Essential Fundamentals for Connecting the Clarinet's Registers

The Midwest Clinic
Wednesday, December 18, 2024 4:30–5:30 PM
W179

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Myths and Legends

- Misinformation
- Misinterpretation of correct information

Essential Fundamentals

- Don't need to do things "differently" to connect registers
- If a student feels they have to, it illustrates an underlying issue to correct
- Four layers:
  - Embouchure (external)
  - Voicing (internal)
  - Airflow
  - Hand position and finger motion

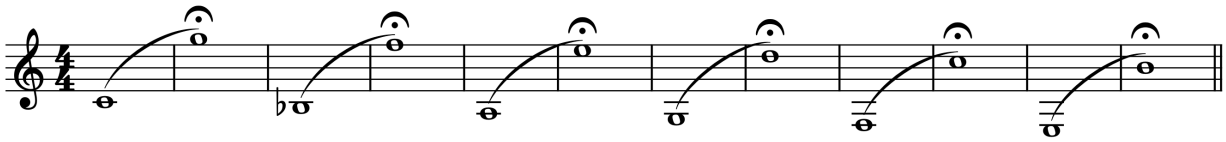
Clarinet and the Overtone Series

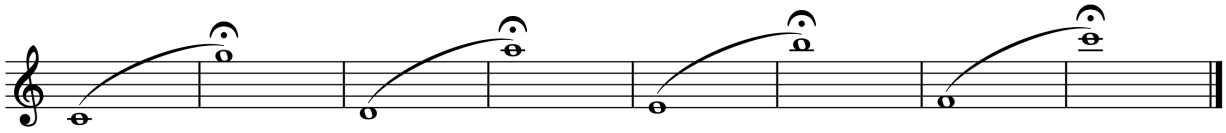
- Two breaks to connect: chalumeau to clarion, and clarion to altissimo
- Each break crosses two partials, not just one
- Chalumeau is the most forgiving register: can get away with poor embouchure, insufficient air support
  - Cultivate a strong, resonant chalumeau register down to low E before introducing clarion

EMBOUCHURE

- External component
- Upper lip tucked against upper teeth, hugging or gripping the mouthpiece
- Chin draws into a point (not "flat")
- Lower lip curled to where edge of lip is even with edge of lower teeth
- Lower lip contacts the reed at the fulcrum point of the mouthpiece (curves away from reed)
- Jaw pressure is stable throughout registers
    - Bringing jaw forward *slightly* so lower teeth are even with upper teeth can help stabilize this

