



# gear

## GEAR REVIEWS

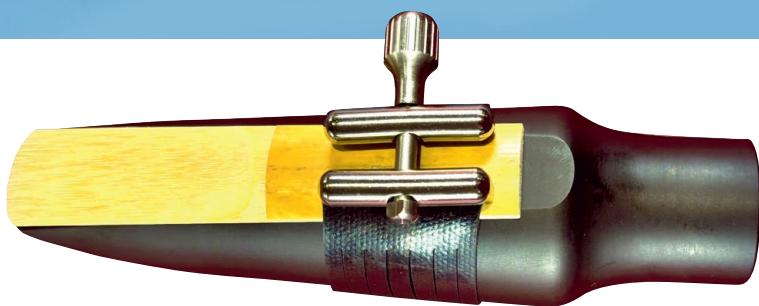
### Ligature Round-Up

This is the third time I have written a feature about ligatures for this magazine. The first was in the Spring 2015 issue. Readers asked for a follow-up article and I revisited ligatures again in the Spring 2020 issue. Five years later, I am lucky enough to keep discovering amazing ligatures so here is my latest update.

**ROVNER STAR SERIES LIGATURE**  
\$37.95 • [rovnerproducts.com](http://rovnerproducts.com)

**ISHIMORI WOODSTONE**  
Kodama II Ligature • £139.25  
[wood-stone.jp](http://wood-stone.jp)

**ZAC LIGATURE**  
\$115 – \$420  
[zacligature.com/en](http://zacligature.com/en)



#### Rovner Star Series Ligature

First, the greatest value ligature of all time. I believe it is Rovner's finest ligature... and the least expensive. I discovered The Rovner Star Series Ligature because they came with some marvelous Rousseau 3.0 baritone saxophone mouthpieces which I received from Jody Espina. The extremely light and flexible fabric is also cut through around its circumference five times so that it does not dampen vibrations much at all. It still dampens a reed more than two rails, though. I reverse all fabric ligatures that do not have rails included so that the pins are on the reed. Projection is increased and articulation is far more fluid. These particular pins enhance this effect, since this is the only fabric ligature made that does not also cover the pins with fabric.

When I give this ligature to students who are starting to get a great sound and quick light staccatos after a couple of years of lessons, their projection increases dramatically, and they can tongue staccatos about twelve per cent more quickly, jumping from sixteenth notes tongued at 128bpm to 144bpm instantly. So ligatures make more noticeable differences when all the fundamentals are in place. Up until then, the stock ligatures that come with student instruments are just fine. As this is indestructible, it is the perfect student ligature.

The image above is that Rousseau 3.0 mouthpiece with the Star Series pins placed correctly on the reed. The other six great ligatures in my case range from \$150 to \$450 (Canadian dollars) and this ligature competes with them very well at between 10 and 25% of the cost; the Star Series is just \$40 (Canadian dollars). The Rovner Star Series punches way above its weight.

#### Ishimori Woodstone Kodama II Ligature

I discovered the next ligature when two close friends and colleagues showed it off to me in my studio when trying out instruments, mouthpieces and other gear. The sound of this ligature is wonderful, and the colleagues who were using it both play Légère reeds. The grenadilla resonator adds a subtle woody grain to the tone. The amazing thing is that the plate is not symmetrical... it is wider at the top than the bottom.

I experimented with rotating the resonator so that the narrower side was at the top and the projection and response increased dramatically! I called my friends immediately, and they both tried it... and told me I was a genius! Neither had noticed the difference in the width between the two ends of the resonator. I ordered six more of these for the remainder of my instruments. Despite the excellent colour of the sound, all that heavy leather does dampen projection significantly.







Zac Ebony

## ZAC Ligature

I discovered the final ligature in this article when I visited ZAC Ligature's booth at the recent ICA Clarinetfest in Dublin. I wasn't looking, but I didn't realize that the ligature I had never dreamed of was going to find me!

The four parts of this ligature are the 'mother', which consists of the screw going through a metal plate with a high-tech washer contacting the back of the mouthpiece, and four lugs that hold the 'cords.' The washer that contacts the back of the mouthpiece is made of Vibram, a high-resistance, high-traction and high-grip rubber that is used for the soles of high-performance mountain climbing boots.

