

instrument playground online

featuring
jelena dirks oboe

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[Interview with Jelena Dirks, SLSO Oboist](#) [Oboe Demonstration](#)

The oboe is a woodwind instrument that uses a double reed to produce sound. Reeds are made from a type of cane or bamboo. Single reeds use one piece of cane and double reeds use two pieces. Other double reed instruments include the English horn, bassoon, and contrabassoon. Sound is produced when a musician blows into the double reed, causing both sides of the reed and the air inside the instrument to vibrate.

Make Your Own Double Reed

Jelena makes her oboe reeds from cane, but you can make your own double reed from a drinking straw. Try this:

- Flatten one end (3-5 cm) of a plastic drinking straw by biting and sliding your teeth along the straw.
- Cut the sides of the flattened end of the straw to almost a point. The cut end of the straw acts like the reed (*pictured right*).
- Place the flattened, cut end of the straw into your mouth closing your lips gently around the straw. With your lips barely touching, blow steadily, gradually increasing your lip pressure until you make a buzzing noise.

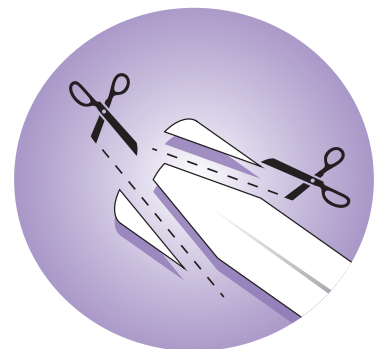
Sometimes musicians spend hours making a reed only to find it does not sound very good. If your straw does not work the first time, do not get discouraged and try again!

When Do You Breathe?

Jelena uses her breath to play the oboe. How a musician uses their breath is very important when singing or playing a wind instrument. Where they choose to breathe when performing a piece of music determines the musical phrasing. A musical phrase is like a sentence. Sing your favorite song, and pay attention to where you breathe: Did you breathe at the end of a line or sentence, or in the middle? Try singing the song more times but take breaths in different places each time. Do you hear differences in your musical phrases?

Everyone Gets Nervous

In the video Jelena says that she gets nervous when she performs. What are some things that make you nervous? Jelena calms herself by thinking about sharing her music with the audience. How do you calm yourself when you are nervous?



s|s|o

St. Louis Symphony
Orchestra

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