

TEXAS BANDMASTERS ASSOCIATION

ADVANCED YOUNG PLAYER SERIES



**ADVANCED LOW  
CLARINET**

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53RD ANNUAL CLINIC  
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS  
2000

**TEXAS BANDMASTERS ASSOCIATION**  
**Convention/Clinic**  
**July 23-26, 2000**

**A Guide to Teaching Advanced  
Low Clarinet**

Presented by

**Ruben Estrada**

This is my method of teaching the advanced low clarinet. Though there are many different philosophies and methods to teaching, I have found the following procedures most beneficial in my students' development over the years.

I. Tone

**A. Embouchure**

1. set embouchure by inserting **RH** thumb in mouth
  - a. top teeth hit fleshy part of thumb b. bottom lip rolled in
    1. be sure some "red" is showing
  - c. upper lip wrinkled & nose points down
2. lower jaw
  - a. push jaw slightly forward
  - b. keep oral cavity wider than Soprano Clarinet
3. corner formation
  - a. keep comers in toward center b. keep **firm** always
4. mouthpiece placement
  - a. less than half works!
  - b. top teeth on top of mouthpiece
5. ligature placement on mouthpiece
  - a. line up top of ligature with the line on the mouthpiece
  - b. keep ligature snug but not tight
6. reed placement
  - a. keep reed even with MP tip
  - b. if reed is unbalanced, adjust to right or **left**
  - c. if reed is too soft, raise it above MI' tip
  - d. if reed is too hard, lower it a bit below MP tip

## B. Air Support

1. **.always** stress the correct and incorrect ways to breathe
  - a. watch that bad tendency to take *chest breaths*
    1. ask student where they feel the air going
    2. listen and have students listen to their own breaths
    3. a backwards “hee” sound during a breath is usually a bad sign
  - b. be certain that air is going into tummy
    1. fill up from the bottom to the top of tummy
    2. tell student to aim for a backwards “ho” sound
    3. students should feel a difference between a tummy breath and a chest breath
    4. constantly monitor their breathing. **.till** graduation! ! !
2. keep that air fast! ! !
  - a. be sure the students are pushing from their tummy
  - b. without horns, have students blow fast air out of there formed embouchure with hand on tummy.. . they should feel the press
  - c. keep stressing this area forever!

## C. Long Tones Are the Key!

- 1 twelves (see fig. 1)
  - a. start sound **w/o** tongue
  - b. hold low note and **cresc.** for 8 cts, then hold high note and decrescendo for 8 cts
  - c. thumb hits register key at a slight angle
  - d. keep a steady, smooth tone on both pitches (no bumps)
2. descending chromatics & dynamics (see fig. 2)
  - a. start sound **w/o** tongue
  - b. begin FF and decresc. to **PP...holding** fermata for 4-6-8 cts
    1. decrescendo fermata note to PPP c. review all chromatic fingerings
3. ascending chromatics & dynamics (see **fig**, 3)
  - a. start sound **w/o** tongue
  - b. begin PP and **cresc.** to FF...holding fermata for 4-6-8 cts
    1. crescendo fermata note to FFF
  - c. review all chromatic fingerings

\*\*note...remember to uncover 1st **finger** vent by sliding index finger, not lifting

## II. Articulation

- A. Less Tongue/More Air
  1. tongue strikes just below tip
  2. no force needed
  3. use tip of tongue to strike
  4. air is always fast!

- B. Fun with Tongue
1. sixteenth pattern...pick your favorite scale (see fig. 4)
    - a. play FF thinking fast air, not heavy tongue
    - b. keep steady pulse and curved fingers
    - c. hold quarter all the way to the rest
    - d. beginning tempo =72, then 96, 120, 132±±
    - e. aim for using the three octave F scale
  2. **the** tongue & finger combo (see fig. 5)
    - a. play FF thinking fast air, not heavy tongue
    - b. keep steady pulse and curved fingers
    - c. hold quarter all the way to the rest
    - d. beginning tempo =72, then 96, 120, 132++
    - e. to avoid nasty blips line up fingers and tongue very carefully.. don't begin easy parts too fast!!

