

**Third Annual  
2006 MSU CLARINET EXTRAVAGANZA:  
The Complete Clarinetist  
Dr. Caroline Hartig Master Class  
“Technician or Musician: Finding the music within demanding technical  
passages”  
10:00-11:00 a.m. Music Auditorium  
Saturday, October 28, 2006**

**The attainment of consummate technical command is a necessity for any clarinetist and a pre-requisite for a successful performance. While technical mastery is essential, it does not guarantee a successful performance. The highest priority of a complete performance should be the communication of musical thoughts and ideas. Musicians often have a strong sense of how they wish to play a musical phrase, but due to technical limitations are not always able to translate their musical ideas into their playing. Therefore much of the clarinetist’s practice time is consumed with trying to play and tongue faster and louder and attain the super altissimo, often sacrificing musical development. The focus remains purely mechanical and the resultant product often lacks technical mastery as well as musical significance. This clinic is designed to demonstrate how finding the music within demanding technical passages can serve a dual function of improved technical/tonal command while enabling the clarinetist to find her/his voice as an artist....THE ULTIMATE GOAL!**

**The elements below will aid in increased technical ease and musical mastery:**

1. Be aware of your body and instrument angle
  - a. Instrument angle can affect volume and technical command
  - b. Head position-keep erect allowing the air to flow freely. Beware of tipping the head down or having it too high which will create tension. Simply stay in natural position, chin parallel to the ground. Be sure music stands are adjusted properly as to encourage proper head angle.
  - c. Let the instrument flow naturally from the body and hold the instrument with your head and shoulders as well as your thumb.
  
2. Body position
  - a. Balancing the instrument-hold with left hand head and body as well as right thumb, instrument should really balance itself and stay in place to root solid technique.
  - b. Root the body like a solid oak tree from the lower part of body, waist down.
  - c. Standing/Sitting for optimum technical/tonal command-increase comfort both standing and sitting and understand how to set-up properly for each

- d. When to sit/stand-chamber/band/ orchestra/ solo –Practice the same way you will be performing. Muscles have a distinct memory as we practice. Sudden changes from sitting to standing or vice versa can make the passages seem awkward and difficult
3. Carefully determine how much reed/mouthpiece to take in-finding the proper ratio, can enhance sound and therefore technical proficiency... when the sound is vibrating at the proper frequency, technique becomes less labored
    - a. Proper upper to lower lip ratio-1/3 upper teeth on the mouthpiece to 2/3 lower lip.
    - b. Find the fulcrum of the mouthpiece-also known as the resistance curve of the mouthpiece, where the facing breaks away from the table.
    - c. The open G tells all and can help to find the right lower lip position
      - i. Experiment with the physics of sound and physical changes to hear subtle timbre changes and nuances.
      - ii. Lengthen and shorten the reed while playing the difficult technical passage to find the best position
  4. Voicing of Oral Cavity/Tongue Position
    - a. The inside of the oral cavity is like a concert hall.... correct tongue/throat position will make the concert hall vibrant, warm and resonant and carry the technique....or dead and dry making technique difficult and labored
    - b. What's happening on the outside is a good indicator of what is or isn't happening on the inside....if there is excessive motion on the outside a correction needs to be made on the inside
    - c. Create a venturi which enables the wind to move swiftly and efficiently through the oral cavity thus carrying the technique
    - d. Keep tongue position high/back and thing EEE ÖÖÖ
    - e. Throat position....can't be too open or tight in order for it to work properly, a distinct balance must be achieved
    - f. Eeee gliss can help students to feel the correct tongue position
  5. Air Support/Breathing -Excellent technical command depends on solid breath support as air enables the sound to sustain and hold the technique
    - a. Exhale completely to relax
    - b. Double Breath from abdomen and chest
    - c. Do not move shoulders when breathing
    - d. Imitate a sideways Accordion

6. Wind Speed is essential
  - a. Wind should always be fast and low
  - b. Don't let the air go up with the sound, especially in high register and when making large intervallic leaps
  - c. Voicing the correct syllable when inhaling, voicing "whee" "eeee" helps to get the tongue high/back and allows the air to travel fast creating a natural venturi
  - d. Let the wind guide the tongue high/back
  - e. "Spin" the wind at all times and "Play on the wind"
  - f. It is important to keep correct high tongue position during inhale/exhale and at all times-to avoiding a lazy tongue that drifts downward and inhibits free technical/tonal flow
  
7. Finger Facility.... slow facility is not always due to faulty hand and finger position...sound production is key to excellent facility/technique.
  - a. Blow THROUGH and BETWEEN EVERY NOTE-be sure not to pulse the wind thereby slowing the fingers
  - b. Do not change the wind when moving fingers...fingers must be independent of the air stream and air stream must be continuously maintained
  - c. Play from the base knuckle and use the pads of your fingers, not the tips.
  - d. Constant wind speed creates seamless and facile technical command
  - e. Be sure not to stop the wind when articulating...separate the air stream, don't STOP it
  - f. If you want to play fast, practice S-LO-W
  - g. Be sure that fingers are covering the tone holes
  - h. Make sure the fingers-match the style of the work, i.e. fast legato vs. slow
  
8. Hand Position- Work on proper hand position-hands and fingers must work together. Be aware of how your hands are working and isolate left and right with exercises and etudes that focus on each hand and finger. Practice slowly and work to eliminate tension from hands and fingers. DON'T GRAB the instrument. Bring the instrument to you, not your head to the instrument and work to feel weightless in hands and body to release excess tension before playing.
  
