Baritone Maintenance and Cleaning

Needed Items

Slide grease, mouthpiece brush, snake brush, valve oil, cleaning cloth

Storing your instrument

When not using your instrument, keep it closed in its case to help protect it and to prevent the possibility of damage. Do not store the instrument in areas of extreme temperature changes. Keep the instrument away from heating supplies or from windows where direct sunlight or other weather can cause damage.

Daily Maintenance

As you play, your baritone collects moisture inside from the warm air coming out of your mouth. If you do not clean this moisture out after each playing session, it can accumulate in your instrument and cause various problems. After playing, open any water keys and blow a steady stream of air through the instrument to blow any water out. The outside of the instrument should be wiped off with a polishing cloth to remove fingerprints. This will stop your instrument from tarnishing and keep it in good working order.

Weekly Maintenance

The mouthpiece should be cleaned weekly using warm water and soft liquid soap and your mouthpiece brush. This sanitizes the mouthpiece and removes foreign matter from the inside. Make sure all slides move easily. Use slide grease to lubricate slides if they are difficult to move. Make sure valves move easily as well. Oil valves once each week or more often as needed.

Monthly Maintenance

Every few months the instrument should be taken apart and given a bath. Begin by laying a towel in the bathtub. Take all of the slides off the instrument and wipe the grease off of them. Take the valves out of the baritone and set them aside. Be sure to remember which valve is which – the instrument will not work unless each valve is in its specific place. Everything but the valves can be laid on the towel in the bathtub. Making sure that the water is a comfortable temperature (comfortable for you is comfortable for your horn), fill the tub with enough water to cover the instrument. HOT WATER WILL DAMAGE YOUR INSTRUMENT! Let the instrument

soak for about an hour to loosen dirt and debris. While the instrument is soaking, rinse the valves with warm water, being careful not to let any felt or cork get wet. Using your valve casing brush, clean the pathways through the valves gently. Set the valves on a towel on the counter to dry. Once the rest of the horn has been soaked, clean out all of the tubing using a snake brush. Run the snake's bristle heads in and out of all of the tubing several times underwater to remove any build-up. Pay special attention to the leadpipe, which has a tendency to have more accumulated grime than anywhere else. Also use your valve casing brush to brush out the valve casing. Remember, this is a delicate part of every horn, so be gentle. After you're satisfied that everything is clean, rinse everything with lukewarm water. To prevent spotting, wipe off the outside of the horn with the softest cloth you can find. Blow out any water hanging up in the tubing, and lay the horn out to dry. As you reassemble your horn it is absolutely necessary to liberally coat the valves with valve oil (ten drops or more may be necessary) so that excess oil will transfer to the internal solder joints. Your slides are bare metal and need grease to keep them moving properly, otherwise, they can get stuck. With your finger, place a small amount of grease on the part of the slide that is thinner and fits inside a larger piece of tubing. Spread the grease evenly all the way around the slide, and then reinsert only one of the tubes back into place, rotate around, and repeat with the other side. Once both sides have been rotated in the tubing, the slide can be replaced normally back onto the baritone. Once the instrument is reassembled, try playing to make sure everything is back to the right place.

Yearly Maintenance

Have your instrument checked out at a music store. They will do minor repairs and replace worn pads. You may ask for an estimate for cleaning and repairs before having the work done. Early summer is the best time to do this.