### III. Technique

- A. Hand Position
1. keep fingers curved & as close to keys as possible
    - a. improper finger placement will result in poor technique
  2. center of thumb rest should hit center of cuticle
  3. keep wrist at a comfortable angle
  4. LH pinkie rests on e/b key...RH pinkie rests on f/c key
  5. monitor students' hand/finger placement forever
- B. Finger Development & Speed
1. keep fingers curved & as close to keys as possible
  2. use daily technical drill
    - a. always use metronome
    - b. begin extremely slow
    - c. insist on correct foot tap
      1. equal time on down & up (subdividing will be easier)
    - d. once a drill is successfully performed at slow tempo, inch metronome up only 4 clicks at a time
    - e. assist students with stressing down beats so they may "organize" music in their mind
  3. many students struggle here. ..be patient & **POSITIVE!!!!!!!**
  4. additional chromatic exercises for developing faster fingers (fig.6)
    - a. Use metronome = 60, then =60

### IV. Intonation

- A. The Bad Sharp Throat Tones (G, G#, A, A#)
1. pull neck out from body
  2. open jaw
  3. keep RH down
    - a. if still sharp add 2 & 3 of LH
  4. **check** height of keys

- B. High Notes (pitch of high G to high C is sharp on the instrument)
  - 1. open up oral cavity (more yawn)
- C. Low Notes (pitch of low E to low A is sharp on the instrument)
  - 2. open up oral cavity (“O” in mouth)
- D. Altissimo Notes (pitch of high D [**above staff**] to high F is usually FLAT!!!)
  - 1. think “EE” in mouth
  - 2. add RH **G#/Eb** key (top right key)
  - 3. always support **&** blow fast air
  - 4. keep chin pointed **&** set corners
  - 5. no lower lip pressure

## V. Equipment

- A. Peg
  - 1. adjust peg to the students size
    - a. angle bell **&** peg into student
    - b. student’s neck does not stretch to mouthpiece
      - 1. peg is too high if student is “over reaching”
      - 2. peg is too low if back of neck is strained
    - c. keep student posture correct...straight back **&** relaxed shoulders
      - 1. no raised, tense shoulders...this will effect the students’ overall performance
- B. Neck Strap
  - 1. needed for marching
  - 2. combo of neck strap **&** peg will avoid excessive movement **&** enhance overall performance
  - 3. if instrument has two neck strap rings..be sure to use a two hook strap
- C. Reeds
  - 1. fibers should be centered...avoid a lot of dark
  - 2. count on about 3-4 “good” reeds per box (warn students **&** parents.. this is an expense)
  - 3. reed holders are a must...never leave reed on **MP**
    - a. keep reed holder inside a zip lock bag
    - 4. use sand paper to **balance the** reeds
      - 1. use 400-600 grit
      - 2. gently sand reed

## VI. Motivation

- A. Overcoming Obstacles
  - 1. instill in student that every set back is temporary
  - 2. always allow student to verbally express fears **&** concerns
  - 3. allow student to discuss “worst case” scenarios a. this mentally prepares students for any outcome

- B. Performance Anxiety
1. provide as many performance opportunities as possible
    - a. school assemblies, mock auditions, perform for class
  2. have a set warm up **&** warm down before audition
    - a. consistency here will reassure student
  3. always arrive to any concert/audition with as much warm up time as possible
    - a. late arrivals are a severe contributor to nerves!
  4. train student to “tune out” competition during actual audition or while warming up
    - a. reading, deep breathing exercises, etc.
- C. **Learning to Win/Learning to Fail**
1. being humble
    - a. teaching student to be proud, but not conceited
    - b. instill in student that their work paid off regardless of outcome
    - c. learning to be sensitive to peers who may not have been as successful
  2. accepting the worst
    - a. always assist student in looking toward the **future..(the next audition..the next concert...the next rehearsal)**
    - b. instill in student that their self worth is not determined by their successes
    - c. students need to understand that they will always be valued by others for their dedication, leadership and work ethic....not high chairs

