Clarinet Warm-Ups

Materials For The Contemporary Clarinetist

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# Table of Contents

Foreword ........................................................................................................... 2
Acknowledgments .............................................................................................. 3
Dedication ........................................................................................................... 4

Daily Warm-Up .................................................................................................. 5

Pre-Playing Warm-Ups ...................................................................................... 8
  Mental Preparation
  Breathing
  Physical Preparation

Playing Warm-Ups ............................................................................................... 18
  Long Tones & Sound Exercises
  Intonation
  Technical Warm-Ups
  Finger Exercises/Basic Finger Motions
  Over the Break
  Left-Hand/Right-Hand Exercises
  Articulation
  Basic Scale and Chord Patterns
  Chromatic Patterns
  Intervals

Expanding the Warm-Up .................................................................................... 60
  Contemporary Scale Forms
  Multiple Articulation
  Quarter Tones
  Multiphonics

Performance Routine ......................................................................................... 73

Reference Materials ............................................................................................ 75

Personalized Warm-Up Routine ......................................................................... 83
CHAPTER ONE
Daily Warm-Up

Having been trained as a brass player as well as a clarinetist, it has always intrigued me why so many clarinetists ignore the benefits of a consistent warm-up routine. One of the most important aspects of playing a brass instrument is the warm-up. This is, however, an often neglected area in woodwind playing. No doubt this is due to our ability to put a reed on and produce a quality product immediately, unlike a brass player who needs an extensive warm-up to get the embouchure to the point where flexibility and a consistent sound are obtained. In addition, there are several long-standing recognized warm-ups published for brass instruments, such as the Remington Warm-Ups for the trombone and the Schlossberg and Clark Warm-Ups for the trumpet. If a clarinetist uses any written materials in his or her warm-up, it is usually pieced together from various sources.

Most clarinet teachers have a well defined pedagogic method, but the warm-up seems to be approached in a haphazard manner with little emphasis on consistency. A daily warm-up can be an extremely valuable tool for achieving and maintaining consistency, as well as a means for the development of certain basic aspects of clarinet playing. The warm-up can be varied for the demands of a pending performance as well as a great vehicle for maintenance work in a less demanding season.

WHY A DAILY WARM-UP?

There are four main reasons for a daily warm-up routine

1. To mentally prepare for performance
2. To physically warm-up muscles to help avoid injury in performance
3. To review the basic fundamentals of clarinet playing
4. To help achieve consistency in performance
CHAPTER TWO
Pre-Playing Warm-Ups

MENTAL PREPARATION

Being mentally prepared to perform means different things to different players, and the level of involvement in this area will reflect individual needs. Some performers never give this area any thought, while others go through extensive mental training. Regardless of the type of preparation undertaken before taking the stage, most musicians will agree that concentration during performance can make the difference between a great performance and a lackluster one.

For the clarinetist who would like to learn more about mental preparation, there are a number of books available to assist in various techniques. Several are directed towards the professional athlete, but since the concentration demands of the athlete and musician are so similar, the techniques offered in these books work well for the professional musician. There are also several books written specifically for the musician that deal with mental concentration. These books offer exercises ranging from basic through advanced, depending on how involved the musician wishes to become. A few of the many available books on this subject are described below:

*Peak Performance* by Charles Garfield. 1989, Warner Books: New York, NY. 224 pp., $10.95. *Peak Performance* is a very thorough and comprehensive book dealing with mental training for the professional athlete. The techniques presented by Garfield were originally inspired by the Soviet regimen of psychological training for its athletes. The exercises are presented in a very structured, six-level learning sequence with opportunities for immediate feedback. This is an excellent source for the musician who wants to improve concentration in performance.

*A Soprano on Her Head* by Eloise Ristad. 1982, Real People Press: Moab, Utah. 203 pp., $10.50. One of the earliest books dealing with the subject of performance anxiety, it remains one of the most popular. *A Soprano on Her Head* is written in a very relaxed style, free of the usual
CHAPTER THREE
Playing Warm-Ups

As with the pre-playing warm-ups, the playing warm-ups must be approached in a logical manner that gradually works the larger muscle groups and then the small groups. The biggest mistake a player can make is to play too fast, too soon. For instance, most clarinetists have a favorite "lick" they play as soon as they get the reed on which usually consists of a few articulated tones and then some blazing fast scales. It is much more valuable to have a consistent set of playing exercises that are executed on a daily basis. These exercises should warm up the clarinetist for all the demands of performance. Each player should develop a routine that works well for him. Most clarinetists will find that their playing is much more consistent and reliable if the routine covers all the fundamentals of clarinet playing and the routine is performed every day. An added benefit of a logical "Daily Routine" is increased endurance. The playing examples presented in this chapter are intended to serve as a starting point for clarinetists to develop their own daily routine. The basic exercises include:

- Tone & Intonation Studies
- Register Flexibility
- Basic Finger Motions
  - over the break/left- & right-hand studies
- Articulation
- Extended Scale & Chord Patterns
- Chromatic Patterns
- Intervals

A final component of a daily routine, special exercises that may be added to help meet the demands of a particular performance, will be covered in Chapter Four.

Suggested tempo markings and instructions for completing each exercise are provided. A metronome should be used at all times to make sure the tempo is accurate, even, and, especially, not too fast.
Five-Note Groups are an excellent exercise to combine the elements stressed during long tones with very slow finger motions. The exercise allows one to check the air stream to ensure that it functions independently from the fingers. Many younger players will incorrectly pulse the air as they move from note to note. Five-Note Groups are to be executed slowly enough to allow for concentration on the sound, embouchure, and hand position. These can also be used to give the fingers an opportunity to warm up very slowly. Most importantly, Five-Note Groups stress registral unity, especially across each of the breaks. It would be useful to repeat each of the five-note segments at different dynamics, listening carefully for tonal beauty at each dynamic level. Any scale form may be used for this exercise.
**UPPER-BREAK FLEXIBILITY**

Harmonic Exercises #1 & #2 are also designed to encourage relaxation and proper voicing of the throat. For the given harmonics, the lower note should be fingered while producing the pitch of the upper open diamond-shaped note. Concentrate on a relaxed, steady embouchure, eliminating any motions in the throat. Pitch may vary slightly for each harmonic.
The following 196 Finger Exercises drill the various combinations of finger motions used on the clarinet. Each set is comprised of a one-measure pattern that should be performed slowly and gradually increased in speed through the repetitions. In this series, the clarinetist will find specific exercises for the right hand, the left hand, and traversing the breaks. In addition, many of the exercises concentrate on coordination between the hands.
For clarinetists with a desire to expand into additional contemporary scale forms or with an interest in jazz, the following Blues and Pentatonic Scales offer an opportunity to warm up in that idiom. It would be appropriate to impose jazz articulations over these scales.

**BLUES SCALES**
MULTIPHONICS

The final contemporary technique to be presented is multiphonics—the production of two or more tones simultaneously. Multiphonics have become a common practice technique since their introduction to the clarinet in 1961 in John Eaton's *Concert Music for Solo Clarinet*, published by Shawnee Press. Although there are numerous multiphonics available, the author has chosen 18 that are easy to produce and fairly stable. They are introduced in ascending order based upon the sounding fundamental. The fingerings supplied are ones that work well for the author, but for every clarinetist there will be favorite fingerings. As with multiple tonguing, these exercises are not designed to teach technique, but are intended to provide the player with a warm-up to adjust to the different demands involved in the production of multiphonics. (Refer to the directions on page 67 for the fingering chart.)

SELECTED MULTIPHONICS
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