

2025

IMPROVE YOUR CLARINET SECTION

SOUND QUALITY, TECHNIQUE, AND EQUIPMENT

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Sound Quality, Technique and Equipment

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I. SOUND QUALITY

A good clarinet tone is clear, centered, focused, and dark.

➤ Embouchure

Chin: Keep a flat chin.

Lower lip: Smooth and stretched out toward the corners

Grip: Stays constant. A weak grip (movement) produces an unfocused sound.

Common problems: puffed cheeks, amount of mouthpiece, too much tension.

➤ Air speed

Use fast and focused air. Slow air produces a flat, unclear sound, while fast air produces a clear vibrant sound. Blow through resistance areas.

➤ Tongue position

A higher tongue position "EE" produces a focused sound, while a low tongue position "OH" produces an unfocused sound.

➤ Clarinet Registers

documents

Chalumeau Register: Full dark sound, most forgiving. Bad habits form here.

Clarion Register: The first over the break. Slurs. Remove the R.K.

Altissimo Register: The other break! fast air, slightly adjust.

➤ Adjusting Pitch

The shape of the tongue. The speed of the air. Reed tension.

Using Alternate Fingerings/Resonance Fingerings.

➤ Posture

Good posture can play an important role in sound quality.

Practice standing, chin up, no obstacles (music stands).

What we don't want in our sound: spit, squeaks, bright "shrilly tone", unsteady pitch, unfocused tone, over articulated.

Problems typically found: Weak mouthpiece grip. Too much or too little mouthpiece. Puffed cheeks, leaking air in embouchure, slow air & unfocused.

*The infamous **bad throat sound!** Work air flow and relaxed open mouth shape.*

II. TECHNIQUE

Good hand positions can help with technique and prevent problems. Consider fingerings for pitch, tone quality, and smooth technique.

- **Hand Positions**
Relaxed, curved fingers - cover holes, move from the knuckles. No tension.
LEFT HAND – *work F#-A, roll (not G – A)* documents
Thumb position angled – cover hole and touching register key.
RIGHT HAND – *start with 2nd finger B natural. *Bent key issue*
Thumb position not too far in.

- **Chromatic Fingerings** documents
Have a full fingering chart. Mark your music for chromatics.
Also, mark when you can't use an alternate fingering, "2"

- **Pinky Keys** documents
Marking R & L as needed. (don't mark regular fingerings)
Trading fingers in a phrase.

- **Alternate Fingerings, Resonance Fingerings, Trills** documents
Mark as needed! Side Keys
Throat Tones – Resonance Fingerings for intonation & sound

- **Finger Patterns in Keys** documents
More for intermediate/advanced players but encourage beginners to feel the difference in patterns. Most Advanced Beginners can learn 4 note patterns.

- **Fingering Charts**
Use good fingering charts.
Some charts are limited in range or lack alternate fingerings.

Teach early or correct later: Proper hand positions. Complete hole coverage.
Left hand rock and roll,

Problems typically found: Locked fingers, inverted knuckles, twitching pinky,
bad thumb placement, bent side keys resulting from RH position.

III. EQUIPMENT

Playing with high-quality equipment will make a difference in your sound. Experiment with all equipment to achieve better sound quality.

- **Reeds** document
*Clean them, use reed cases, and throw them out! (Reeds will wear out)
Strengths, Brands, Synthetic. (downsize for synth.)
Reed strength really refers to flexibility. Too strong you can't bend the pitch or play soft. Too weak you can't play upper reg. (in tune)*
- **Ligatures**
Reversible, metal, leather. Put on correctly.
- **Mouthpieces**
*Plastic, hard rubber, opening/facing
Use a Mouthpiece Cap – keeps reeds protected and ready.*
- **Clarinets and Barrels**
*Quality wood clarinet will improve your sound.
Barrels: different lengths could help with pitch issues. Change tone quality.*
- **Accessories**
*Neck Strap (support strap) if balance and weight is a problem.
Mouthpiece Pad (patch) if the mouthpiece feels awkward on teeth.
Reed Guard or Reed Case to protect your reeds.
Use swabs, silk cleaners (don't get caught)*
- **Equipment list by price range**
Equipment upgrades can help improve a player's sound and technique.
Price under \$25 *Mouthpiece Patch, Thumb Rest, Neck Strap,
Quality Reeds, Reed Guard/Case*
Price range \$20-\$60 *Ligatures, Synthetic Reeds, Neck Strap*
Price range \$60-\$150 *Mouthpiece*
Price range over \$1K *Pro Clarinets, Int. Level, Student Model Clarinets.*

