



Alphorn Workshop

History, Care and Musicianship

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Agenda

- History of the Alphorn
- How are they made
- I want an Alphorn !
 - Where to get them
 - What type of horn should I get
- How to care for and repair your alphorn
- How to play an Alphorn
- Let's play an Alphorn Echo

History of the Alphorn

- Alphorn or Alpen Horn refers to the horns from the Alpine region of Europe (Bavarian, Austrian, Swiss and French).
- “The oldest known document using the German word *Alphorn* is a page from a 1527 account book from the former [Cistercian](#) abbey St. Urban near [Pfaffnau](#) mentioning the payment of two [Batzen](#) for an itinerant alphorn player from the [Valais](#).” - Wikipedia
- May be a descendent of the labrophone, however the actual history of the horn’s origin is unknown !
- Fact: True alphorns are made of natural wood and use a wood mouthpiece

History of the Alphorn

- Common belief is the Alphorn was and is used for Communication between
 - Shepherds and Farmers
 - Villages
 - Animals - what?
- Alpine shepherds have developed specific “Alphorn calls” that they teach their herds to respond to!
 - Herds will come to the horn player, the barn or a field
 - Youtube has the videos!!

History of the Alphorn

- Construction
 - Natural Soft wood (Alpine Spruce or Pine)
 - Original horns came from trees on the side of the mountain. The bell leads to the roots !
 - Today makers “create” a bell from multiple pieces of wood
- Unique decorative characteristics
 - Swiss/French makers : decorative rattan wrapping around the outside
 - Bavarian / Austrian makers : solid smooth wood outside
- Bell can be decorated with hand-painted Alpine flowers and pictures picked by the owner

I want an Alphorn !

- Where to get them?
 - Major Artisans
 - Pot : Handcrafted custom horns
 - Online orders : MUST communicate in FRENCH
 - Will provide multiple adapters to change the Key of the horn
 - Stocker : Largest handcrafted and machine crafted horns
 - Online and Phone ordering
 - Can also order specific pieces including individual mouthpieces custom bored
 - Rocky Mountain Alphorns (Canada/US)
 - Other manufacturers
 - EBAY – resale
- Look for
 - Original name, solid pieces of wood, brass fittings and wood mouthpieces
 - Has it been used or has it sat in a DRY room for a long time (Dry rot or cracking)

I want an Alphorn !

MOST IMPORTANT DECISION!

- What key is it ??
 - Swiss – FIS (F#) only
 - Bavaria, Austria – Eb, F, G,
 - France – F, G, A444, A
 - U.S. – G, F

How to Care for and Repair your Alphorn

- It is Wood – don't be afraid!
- Keep from dry rot
 - Play it to put humidity into the horn
 - Give it a quick bath!! Don't leave in the water - just dunk, swish around to clean inside and take out
 - Use a Cello or Bass humidity stick in the bag over long periods of time
 - Do Not Leave in the SUN
- Use wood oil or light polish on the outside
- Brass cleaner on the couplers
- Verify O-Rings, if your horn has them, are rubbery
- Cover the ends with old socks when travelling

How to Care for and Repair your Alphorn

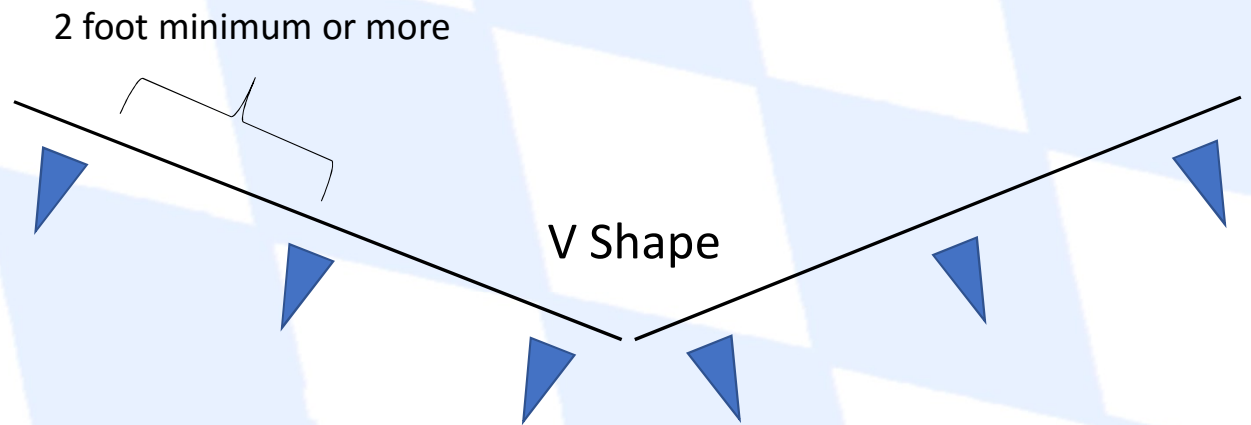
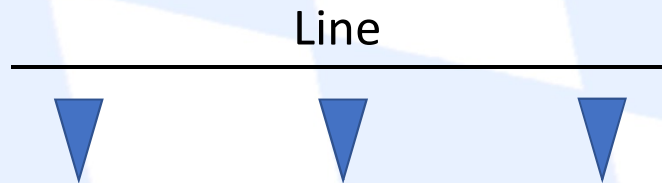
- Small cracks and dents
 - Create a Paste and fill the crack
 - Sand block of same type of wood and collect the wood sawdust
 - Mix 1/2 Sawdust and 1/2 Wood glue into a wood paste
 - Fill the crack and bind the pieces together for 24 hours
- Large cracks
 - Woodworker best option
 - An Epoxy that works with wood is also an option
 - Frankenstein knitting possible

How to Play an Alphorn Demonstration

- Technique
- Volume
- Articulation
- Starting Pyramid
- Ending Stair steps

Line up

Pay attention to each bell's direction and how close they are to each other to stop vibration of the horn and ruining the sound!!





Let's Play

Presentation will be posted for download

- Altwashingtonia Website on the GAUFEST page
 - www.altwashingtonia.com
- Bill Hummel
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