

Oboe Shopping Information

I'm so excited that you're oboe shopping! You should be too! Here are some tips and information to help you along your way to getting a new or new-to-you instrument that will have you playing even more beautifully in no time flat.

Here are a few considerations to get you started.

-What is your budget?

Of course money matters, and oboes are not cheap instruments. It is a great thing to have a budget in mind and to also know if there is room for flexibility, and also if there is not. Avoid being lured in by the Big Box music stores which offer limited options at higher costs, also avoid the temptation of deals on places like Ebay that seem too good to be true. They almost always are.

New Professional Model Oboes can run anywhere from approximately \$6k+

Used Professional Model Oboes for an excellent instrument should begin at approximately \$4-5K+

If you are looking at an oboe in a lower price bracket, check the description carefully to try and discern how the cost adds up. Is it truly a Professional Model? Or is it a "Student" or "Intermediate" level instrument in actuality?

Oboes are sold in three market brackets: Student, Intermediate, and Professional.

Student oboes are the ones that most middle schools in CCSD use as school instruments. They have limited keywork, are always plastic, and are really meant as a training tool to teach fingerings and the most basic level of technique. These are not the oboe that you want to look at as an upgrade or to purchase.

Intermediate oboes, in my opinion, are a bit of a marketing tactic. They are in a high price range than the student model oboes, and the price is balanced depending upon the maker and their priorities. Some makers will opt for a plastic body with full conservatory keywork and others will opt for a wood body with more minimal keywork. Both instances still leave most people wanting, especially if you have long term goals. You will have to upgrade again in a couple of years and certainly before college.

Professional oboes are the best option to just head for right of the bat. Especially if you look at used instruments which can significantly lower cost. They should include "Full Conservatory" keywork (complete keys) which includes a Left "F" key, Low B-Flat key, and 3rd octave key.

-What are your playing needs and how far ahead can you look with your playing? ie; playing through the end of High School VS the possibility of playing oboe in college

If you aren't sure about the long term commitment yet, but know that you need an upgrade from the school oboe or rental, I still recommend considering a high quality used Professional model

oboe. If it is well maintained, oboes tend to hold their value fairly decently and a good instrument is only going to help.

If you know now that you are interested in a long term relationship with the oboe- congrats, that's amazing! Whether your plans include a music major, minor, or non-major participation for scholarship in college, you'll want a great oboe that can help you along the way with your goals.

Necessary in this instance: Wood body oboe, Full Conservatory Keywork. Brands include Loree, Yamaha, Howarth, Marigaux, and Fox.

-Along the same line as the previous question, are you ready to commit to the care of a wood instrument in our extreme Desert climate?

Wood VS Plastic is a good question. It is important for you to know that close to 100% of professional oboists play wood oboes. Wood vibrates, rings, and resonates in a beautiful, natural way that plastic can't. Plastic oboes exist for many practical reasons including student oboes that need to be strong and sturdy, and oboists like us living in what I consider to be an extreme climate with very little humidity.

There are many options on the market today:

Wood

Resin (thick plastic material)

Composite (wood and plastic combined into a pulp)

Oboes with plastic topjoints

Wood oboes with a liner on the inner part of the topjoint (This is the type of oboe I play)

I strongly recommend considering the Yamaha 841 professional model oboe for a variety of reasons, not in the least, this is the oboe that I make my living on. It is the last option on this list- wood body with an ebonite (thin resin painted on the inside of the topjoint of the instrument). Any make of oboe that has this option is a great one.

Oboes crack. Fairly often. Especially in Las Vegas. When you think about it, a lot of stress is being put into the topjoint (uppermost piece of the oboe) every single time we play. It is the most narrow part of the instrument, and it is where our warm air and condensation hit first. Natural fluctuations in wood as well as humidity and temperature changes make extreme care and supervision a must.

Oboe Shopping Tips

1. Shop with an oboe retailer or double reed specialist. Big Box music stores don't have the same selection (especially when it comes to used instruments) as a dealer that specializes in the sale of oboes and English horns. You also have the option with this route of doing an instrument trial which I'll explain more about shortly.
2. Try various brands of oboes. There are many great instrument makers out there. Some of the big standards to check out would be Loree, Yamaha, Marigaux, Howarth, Covey, Fox, and Laubin.
3. Do an instrument trial. Reputable retailers will send you 3-4 oboes at a time to play and test out before you commit to a purchase. This is a very important process that you can miss out on at

larger retail stores like Woodwind and Brasswind, Musician's Friend, and even Kessler and Sons. Midwest Musical Imports in Minneapolis has the best selection of new and used oboes on the market today and through doing an oboe trail with them, you can really be confident that you're getting the best oboe for you.

4. When going used, the younger the better. Look for used oboes that are 10 years old (or less). Because we are blowing hot air and condensation into our oboes, the wood does not age well like string instruments. Also look for used oboes without cracks. Most oboes crack within their first year of being played, so if this can be avoided it is for the best.
5. If a deal seems too good to be true, it is. Avoid Ebay, Craigslist, Auctions, and Storage unit sales. Ebay and the like are an easy façade for sellers to hide behind with problematic instruments that will not sell in any other setting. It also eliminates the trial process as an option to compare multiple instruments so you really feel confident in what you are purchasing.

Oboe Retailers

Midwest Musical Imports www.mmimports.com *Yamaha dealer

My absolute favorite retailer, I buy all of my supplies and instruments from this company because I respect their honesty, integrity, and professionalism. If you call them for anything, ask to speak with Steven Maijala (My-AH-Luh). He and I did our undergraduate oboe performance degrees together at DePauw University and he'll know how to assist you, especially if you tell him you are my student!

RDG Woodwinds www.rdgwoodwinds.com

Forrests Music www.forrestsmusic.com

Carlos Coelho www.carlosoboe.com *Loree technician

Mark Chudnow www.MCWoboe.com *Loree technician

MacFarland Double Reed www.macfarlanddoublereed.com *Yamaha dealer