



Midwest Clinic 2011
Wednesday, December 14, 2011

Tweaking and Tuning:
Tips for working with oboe, clarinet and bassoon

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Fundamental Elements for Student Success

Air Support/Breathing

Adequate abdominal support and breath:

Optimal tone

Accurate intonation

Wide dynamic range

Insufficient support and/or air:

Weak, unstable tone

Bad intonation

“mezzo nothing”

Steps to create good abdominal support and breath:

- Exhale
- Chest up, shoulders down and back (like after a backward shoulder roll)
- Breath in - imagine the air coming in through your belly button
- Abdominal muscles expand outward as they fill with air (like a balloon).
- Lower abdominal muscles contract to create support
- Air is expelled in a steady stream (hissing motion).
- Lower abdominal muscles remain engaged (*stuck in a sit-up*) until next breath.

Body Awareness

Good Posture (Seated):

Relaxed but upright (puppet with string out the top of your head)

Chest up, shoulders down and back (backward shoulder roll)

Arms hang relaxed from shoulders

Centered on “sitting bones”

Feet flat on floor

Bring the instrument to YOU (not vice versa)

Things to Avoid:

Tension (neck, throat, back, shoulders, arms, hands, fingers)

Slouching/slumping against chair back – causes lack of support

Sitting too straight – limits inflow/outflow of air

Head Position

- Natural position with chin level to avoid tension in neck and throat
- Amount of reed in the mouth affects timbre, pitch, and response

Articulation

- **Small motion with end of tongue**
- **Approx. 1/8 to ¼ inch behind tip of tongue touches reed**

Finger motion

- Tense and slapping fingers create undesirable tone as well as sloppy, slow finger technique
- Strive for gentle and smooth motion
- Keep fingers close to keys

Tuning

- Tuning primarily on the EARS (internalize the target)
- Never adjust with breath support!
- Tone and Tuning are Siamese Twins – if one suffers so will the other

	Clarinet	Oboe	Bassoon
Holding Position	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Top teeth on mouthpiece - Balance on RH thumb knuckle - 30 to 45 degree angle pending over/underbite - Lever test 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Right hand thumb nail under thumb rest -Not too much thumb underneath -45 degree angle from body 	<p>3 places of support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Strap -Right thigh near knee -Base of left index finger - Diagonal tilt brings left thumb on whisper key to center of body <p>*Adjust placement of boot on right leg so that reed enters mouth parallel to the floor (affected by bend of bocal)</p> <p>Read music to the right of the bassoon (over the bocal)</p>
Hand Position	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Fingers are curved and at an angle -Pads of fingers cover the holes -Pinky fingers should be curved and have relaxed mobility -LH Thumb at 2 o'clock position 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Fingers are curved -Third (ring) finger is a bit straighter to reach the G key (<i>curl-curl-straighter</i>) -Pinky fingers hover over the keys when not in use -Hands are at a bit of an angle, not perpendicular to the oboe -Keep wrists straight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Fingers are softly curved - Pads of fingers cover the holes -Use pad near tip of left thumb (avoid hitchhiker's thumb) -Pinkies and thumbs should be curved and have relaxed mobility **short reach model (covered c-hole for left ring finger) available for small hands
Embouchure	<p>"Set it and forget it"</p> <p>"Milkshake face"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -unmoving -top teeth on top of mouthpiece - Move lower jaw down reed so vibrating parts are free in the mouth, not dampened by the lower lip <p>Chin: Pointed down and never moves</p> <p>Vowel: "Ewww"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Open mouth -Place reed on lower lip reed (halfway between thread and tip of reed) -Close mouth while "hugging" the reed <p>Chin: Point downward <i>Flat/Vertical</i></p> <p><i>Upper lip is 'in front' of teeth</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Open mouth -Place on lower lip reed (halfway down surface of blade) -Close mouth while "hugging" the reed *Lips create soft cushion for reed Support evenly from all sides Natural jaw alignment - close to parallel <p>Chin: flexible</p> <p>Lip shape: 'Oh' or "em"</p>

