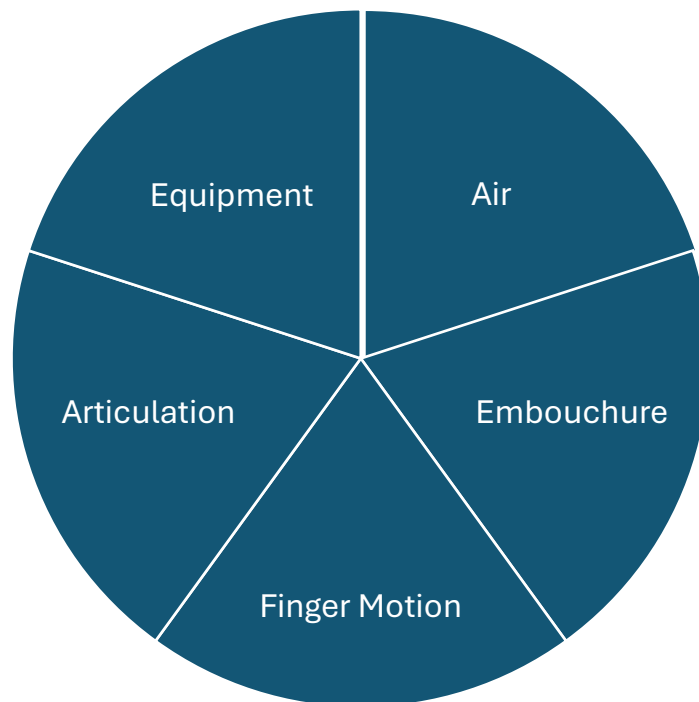


Start With Success: Instilling Clarinet Fundamentals

Dr. Aileen Razey

razey1@stolaf.edu, aileenrazey.com
St. Olaf College, Assistant Professor
Conn Selmer, Henri Selmer Paris Artist
D'Addario Woodwinds Clinician

All aspects of clarinet technique, fundamentals, and equipment influence clarinet tone and expressive capabilities.



What is a characteristic clarinet tone?

- Dependent on style
- Listen to: Sabine Meyer, Carlos Ferreira, Anthony McGill, Doreen Ketchens, Sharon Kam, Artie Shaw, Martin Fröst, Benny Goodman, Alessandro Carbonare, Emma Johnson, Giora Feidman, and others

Air:

- Purpose: Controls tone, stabilizes intonation, controls musicality, reduces tension
- Natural inhale: How does this feel in your body? Is this the same as an inhale before playing?
- Body movement: Give yourself a hug! When breathing, where do you feel movement?
- In general:
 - o Mouth inhale
 - o Controlled exhale: maintain inhale position, feel abdominal muscles stay down, out. Fast, cold air
- Practice:
 - o Embouchure & air (short notes) only
 - o With clarinet & air start (no tongue articulation)
 - o All slurred with same support
 - o Airy clarinet
 - o Flutter tongue or growl!
 - o "Clarinet hero"
- Resource: Copeland, Shawn, and Jacqueline McIlwain. "Body Mapping for Clarinetists: New Frontiers in Clarinet Teaching." GIA Publishing, 2023.