Problems typically found: Chipped reeds or dirty reeds. Ligatures - too much tension or bent metal. Thumb rest too high. Leaking pads/keys not lined up.

IV. PRACTICE

➤ Practice tips for sound

- Check embouchure. Use a mirror.
- Teeth adjustments & air adjustments.
- **Long tones** in all registers. Calm-relaxed warmups, not frenzied scales.
- Practice in **all ranges and dynamic levels**.
- Experiment what creates bad sounds to create good sound.
- No tonguing to start. Create a good sound and rhythmically even fingers.
- Upper range: E to A, same fingering-change air speed (Advanced level)

Work with just MOUTHPIECE and BARREL checking embouchure and reed.

- Reed ready, no tone. Just air to hear the focus and speed. “EE” check tongue position and fast air. Keep embouchure correct.
- Increase the amount of air to eventually produce a tone.
- No air leaks, bottom lip placement check.

*Bb Sop. mouthpiece with barrel – concert F# (clarinet G#)

Mouthpiece alone: concert pitches: Bb Sop. – C, Eb Sop. – D

➤ Angles, Tension, Amount of Reed

About a 45° angle from the body. Enough tension but not weak.

Placement of lip: find the part of the reed that doesn't hit the mouthpiece.
(try more or less)

➤ Adjusting Pitch

Once the instrument is *mostly* in tune – there will be notes of concern.

- Adjustment with embouchure tension, vowel “EE” to raise, “OH” to lower, faster and more focused air, corners tightened or loosened.
- Resonance Fingerings/ Alternate Fingerings.
- Other factors could include temperature, breath support, posture, reeds, key heights and pads.

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Also available @ www.KunzleMusic.com /master-classes

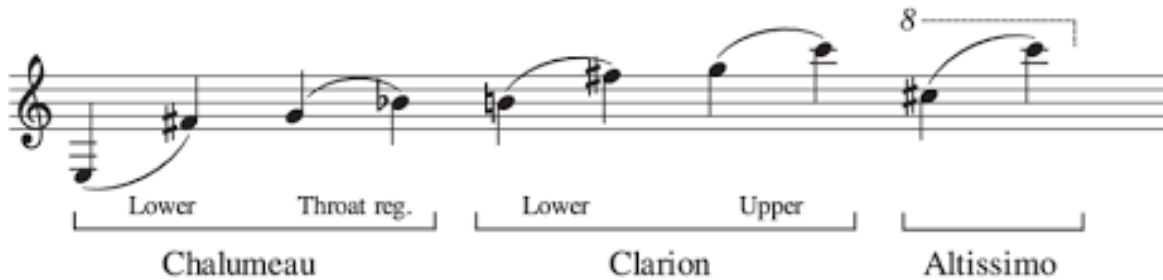
CLARINET DOCUMENTS – *more documents for clarinet students*

CLARINET ENSEMBLE MUSIC – *free downloads until spring*

MASTER CLASS INFORMATION – *clarinet sessions*

CLARINET REGISTERS

The Bb Soprano Clarinet is divided into three registers:



The low register or **Chalumeau** (written E3 to Bb4)