<p>Tongue Position</p>	<p><u>Clarinet</u> Back of tongue High in mouth Vowel: "Heee" Front of tongue high behind upper teeth Vowel: "Shhhh" Tongue always parallels roof of mouth and never drops</p>	<p><u>Oboe</u> <u>Upper register</u> Tongue is higher Vowel: "ee" focuses pitch <u>Lower Register:</u> Tongue is lower Vowel: "o" used for response and focus</p>	<p><u>Bassoon</u> Default position is relaxed and low in the back of the mouth like when saying "ahhh" Low back of tongue = flatten pitch (ah) High back of tongue = sharpen pitch (eee)</p>
<p>Articulation</p>	<p>Syllables: dee-dee, lee-lee Nee-nee, tee-tee New-new</p>	<p>Syllables: dah-dah, tah-tah</p>	<p>Syllables: dah-dah, tah-tah ('ah" lowers pitch, "eee" raises pitch)</p>
<p>Lips</p>	<p><u>Upper lip</u> -frowning -pushing down -"Ewww" <u>Lower lip</u> -Smiling -Firm against lower teeth -Not too much folded over "Vuuuum"</p>	<p>Lips should be about halfway between end of thread and tip of the reed</p>	<p>-Lips loosen for lowest notes - Lips firm for highest - Teeth are cushioned by lips -Should see some pink Vowel is usually "oh" or "ah"</p>
<p>Placement of the Reed</p>	<p>Reed Rests against lower lip, over teeth Too much mouthpiece in mouth = uncontrolled and wild tone quality, flat pitch Too little mouthpiece/reed in mouth = Pinched/thin tone quality, sharp pitch Both will lead to a multitude of squeaks</p>	<p>Lips should be about half-way between the end of thread and tip Too much reed in mouth = sharp pitch and strident tone Too little reed in mouth = flat pitch and saggy; unsupported tone quality</p>	<p>Default position is approx. 1/2 of blade length in the mouth Low notes = closer to tip High notes = closer to wire Too much reed in mouth = wild , uncontrolled tone and sharp pitch Too little reed in mouth = small sound that is either tight or flabby depending on amount of lip pressure</p>
<p>Tests</p>	<p>- Voice Bb on mouthpiece - F# on the mp + barrel - Buzz a D when remove the clarinet from the mouth</p>	<p>-C-Bb-Ab exercise on the reed alone, produced by pushing reed out of mouth, using the upper lip -This encourages and demonstrates the muscular work needed for good pitch adaptation</p>	<p>- Middle C with reed on bocal - Buzz lowest pitch possible on reed alone - Pointed chin doesn't hurt but not necessary</p>