EMBOUCHURE: 12TH SLURS

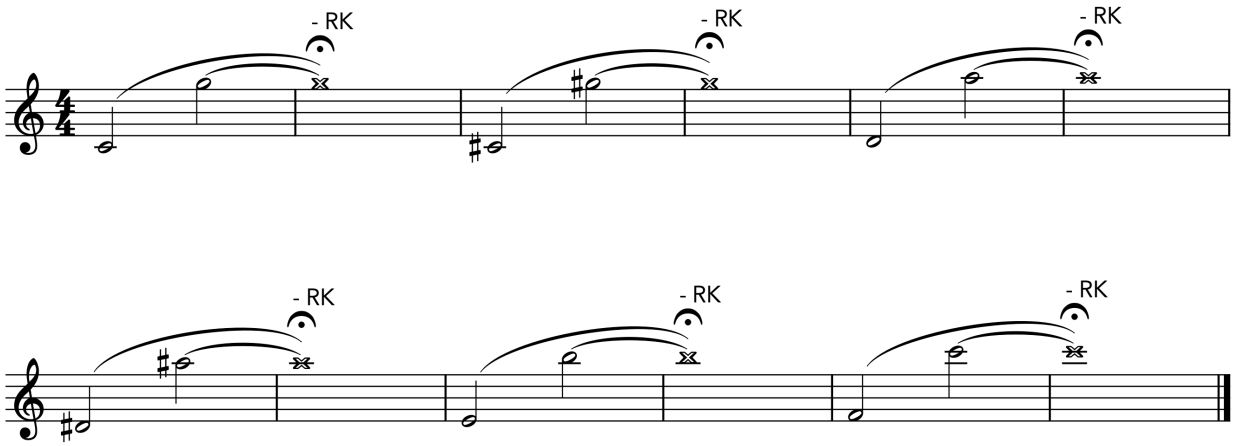




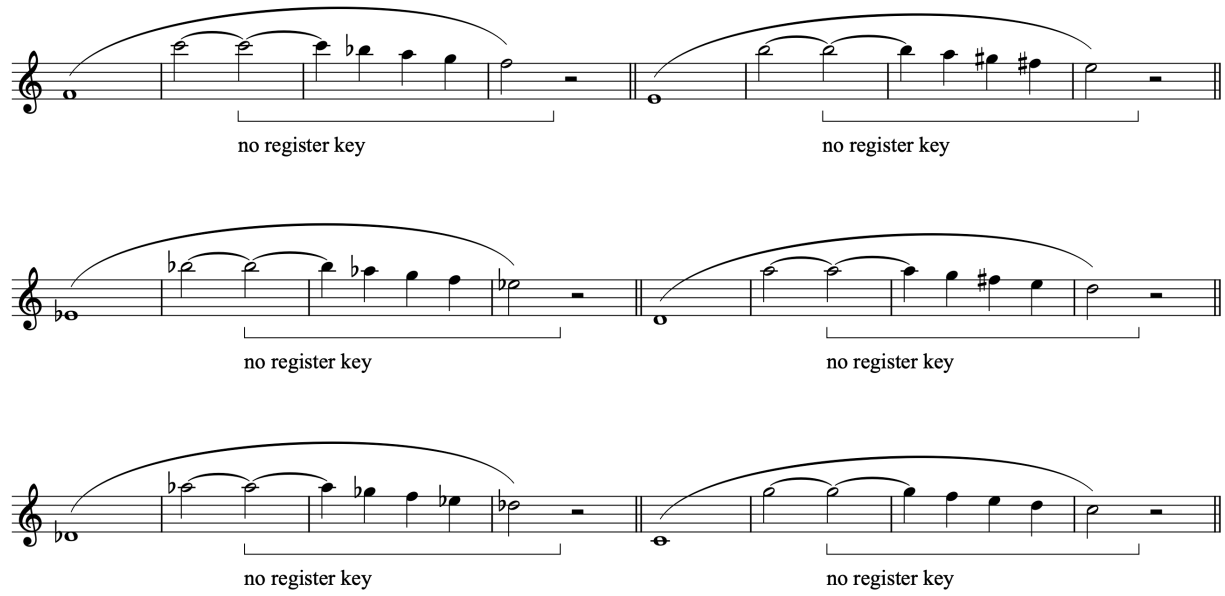
VOICING

- Internal component (tongue position and shape of oral cavity)
- Tongue does not consciously move
- Middle of tongue: tonal color and focus (high and forward)
- Back of tongue: register
    - Moves higher when moving from chalumeau to clarion register

VOICING: 12TH SLURS, THEN REMOVE REGISTER KEY



DESCENDING PENTACHORDS



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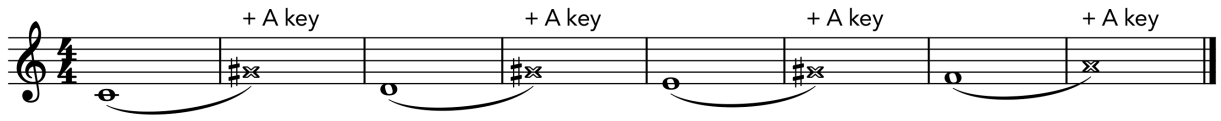
Airflow

- Consistently fast, aided by tongue position
- Faster vs. more?
- Students back off on airflow in higher registers due to increased resistance from the instrument

