



Advanced Bass Clarinet Pedagogy

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Sponsor: Texas Bandmasters Association

*Texas Bandmasters Association
60th Annual Convention/Clinic*

July 20-23, 2007

*Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center
San Antonio, Texas*

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21 July 2007

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- I) Approach to the Bass Clarinet: an overarching philosophy
 - A) The Clarinet Doubler
 - B) The Bass Clarinet Specialist
- II) Instruments: function and price
 - A) **Selmer Paris** Model 67 Professional Low C Bass Clarinet (c. \$7,500)
 - B) **Buffet** Model 1193 Prestige R-13 Low C Bass Clarinet (c. \$8,600)
 - C) Marching Instruments
 - 1) **Selmer** Model 1430P (c. \$1,250)
 - 2) **Vito** Model 7166/7168 (c. \$1,400) (Low Eb Key: 7166=on the bell; 7168=on the body)
 - 3) **Yamaha** Model YCL221 (\$1,625)
 - D) Eb Contra-alto Clarinets: **Selmer** 1440/**Vito** 7181 (c. \$2,200)
 - E) Bb Contra-bass Clarinets (upright): **Vito** 7182 (c. \$3,550); wrapped Bb Contra-bass Clarinets are very expensive (>\$10K)

III) The Setup: choosing the best combination of mouthpiece, ligature, and reed.

- A) Mouthpieces: the price versus the sound
 - 1) Clark W Fobes (c. \$260)
 - 2) Charles Bay [see chart below] (\$250)
 - 3) Borbeck (c. \$160)
 - 4) Selmer Brands [see chart below] (c. \$130)
 - 5) Vandoren [see chart below] (c. \$110)
 - 6) Hite (c. \$80)
 - 7) Ridenour *Encore* (c. \$53) [Great for Marching Band]
 - 8) **Vandoren Bb Clarinet Mouthpiece Comparison Chart:**

Tip Openings*	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	54	56	57
Bay					MC		MM			MOM		MOL	OM	OL			
Ridenour			EN	HR													
Selmer	B/HS*		B*/C		C*	C**	D	HS**			E				F	G	
Selmer C85			105			115	120										
Vandoren	M13	M13L	M15	5RV/ (B30)	5RVL		11.6/ M30/ (B44)	B46/ B40L	B45/ B45d/ B40/ AT45			B45L					5JB
(*thousands of an inch)																	

- B) Ligatures: which one allows the reed to vibrate most freely?
 - 1) Rovner – Various types and models from c. \$18 - \$50
 - 2) Bonade Inverted – c. \$18
 - 3) Charles Bay – c. \$60
- C) Reeds: the reed strength must match the facing and tip opening of the mouthpiece.
 - 1) Vandoren (\$12 - \$14 per box of 5)
 - 2) Legere Plastic Reeds (\$14 per reed)—great for marching and/or Contra-alto/Contra-bass Clarinets
 - 3) Others
- IV) Other Necessary Accessories: equipment for success
 - A) Neck strap in combination with a...
 - B) Peg (both are required for success)
 - C) Swab or fuzzy pad saver thing