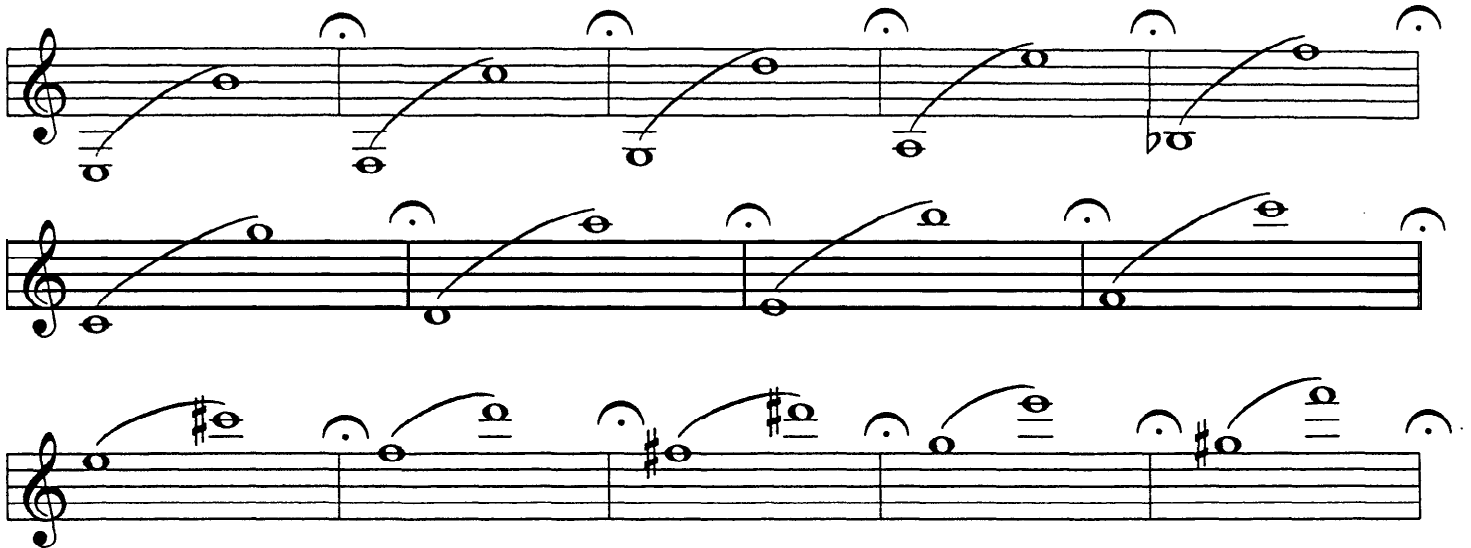
## VII. Who Should I Switch???

- A. **NEVER** switch your worst B-Flat clarinet player to a low clarinet. It only gives them a larger weapon with which to inflict damage.
1. the best candidate for a switch to low clarinet is a student with good technique on B-Flat, but possible embouchure problems.
    - a. spread sound
    - b. weak chin or weak comers
    - c. physical size of student
    - d. eager saxophonists (if you have any)

# Clarinet Long-Tone Exercises

Figure 1

Use no tongue on start



Each week choose one of the following dynamic markings and perform each measure for 8, 12, or 16 counts:

