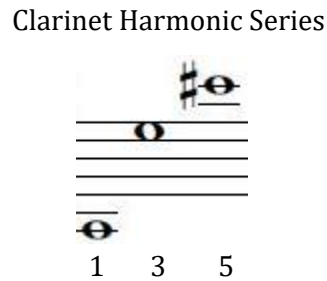
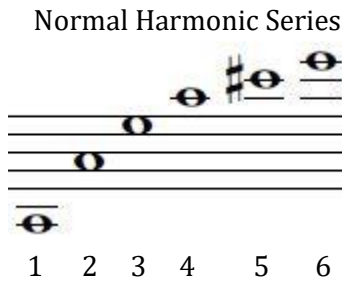


# Understanding the Clarinet: Dealing with Issues A-Z

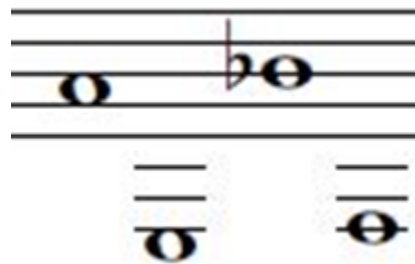
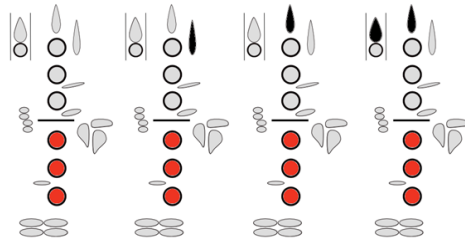
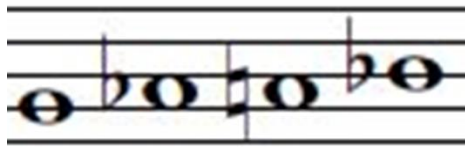
Aubrey Shirts, University of Utah

The clarinet is weird, and how to deal with it

- I. Acoustics: Clarinet-cylindrical, other woodwinds-conical
  - A. Large range
  - B. The clarinet only produces the odd-numbered harmonics



- C. Acoustic issues
  - 1. Throat tones- faster air support
  - 2. Register breaks
    - a) Finger coordination



- (1) LH 1st finger too much movement, practice rolling
- (2) LH Thumb not covering the tone hole, 45 degree
- (3) Fingers not covering holes
- b) Air
  - (1) Aim air (breath) in the direction of the notes
  - (2) Check reed strength, should be at least 2.5
- c) Embouchure
  - (1) Barrel and mouthpiece=Concert F#

- (2) Corners pulled back too far
- (3) Upper lip-pull lip up, then slide down the front teeth until they touch the mouthpiece. Helps prevent biting
- (4) Experiment with angle
- (5) Earspasm video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B4d2gpRysZY&t=1s>