	Clarinet	Oboe	Bassoon
Air Speed	<p>Fast air = forte + long tube notes</p> <p>Slow air = piano + short tube & Altissimo notes</p>	<p>Air speed is always intense on the oboe</p> <p>Envisioning a slow air may result in poor response</p>	<p>Fast air = forte + high notes</p> <p>Slow air = piano + low notes</p>
Tuning	<p>NEVER drop tongue or loosen/tighten embouchure or lips to adjust tuning!!! Tone will be compromised and squeaks are likely</p> <p>-Start with instrument pulled/pushed to proper place</p> <p>- Upper joint tunes to open G/Low C</p> <p>-Lower joint tunes to Long B or C</p> <p>-Lower pitch by bringing fingers close to keys</p> <p>-Lower register key in clarion and altissimo</p> <p>-Raise pitch by lifting fingers off the keys</p> <p>-Raising tongue even higher "ee"</p> <p>-Use "resonance" fingerings for throat tones</p>	<p>If sharp: Use upper lip of the embouchure to push reed out of the mouth Relax, think of a more vertical embouchure, with upper lip resting on top of reed</p> <p>If flat: Hug/encircle the reed Lift the tongue and create an 'eee' vowel. Narrow the oral cavity</p>	<p>Develop Aural Target for best intonation (blowing and pushing the buttons only gets you so close)</p> <p>If sharp: Open oral cavity (<i>hot mashed potatoes</i>) Lower back of tongue (<i>ahh</i>) Increase space between teeth (<i>jelly beans</i> in front or back)</p> <p>If flat: Increase breath support and use more air Close oral cavity ("eee") Raise back of tongue Gently increase "hug" of lips</p>
Tendencies	<p>Forte/Crescendo = -goes flat -raise fingers</p> <p>Piano/Diminuendo -goes sharp -lower fingers</p>	<p>Similar to bassoon tendencies, except for the following:</p> <p>Piano/Diminuendo = Air remains just as intense as always, and lips gently surround and close the opening of the reed to gradually stop the sound.</p>	<p>Usually sharp due to embouchure that is too tight Relax, Open, "Hot Pizza"</p> <p>Forte/Crescendo = magnifies natural tendency (sharp gets sharper, flat gets flatter) Compensate with lips and amount of reed in mouth</p> <p>Piano/Diminuendo = tends to go sharp due to pinching with lips. Keep lips soft and reduce volume or speed of air to achieve decrescendo or piano dynamic.</p>

Correct Clarinet Embouchure



*Correct Clarinet Embouchure:
Lower lip & chin are flat and firm
Focused, centered tone
Efficient reed vibration*

Incorrect Clarinet Embouchure



*Incorrect Clarinet Embouchure:
Lower lip and chin are collapsed
Unfocused, brittle tone
Inhibits reed vibration*

Correct Clarinet Embouchure:



*Upper lip engaged & chin pointed,
corners closed
Focused, centered tone*

Incorrect Clarinet Embouchure:



*Upper lip & corners loose
Unfocused, flabby tone*

Correct Oboe Embouchure:



*Upper lip rests on top blade
Increased resonance
Pitch is centered
Tone is deep and full*

Incorrect Oboe Embouchure:



*Upper lip curled around teeth
Decreased resonance
Pitch is sharp
Tone is pinched and tight*

Correct Bassoon Embouchure:



*Natural jaw alignment
Equal pressure on blades
Increased resonance
Centered pitch and full tone
Wide dynamic range
Easy response in all registers*

Incorrect Bassoon Embouchure:



*Lower jaw is forced back to create
exaggerated overbite
Uneven pressure on blades
Decreased resonance
Pitch is sharp, tone is muffled
Bad response in low register*

Correct Bassoon Embouchure



*Equal pressure around the reed
Both lips show a little pink
Relaxed lower jaw
Open Oral Cavity
Centered pitch, full tone
Easy response in all registers*

Incorrect Bassoon Embouchure



*Lower jaw forced down
Bottom lip folded in over teeth
Tension in jaw
Partially open oral cavity
Unstable pitch, unfocused tone
Poor response*

Correct Clarinet Hand Position



*Fingers curved & relaxed
Fingers approach holes/keys from
the side
Pads of fingers cover holes*

Correct Oboe Hand Position



*Index and middle finger are more
curved than ring and pinky
Fingers approach keys at slight
downward angle
Pads of fingers cover holes
Avoid collapsed joints and
squeezing*

Incorrect Clarinet Hand Position



*Fingers tense
End joints collapsed
Sharp angles instead of curves
Downward slant*

Incorrect Oboe Hand Position



*Fingers are straight and tense.
Fingers are perpendicular to the
oboe.
Pads are not centered on the
holes.
Pinkies are tucked beneath the
oboe.*

**Bassoon Correct Position
Left Hand**



*Fingers are curved and relaxed
Pads of fingers cover holes
Thumb stays soft and flexible*

**Bassoon Incorrect Position
Left Hand**



*Index finger overreaches first
tone hole
Joint collapsed on middle finger
Ring finger not covering hole
Hitchhiker's thumb*