Then there are the various 'resonators', ebony on the picture above, and gold-plated solid sterling silver to the right. (These are my personal ligatures, hence the initials engraved on the inside of the mother. The ebony resonator model is one of the original samples I tried.) The final parts are the 'clips' that clamp the cords around the lugs. They are made from the same metal as the resonator, mine is solid sterling silver. The cords holding the resonators are extremely easy to remove from the lugs but are very secure and cannot come off accidentally. This allows one to change between various resonators on the same 'mother' with ease.

The quality of the design, engineering and machining on these ligatures is matchless. The owner and manufacturer, Alberto Pellizzari, is a fine musician too.

I contacted Alberto because I noticed the Ebony resonator in his catalogue, and it seemed to me that I could get the colour of the Kodama II ligature with more freedom and projection since the cords and mother had much more limited contact with the mouthpiece. The resonator is also made exactly the right width with very fine points of contact on the reed. Alberto felt I should also try the gold-plated solid sterling silver resonator to compare it and gave me one, gratis!

The ebony resonator did indeed have the same colour and much better projection than the Kodama ligature, but I liked the gold-plated silver resonator even better after taking both it and the ebony resonator on a two-week tour, trying them in seven different halls. The mother supplied was also gold-plated sterling silver, and the clips were sterling silver.

There are two different metal resonators available, brass and sterling silver. They are available with a satin finish or plated with Rhodium or Gold. The mothers and clips are also available in these metals and finishes. They all have different sound qualities that can be preferable for various kinds of music or any musician's taste. All the mother and resonator plates come in different sizes for different saxophones and clarinets. Most other manufacturers use the same size resonator plates for every size of reed, which is totally inappropriate.

Most ZAC endorsers use gold-plated sterling silver mothers and resonators, but there are many using combinations of all the different materials. The ebony resonator is used by many players on soprano saxophone and clarinet.

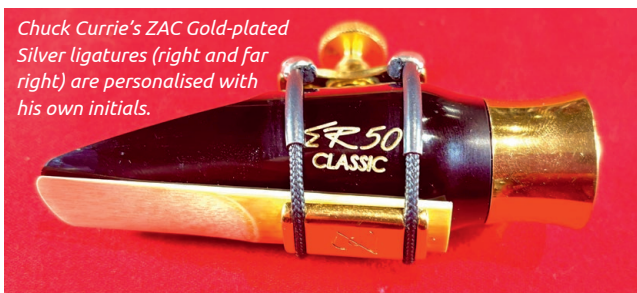
The cords that hold the resonators can also be used without resonators. These Dyneema® fiber cords are the highest quality available, incredibly strong and supple. Dyneema® fiber is 15x stronger than steel at the same weight. It was first developed for sailing lines for America's Cup competitors.

The combination of this cord, with its incredibly grippy rubber coating and the high-tech washer that contacts the back of the mouthpiece, gives us an extremely secure ligature that lets the reed and mouthpiece vibrate with incredible freedom. The reed is seated nicely with very little pressure. I had no problem tuning the saxophone or moving the clarinet mouthpiece between A, Bb and C clarinets quickly in orchestra. No other ligature is this secure with so much freedom and vibrancy in tone and articulation.

The gold-plated solid sterling silver models I chose have great projection of a pure, warm, rich, resonant, shimmering and centred tone, with the greatest ease of articulation I've ever experienced. Three accomplished colleagues spent three hours in my studio recently trying these ligatures on every size of saxophone and clarinet and were blown away.

The prices of these ligatures run from a \$115 Satin Brass Mother with no Resonator to \$420 US for a Gold-plated Solid Silver Mother with a Gold-Plated Solid Silver Resonator. One can mix and match any of the material choices with each other.

Chuck Currie's ZAC Gold-plated Silver ligatures (right and far right) are personalised with his own initials.



Chuck Currie performs with the Meridien Wind Orchestra, Swiftsure Big Band, and Pacific Basswood in Victoria, BC, Canada as well as the Bass Clarinet Choir of the Association Canadienne de Clarinette Basse. He is a Backun Canada and Yanagisawa Artist-Clinician performing exclusively on Chedeville, Rousseau and JodyJazz mouthpieces. He is a Canadian Champion for Music Education.