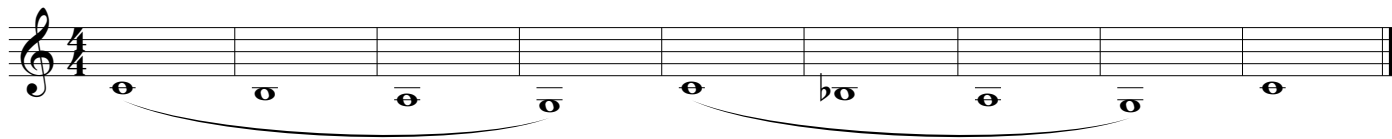
The **Throat Tones** *part of the Chalumeau* (written G4 to Bb4)

The middle register or **Clarion** (written B4-C6)

The high register or **Altissimo** (written C6 and above)

CLARINET TECHNIQUE WORK - UPPER REGISTER "Clarion Register"

Create complete coverage of the holes Good EMBOUCHURE and FAST AIR!



REGISTER KEY - up a 12th

up a 5th, then up th 12th



Work SLOWLY with a TUNER



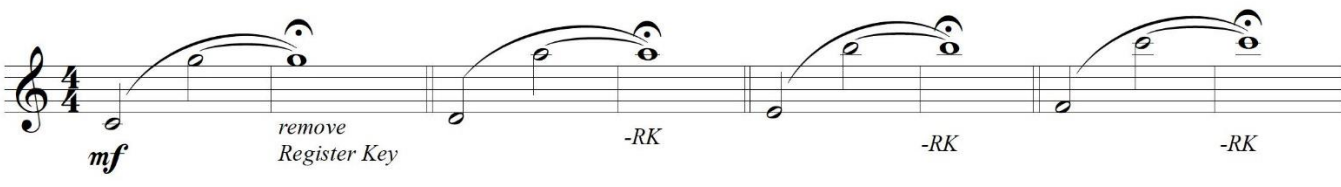
TUNE THE FIRST NOTE C

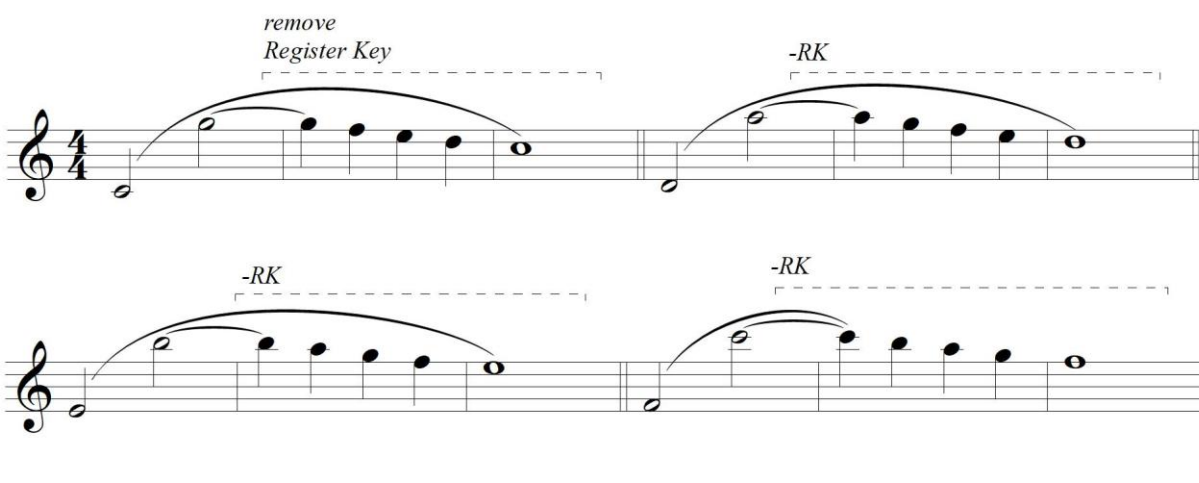
Each step add a note and look at the tuner. Play 1, 1-2, 1-2-3,