- D) Cork Grease (Vaseline)
- E) Mouthpiece brush
- V) Proper Assembly: keeping the instrument out of the repair shop
 - A) Step 1: Peg; Bell; Lower Joint
 - B) Step 2: Neck and Upper Joint
 - C) Step 3: Top and Bottom Half Together
 - D) Step 4: Reed; Mouthpiece; Ligature
 - 1) Ligature stays on the mouthpiece; reed slides between the mouthpiece and ligature.
 - 2) Align the tip of reed to tip of the mouthpiece; reed rails align to facing (table) of mouthpiece
 - E) Step 5: Mouthpiece on the Neck; be sure the reed stays in place
- VI) Body/Instrument Ratio: where does the bell go?
- VII) Tone: a combination of proper embouchure formation, correct use of air, suitable voicing, and lots of practice.
 - A) Embouchure: what allows the reed to vibrate the most freely and efficiently?
 - 1) Similarities and Differences: clarinet versus saxophone
 - 2) Common Problems: symptoms and solutions
 - (a) Too much lip inside mouth/lip not tight against the bottom teeth
 - (i) Dull/"flabby" sound; high range issues
 - (ii) Lip is held firmly in front of bottom teeth (finger check); chin must be flat.
 - (b) Too little mouthpiece inside the mouth
 - (i) Thin, puny sound; response problems; articulation problems
 - (ii) Lower lip rests on an imaginary line across the face of the reed where the mouthpiece facing and back of the reed separate (paper check). Playing on mouthpiece and neck alone should produce the note f-sharp¹.
 - (c) Top teeth not in contact with top of the mouthpiece:
 - (i) Upper register problems; articulation problems
 - (ii) Top teeth firmly on top of mouthpiece; use a mouthpiece patch.
 - (d) Too loose/air in cheeks
 - (i) Unfocused or airy sound; lack of control; spit crackles in sound
 - (ii) Tighten corners (drawstring metaphor); keep the head up.
 - (iii) Upper lip firmly grips the top of the mouthpiece from corner to corner.
 - (e) Too tight
 - (i) Squeaks and squawks in extreme registers; unable to play at louder dynamic levels
 - (ii) Open the jaw hinge by spreading back teeth apart; lower jaw is slightly behind upper teeth.
 - B) Voicing: shaping the air column
 - 1) Use an "ooh"/"aah" vowel sound.
 - 2) The throat must be open and unrestricted in all registers.
 - 3) Change of voicing can alter faulty intonation (especially b², c², etc.).
 - C) Air Column: support without force
 - 1) Air column and embouchure must be balanced.
 - (a) Forced sounds are caused by too much air volume or speed.
 - (b) Thin sounds are caused by too little air volume or air speed, or too much jaw pressure.
 - 2) Breathing exercises: are they really necessary?
 - (a) Practice breathing in tempo with a metronome.
 - (b) Completely fill up and release all your air on each breath.
 - (c) Turn the air around without holding the breath.
 - (d) Maintain a consistent speed during the entire out-breath.
 - (e) Breathing exercises help focus the air and the mind.

VIII) Articulation: the tongue releases the reed to vibrate

- A) "Hit" Inhale (C. Le Grand)
- B) Tongue placement on the reed
- C) Tongue movement during articulation
- D) Playing short: interrupting the vibrations of the reed with the tongue
- E) Multiple articulation: an advanced and realistic technique
 - 1) Adjustment for clarinet/bass clarinet: "tee-kee" where "kee" is higher/closer to the front of the mouth
 - 2) Minimal tongue motion; no jaw movement
 - 3) Air travels down the center of the mouth in a column.
 - 4) Practice suggestions to develop multiple articulation:
 - (a) At first: practice "kee" syllable separately.
 - (b) Second: practice alternating syllables on one note; start on open g^1 and work down/up the range of the instrument.
 - (c) Once the multiple tonguing is achieved on one note, practice three-note half-step/whole-step lower neighbor patterns (for example: g^1 -f-sharp¹- g^1 ; or g^1 -f¹- g^1).
 - (d) Once coordination is established with the exercise above, practice five-note diatonic scale patterns up/down.
 - (e) Triple tonguing can be a variation of double-tonguing.

IX) Hand Position: preparation for technical success

- A) Right Hand
 - 1) Flat "C"
 - 2) Space between the palm and instrument
 - 3) Proper thumb placement
- B) Left Hand
 - 1) Thumb placement (2:00)
 - 2) Fingers slope downward
 - 3) Index finger knuckle placement (A key; G-sharp key; 1st tone hole)
- C) Finger Motion: first step in developing even technique
 - 1) Keep fingers on top of keys.
 - 2) Keep pinkies on proper keys at all times.
 - 3) Move with energy to close pads/push down keys.
 - 4) Move with even more energy to open pads/release depressed keys.