**Bassoon Correct Position
Right Hand**



*Fingers are curved and relaxed
Pads of fingers cover holes/keys
Avoid collapsing joints and
squeezing
Thumb stays soft and flexible*

**Bassoon Incorrect Position
Right Hand**

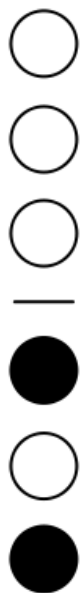

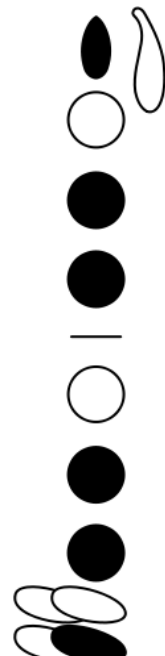

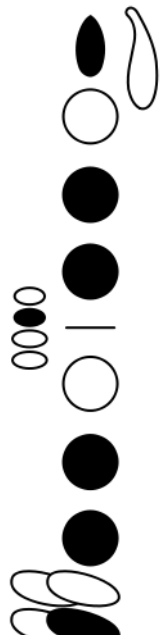


*Fingers are stiff
Joint on ring is collapsed
Ends of fingers show evidence of
excessive pressure on holes/keys*

Helpful Clarinet Fingerings
 By Dr. Julianne Kirk Doyle
 Crane School of Music – SUNY Potsdam

Resonance fingerings for Bb Clarinet Throat Tones

- Help with centering sound of throat tones
- Aid in centering pitch of throat tones
- Having fingers down enable a smoother transition over the break
- Students can really blow into these notes rather than back away
- Different types of clarinets may require different fingering combinations

				
Open G	G#	A	Regular Bb	Side Bb

Encourage your more advanced students to employ these early in etudes and solo passages, particularly on sustained notes. It will really help your clarinet section blend and play better in tune.

Helpful Altissimo Fingerings

- Depending on context, different fingerings can be used to aid in blend and intonation of the altissimo register
- Many method books only give limited options when most of these notes have a minimum of **15 fingering options!**
- Be sure students are using proper fundamentals/air support and NOT biting to play in the altissimo register

Long F-natural	F	F	
F#	F#	F#	F# (if going to G)

G (overblown B)	G	G	G (in G Major Scale)

Fingering Aids for Tuning the Bassoon

Problem: Top space G is notoriously sharp and wild sounding. Solution: Add top key in lefthand pinky.

The image shows a musical staff in bass clef with a treble clef sign above it. The first measure contains a whole note G in the top space. The second measure contains a whole note G in the top space with a small circle above it, indicating the addition of a key. Below the staff are two fingering diagrams. The first diagram shows the left hand with the pinky finger on the top key (indicated by a black dot) and the other fingers on their respective keys. The second diagram shows the right hand with the index and thumb fingers on the Bb key (indicated by a black dot) and the other fingers on their respective keys.

Problem: 3rd space Eb is unstable and fuzzy. Solution A: Add R2, Bb key, possibly top key in lefthand pinky. Solution B: (even lower) Add Index finger and thumb Bb in right hand, and possibly top key in lefthand pinky.

The image shows a musical staff in bass clef with a treble clef sign above it. The first measure contains a whole note Eb in the 3rd space. The second measure contains a whole note Eb in the 3rd space with a small circle above it, indicating the addition of a key. Below the staff are two sets of fingering diagrams labeled A and B. Diagram A shows the left hand with the pinky finger on the top key (black dot) and the other fingers on their respective keys. Diagram B shows the right hand with the index and thumb fingers on the Bb key (black dot) and the other fingers on their respective keys. Diagram C shows the left hand with the pinky finger on the top key (black dot) and the other fingers on their respective keys.

Problem: Lowest E is sharp. Solution: "Hot mashed potatoes" and add bottom key in lefthand pinky.