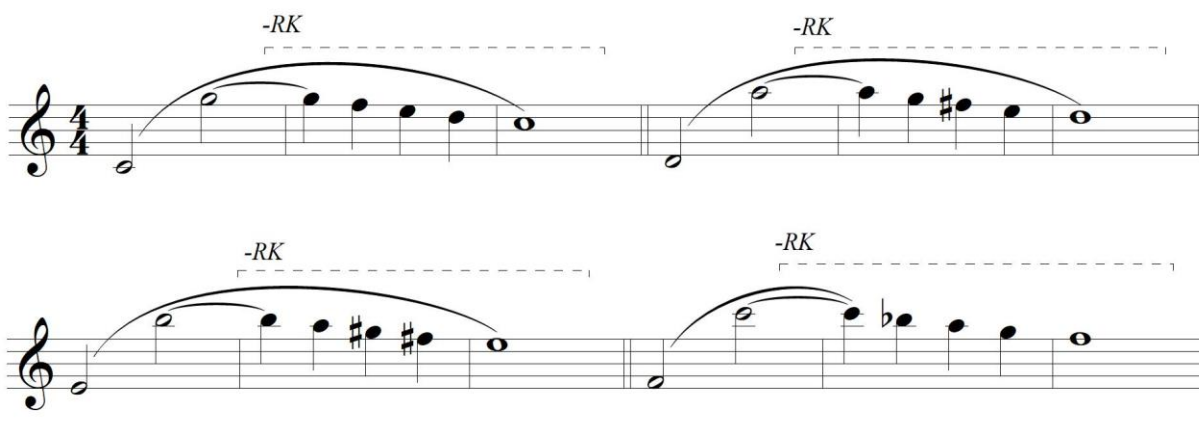
CLARINET UPPER REGISTER work

Jumping registers in clarinet – interval of a 12th Sounds like a 5th Do – Sol (1 – 5)

Keep pitch and remove the Register Key

1. 

2. 

3. 

*Think Do – Sol (1-5) and down 5 scale degrees IN KEY.

CLARINET ALTISSIMO REGISTER WORK
 "HIGH NOTES"

- Fast air will create good tone and pitch

no pinky 1 best
 3 good alternate add RH 3
 123.123. LP banana key
 no RP

Use fingering chart if needed. extra comments here

CLARION TO ALTISSIMO
 interval M6 Think solfege, DO - LA

Remove 1st finger LH add pinky

RH 1
 3

- Try rolling the first finger LH down. possibly half hole

CHALUMEAU to CLARION to ALTISSIMO
 12ths & 6ths

THROAT TONES | RESONANCE FINGERINGS

Adding fingers to the regular fingering to improve pitch, tone quality and execution.

LH = left hand fingers 1,2,3 **RH** = right hand fingers 1,2,3 **P2** = right hand pinky key 2 (F/C)

	○ ○ ○	○ ○	○ ○	
	○ ○ ○	○ 2	2 ○	
LH	○ ○ ○	○ 3	3 ○	
	— — —	— —	— —	
				*S2
RH	○ 1 1	○ ○	○ 1	
	2 2 ○	2 2	2 2	
	3 3 3	3 3	3 3	
		P2 P2	P2 P2	

*S2 = side key 2, with A

SIDE KEYS – ALTERNATE FINGERINGS

Alternate fingerings for better pitch, tone quality or technical execution.

S1 = side key 1 (top) THIS KEY BRINGS PITCH UP A **WHOLE STEP** (*most of the time)

S2 = side key 2 (second from top) THIS KEY BRINGS PITCH UP A **HALF STEP** (most of the time)

S4 = side key 4 (bottom) USE THIS KEY MORE for first line Eb, high Bb

S3 & 4 = two side keys together (bottom two) ALT. FINGER for first line F – F#, high C – C#

*This one different

Possibly both 1 & 2

CLARINET PINKY KEYS 1.1

*Clarinet notes change in 12ths with the register key *There are several fingerings for the same note.