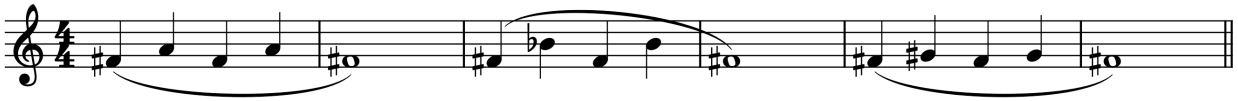
Hand Position and Finger Motion

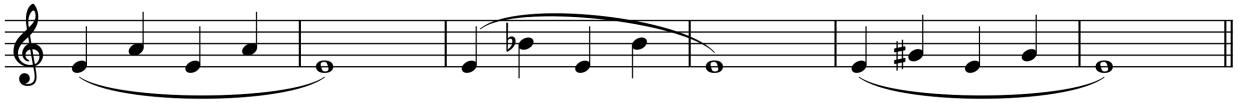
- LH thumb must cover tone hole and rest on bottom edge of register key
- LH first finger must curve/angle so it touches G♯ and A keys while covering tone hole
- "Right hand down" can help with throat tones and facilitate smoothness
- Practice starting from upper notes so fingers know where they are returning to

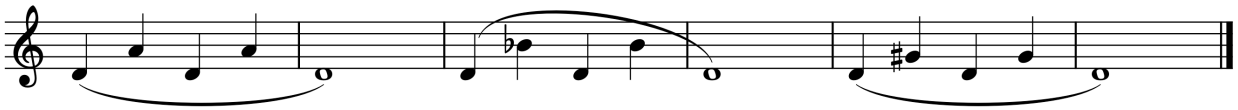
Hand Position and Finger Motion: Left Hand Rock and Roll



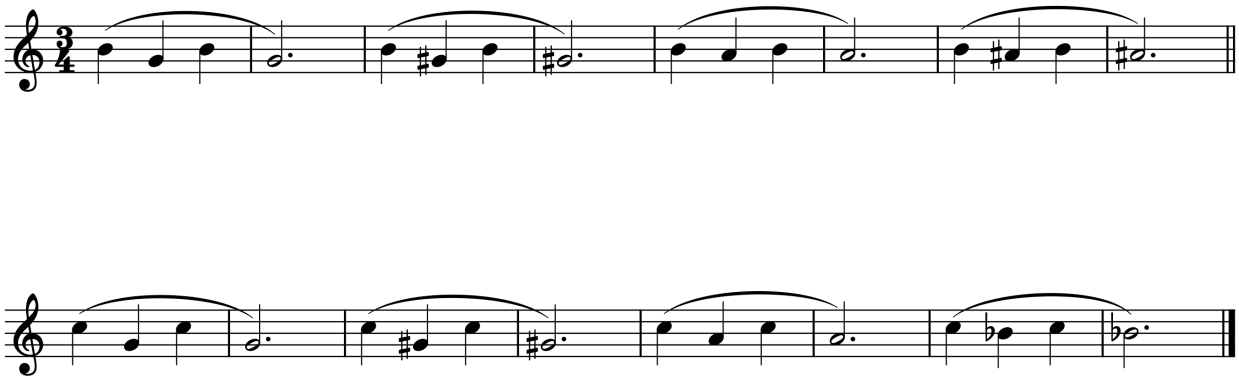
Left Hand Interval Studies







RIGHT HAND INTERVAL STUDIES



CHALUMEAU TO CLARION

EMBOUCHURE: chin pointed, lower lip on fulcrum of mouthpiece, jaw pressure remains constant

VOICING: tongue does not *consciously* move, back of tongue will lift slightly

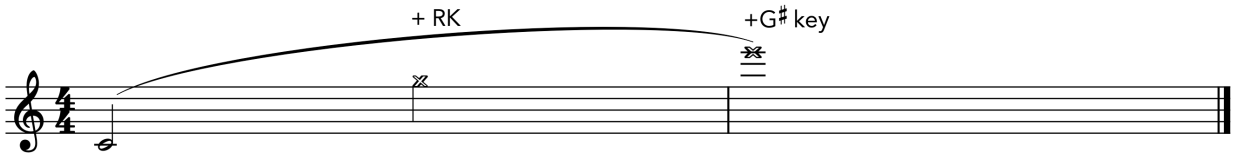
AIRFLOW: consistently fast, need to blow through resistance of register change

HAND POSITION AND FINGER MOTION: LH thumb must simultaneously cover tone hole and rest on register key (1 or 2 o'clock angle on clock face)

"It only comes out if I..."