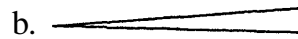
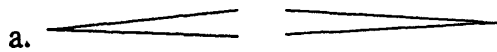
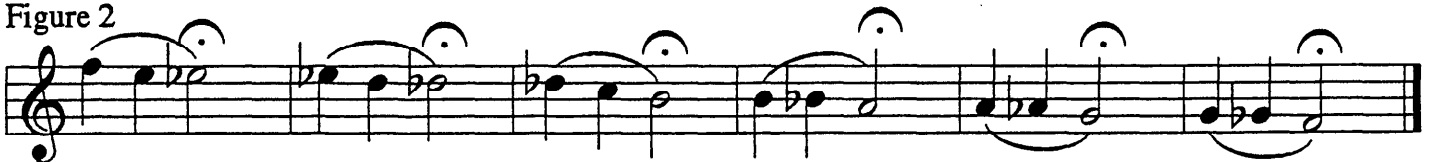
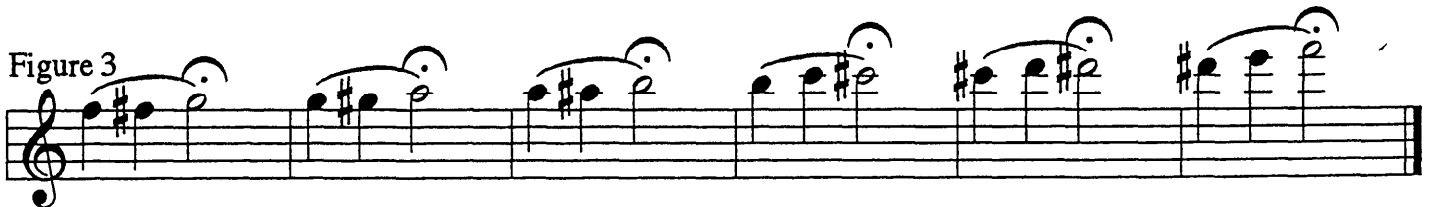


Figure 2



Use Chromatic fingerings

Figure 3



Use Chromatic fingerings  
Maintain same tone quality

Figure 4 Use metronome setting of  $\text{♩} = 72$  plus once at your quickest: %, 120, or 132



Continue up to your highest "F"  
Play at Fortissimo

# Low Clarinet Chromatic Technique Exercises

Figure 6

First Octave Chromatic

Use Chromatic B-natural

$\text{♩} = 60$   $\text{♩} = 60$

Musical notation for the First Octave Chromatic exercise. It consists of a single staff in 3/4 time with a treble clef. The exercise is a chromatic scale starting on G4, moving up to G5 and then down to G4. The notes are: G4, A4, B4, B-natural4, C5, B4, A4, G4. The notes are beamed in groups of four. A large slur covers the entire exercise. The piece ends with a double bar line and a final G4 note.

Second Octave

Use side F-sharp

Musical notation for the Second Octave Chromatic exercise. It consists of a single staff in 3/4 time with a treble clef. The exercise is a chromatic scale starting on G5, moving up to G6 and then down to G5. The notes are: G5, A5, B5, B-natural5, C6, B5, A5, G5. The notes are beamed in groups of four. A large slur covers the entire exercise. The piece ends with a double bar line and a final G5 note.

Third Octave Chromatic

Maintain proper use of right hand/Left hand in altissimo register

Musical notation for the Third Octave Chromatic exercise. It consists of a single staff in 3/4 time with a treble clef. The exercise is a chromatic scale starting on G6, moving up to G7 and then down to G6. The notes are: G6, A6, B6, B-natural6, C7, B6, A6, G6. The notes are beamed in groups of four. A large slur covers the entire exercise. The piece ends with a double bar line and a final G6 note.

Full Chromatic

Include all fingering considerations from the examples above

Musical notation for the Full Chromatic exercise. It consists of three staves in 3/4 time with a treble clef. The exercise is a chromatic scale starting on G4, moving up to G7 and then down to G4. The notes are: G4, A4, B4, B-natural4, C5, B4, A4, G4, G5, A5, B5, B-natural5, C6, B5, A5, G5, G6, A6, B6, B-natural6, C7, B6, A6, G6. The notes are beamed in groups of four. A large slur covers the entire exercise. The piece ends with a double bar line and a final G4 note.



# Articulation Exercises

Figure 5

Figure 5 consists of eight staves of musical notation, each in treble clef and common time. Each staff is divided into two measures by a double bar line with repeat dots. The first measure of each staff contains a series of eighth notes, and the second measure contains a series of sixteenth notes. The patterns vary in rhythm and articulation, including slurs and accents.

Play Fortissimo Throughout  
Use this pattern through all keys and throughout the range of the instrument.

