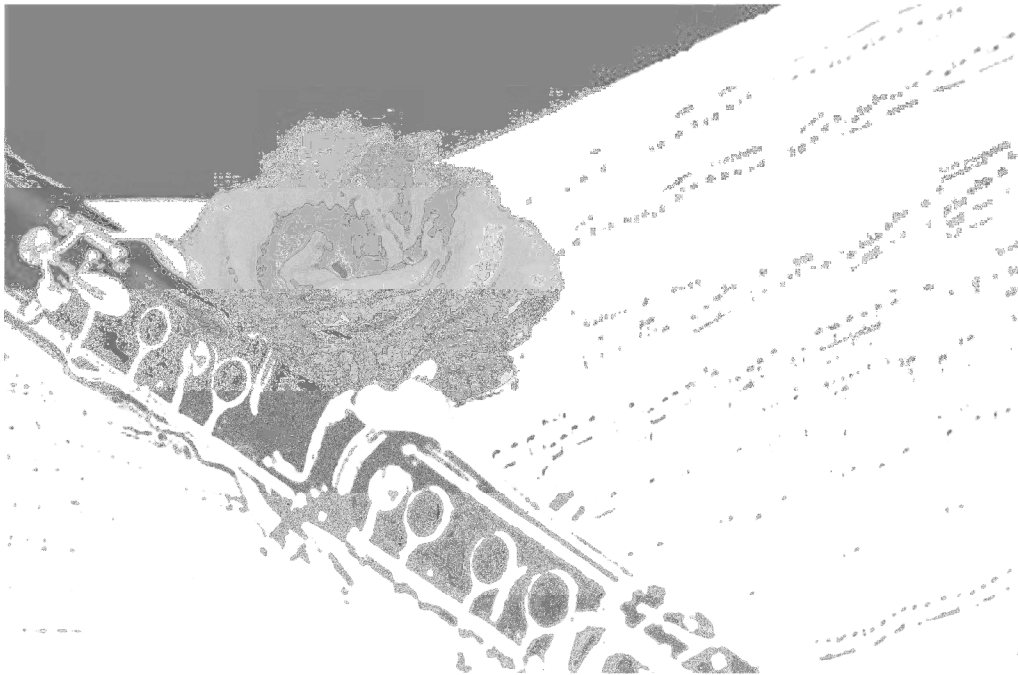


Clarinet 101

Staci A Conkling

**Set-up
The Basics
Technique
It's All About the Reed**



**Resources pulled from Dr. David Odom, Auburn University,
Dr. Jeffery Olson, Valdosta State University, and Walton High School**

Set-Up

While the listed equipment items are not necessary to perform clarinet, they are **HIGHLY** recommended for improvement and better performance technique and abilities. The prices listed are estimated maximum prices based on current retail value (2010). One store for equipment purchasing is Woodwind Brasswind. They can be found at www.wwbw.com.

I. Clarinets

- A. A professional wooden model from Buffet, Selmer, Leblanc, or Yamaha
Most standard and traditional: Buffet R-13

II. Mouthpieces

- A. Vandoren
 - M13 (\$75), M13 Lyre (\$75), 5RV (\$75)
 - M30 (\$75) or B45 (\$70)
- B. Richard Hawkins (www.richardhawkinsmouthpiece.com)
 - Student (\$100)
 - Standard (\$175)
 - Professional B or R models (over \$200)
- C. Others to consider
 - Fobes (\$185)
 - Gennusa (\$105)
 - Lomax (\$190)

III. Ligatures

- A. Cloth - Rovner Dark (\$20)
- B. Hybrid (MOST preferred)
 - BG Revelation (\$30)
 - Rovner Eddie Daniels II (\$45)
- C. Metal (NOT preferred)
 - Vandoren Optimum (\$60)
 - Bondae (traditional & inverted) (\$20)

IV. Reeds

- A. Vandoren Traditional or V-12 (MOST preferred)
- B. Rico Grand Concert Evolution
- C. Mitchell Lurie

V. Other Equipment (When it comes down to it, any will work but you **NEED** to have these)

- A. Metronome
- B. Tuner

VI. Extras

Swab, reed case, cork grease, blotting papers, thumb rest, case

The Basics

I. Breathing

- A. Relax abdomen and let it extend
- B. Relax back and sides
- C. Shoulders down
- D. Relax chest and keep in natural (not inflated) position
- E. Fill lungs all the way to the bottom - expand to your stomach

II. Breathing Exercises

- A. Place your hands on your lower back, finger tips touching. When breathing in your fingertips should expand away from each other.
- B. Say "How" with a wide open chamber in the mouth while breathing in. This intake of breath should feel abnormal but it helps expand all air cavities and fill the lungs and abdomen with air.
- C. Focused Air - Hold a piece of paper against a wall. Let go of the paper trying to sustain the paper on the wall using focused, solid air.
- D. Breathing on Counts - breath in for 4 counts and out for 4. Use multiple progressions. In 4, out 8; in 4, out 12; in 2 out 8, in 2 out 12; in 1 out 8, in 1 out 12
- E. Breathing on Counts with Hissing - Hissing provides resistance forcing the air out during exhalation. Use all the air inside the lungs.

III. Embouchure

- A. Jaw
 - 1. Don't bite
 - 2. Don't move (keep your jaw stationary)
- B. Chin
 - 1. Flat and pointed down, pulling down on the lower lip
 - 2. Don't move (keep your chin stationary)
- C. Lips
 - 1. Consistent, even pressure
 - 2. Seals the mouthpiece
 - 3. Corners firm but not pulled back
 - 4. Lower lip cushions the reed
- D. Use your ears!
 - 1. If you hear any of the following there may be a problem with some aspect of the embouchure: pinched sound (or no sound), thin sound, sharpness, flatness, inflexibility, chirps, squeaks, fuzzy sound, air leaking from corners.

