CRANE
Julia C. Crane
The Crane School of Music • SUNY Potsdam

Midwest Clinic 2011

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Tweaking and Tuning:

Tips for working with oboe, clarinet and bassoon

Presented by the Aria Reed Trio:

Dr. Anna Hendrickson, oboe
hendriak@potsdam.edu

Dr. Julianne Kirk-Doyle, clarinet
kirkj@potsdam.edu

Dr. Carol Lowe, bassoon
lowecc@potsdam.edu

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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	-Top teeth on mouthpiece - Balance on RH thumb knuckle - 30 to 45 degree angle pending over/underbite - Lever test	-Right hand thumb nail under thumb rest -Not too much thumb underneath -45 degree angle from body	3 places of support: -Strap -Right thigh near knee -Base of left index finger - Diagonal tilt brings left thumb on whisper key to center of body *Adjust placement of boot on right leg so that reed enters mouth parallel to the floor (affected by bend of bocal) Read music to the right of the bassoon (over the bocal)
Hand Position	-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	-Fingers are curved -Third (ring) finger is a bit straighter to reach the G key *(curl-curl-straighter*) -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	-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	"Set it and forget it" "Milkshake face" –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 Chin: Pointed down and never moves Vowel: "Ewww"	-Open mouth -Place reed on lower lip reed (halfway between thread and tip of reed) -Close mouth while "hugging" the reed Chin: Point downward *Flat/Vertical* *Upper lip is 'in front' of teeth*	-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 Chin: flexible Lip shape: 'Oh' or "em"

	Clarinet	Oboe	Bassoon
Tongue Position	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	Upper register Tongue is higher Vowel: "ee" focuses pitch Lower Register: Tongue is lower Vowel: "o" used for response and focus	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)
Articulation	Syllables: dee-dee, lee-lee Nee-nee, tee-tee New-new	Syllables: dah-dah, tah-tah	Syllables: dah-dah, tah-tah ('ah" lowers pitch, "eee" raises pitch)
Lips	Upper lip -frowning -pushing down -"Ewww" Lower lip -Smiling -Firm against lower teeth -Not too much folded over "Vuuuuum"	Lips should be about halfway between end of thread and tip of the reed	-Lips loosen for lowest notes - Lips firm for highest - Teeth are cushioned by lips -Should see some pink Vowel is usually "oh" or "ah"
Placement of the Reed	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	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	Default position is approx. ½ 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
Tests	- Voice Bb on mouthpiece - F# on the mp + barrel - Buzz a D when remove the clarinet from the mouth	-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	- Middle C with reed on bocal - Buzz lowest pitch possible on reed alone - Pointed chin doesn't hurt but not necessary

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

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 & <u>relaxed</u>
Fingers approach holes/keys from the side
Pads of fingers cover holes

Incorrect Clarinet Hand Position

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

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 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.

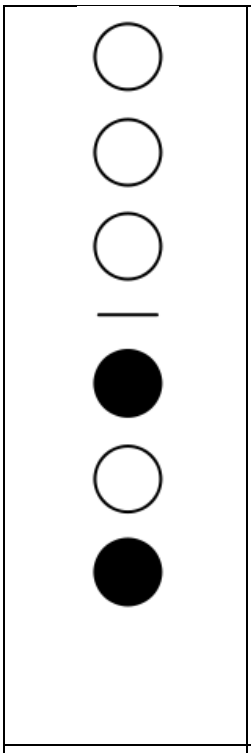
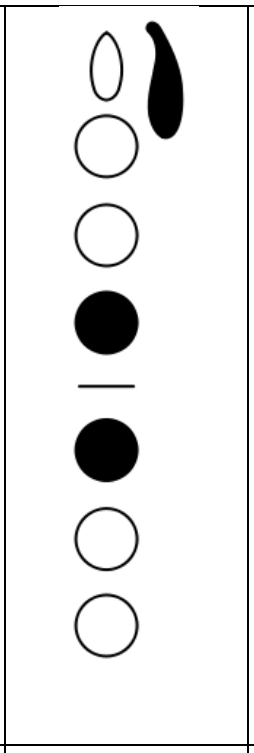
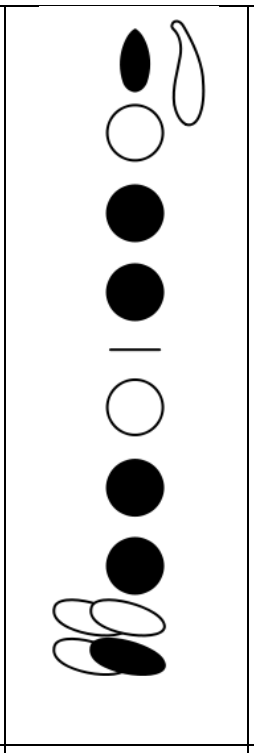
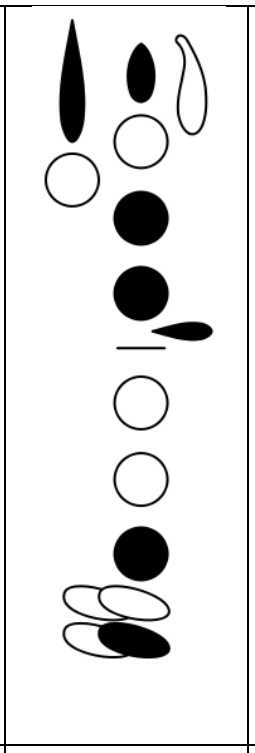
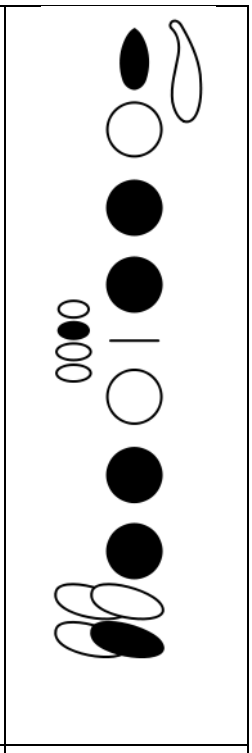
Bassoon Correct Position **Left Hand**  ***Fingers are curved and relaxed*** ***Pads of fingers cover holes*** ***Thumb stays soft and flexible***	**Bassoon Incorrect Position** **Left Hand**  ***Index finger overreaches first tone hole*** ***Joint collapsed on middle finger*** ***Ring finger not covering 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

