

Insights: Berlin Woodwinds and Vibrato

By Peter Lawrence Alexander / September 9, 2012



This is my [Berlin Woodwinds](#) weekend!

In this Insights article we're looking at vibrato specifically on sustained pitches, and particularly based on U.S. practice. Looking at BWW for Flute 1, you see three vibrato choices:

- Sustains Without Vibrato;
- Sustains Normal Vibrato;
- Sustains Progressive Vibrato.

To replicate orchestral woodwind writing, which should be used? Look carefully at the table below.

Vibrato on Sustain: Woodwinds								
	Pic	Flt	Oboe	Eng Horn	Clar	Bass Clar	Bsn	Contra Bassoon
Vibrato on Sustain	1st two octaves	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No

Source: Textures and Timbres

To make the most out of this chart, you'll need the BWW Articulation Chart found on the Orchestral Tools web site (it's not part of the documentation folder on download).

Note that only the flutes and oboes give you a *progressive* vibrato on the sustain. All the other instruments, except for the clarinets, give you a normal vibrato.

Depending on the passage, above the first two octaves, the piccolo may or may not have vibrato. Composer's choice.

So, from an orchestration perspective, when compared back to actual scoring practice (U.S.), BWW gives the composer vibrato on those instruments where vibrato is sounded in live performance practice, and with the flutes and oboes you have two types, normal and progressive. Since the bass clarinet and contrabassoon are now being recorded, we'll have to wait and see if and how vibrato has been added.

If possible, it would be nice to see in a future update, a progressive vibrato come available for the bassoon and English horn.

You can use MIDI CC22 to move between the vibrato choices.

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