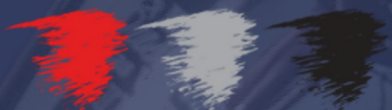


CLARINET VS. BASS CLARINET

THE LONG AND THE SHORT OF IT!

WITH
DR. ROBERT SPRING &
DRS. JOSHUA AND
STEFANIE GARDNER

GLENDALE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
PERFORMING **ARTS**
MUSIC • DANCE • THEATRE



School of Music, Dance and Theatre

ASU Herberger Institute for
Design and the Arts
Arizona State University

“You’re not a good enough player for the Bb section, but I can put you on bass clarinet”.

FALSE!!! That line has been used for so many years. Bass clarinet has become an instrument worthy of virtuoso performers. Literature has been written specifically for the instrument, and the International Clarinet Association has a specific “Low Clarinet ClarinetFest” to celebrate the instrument!

This clinic will focus on basics that are specific to each instrument, and methods to help your students become successful performers on both instruments. Included are fingering recommendations for each instrument, embouchure instruction, tongue placement, and methods to allow your students to become proficient on both instruments.

Robert Spring and Joshua Gardner taught as a team at Arizona State University for 13 years. They developed a team-teaching approach that has been used by other universities across the country. Stefanie Gardner teaches at Glendale Community College. She conducts and leads the “Team Lo-Blow” Low Clarinet Choir and has been the artistic director of the first two “Low ClarinetFests”, sponsored by the International Clarinet Association. She is recognized as a virtuoso performer on the bass clarinet.

CLARINET BASICS!

I. Embouchure: A good embouchure allows a clarinetist to produce a good sound, with accurate intonation, with any articulation, in any register, without a noticeable embouchure change. (See Example 1).

A. Teach specifics—insist on “rightness”

1. Lower lip over lower teeth. Feel teeth 1/2 way between the “pink” line and “wet” line.
2. Mouthpiece between 1/4” and 1/2” in mouth at approximately 30 with the body. Keep head up!
3. Upper teeth on mouthpiece. Patch on mouthpiece often eliminates this problem.
4. Drawstring in lips—pulls lips out and around the mouthpiece. Corners firm, but no smiling.
5. Chin stays pointed as if blowing into a pop bottle.
6. Upper lip stays firm, pressing down on mouthpiece and against the upper teeth.
7. Breathe through corners of mouth. Teeth do not come off top of mouthpiece!
8. Cheeks will not puff out if corners are firm.
9. Upward pressure from right thumb into top teeth (see hand position).
10. **NO MOVEABLE EMBOUCHURES!**
11. Keep head up and clarinet at a 30 degree angle to the body
 - i. (See Example 2).
12. Mouthpiece-barrel combination should produce a concert F#.

B. Problems associated with the embouchure

1. Small stuffy sound - usually too much lower lip, (or flesh) touching the reed.
 - i. Bunched chin: insist on firm chin. Pressure to hold the reed must be transferred from the muscles in the chin to those in the jaw.
 - ii. Too much lower lip in the mouth (see section A.1).
 - iii. Check horn angle to the body. Too close: too much lower lip on the reed
 - iv. Check reed strength (see Reeds).
 - v. Check amount of mouthpiece in mouth. Too little does not allow enough reed in mouth to vibrate correctly
 - vi. Saliva in sound: check horn angle. Keep head up, horn down (30 degrees from the body). Raise music stand higher to keep head up.
2. Wild uncontrolled sound
 - i. Check reed placement (reed too low).
 - ii. Check amount of lower lip in mouth (too little lower lip will cause uncontrolled sound and squeaks).
 - iii. Too much mouthpiece in mouth (see section A.2).
 - iv. Check horn angle (30 degrees to the body).

II. Tongue: Tip of Tongue *only* stops the reed from vibrating.

A. Tip of tongue touches tip of reed.

1. Tongue pressure should be no more than that necessary to stop the reed from vibrating.
2. “Finding” the tip of the tongue:
 - i. Scratch tip of tongue with fingernail or rub against bottom of front teeth to locate exact tip.
 - ii. Place tip of tongue on tip of reed **outside** mouth.
 - iii. Bring mouthpiece into mouth **keeping tongue in place on the reed**
 - iv. Form embouchure.
 - v. Build pressure behind tongue, release reed.
 - vi. Touch tip of tongue to tip of reed many times, *denting the sound*.
 - vii. Repeat above process but stop reed with tip of tongue.

