

A different question: What is the influence of the background on the vibrancy of a picture (canvas, paper,...)?

It could be misleading to pose the isolated question of the influence of the wood on the recorder sound. Brush (pencil, palette knife,...) and colour (oil, water-colour, spray,...) presumably have a stronger influence on the picture than its background. A statement can only be made when the context is known!

The wood is outwardly very much in evidence and is therefore often overrated. The labium, measure and wall characteristics are often underrated. It is important, therefore, to look at the instrument as a whole!

I will not find a well-sounding recorder which suits my taste and my requirements if I only concentrate on the question of the wood. Why can recorders made of pearwood sound completely different depending on the manufacturer? Why do instruments from the same model, wood and manufacturer sound so different?

The wood in a recorder hardly oscillates, it is the air column that oscillates. The decisive factor is how the air column is set into vibration plus its form, the inner drill-hole. It is different with a violin or a harpsichord, there it is really the wood that vibrates!

Wood is also always processed wood.

The wood is put into oil or impregnated with paraffin. Sometimes only oiled on the surface and sometimes varnished (in particular inside). There are rough and smooth inner drill-holes. The bore wall thickness can vary greatly. The undercut of the finger holes also has some influence. How well has the wood been stored? All this has an influence (thickness, dimensions, surface) on the sound!

The quality of the wood also varies greatly. There are various types of pears to eat, so there are various types of pear-trees. The trees also grow very differently depending on the ground and the location. And the same goes for maple, palisander, olive, cherry, boxwood, plum.....

The characteristics of a wood favour a certain overtone structure.

This is the basis of the sound and we perceive it intuitively as the sound of a wood.

But what is then done with it (model, processing) can differ greatly and can cover up the 'wood sound'.

In general, woods which are too light are not suitable. (The deeper a recorder, the lighter the wood can be.) Hardwoods (exotic woods) are richer in overtones, which is perceived as hard. They are also somewhat louder and are longer-lasting. I do not find that soft woods sound soft or warm, but not so sharp (less overtone).

With its open pores, palisander often causes turbulence in the wind-channel, which can sound somewhat raucous.

As a recorder manufacturer, I have my likes and dislikes of certain woods, either because of the sound produced or because of the processing. I like pearwood and European boxwood very much, and cherrywood for lower-tone instruments. Olive looks very good. I do not like grenadilla, palisander, maple, plumwood, substitute boxwood quite so much.

A preference for certain types of wood is often associated with past experiences. If someone has a poor recorder made of palisander wood, the person will always be sceptical regarding this wood. If someone has a good recorder made of cherrywood, he/she will try cherrywood first as a next instrument and very probably purchase a cherrywood one even if the instrument is just average. The fault often does not lie with the wood.....

Why are there sound differences with serial recorders made of the same wood?

It depends very much on who created the sound at the end. The signature, the tuner's taste, has a great influence. Two recorders are never exactly the same – not even when made of plastic.... And then the wood, as I said previously, also plays a role. One model supports the basic sound characteristics of a certain wood, another model supports a different wood more.

Blind testing with different types of wood brought very confusing results. Just try it for yourself!

I hope all you players will have open ears, intuitive awareness and will not find your glasses right now.

Geri Bollinger, K ng Recorder Manufacturer