X) Good Technique: tonal evenness, rhythmic accuracy, and facility that serves to convey musicianship

- A) Tonal Evenness: can every note be heard clearly?
 - 1) All notes within a given passage ("run" or phrase) are produced at the same volume/dynamic level, unless specific special effect dynamics are indicated.
 - 2) All notes throughout the range of the instrument are produced with the same quality of sound.
- B) Rhythmic Accuracy: reproducing exactly what the composer intended
 - 1) Fingers are even in a given passage of notes with the same rhythmic value; faster rhythmic figures are not "crushed" together; "Think of making 'inside' notes longer/stronger".
 - 2) Smaller note values occurring between (among) larger note values are not "cheated" of value; "Think of making shorter note values longer/stronger".
 - 3) Rhythms are accurately performed despite difficult fingering patterns or combinations of patterns.
- C) Facility: most music written in the common practice period is comprised of scales and arpeggios.
 - 1) Register crossings: the "Achilles Heel" of young clarinetists/bass clarinetists
 - (a) 1st Finger Roll: proper execution and practice
 - (b) Thumb Roll: proper execution and practice
 - (c) Matching the Feel: air resistance from lower register notes to upper register notes

- (d) Throat shape/motion
- (e) Half-hole technique for crossing into the altissimo
- 2) Alternate fingerings in the altissimo register (scale patterns):
 - (a) c^{#3}: T/R, 1st & 2nd Side Keys (or 1st finger only)
 - (b) d³: Open
 - (c) eb³: A-flat key
 - (d) e³: T/R A key (or just A key)
 - (e) f³: T/R, A key, 3rd Side Key (or just A key & 3rd Side Key)
- 3) Finger Pattern Exercises: practice daily for development of facility; gradually add exercises from the top of the list as the player gains increasing proficiency.
 - (a) 12 major scales in the circle of fourths
 - (b) Major arpeggios
 - (c) 12 melodic minor scales in the circle of fourths
 - (d) Minor arpeggios
 - (e) Scales in thirds in all major and melodic minor keys
 - (f) Dominant 7th arpeggios (12 keys)
 - (g) Fully diminished 7th arpeggios
 - (h) Full-range chromatic scale

D) Advanced Techniques:

- 1) Multiple Tonguing
- 2) Vibrato
- 3) Circular Breathing
- 4) Multiphonics

XI) Musicality: making the music move forward

- A) Note Groupings: notes occurring on weak beats (or weak subdivisions of the beat) move toward notes occurring on strong beats (or downbeats, or strong subdivisions of the beat).
 - 1) In simple-quadruple time, 2 moves to 3 and 4 moves to 1; in simple-triple time, 3 leads to 1; in compound-duple time, 3 moves to 4 and 6 leads to 1.
 - 2) Upbeats move toward downbeats.
 - 3) Sixteenth notes on the 2nd or 4th subdivision of the beat move toward sixteenth notes on the 1st or 3rd subdivisions of the beat.
- B) Sustained Notes: energy is either moving toward or away from the next note or rest; static notes should be utilized for special effects only.
- C) Vibrato: an appropriate enhancement of the tone in particular situations
 - 1) Develop a jaw vibrato using Dr. Gary Garner's Vibrato Exercise.
 - 2) Use during solo passages on long, sustained notes only.
 - 3) Developing vibrato is a clinic in itself; consult with a great saxophone teacher to develop jaw vibrato.