L-R R L Bb + S / A + S

S = side key

R L Bb + S

R-L L R

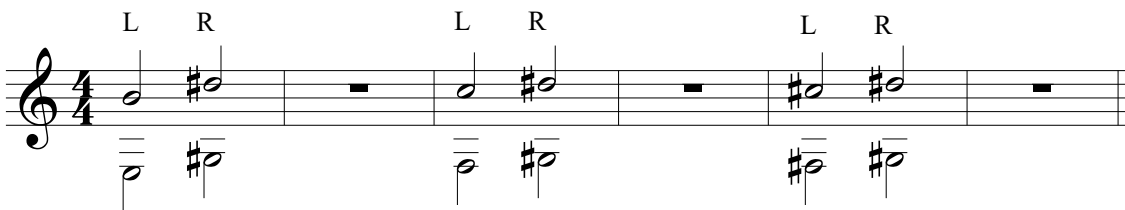
R R same note ENHARMONIC

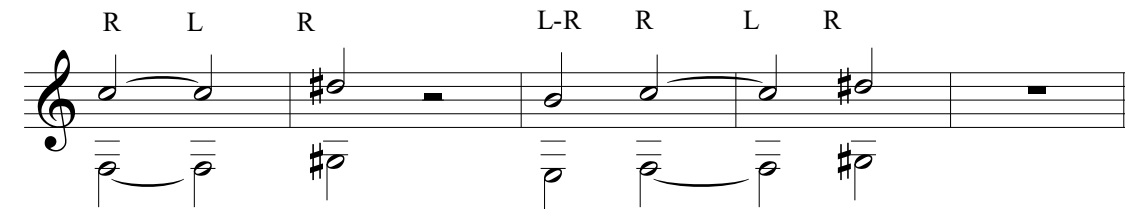
These are the notes with only 1 fingering option. RIGHT PINKY
 When another pinky key note is before or after these, work out the LEFT !!!
 Follow up with CLARINET PINKY KEYS 1.2

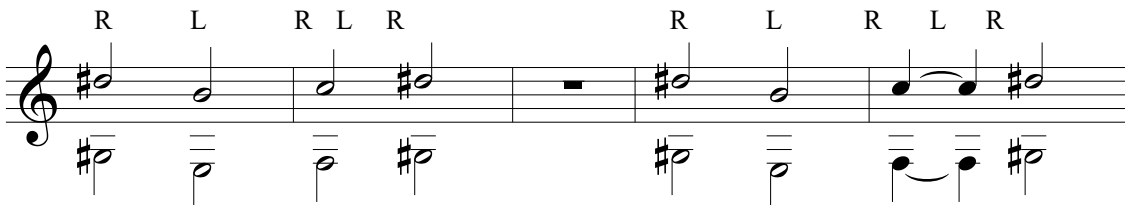
Practice switching fingerings while sustaining the note.

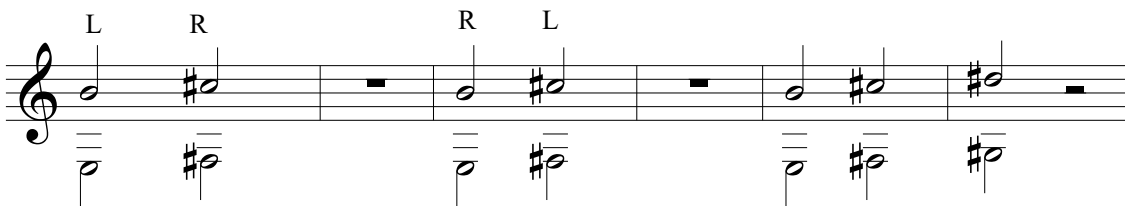
R L R R-L L R L-R L R

CLARINET PINKY KEYS 1.2


1. 

2. 

3. 

4. 

*Write in first note only

5. 

*Write in only what you need


SUGGESTION: Be consistent with L & R in your music. Place above the notes

CLARINET

Chart for Beginning the Clarinet with good habits

FIRST 5 NOTES

C D E * F G

1. 