- viii. Remove mouthpiece from mouth to check tongue placement.
- 3. Tongue should remain in an approximate “eee” position for most notes. This will bring the tongue up and back such that the tip of the tongue can touch the tip of the reed. It is also fundamental to achieving characteristic tone quality.
- 4. Do *not* allow embouchure to move while tonguing.

B. How to recognize correct tongue and correct problem tongue.

- 1. Avoid “TT” sound in articulation. Tongue releases the reed, it does not attack the reed.
- 2. There should be *NO* visible throat motion during articulation (See Ex. 2).
- 3. There should be no pitch change during articulation.
- 4. During rapid articulation, the tongue starts and stops the sound. **Air pressure should not change.**
- 5. How to correct
 - i. Student must be made aware of “correct” method of articulation.
 - ii. Above steps should be followed.
- 6. The tongue consists of a group of muscles that must be “exercised” to respond correctly. An exercise should be used daily to strengthen tongue and good habits (see example 9).

III. Air: The Basis of Tone

- A. Laser beam air.
- B. Soft sound is only less air, not less intense air.
- C. “EEE” tongue position will keep the tongue arch high, which is necessary for most notes.

IV. Hand position & Finger Motion

A. Instrument must be played with pads of fingers, not tips.

- 1. Drop hand to side, bring fingers up to instrument. Keep fingers relaxed. Collapsed “C” position. *No squeezing!*
- 2. Left hand index finger should roll back to play “A” key. This finger should *not* be lifted to contact the “A” key and should be very close or actually touch the G# key (See Ex. 3a).
- 3. Right hand index finger should not support the instrument. This finger should rest next to or slightly above RH E^b/B^b key so side trill keys can be reached easily.

B. Thumbs

- 1. Left thumb should aim at the “2:00” position. Register key should be played with the side of the thumb, next to the nail (see Ex. 3b).
- 2. Thumb rest should contact the right thumb between the nail and first joint. Pressure should be up into upper teeth (see Ex. 3c).
- 3. **Neck Strap can be used!**

C. Finger motion

- 1. Fingers should always remain close to the keys. This will help technique and aid in “over the break” passages.
- 2. Mirror practice must be encouraged.

V. Tuning

- A. Tune open G by adjusting between the barrel and upper finger joint. C’s should be tuned between the upper and lower joints. The best notes for tuning the clarinet are open G (tuned at barrel) and G above the staff (tuned between the upper and lower joints).
 - 1. Basic tuning should be done between the barrel and upper finger joint. Right hand pitches can be further adjusted between upper and lower joints.
- B. Use tuning rings to close gap and maintain constant length.
- C. Venting, dampening, and mouth/throat motion should be used to fine tune pitch (See Ex. 4).

VI. Upper Register Production

- A. More mouthpiece can be taken in the mouth to help produce the notes in the initial stages.
- B. Keep tongue in “eee” position to E above the staff, then things get more complicated. Encourage exploration of the highest notes for improved fluency (see Fingering Chart).
- C. No biting!
- D. Bugle calls (See Example 7).
- E. Articulation in the high register requires much less tongue motion and tongue contact than those in the lower registers.

VII. Reed placement and Reeds

- A. **Tip of reed should *always* line up with the tip of the mouthpiece.**
- B. **Reed must line up on the table of the mouthpiece (watch butt as well as tip).**
- C. **Pick correct strength reed**
 - 1. Reed too hard: sound is airy, hard to blow. Can cause severe embouchure problems, especially the bunched chin.
 - 2. Reed too soft: sound is buzzy, high notes flat or difficult if not impossible to produce.
 - 3. Pick good nationally-known brand. Cheaper reeds are just that!
 - 4. Mouthpiece selection affects reed selection—one reed doesn’t fit all!

VIII. Technique

- A. SLOW PRACTICE WITH A METRONOME!
- B. Learn alternate fingerings! (See Examples 5 and 6).

