

Developing a practice routine that is thoughtful, inquisitive, and - of course - disciplined will result in clarinet playing that is confident, relaxed, and fun. Below, I have outlined many important practice areas - gleaned from various teachers over the years with a few of my own thrown in - that will help guide students and professionals towards developing and maintaining excellent technique through optimal practice habits. Flawless technique should not be viewed as an end in itself. The control that good technique creates, however, is ultimately what supports mature musicianship, engaging performances, musical style and maturity, and confident stage presence. Mastery can feel elusive, but every effort pays off tenfold. Often when we're improving, we're the last ones to know it...so stay the course!

Technique that is informed by relaxation and consistency can provide us with the tools to rise above performance anxiety in order to become the best clarinetist/musician possible. It is also important to learn about the mechanics of the clarinet, to create good habits with reeds, and to understand the ergonomics of your hands and the physiology of breathing.

The following ideas can be abbreviated depending on the amount of time you can practice on any given day. For variety, mix and match your etudes, solo, ensemble repertoire, scales, and method books in your practice sessions. Add some of your own practice ideas to my outline. What works for you?

Finally, a practice session is best viewed as a pyramid: a strong foundation of relaxed and supported tone (hey...it's all about the tone!) upon which we build towards more virtuosic playing.

## I. Areas of Practice

- A. Breathing
  - Meditation - find your center, your breath, and the present moment
  - *Breathing Gym* exercises
  - Breathing apparatuses
  - Tension/Release
  
- B. Tone Development, Breath Support, Reed-for-the-day
  - Soaking, selecting, and adjusting reed
  - **Not exercises - Music!**
  - Low register long tones (listen for the 12th!)
  - Chromatic low register long tones slurred to the 12th
  - Octave long tones
  - Crescendo/Diminuendo
    - Quarter note = 60
    - ppp crescendo to fff
    - 8 counts crescendo to 8 counts diminuendo
  - Matching tones / Intonation
  - Intervals (slow Bearmann 6ths, for example)
  
- C. Finger technique
  - Hand Position
  - Individual Finger Movement (Jeanjean's Vade Mecum, etc. - slowly)
  - Scales (Baermann, Klose, Kroepsch, for example)
    - Slow to Fast
    - Diatonic, Thirds, Arpeggios, etc.
    - Legato (can it ever be too legato?)
    - Articulation
    - Metronome / Tempi
  - Legato (playing between the notes)
  - Legatissimo
  - Oh, and one more thing...legato (all registers and over the breaks)

- D.     Articulation
  - Long
  - Short
  - Finger/Tongue coordination
  - Speed
  - Single and Double tonguing
  - Dr. Robert Spring YouTube video for reference
  
- E.     Repertoire
  - Etudes
  - Solo
  - Chamber
  - Orchestral Excerpts
  - Ensemble parts
  - Sight Reading

## II. Types of Practice

- A.     Problem Solving
  - Slow practice / “Under the microscope”
  - Trouble-shooting
  - Using different rhythms
  - Creating “mini-etudes”
  - Backward chaining
  - Scales against a pitched drone
  - Intonation
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  
- B.     Making Music
  - Define musical terms
  - Interpretation
  - Projection
  - Endurance/Run-throughs/Concentration...keep going no matter what!
  - Stage Presence
    - Posture
    - Entrance, bowing
    - Dress rehearsal
    - Mwah, mwah...you look and sound mah-velous, darling.

## III. Reeds/equipment

- Choosing the correct reed strength
- Reeds: Goldilocks will guide you - this one’s juuuuuust right...
- Mouthpiece: The Holy Grail
- Breaking in reeds - find your routine
- Ligature - not too fancy, in my opinion.
- Woodwind technician - your new BFF
- Investing in a good instrument - finding your own good fit  
(following recommendations in alphabetical order)
  - Backun
  - Buffet
  - Selmer
  - Yamaha

