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# The Bassoon Reed Manual: Lou Skinner's Techniques



## Synopsis

"... an extraordinary book, monumental and challenging... Buy this book and immerse yourself in it. You will enter a new world." *—* American Musical Instrument Society Newsletter

With the help of author James McKay, the late Louis Skinner, America's master bassoon reedmaker, documented his techniques for making specialized and general purpose reeds for the bassoon and the contrabassoon. In this work, step-by-step explanations of reedmaking techniques are complemented by photographs and drawings, making every procedure clear. Throughout, the emphasis is on giving practical advice, not just giving steps to follow but explaining why they are important.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"This book codifies the practices of a man who devoted his life to researching and developing practices to improve the art of reedmaking - Louis Skinner... This is the written account of what in the past has been an oral (and aural) tradition passed down from the bassoon teacher to the students... Lou Skinner catalogued his reed experimentation, and over the years developed these unique techniques that are unknown refinements to the traditional reedmaker. Only those persons who went and studied with Skinner directly were made aware of them in the past." - Ronald Klimko, University of Idaho, Moscow

"Reading Skinner's comments one is struck by the logic and clarity of his analysis, thinking, and explanations. His consideration of reed characteristics is universal; he accounts for all of the physical factors: embouchure, air supply, pitch level, cane strength." - Christopher Weait, Ohio State University

James McKay is Chair of Music Performance at the University of Western Ontario. Russel Hinkle (bio data to come). William Woodward has a mail-order reed business and (bio data to come).

I studied with Lou in 1980, and this was a fantastic resource to fill in the gaps that crept in over the last few decades! I think it is a lot to digest for the uninitiated, but I don't think that really is the point of the effort by James McKay.

The perfect practical manual for making bassoon reeds! My son is a senior in college and has been on a mission to perfect his reed-making technique. His professor recommended this book, and has become a great reference for him. Seller did a great job shipping quickly.

Each of us makes our reeds to our own specifications right down to the colour of the thread. This book details some of Lou Skinner's later techniques for producing remarkable bassoon reeds. While it is targetted at a more advanced bassoonist, hence written by a college professor, it breaks down to the smallest detail the nuance of making a personal reed design that works for each of us. Skinner, like all good academics, stressed open-mindedness. He encouraged bassoonists to continue experimenting to find the palette of colours most suitable for themselves. Anyone who can't produce a fine reed from this book should work with Professor McKay to find what crucial element they are misinterpreting. This is the foremost publication on the subject of reeds to be produced to date.

I bought this book on the recommendation of my repairman, James Keyes. The contents of this book are interesting, giving some (not much, but some) insight into how a reed actually works. However, a sketchy quality of writing makes it hard to follow with the very few examples provided. It doesn't end there. The instructions and methods provided to produce the various reed models mentioned in the book are completely useless; every reed I've made following his instructions has failed even if I followed them to the exact letter. Interesting if you want to see how Louis Skinner worked. But if you want to use the book for practical purposes, don't bother.

I waited over a year for the book and it was worth the wait. It is well documented and well worth the cost of the book. It will definitely be a well used and valuable reference in any serious bassoonist library. It may be too advance for a beginning reed maker (Popkin & Glickman, Chris Weait, or Mark Eubanks reed books may be easier for them to follow). Thank you Mr. Skinner for sharing your

knowledge.

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