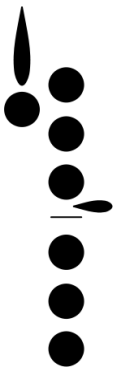
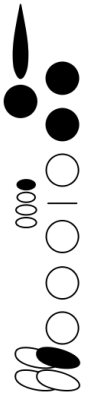
- Help with centering sound of throat tones
- Aid in centering pitch of throat tones
- Having fingers down enable a smoother transition over the break
- Students can really blow into these notes rather than back away
- Different types of clarinets may require different fingering combinations

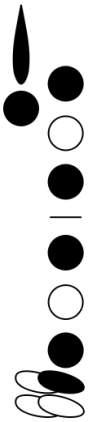
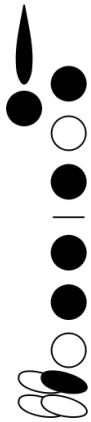
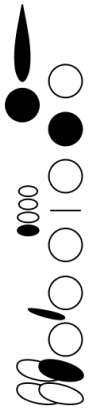
				
Open G	G#	A	Regular Bb	Side Bb

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

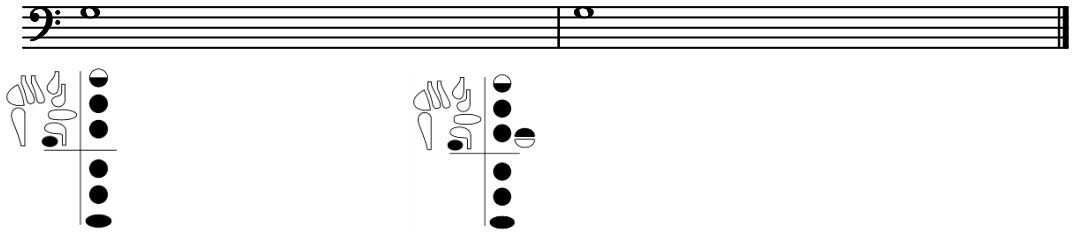
- Depending on context, different fingerings can be used to aid in blend and intonation of the altissimo register
- Many method books only give limited options when most of these notes have a minimum of **15 fingering options**!
- Be sure students are using proper fundamentals/air support and NOT biting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

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

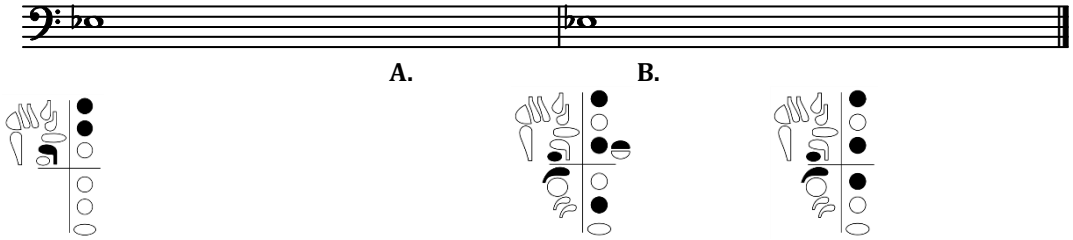
			
G (overblown B)	G	G	G (in G Major Scale)