IX. Warm-up

- A. Importance of daily warm-up and practice routine cannot be over emphasized (See Example 8).
- B. Measure the quality of warm-up by its effort at improvement.
 - 1. Long tones (Exercise 8)
 - 2. Tonguing (Exercise 9)
 - 3. **Scale studies** (Exercise 10)

X. Equipment

- A. Keep hands and mouth clean. Brush teeth and wash hands before practicing.
- B. Swab instrument after each use.
- C. Wipe keys with a clean cloth daily.
- D. Keep small paintbrush in case for weekly cleaning.
- E. Use Q-tip for weekly tone hole cleaning. BE CAREFUL!
- F. Clean corks—wipe off old cork grease weekly.
- G. Clean pads—cigarette paper or pad dryer.
- H. Oil and clean keys use key oil or motor oil.
- I. To avoid cracks in wood instruments, keep a humidifier in case (NOT in the bore) and warm outside of instrument with hands/body before blowing air into it.
- J. Assembly:
 - 1. Teach specific method, one that will not bend keys or unseat pads.
 - 2. Assemble from bottom up; disassemble from top down.
 - 3. Watch for bridge key and side trill keys
 - 4. Grease corks lightly, rubbing it into the corks. This is best done when putting the clarinet away so it can absorb into the cork.

Examples:



Example 1. Embouchure. (1) Firm upper lip. (2) Firm corners. (3) Firm chin. (4) Lower lip placement. (5) Mouthpiece in mouth approximately ½ inch.



Example 2. Clarinet placement approximately 30 degrees from the body. No throat motion during articulation.



Example 3a. Front hand position.



Example 3b. Left hand thumb position.



Example 3c. Right hand thumb position.

Example 4: Venting and Dampening

Add F#/C# key to lower

Add C#/G# or Eb/Bb to raise

Add right hand fingers to lower (see Long Tones for suggestions)

Use right hand fork B/F# to raise

See fingering chart for many options

Example 5: Some cases where sliding occurs

R R L R R L R R L R R L L L R L L R

R R L R R L R R L R R L L L R L L R

Example 6: Alternate Fingering Exercises

23 L R L R L R L R L R L R K 2 L R

S 1 K 2 L R K 2

Example 7: Bugle Calls using stopped bell

B Natural C C# D

Example 8: Long Tones

This musical score, titled "Example 8: Long Tones," is written for a single melodic line in treble clef with a common time signature (C). The score consists of six staves, each containing a series of notes and rests, with various musical markings and fingerings.

The first staff begins with a whole note G4, followed by a whole note A4, a whole note B4, and a whole note C5. A slur connects the first four notes. A bracket labeled "Resonance Fingerings" spans the last three notes. The second staff starts with a whole note D5, followed by a whole note E5, a whole note F5, and a whole note G5. A slur connects the first four notes. The third staff begins with a whole note A5, followed by a whole note B5, a whole note C6, and a whole note D6. A slur connects the first four notes. The fourth staff starts with a whole note E6, followed by a whole note F6, a whole note G6, and a whole note A6. A slur connects the first four notes. The fifth staff begins with a whole note B6, followed by a whole note C7, a whole note D7, and a whole note E7. A slur connects the first four notes. The sixth staff starts with a whole note F7, followed by a whole note G7, a whole note A7, and a whole note B7. A slur connects the first four notes.

Throughout the score, there are numerous "Resonance Fingerings" indicated by small diagrams showing the placement of fingers on the keys. These diagrams are placed above or below the notes they apply to. The fingerings are as follows:

- Staff 1: G4 (1), A4 (2), B4 (3), C5 (4).
- Staff 2: D5 (1), E5 (2), F5 (3), G5 (4).
- Staff 3: A5 (1), B5 (2), C6 (3), D6 (4).
- Staff 4: E6 (1), F6 (2), G6 (3), A6 (4).
- Staff 5: B6 (1), C7 (2), D7 (3), E7 (4).
- Staff 6: F7 (1), G7 (2), A7 (3), B7 (4).

The score is presented in a clean, professional layout with a white background and black musical notation. The notes are clearly visible, and the fingerings are well-defined.

Example 9: Articulation Warmup

Start at a comfortable tempo, gradually push limit.

1. Speed Exercise #1



etc.

2. Speed Exercise #2



etc.

3. Endurance with a single note



etc.

4. Five-note scales



etc.