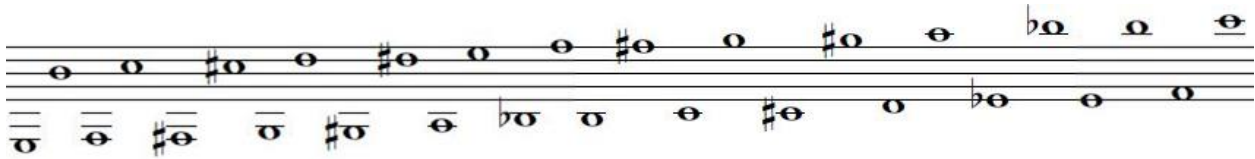
Bad chin

vs

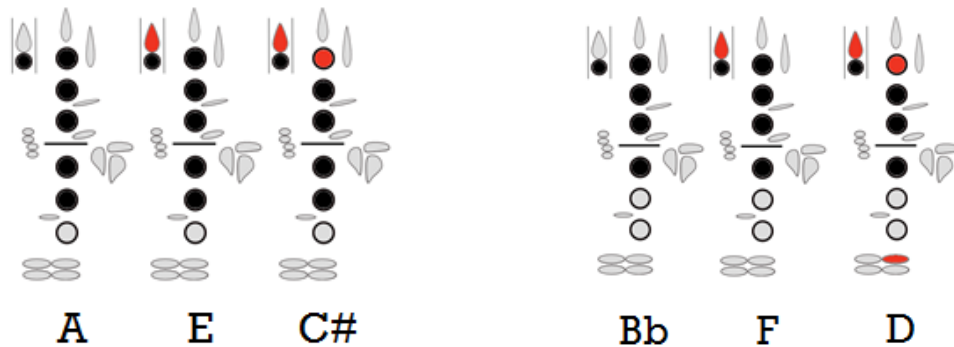
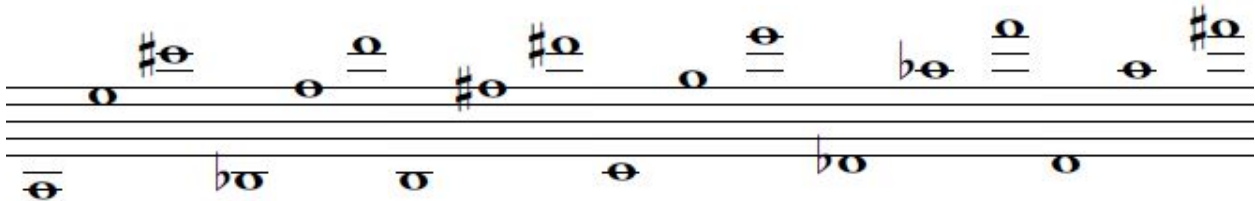
Good chin

Reed cushion embouchure

### 3. Register break exercises



Play the lower note, then press the register key to slur to the upper note. Crescendo and use more air, but keep embouchure steady.



Largo *ATTACCA* *Think AIR* 23

1<sup>re</sup> fois forte - 2<sup>e</sup> fois piano

Lento *acompre mf* *AIR*

s'aider d'un crescendo sans jouer trop fort pour atteindre le do aigu

#### D. Intonation

1. Adjust at the barrel and the middle joint, never the bell
2. Clarinet is sharp when soft, flat when loud
3. Embouchure
  - a) Lower jaw/bottom lip to bring pitch down
  - b) Difficult to bring pitch up
4. Instrument tendencies

Circles=Flat Squares=Sharp

## II. Sound

- A. Sound guides on YouTube
  - 1. Sabine Meyer
  - 2. Karl Leister
  - 3. Paul Meyer
  - 4. Martin Frost
  - 5. Wenzel Fuch
- B. Causes of brightness
  - 1. Reed
  - 2. Embouchure-biting, and corners too far back
  - 3. Unfocused air
  - 4. Mouthpiece ligature combo
- C. Causes of flatness
  - 1. Reed too soft
  - 2. Loose embouchure
  - 3. Air
  - 4. Extra keys being pressed
  - 5. Angle of clarinet-experiment to find best angle for individual players
- D. Long tones are the quickest way to improve sound
  - 1. Match partner
  - 2. Match drone
  - 3. Long tone scale

## III. Equipment

- A. Mouthpieces-Don't use the ones that come with the instrument
  - 1. Clark Fobes Debut: \$40, will send you a free one  
<http://www.clarkwfobes.com/pages/free-debut>
  - 2. Vandoren M15: \$90
  - 3. Care
    - a) Sanitize, never boil
    - b) Swab occasionally
    - c) Mouthpiece checks-reed comes off every day!
  - 4. Teeth cushion-helps embouchure and fatigue
- B. Ligatures-Screws always go on the right of the mouthpiece
  - 1. Rovner
    - a) Versa: \$45
    - b) Mark III \$30
  - 2. Bonade: \$20
  - 3. Vandoren Optimum: \$85
- C. Reeds
  - 1. Strengths from 1-5, softest to hardest
    - a) Start beginners on a 2
    - b) Go to 2.5 when they start working over the break
    - c) After 2 years students should be on a 3 at least