Left Hand	1	1	1	thumb only	open
start on E *	2	2			
	3				
thumb down	th	th	th	th	

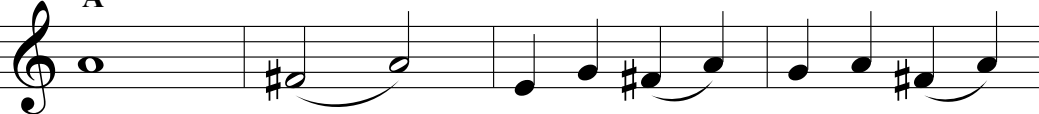
NEXT NOTES

F F# work to F# 2 different F's

2. 

ROLLING ALONG with good fingerings

A

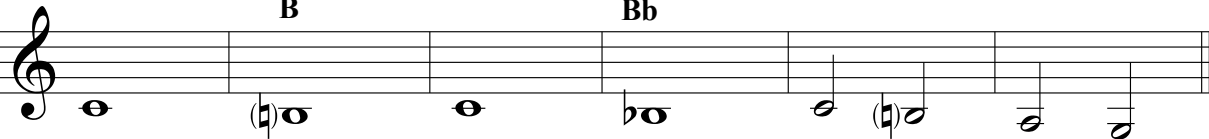
3. 

*ROLL the HAND slur from F# to A

ADDING THE RIGHT HAND

Thumb and Fingers even.

B Bb C B A G

4. 

—	—	—
2	1	1
	2	2
		3

SCALES USING THE CIRCLE OF 5THS

PATTERNS 1

Play **STACCATO** - consider the **4 NOTE FINGER PATTERNS** key to key and in **OCTAVES** (same key)

A \flat M

E \flat M

B \flat M

F M

C M

G M

D M

CLARINET CHROMATICS

EXERCISES AND PATTERNS

All Slurred Use Alternate Fingerings

1.

LR-R- LR LR-R- LR 1-3 1-3 L L

2S 2S *roll LR-R-LR R-LR LR-R

1-3 1-3 L no pinky 1-3 1-3 no pinky



2.

LR R LR 1-3 L 2S *roll 1-3 L

no pinky 1-3 pinky 1-3

2S L 1-3 LR R LR

CLARINET REEDS COMPARISON CHART

BRAND SOFT  —————  HARDER

VENN					2.0	2.5	3.0		3.5	3.5+	4.0			
<i>Reserve</i>					2.0	2.5	3.0		3.5	3.5+	4.0	4.0+	4.5	
<i>Reserve</i> CLASSIC				2.0	2.5	3.0		3.5	3.5+	4.0	4.0+	4.5		
<i>Reserve</i> EVOLUTION						2.5	3.0		3.5	3.5+	4.0		4.5	5.0
RICO by D'Addario		1.5	2.0	2.5	3.0	3.5	4.0							
<i>Royal</i> by D'Addario	1.0	1.5	2.0	2.5	3.0	3.5	4.0		5.0					
<i>Mitchell Lurie</i>		1.5	2.0	2.5	3.0	3.5	4.0	4.5	5.0					
<i>LaVoz</i>		S	MS	M	MH	H								
PLASTICOVER by D'Addario	1.0	1.5	2.0	2.5	3.0	3.5	4.0		4.5					
GRAND CONCERT SELECT THICK BLANK			2.0	2.5	3.0	3.5		4.0	4.5	5.0				
GRAND CONCERT SELECT TRADITIONAL			2.0	2.5	3.0	3.5	4.0		4.5					
VANDOREN TRADITIONAL		1.0	1.5	2.0	2.5	3.0		3.5		4.0		5.0		
VANDOREN V12					2.5	3.0	3.5		3.5+	4.0	4.5	5.0		
VANDOREN 56 RUE LEPIC					2.5	3.0	3.5	3.5+	4.0	4.5	5.0			
VANDOREN V21					2.5	3.0		3.5	3.5+	4.0	4.5	5.0		
VANDOREN JUNO		1.0	2.0	2.5	3.0	3.5								

borrowed from daddario.com/woodwinds

D'Addario