The image shows a musical staff in bass clef with a treble clef sign above it. The first measure contains a whole note E in the bottom space. The second measure contains a whole note E in the bottom space with a small circle above it, indicating the addition of a key. Below the staff are two fingering diagrams. The first diagram shows the left hand with the pinky finger on the bottom key (black dot) and the other fingers on their respective keys. The second diagram shows the right hand with the index and thumb fingers on the Bb key (black dot) and the other fingers on their respective keys.

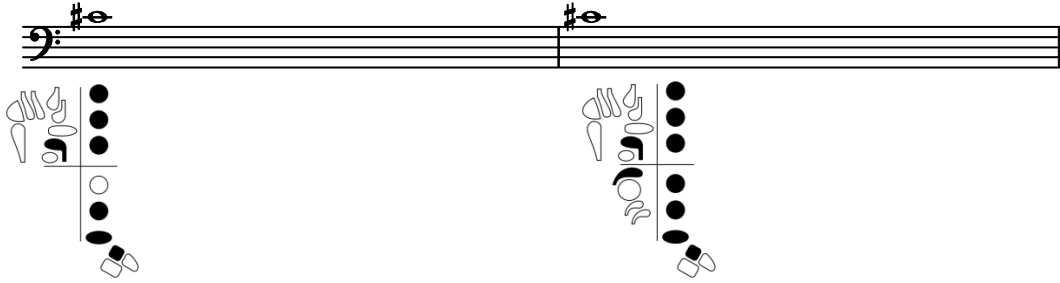
Problem: High notes are sharp and thin. Solution: Lower back of tongue, Add top key in lefthand pinky for all notes E and higher above the staff.

The image shows a musical staff in bass clef with a treble clef sign above it. The first measure contains a whole note E in the bottom space with a small circle above it, indicating the addition of a key. The second measure contains a whole note E in the bottom space with a small circle above it, indicating the addition of a key. Below the staff are two fingering diagrams. The first diagram shows the left hand with the pinky finger on the top key (black dot) and the other fingers on their respective keys. The second diagram shows the right hand with the index and thumb fingers on the Bb key (black dot) and the other fingers on their respective keys.

Problem: Top line A growls or won't stay in upper octave. Solution: Clean vent-hole in bocal. Add high A speaker key with left thumb.

The image shows a musical staff in bass clef with a treble clef sign above it. The first measure contains a whole note A in the top line. The second measure contains a whole note A in the top line with a small circle above it, indicating the addition of a key. Below the staff are two fingering diagrams. The first diagram shows the left hand with the thumb on the high A speaker key (black dot) and the other fingers on their respective keys. The second diagram shows the right hand with the index and thumb fingers on the Bb key (black dot) and the other fingers on their respective keys.

Problem: C-sharp above the staff is very sharp. Solution: Add index finger and Bb key in right hand.



Suggested resources for each instrument:

Oboe:

Schuring, Martin. *Oboe Art and Method*. Oxford University Press, Inc., 2009.

<http://www.public.asu.edu/~schuring/Oboe/air>

Clarinet:

Etheridge, David. *Skill Builders: Beginning Clarinet/Intermediate Clarinet; A Practical Approach to the clarinet for advanced clarinetists and their teachers*. Woodwind Educators Press, 2008. www.woodwindeducatorspress.org

Etheridge, David. *Skill Builders: Advanced Clarinet; A Practical Approach to the clarinet for advanced clarinetists and their teachers. Revised edition* Woodwind Educators Press, 2010. www.woodwindeducatorspress.org

Bassoon:

Polonchak, Richard M. *Primary Handbook for Bassoon*. Meredith Music Publications, 1982.

Popkin, Mark and Loren Glickman. *Bassoon Reed Making*. Charles Double Reed Company, 2007. www.charlesmusic.com

Spaniol, Douglas E. *The New Weissenborn Method for Bassoon*. Hal Leonard Corporation, 2010.

Wolfe Jensen, Kristin. "Music and the Bassoon." 2009.

<http://www.musicandthebassoon.org/> (accessed March 4, 2011).