

Identifying the make and model of an instrument (Jan 2025)

Usually the manufacturer, the model, and a serial number (and sometimes the place the instrument was made) will be stamped on an instrument somewhere. If there are no markings then the instrument could be a 'demonstration' model used to test the market place, or more likely a budget instrument nobody wants to own up to making!

On Clarinets: the manufacturer and model are usually stamped on the front of the top-joint (and/or the barrel and bell); the serial number is usually stamped on the back of the bottom-joint (and/or the back of the barrel, top-joint, and bell).

On Saxophones: the manufacturer and model are usually stamped on the front of the (flared) bell or at back of the body just above the D# key; the serial number is usually found likewise.

On Flutes: the manufacturer and model are usually stamped on the front of the body on the socket which the head-joint fits into, although sometimes the model is stamped just underneath the trill key cups or high C key; the serial number is usually stamped on the back of the body near the foot-joint, although sometimes the serial number is stamped just underneath the trill key cups or high C key.

On Piccolos: the manufacturer and model are usually stamped on the front of the head-joint; the serial number is usually stamped just underneath the high C key, or sometimes on the metal tenon on the body which fits into the head-joint.

On Oboes: the manufacturer and model are usually stamped on the front of the top-joint (and/or the bell); the serial number is usually stamped on the back of the bottom-joint (and/or the top-joint and bell).

On Bassoons: the manufacturer is usually stamped on the Bell, the model is not always indicated (and has to be worked out by identifying the features of the instrument such whether the instrument has a high d key); the serial number is often stamped on the metal end of the boot-joint (the boot cap will need to be removed to uncover this).

Establishing the date of manufacture

Serial numbers can be used to establish the date of manufacture of an instrument. Information sheet No 7 - NAMIR Ltd – Serial numbers Woodwind (on this website) is a collection of lists of serial numbers from certain manufacturers indicating what year the serial number was issued. This collection was put together by the Wind Instrument Repairers trade organization NAMIR Ltd. There are also many sites on-line that list serial numbers of particular brands.

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