## **Recommended Mouthpieces**

### **Alto**

Vandoren B44

Bay

Hite

Selmer C\*

Vandoren **B45**

### **Bay MMO**

Selmer C\*

**Selmer\*\*** (more open than the C\*)

Vandoren B45

Vandoren B44

Hite

### **Contra-alto**

Bay

Selmer C\*\* (possibly easier to play on contra than bass because it is more open)

Selmer C\*

Leblanc

### **Contrabass**

Leblanc

Bay

## Course of Study for Low Clarinets

### Elementary

- Endresen, Supplementary Studies for Clarinet. Rubank. This book, or the very similar volume for sax, may be used for melodic material, continued rhythmic and stylistic development.
- Hovey, Elementary Method for Clarinet. Rubank. A very standard method. May need adjustment for a young player, as the book extends range. Useful for beginner or transfer student.
- Hovey, Practical Studies. Volume I for the Clarinet. Belwin. More good melodic studies which will not tax the young player but give him real music to play in addition to exercises.
- Mimart, Method for Alto and Bass Clarinets and Sarrusophones. Cundv-Bettonev Co. A volume designed much like the **Klose**, Lazarus, and Baermann beginning methods. Good fingering charts, though, like Rubank, quite complicated. In spite of a formidable format, effective method through the early advanced stages.
- Weber, et al., Student Instrumental Course. Level One. Belwin. All the study materials in this and the other levels are useful for the bass and alto clarinets; the upper register is introduced early and demands are made upon the clarion register.

### Intermediate

- Demnitz-Waln, Melodious Etudes and Chord Studies. Kjos. Excellent preparatory material for advanced work. Each key is represented by a **well-**constructed study with many clarinetistic problems. Schirmer publishes a similar volume. David Hite's 48 Studies. published by Southern, is similar also.
- Hovey, Practical Studies for the Clarinet. Vol. II. Belwin-Mills. More advanced material than Vol. I. Useful rhythmic and melodic studies.
- Rhoads**, 35 Technical Studies for Alto and Bass Clarinet. Southern. These studies are excellent and may be incorporated nicely with the Voxman transfer method, or, if employed properly, with elementary through early advanced teaching materials.
- Skornicka-Miller, Intermediate Method for Clarinet. Rubank. An eager student or teacher may wish to by-pass this or similar books for more advanced material, even though this material is sound.
- Voxman, Introducing the Alto or Bass Clarinet: A Transfer Method for Intermediate Instruction. Rubank. And excellent transfer method which

assumes that a student has a moderately firm grasp for clarinet playing fundamentals.

Weber, et al., Student Instrumental Course. Levels Two and Three. Belwin. Level three may be applicable in the early advanced level.

## Advanced

Mimart, Method...

**Rhoads**, Advanced Studies from the Works of Julius Weissenborn. Southern. Musical studies from the famous bassoon studies. No exploitation of range and few slow, expressive etudes.

**Rhoads**, Baermann for the Alto and Bass Clarinet: adapted from division three celebrated method for Clarinet. Opus 63 by Carl Baermann. Southern. A very standard teaching method well-adapted for the low clarinets. Emphasizes scale and chord development through patterned drill. In addition, Lazarus Vol. II, Klose Vol. II, and the Baermann Vol. III (all for Bb clarinet) can be used to extra advantage and technique development.

**Rhoads**, Etudes for Technical Facility. Southern. These studies are good for the purpose intended. Only the keys of F, C, and G are employed. Phrasing is left up to the student.

**Rhoads**, 18 Selected Etudes for Alto and Bass Clarinet. Southern. Material in a variety of keys and adapted from a number of composers. Rather than just technical material, there are some good musical studies, also.

**Rhoads**, 21 Foundation Studies for Alto and Bass Clarinet: Selected from Literature for the Violincello. Southern. More excellent technical material in easy keys. difficult fingerings are not emphasized, but articulation and fluidity are taxed.