Embouchure

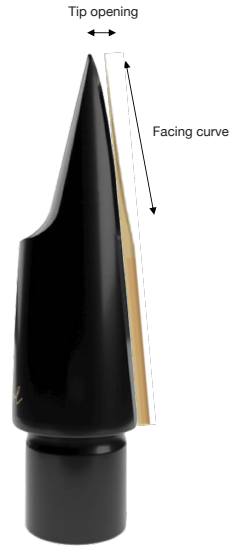
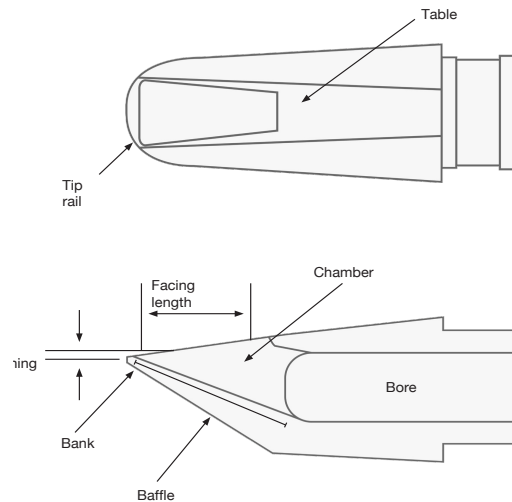
- Purpose:
 - o 1st contact point between body and clarinet
 - o Offers a seal, support, and stability (not a hold)
 - o Directs airflow
- Shape:
 - o Suck thumb, drink thick milkshake, drink boba tea, breath in through clarinet
 - o Embouchure sprints: "eee," slight "ah," "oh" with tongue "eee"
- External embouchure:
 - o Top teeth & right arm = snug **mouthpiece patch
 - o Upper lip = active
 - o Cheeks = against teeth
 - o Bottom lip = firm pillow, against teeth
 - o Chin = tall from nose to chin
 - o Corners = hug
 - o Jaw = assists bottom lip to meet reed
 - o Amount and angle of mouthpiece = listen
 - o Double lip = practice
- Internal embouchure:
 - o Top teeth- mouthpiece snug
 - o Tongue:
 - Tip = articulation
 - Middle = air focus

- Purpose:
 - o Clarity to starts/ends of notes (air starts note, tongue gives clarity)

- Keeps rhythm
 - Expression
- Beginners: can start with breath first to be sure there is enough air to start note
 - 1. Start with “hee”
 - 2. “Hee” then “dee” in the same breath, add tongue
 - 3. Tongue starts on reed and releases away
- Three parts to articulation
 - 1. Release of tone - tongue starts on reed and releases away
 - 2. Sustain/duration of tone – tongue near reed
 - 3. Stop of tone (or interruption) – tongue returns to reed to stop vibrations
- Legato
 - Basic movement for all articulations, informs staccato
 - Sequence:
 - Speak “dee” / “tee” / “thee”
 - Speak with embouchure
 - Air with embouchure
 - Mouthpiece speaking, aim tongue to same place
 - Play w/ varying dynamics
 - “dee” vs “dah”
 - Movement details:
 - Air! (Practice- kite exercise)
 - “Top of the tip of the tongue to the bottom of the tip of the reed” – Kimberly Cole Luevano
 - “One” tastebud to reed – interrupts
 - Tongue wants to stay close to the reed
 - Sides of tongue – against top molars
- Staccato
 - Sequence:
 - Speak “deeeet” / “teeeet”
 - Speak with embouchure
 - Air with embouchure
 - Mouthpiece speaking, aim tongue to same place
 - Play w/ varying dynamics
 - Motion details: like legato
 - Tongue stays on reed longer
 -
- Common challenges:
 - Anchor tonguing - tip of tongue is behind bottom teeth
 - Tip of tongue to bottom lip
 - Tongue to roof of mouth (not touching reed)
 - Glottal stop
 - Tongue coordination (fingers slower than articulation)
 - Too much motion

Equipment:

- Purpose: Choice in and care of equipment has effect on tone and articulation response
- Mouthpiece Terminology and Care
 - o Chapter = scratch free
 - o Table and tip opening = flat, free to knicks



- o Cleaning mouthpiece:
 - Lukewarm water rinse or lemon rinse, avoid cork getting wet, air dry
 - No swab (avoid metal weight going through) or mouthpiece brushes
 - Mouthpiece cap- protect the tip of mouthpiece
 - Mouthpiece patch – keeps scratch and bite free (good if trying to change amount of mouthpiece inside mouth)
- Tip Opening:
 - o Close Facing = Harder Reed
 - Smaller space between tip of reed and the mouthpiece
 - Reed travels shorter distance when vibrating
 - Less resistance
 - o Open Facing = Softer Reed
 - Larger space between tip of reed and the mouthpiece
 - Reed travels longer distance when vibrating
 - More resistance
- Reed Choices:
 - o Cane vs synthetic
- Reed Care:
 - o Use mouthpiece cap
 - o Store in a case- avoid chips, splits, warpage; humidity control case
 - o Rotate reeds- always have a few on hand
 - o Naturally wear down and can become thin/brittle- throw them out!