XII) Intonation: producing accurate intervals with self and others

- A) Know the basic pitch tendencies of your particular instrument. On most bass clarinets: a¹ is sharp; d¹ is sharp; f¹ and e¹ are flat; b² through d² are sharp. Throat tones g-sharp² through b-flat² can be sharp on Buffet instruments or flat on Selmer instruments.
- B) Pitch Bending: altering the pitch with embouchure and voicing changes.
 - 1) Bending up is difficult on bass clarinet; firmer embouchure (lower lip) and "ee" voicing.
 - 2) Bending down is easier; drop the jaw, bring the corners of the mouth in toward the center of the mouthpiece, squeeze down with the top lip, and use "aah" or "oh" voicing.
- C) Venting/Dampening: altering the pitch by opening/closing tone holes. For example:
 - 1) Venting *generally* raises the pitch of flat notes: f¹ and e¹, as well as the throat tones, can be vented by adding one or both bottom side keys.

- 2) Dampening *generally* lowers the pitch of sharp notes: a¹ can be dampened by adding the low f/clarion c² key; d¹ can be dampened by adding 1st or 2nd finger on the right hand (finger 4 or 5). Sharp throat tones can be dampened by adding any combination of fingers in the right hand, as well as fingers 2 and 3 in the left hand.

XIII) FUN-damental Practice (Adapted from Robert Spring, D.M.A., Professor of Clarinet, Arizona State Univ.): add these exercises as proficiency and experience permits.

- A) Long Tones: chromatic scale in whole notes, organized by groups of four separated by four counts of rest. Practice with a metronome (Quarter note = 60) and a tuner. The goal: every note has the same quality of sound; every note is “in-tune”; the air column never feels like it changes; and there are no bumps or gaps between notes.
- B) Scale Patterns:
 - 1) The entire Klosé scale pattern slurred [page 123 in most Klosé books (12 major and melodic minor scales, full range of the instrument, in the circle of fourths)]. Begin with the metronome set at Quarter note ≤ 60.
 - 2) Klosé scales in thirds slurred [page 159-160 in most Klosé books (12 major and melodic minor scales, full range of the instrument, in the circle of fourths)]. Begin with the metronome set at Quarter note ≤ 60.
 - 3) Major and minor arpeggios from Langenus Book 3, page 14. Begin with the metronome set at Quarter note ≤ 60.
 - 4) Dominant 7th arpeggios slurred in all 12 keys. Begin with the metronome set at Quarter note ≤ 60.
 - 5) The three fully diminished 7th arpeggios slurred. Begin with the metronome set at Quarter note ≤ 60.
 - 6) The chromatic scale, full range of the instrument, slurred in duplet and triplet patterns.
- C) Articulation:
 - 1) Single Tonguing: Langenus Book 3, page 22. Begin with the metronome set at Eighth note ≤ 72.
 - 2) Multiple Tonguing: as outlined in VIII, E, 4, a-e above.

XIV) Advanced Bass Clarinet Repertoire

- A) Solo Literature
 - 1) Unaccompanied Solos
 - (a) Baur, J. *Six Bagatelles*. Breitkopf and Härtel.
 - (b) Boulez, Pierre. *Domaines*. Universal.
 - (c) Brown, Rayner. *Prelude and Fughetta*. Western International Music.
 - (d) Cailliet, L. *Fantasy for Five Clarinets* (Movement for Bass Clarinet) G. Leblanc.
 - (e) Hrisanide, Alexander. *Du Soir Venant*. Edition Modern.
 - (f) Lang, Rosemary. *Concert Piece*. Lang Music Publishers.
 - (g) Leichtling, Alan. *Fantasy Piece No. 1*. Seesaw.
 - (h) Martino, Donald. *Strata*. Apogee.
 - (i) Phillips, H. *Eight Bel Canto Songs*. Shawnee.
 - (j) Raphling, Sam. *Lyric Prelude*. Edition Musicus.
 - (k) Wasson, Steven. *Two Pieces*. Shall-U-Mo.
 - 2) Solos with Piano Accompaniment
 - (a) Bennett. *Deepwood*. Carl Fischer
 - (b) Bozza, Eugene. *Ballade*. Andraud—Southern Music Co.
 - (c) Dankner, Stephan. *Three Pieces*. Seesaw
 - (d) Davis. *Variations on a Theme of Robert Schumann*. Southern Music Co.
 - (e) Desportes, Yvonne. *Andante and Allegro*. Southern Music Co.
 - (f) Eccles, H. (Goldberg, arr.) *Sonata in G Minor*. Belwin.
 - (g) Galliard. (Merriman, arr.) *Adagio and Allegro*. Southern Music Co.
 - (h) Galliard. (Kreiselman, arr.) *Six Sonatas*. Peters.
 - (i) Handel. (Ayres, arr.) *Andante and Bouree*. Barenreiter Verlag.
 - (j) Hoffman, A. *Serenade Basque*. Belwin.

