

Purchasing a Clarinet



Brand Names vs. Off-Brands

There are a number of things to keep in mind when purchasing a clarinet. First and most important is the **quality**. The brand name of the instrument is important today, as there are a number of newer companies out there that are producing cheaper Clarinets. These clarinets look great and play ok by themselves! The key word is by *themselves*! Often when these instruments are mixed in the band setting the students find themselves sounding “out of tune”. In an effort to cut costs companies like these are less precise in the manufacturing the instrument along with the materials of the instrument. In many cases the kids often find themselves playing the right fingerings but having almost an entire note difference in sound. That is to say they are playing the right note but the wrong note is sounding! Not only is this discouraging to the individual student but also to the others in Band, as it equally makes them sound bad. Students learn from the first year the importance of tuning – the **quality of the instrument** is *very* important.

Brand Names

Below are a few brand names of makers of clarinets. With modern day computers I am sure you can find more- please feel free to contact any music teacher at ALCS if the one you find does not appear below for more input before purchasing.

Armstrong, Bundy, Buffet, Conn, Leblanc, Noblet, Selmer, Yamaha

The Key

Clarinets come in a variety of keys. The one you are looking for is called the Bb Clarinet. (B flat clarinet)

Plastic-vs- Wood

Clarinets come in two types plastic or wood. (Granadilla wood) Most professional line horns are made from wood. It requires a little extra care in maintenance so that the clarinet does not crack. This is why most beginners start on a plastic clarinet. They are much more durable against moisture changes and hold up well to Western New York weather patterns. Manufacturers now even have a brush technique that makes the plastic look like wood! There is usually a cost difference, that being more for a wooden clarinet.

Keys

Some clarinets may offer different materials in the plating of the keys. This generally just affects the looks of the clarinet and does not affect the most important concern which is tone! It does however affect the cost of the instrument – obviously silver plated keys are going to cost more than the standard key.

Mouthpieces

Often when purchasing a clarinet the buyer may be able to barter, to close the deal, for a specific mouthpiece instead of the standard one they put in the case. Next to the quality (student line vs professional line) the mouthpiece is the greatest factor in tone production. It is recommended to try and get a Selmer HS* (* stands for star) or a Vandoran B45. These are the standard mouthpieces others try to copy so the dealer may tell you it is equivalent.