Fingering Aids for Tuning the Bassoon

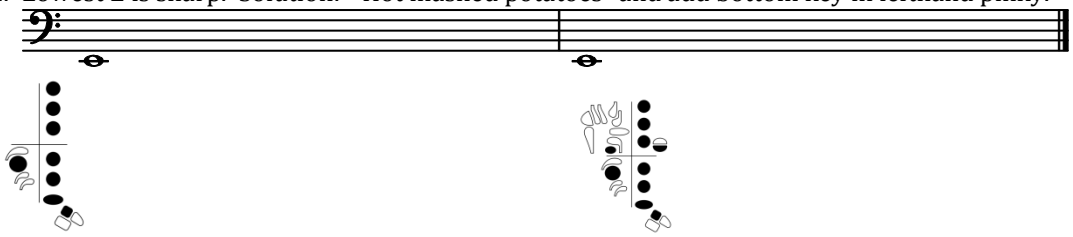
Problem: Top space G is notoriously sharp and wild sounding. Solution: Add top key in lefthand pinky.



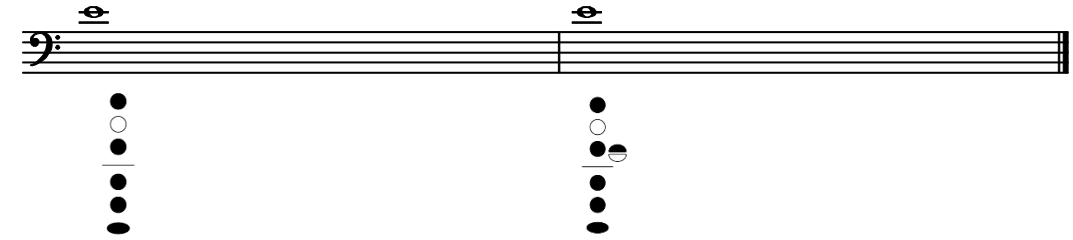
Problem: 3rd space Eb is unstable and fuzzy. Solution A: Add R2 , Bb key, possibly top key in lefthand pinky. Solution B: (even lower) Add Index finger and thumb Bb in right hand, and possibly top key in lefthand pinky.



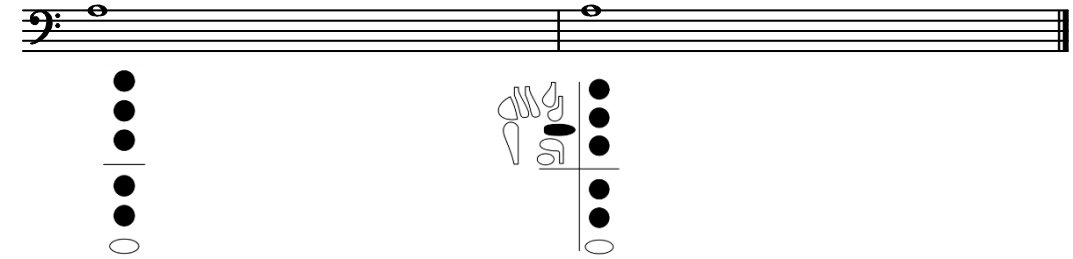
Problem: Lowest E is sharp. Solution: "Hot mashed potatoes" and add bottom key in lefthand pinky.



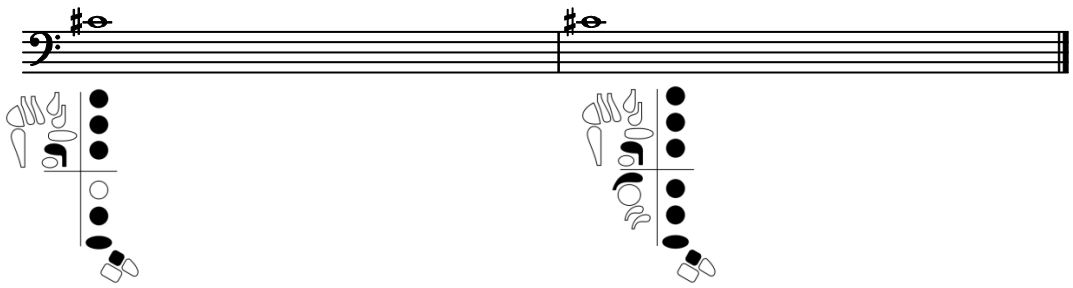
Problem: High notes are sharp and thin. Solution: Lower back of tongue, Add top key in lefthand pinky for all notes E and higher above the staff.



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.



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).