- (k) Karel, Leon. *Aquamarine*. McGinnis and Marx.
 - (l) Kreisler. *Canzone*. Southern Music Co.
 - (m) Long. *Undercurrents*. Rubank.
 - (n) Marcello. (Hite, arr.) *Sonata in A Minor*. Southern Music Co.
 - (o) Marty, G. *Premiere Fantasy*. Cundy Bettoney
 - (p) Orlamunder, J. G. *Romanze*. Schmidt.
 - (q) Parig, John. *Introduction and March*. Western International Music.
 - (r) Rass, Francois. *Leid*. Alphonse Leduc.
 - (s) Reed. *Haitian Dance*. Editio Musica Budapest
 - (t) Rhoads. *10 Solo Works*. Southern Music Co.
 - (u) Rhoads. *12 Original and Arranged Works*. Rubank.
 - (v) Schoeck, Othmar. *Sonate*. Breitkopf and Härtel.
 - (w) Trowbridge, Luther. *Barcarolle*. Seesaw.
 - (x) Veach, D. *Wind Currents*. McGinnis and Marx.
 - (y) Verrall, John. *Nocturne*. Interlochen Press.
 - (z) Weisenborn, J. *Romance*, Op. 3. Andraud.
- B) Orchestral Repertoire (Compiled by Richard Shanley, Professor of Clarinet, Baylor University) [Some parts are written for Bass Clarinet in A; some parts are written in bass clef; and some parts are written in bass clef for Bass Clarinet in A.]:
- 1) Grofe: *Grand Canyon Suite*
 - 2) Khachaturian: Piano Concerto
 - 3) Mahler: Symphonies Nos. 1 – 9 (especially No. 6)
 - 4) Prokofiev: Symphony No. 5
 - 5) Ravel: *Bolero; Daphnis et Chloe; La Valse*
 - 6) Shostakovich: Symphonies Nos. 4 & 5; Violin Concerto
 - 7) Strauss: *Till Eulenspiegel Lustige Streiche*
 - 8) Stravinsky: *Le Sacre du Printemps*
 - 9) Tchaikovsky: *Nutcracker*
- C) Wind Band Repertoire: these standard band works require advanced playing by the bass clarinetist.
- 1) Arnold: *Four Scottish Dances*
 - 2) Barber: *Commando March; Overture to the School for Scandal*
 - 3) Chance: *Incantation and Dance; Blue Lake Overture*
 - 4) Copland: *Emblems*
 - 5) Dahl: *Sinfonietta* (Alto Clarinet)
 - 6) Dello Joio: *Variants on a Medieval Tune* (Alto Clarinet); *Variants on a Theme by Haydn*
 - 7) Grainger: *Children's March; Colonial Song; Lads of Wamphray; Lincolnshire Posy* (Alto & Bass Clarinet); *Molly on the Shore*
 - 8) Hindemith: *Symphony in B-flat*
 - 9) Nixon: *Fiesta del Pacifico*
 - 10) Persichetti: *Divertimento for Band; Symphony for Band*
 - 11) Schuman: *Circus Overture*
 - 12) Respighi/Duker: *The Pines of Rome*
 - 13) Tichelli: *Blue Shades*