Rose, 32 and 40 Etudes. Fischer. Any low clarinetist in this level should be challenged with these etudes. The range is large but practical (even for the better contra-clarinetist). These studies are far more developmentally practical than many of the **Rhoads** studies.

Voxman-ower, Advanced Methods. Vol. I and II. Rubank.

Voxman, Selected Studies. Rubank.

-Note: A good bass or contra player could be challenged with works in the bass clef, particularly those studies from standard cello and bassoon literature.

The above index of method books and studies was taken from an outline by Dr. Richard Shandley entitled "Playing and Teaching The Clarinet Family."

## Suggested Solo's for Low Clarinet:

### Alto Clarinet

- Class I
- Bennett - **Darkwood**
  - Bergson - Scene and Air from Luisa di Montfort
  - Galliard/Gee** - Hornpipe and Allegro
  - Miller - Evening Fantasy
  - Ravel/Bettoney** - Pavane
  - Reed/McCathren - Serenata
- Class II
- Bach/Kent - Arioso
  - Bizet - Adagietto from **L'Arlesienne**
  - Gluck** - Air from Orpheus
  - Reed - Sarabande
  - Rim sky-Korsakov - Song of the East
  - Schaefer - Spring in the Forest
  - Schuman** - Einsame Blumen
  - Stravinsky - Berceuse from The Firebird
  - Trowbridge - Barcorolle
- Class III
- Bach/Dishinger - Menuet in G
  - Goldberg - Country Dance
  - Goldberg - Sweet Betsy from Pike
  - MacDowell/Goldberg** - To a Wild Rose
  - Petrie/Buchtel** - Asleep in the Deep
  - Purcel/Dishinger** - Gavotte and **Hornpipe**
  - Purcel/Vedeski** - Gavotte from Harpsichord Suite No. 5

### Bass Clarinet

- class I
- Bennett - **Deepwood**
  - Davis - Variations on a Theme of Robert Schumann
  - Desportes - Andante and Allegro
  - Eccles/Goldberg** - Sonata in g minor
  - Galliard/Meriman** - Adagio and Allegro
  - German/Voxman** - Pastorale and Bouree
  - Ritter/Shanley - Long Long Ago, **Fantasia** Op. 12

class II            **Bassi/Voxman - Lamento**  
**Boni/Voxman - Largo and Allegro**  
Greig ▪ Norwegian Dance  
**Karel - Aquamarine**  
Koepke ▪ The Buffoon  
Ostransky ▪ Autumn Song  
Ostransky ▪ March Comique  
**Prokofieff/Hummel - Romance and Troika**  
Reed ▪ Guaracha  
Reed ▪ Haitian Dance  
Trowbridge ▪ **Barcarolle**

Class III           **Bach/Dishinger - Menuet in G**  
Bartok/Porter ▪ Two Hungarian songs  
Brahms/Goldberg ▪ Brahms Variations  
**Hummel - The Foggy Dew**  
Monroe/Isaac ▪ In the Garden  
Mozart/Goldberg ▪ Aria **from** The Magic Flute  
**Petrie/Buchtel - Asleep in the Deep**  
**Purcell/Dishinger - Gavotte and Hompipe**  
**Purcell/Vedeski - Gavotte from Harpsichord Suite No.5**  
**Purcell/Dishinger - March from Suite No. 5**  
Skolnik ▪ Nocturne  
Tschaikowsky/Goldberg ▪ Chanson Russe  
Weber ▪ Deep River

**Contra Bass:**

Class I            **Bassi - Lamento**  
**Bennett - Darkwood**  
**Bennett - Deepwood**  
**Galliard/Gee - Hompipe and Allegro**  
Long ▪ Undercurrent  
Reed ▪ Afro  
Reed ▪ Scherzo Fantastique  
**Ritter/Shanley - Long Long Ago, Fantasy Opus 12**

class II            Kesnar ▪ A Clown Festival  
**Marcello/Hite - Sonata in a minor**  
**Parris - Nocturne and Burlesca**  
Presser- Arietta  
Skolnik ▪ Reverie

class III           **Lully/Post - Gavotte and Rondeau**