5. Endurance with scales



etc.

Example 10 Major Scales

R: Right	K: Fork
L: Left	S: Side

C major

L R

F major

R

Bb major

L R R R L

Eb major

R R R R R R

Ab major

R L R R L R

Db major

R S R K R L R S R

Gb major

L R K R S R L R K R L R S R K R

B major

R L R R R L R

E major

R L R R L R R L R R L

A major

L R R L

D major

L R R L

G major

R L

Bass Clarinet 101

Dr. Stefanie Gardner

- How do you get started playing the bass clarinet?
 - Choice or assignment?
 - Negative stigma- the student isn't good enough, so let's put them on bass clarinet
 - Future of the bass clarinet industry
 - New developments in manufacturing
 - Increased student interest
 - Two international festivals celebrated the rise of low clarinet enthusiasts
- What is the difference between playing bass clarinet and soprano clarinet?
 - Embouchure
 - Teeth on top of the mouthpiece with firm contact to the peg on the floor
 - "Foo" – the bottom lip is much looser than soprano, the reed has to be free to vibrate.
 - Pencil trick for finding openness and rounder embouchure
 - More mouthpiece
 - Neck angle
 - Not all angles are the same
 - Mimic a clarinet angle and not a saxophone
 - May need to move the bell between the feet more instead of in front of the player.
 - Angle test just on the neck and mouthpiece to find the strongest projection
 - Reed strength
 - At least one strength softer depending on the mouthpiece setup. It is a bigger mouthpiece and takes more air to play complete phrases.
 - Higher number does not equal better tone. Pitch and clear sound are important.
 - If a reed is buzzy and playing flat, or closing off, it's probably too soft
 - If a reed is fuzzy and playing sharp, and it is challenging to breathe, it's probably too hard.
 - Experiment and don't be limited to one number or brand
 - Pegs, harnesses, and straps
 - Long pegs allow flexibility of standing for soloists and chamber musicians. I can breathe better standing and prefer to practice this way.
 - Harness allows performers to walk around and even more mobility.
 - A neck strap may help with achieving the correct neck angle if the instrument neck isn't steep enough
- Warm ups to get adjusted to fingerings, voicing and intonation
 - Long tones with a drone and/or tuner

- Extended scales to get acquainted with all the new pinky keys and thumbs, and half hole in the altissimo
- The voicing is extremely different from soprano clarinet. Adjustments made in the altissimo and extreme low registers must be exaggerated from soprano clarinet. Again, the embouchure must be looser and having a good ear can help tremendously in the altissimo. Most fingering combinations will work if you can hear the pitch before playing.
- [Fingering Chart](#)
 - Soprano clarinet altissimo fingerings do not work well on bass clarinet. Use different fingerings for better intonation and response.
 - Fingerings will vary model to model. Some instruments have different thumb key options, and the acoustical differences from model to model mean the altissimo fingerings for one model will not work well on another or at all. Look for instrument brand specific fingering charts
- Equipment Budget
 - Budget for a low C bass clarinet varies from \$2000-16,000
 - Mouthpieces \$60-350
 - Reeds \$25 for a box of 5
 - Ligatures \$20-\$400
- Pedagogy and Repertoire lists
 - *Bass Camp* by Erin Cameron
 - Weissenborn Studies
 - *Finger Fitness* Etudes Vols 1 & 2 by Kristen Denny Chambers
 - 20 Etudes by Sauro Berti
 - *Multiphonic Miniatures* by Sarah Watts
 - What about bass clef?
 - My Repertoire list
 - Commissioning New Works
 - Bass Clarinet Choir
- Career opportunities
 - Concert band/Military Band
 - Orchestra
 - Chamber music (reed quintet and other new music ensembles)
 - Soloing
 - Broadway
 - Rock/Metal Groups
- Benefits of playing bass clarinet
 - Potentially more gigs
 - Increased flexibility as a player (less biting, more pitch flexibility, additional exposure to playing diverse and new repertoire)
 - It's pretty dang cool and has a versatile sound palette
- Basic Extended Techniques
 - Slap Tongue
 - Harmonic Glisses

- Growl
- Multiphonics
- Quarter tones
- Flutter Tongue
- Multiple Articulation
- Circular Breathing