ISSUE	REASON	SOLUTION
Embouchure		
Bite harder, change angle of instrument, move chin	Need to decrease resistance by bending reed	Increase air velocity
Move my lip on the reed	Needs more reed to vibrate	Change lower lip placement to fulcrum point
Voicing		
Move my tongue a lot	Tongue is not in correct position	Encourage high and forward tongue: peanut butter, whale breath to aim the air upward
Airflow		
Blow really hard	Compensating for slow air with lots of air	Increase air velocity
Have gaps between notes	Interrupting airflow when moving fingers	Isolate air from fingers by sizzling air while fingering along with mouthpiece out of mouth
Hand Position and Finger Motion		
Have gaps between notes	Not positioned for immediate motion	Address finger motion separately from playing
???		
Have an undertone	Embouchure, voicing, airflow	Any of the above

THREE-NOTE EXERCISE



- IF ALL ASPECTS OF EMBOUCHURE, VOICING AND AIRFLOW ARE CORRECT, ALL THREE NOTES WILL SPEAK EASILY

CLARION TO ALTISSIMO

EMBOUCHURE: chin pointed, lower lip on fulcrum of mouthpiece, jaw pressure remains constant

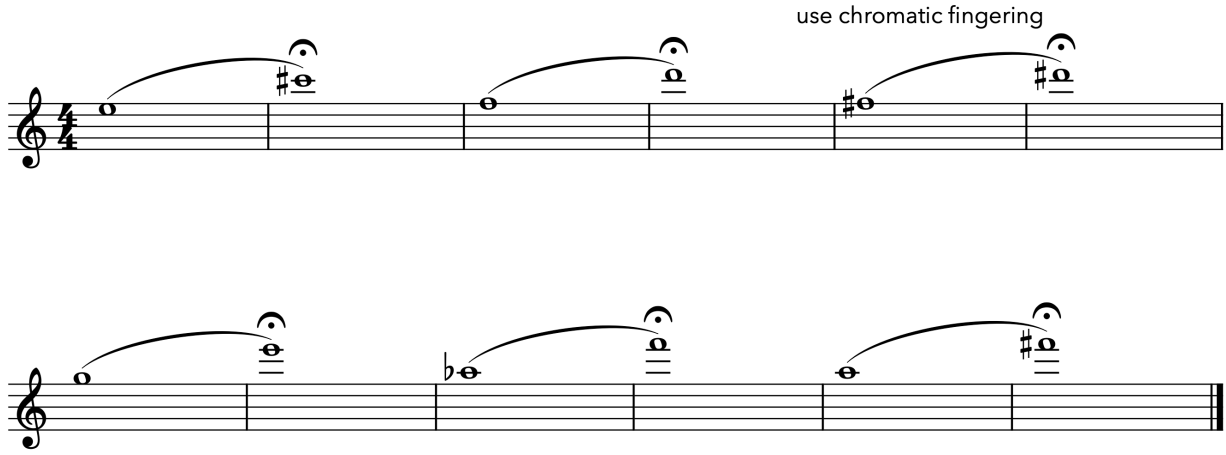
VOICING: tongue does not *consciously* move, back of tongue will drop slightly

