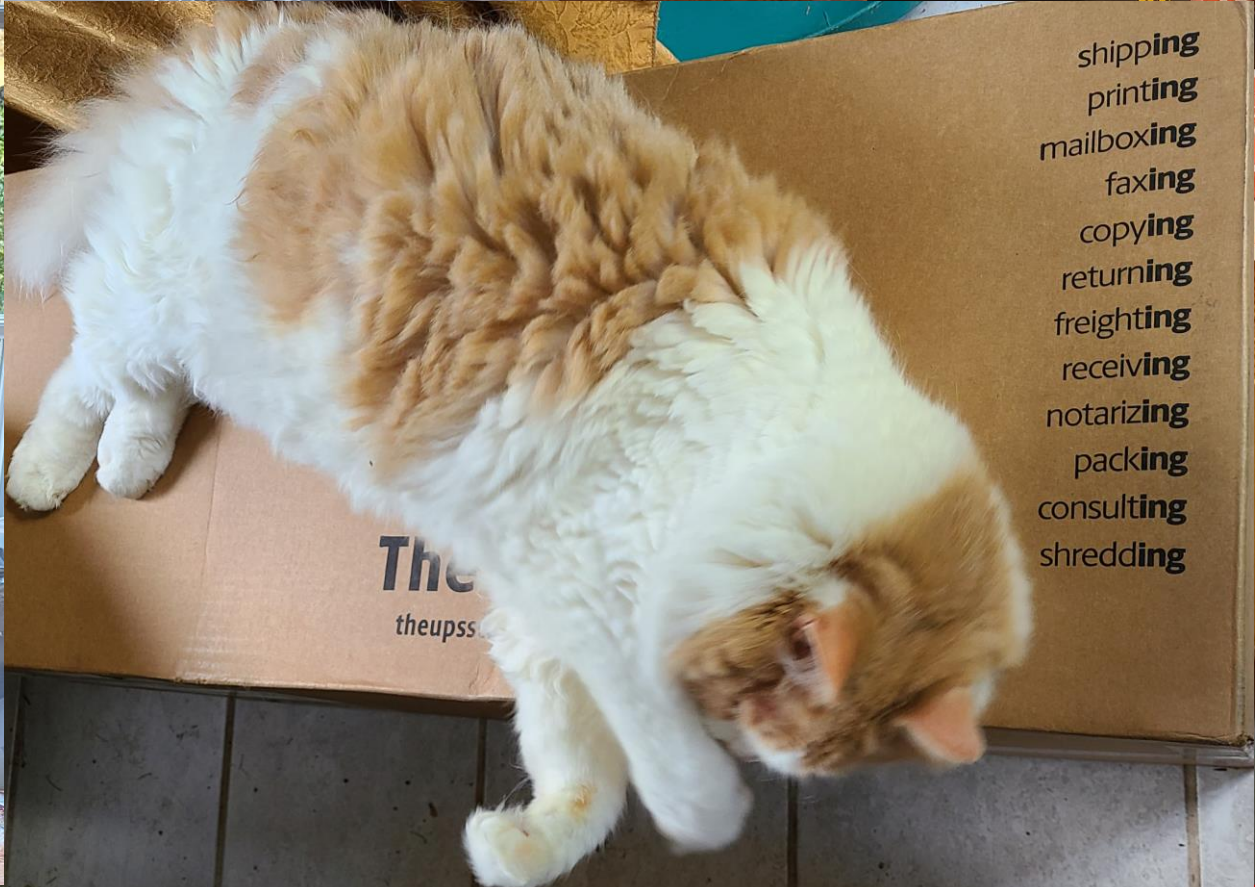
- ▶ Music is hard!
- ▶ Make it easier on yourself
- ▶ By making sure your bass clarinet is in good working order!

**That's one small step
for music**



**One giant leap for
clarinetkind**

CONCLUSION



shipping
printing
mailboxing
faxing
copying
returning
freighting
receiving
notarizing
packing
consulting
shredding

The
theupss