IV. Embouchure Exercise

A. Proper mouthpiece in-take.

1. Too little mouthpiece intake - thin and pinched sound.
2. Too much mouthpiece intake - 'honky' and squawking sound.

B. The vibration of the reed (via wind) produces the sound. The reed is securely fastened to the mouthpiece, though at the top there is room for vibration. Place a piece of paper between the reed and mouthpiece until it no longer can move further down. At this point the reed stops vibrating. This is where the mouth should be placed.



V. Posture & Carriage

A. Straight and up-right (Sit up tall)

B. Legs should NEVER be crossed

C. The clarinet should rest at a 45° angle from your body

D. Arms are relaxed - NOT in your gut and NOT out wide like chicken wings

E. Wrists, hands and fingers should be relaxed and loose.

1. Place hands on legs with palms facing up. Relax the hands so that the fingers curl in naturally. This is the same position used holding a clarinet
2. Wrists should never be locked, rigid or stiff. This WILL result in discomfort, pain and or permanent physical damage.
3. Fingers should always be curved and never locked up.

F. Though posture and carriage is 99% physical, do NOT forget to have a clear and focused mental state.

Technique

I. Fingering

- A. Fingers should always be resting curved above the keys. Do not let fingers 'fly off' or 'float' too far away from the keys. Pinky fingers!
- B. Fingers must always correctly seal the keys. When fingers are not aligned properly and do not seal the key, an incorrect tone or squeak will result
- C. Over the break - when moving over the break on the clarinet, fingers must move quickly and seal the keys.
- D. Right Hand and Left Hand - Eb/D# is the only note (middle staff) on a standard clarinet that MUST be played with the right hand pinky. Before performing a passage, notate R and L for appropriate finger use.

II Articulation

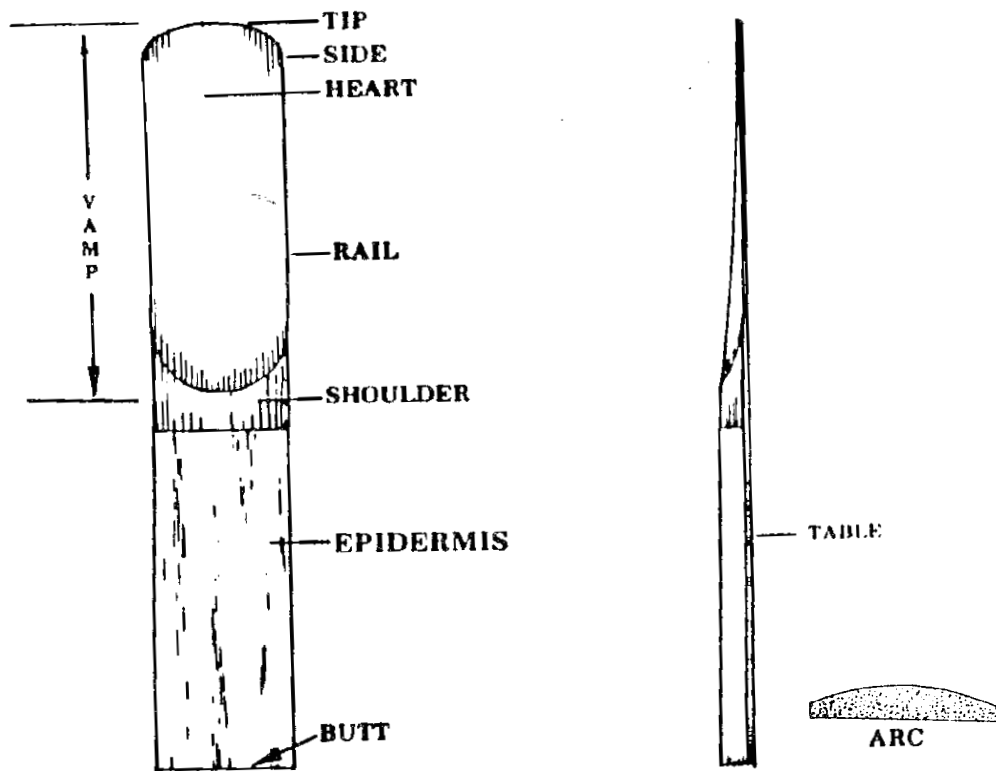
- A. Tip to tip - Tip of the tongue to the 'tip' of the reed (Where the tip meets the heart of the reed)
- B. Articulation begins and ends with the tongue.
- C. Marker Test
- D. Syllable Articulation
 - 1. 'Ta' - standard articulation
 - 2. 'La' - legato - slurred and softer articulation
 - 3. 'Dah' - accented or harder articulation
 - 4. 'Tut' - staccato articulation
- E. Light articulation - Articulation should not be hard or heavy. Heavy movement of the tongue becomes lethargic and slow. Movement should be quick and light regardless the style of the articulation.
- E. Practice Articulation EVERY day. Use scales, articulating every note and try various exercises. Begin at a slow tempo (Quarter = 76) and gradually increase tempo (move metronome up in 2s).
- F. The tongue is a muscle and does fatigue. Practice every day in shorter increments.

III. Mouth Cavity

- A. open and round
- B. Tee-Dee- The difference in the tongue position creates a difference in air speed.
 - 1. Higher arched tongue ('tee') - for the upper register. (creates faster air flow)
 - 2. Lower flattened tongue ('dee') - for the lower register
- C. Air should always be focused
- D. To produce great tone, the air must be warm and supported.

It's All About The Reeds

Reed Nomenclature



What is good and what is bad?