2. Brands
  - a) Beginners-Rico, Juno, whatever is cheapest
  - b) D'Addario (Rico Reserve), Vandoren, Mitchell Lurie
  - c) Legere-only plastic brand I recommend
3. Bass clarinet
  - a) Legere-gather one of each size to have your players find the right strength so they can buy their own
  - b) D'Addario and Vandoren
4. Rotate reeds-they will last longer
5. Different brands have different strengths, a Rico 3 is softer than Vandoren 3

Brand	Strength														
	Softer										Harder				
Rico Reserve											2.5	3	3.5	4	4.5
Rico		1.5	2	2.5	3	3.5	4								
Grand Concert Select Evolution						2	2.5	3	3.5	4	4.5	5			
Rue Lepic						2.5	3	3.5	3.5+	4	4.5	5			
Vandoren		1	1.5	2	2.5	3	3.5	4	4.5	5					
Grand Concert Select Trad. & Thick					2	2.5	3	3.5	4	4.5	5				
Vandoren V12						2.5	3	3.5	4	4.5	5				
Mitchell Lurie		1.5	2	2.5	3	3.5	4	4.5	5						
La Voz		S	MS	M	MH	H									
Rico Royal		1	1.5	2	2.5	3	3.5	4	5						
Plasticover		1	1.5	2	3	3.5	4	5							

#### D. Instruments

1. Student and professional models
  - a) Yamaha
  - b) Selmer
2. Professional: Buffet
3. Plastic vs. Wood
  - a) Plastic is perfectly fine
  - b) Wood for students who plan on studying music in college
  - c) Outside- Plastic only!
4. Bass Clarinet
  - a) Yamaha and Selmer
  - b) Plastic only
  - c) Low E is low enough
5. Invest in mouthpiece and ligature before instrument
6. Don't worry about paying extra for fancy bells and barrels
7. Collect a set of mouthpieces and ligatures to check out to your students. This creates a more homogenous sound.
8. Check out Amazon Prime Day to help with cost. Has been in July the past couple of years. Amazon Prime members get 50% off many items.

#### IV. Miscellaneous

##### A. Why are they squeaking?

1. Pads aren't sealing or are out of adjustment
2. Upper and lower sections not aligned
3. Crack in the instrument
4. Low quality instrument
5. Fingers not covering the tone holes completely, or accidentally pressing an extra key
6. Biting
7. Loose embouchure
8. Unfocused/too much air
9. Reeds
  - a) Too hard
  - b) Too soft
  - c) Has a crack
  - d) Chipped
  - e) Warped-place sandpaper on a flat surface, put soaked reed flat side down, slide reed across sandpaper twice
  - f) Not soaked enough
  - g) Not vibrating evenly
  - h) Not on mouthpiece correctly. Should see a sliver of reed on opposite side and a sliver of black on the reed side. Off center, crooked, etc
  - i) The weather
  - j) Haven't sacrificed to the reed gods lately

##### B. Other sources

1. Earspasm Music YouTube Channel  
<https://www.youtube.com/user/earspasm>
2. Backun Musical Services YouTube Channel  
<https://www.youtube.com/user/backunmusical>
3. InterLibrary Loan-can borrow materials from other libraries. Music, books, recordings. Check with your librarian and closest college library
4. *The Clarinet*-Jack Brymer. Very informative book and a great resource is you want to dig into the clarinet
5. *The Working Clarinetist*- Peter Hadcock. Mostly orchestral excerpts, but there is an alternate fingering chart and trill/tremolo chart. I like them because there are explanations accompanying the charts
6. [Aubrey.shirts@gmail.com](mailto:Aubrey.shirts@gmail.com)-Send me your questions!