AIRFLOW: consistently fast, need to blow through resistance of register change

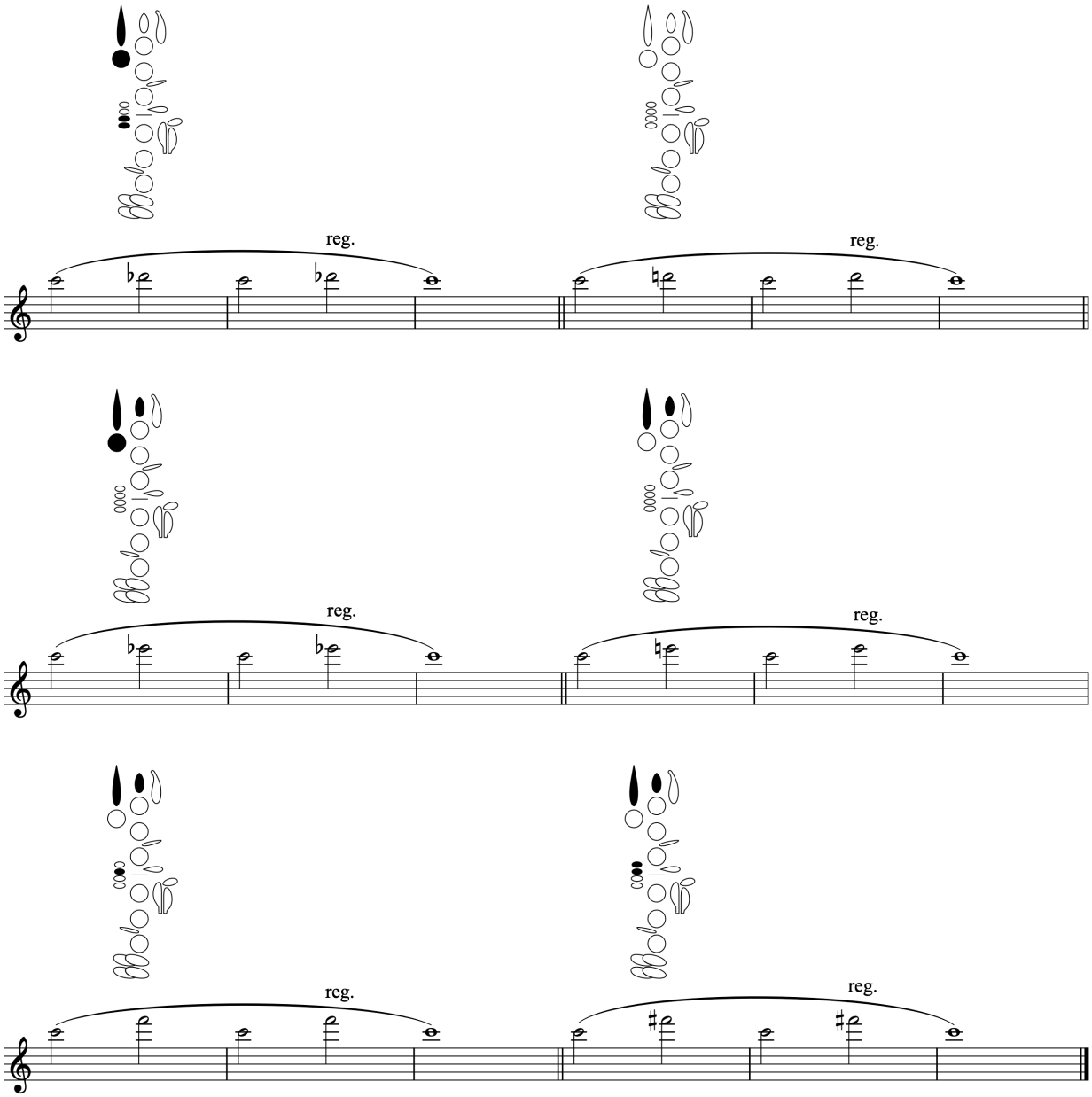
HAND POSITION AND FINGER MOTION: LH first finger can half hole to encourage altissimo note to speak

EXERCISES FOR CLARION TO ALTISSIMO

EMBOUCHURE: 6TH SLURS



VOICING: THIRD PARTIAL/FIFTH PARTIAL OSCILLATION



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