9. Articulation- Wind the tongue....don't tongue the wind!
  - a. Let the wind guide the tongue for optimum control.... when tongue is in correct position, articulation is easy!
  - b. Attacks and note beginnings
    - i. The sound and technique are only as good as the preparation breath

- ii. The prep breath tells all and just like a fine conductor the upbeat indicates much information, i.e. tempo, color, sound, dynamic, style
    - iii. Breathe in the time of the music to catapult the technical passage in time
  - c. Tip to tip tonguing is ideal for technical freedom
  - d. Limit tongue motion when tonguing and keep tongue pointed for clean articulation
  - e. Think of the tongue as being at a piano dynamic for speed and agility to avoid hammering with the tongue and slowing it
  - f. Avoid moving the jaw when articulating/tonguing
  - g. To produce seamless intervals-speed up /maintain wind speed especially over large intervals
  - h. Coordination of fingers and tongue, practice legato first and then staccato, for a fast and clean staccato practice legato and don't stop the wind
- 9. Rhythm/Tempo- Are you rushing or simply not sustaining the sound?
  - a. Identify a rhythm versus a sound issue-often poor rhythm is blamed, or rushing when the culprit is poor blowing or pinching which will contribute to no "sustain" or "hold" to the sound
  - b. Pitfalls of the metronome and how to use it more effectively-the metronome cannot play sustained or legato...use it carefully
  - c. Practice methods to sort out rhythmic/technical difficulties
    - i. Sub-division is key to holding and sustaining the sound- **Always** find the subdivision and interior of the beat to carefully place technique
    - ii. Rebeam difficult passages to exercises to help to sustain the sound throughout the entire beat
    - iii. Practice in segments or chunks...this can be done within the musical phrase or within a difficult figure...i.e. a cadenza that has x number of notes...divide it into manageable segments and practice slowly..divide into 2's, 3's, 4's or 5's and practice that way...slowly incorporate as one line.
    - iv. "Rushing" often occurs during long, sustained notes-blow thou
    - v. There should always be a pulse within the technique and rhythm in your fingers
    - vi. Remember that you can only play one note at a time on the clarinet...don't get ahead of yourself
    - vii. Sing difficult passages and intervals, especially in contemporary music in the written range if at all possible. In extreme altissimo, it may help to take it down the octave.

10. Before practicing and learning a difficult passage choose proper fingerings that will ensure technical ease and good intonation rather than hurriedly incorporating an incorrect fingering which will result in a slower learning time and less technical/musical ease
11. At the beginning of practice, after you have warmed up, run through the difficult passages to identify areas that still need work. Mark them quickly so that you can easily refer to them without wasting time when you go back and practice.
12. Play the passage or figure in the context in which it will be performed as well as isolating it
13. Start in the middle of the passage or at different points to ensure that you really KNOW the passage
14. To really find out if you “**KNOW**” a passage, play it cold at the before you practice it many times...it is always easier to play it after you have practiced it...such practicing can give a false sense of security. Remember that you only get one chance at the performance...try to re-create the performance experience!
15. Don't isolate the difficult passage without playing it in the context in which it will be performed..in other words, play what is before and after the difficult figure and in time. The passage will feel totally different then when played in context vs. isolated....muscles have a very distinct memory and this can be good or bad... therefore practice wisely and for the long-term. Players FREQUENTLY play a difficult passage over and over and they can play it out of context, but not when it is in context. This is risky and gives a false sense of knowing the passage. The tempo also gets distorted this way and the passage becomes technical rather than musical.
16. Transpose the difficult passage to all twelve keys. Once the player has accomplished this, the stubborn and difficult passage will seem much easier...almost simple!!
17. Know the historical background and relevance of the work, i.e. form and time period of composition
18. Research the composer, especially in new music to learn tendencies...listen to other compositions of the composer in addition to the clarinet
19. LEARN YOUR SCALES AND CHORDS WITH ABSOLUTE APLOMB....99% OF ALL MUSIC WE PLAY IS BASED ON SCALES AND CHORDS...THIS MEANS YOU HAVE ALREADY LEARNED MUCH OF THE MUSIC YOU WILL ENCOUNTER!!
  - a. In addition to majors and minors, be proficient at thirds, fourths, fifths, sixths, sevenths, octaves and arpeggios and extend your range beyond what is comfortable to you
  - b. Learn modes, whole tone, diminished chords and scales and other similar patterns you encounter in your music
  - c. Make flash cards to learn all forms of scales and chords...make it a part of your routine practice

20. Make the technical figure/passage a part of the musical line and flow so that it is seamless and unlabored
21. Before learning a new piece, study it without the instrument and make notes. Think about the performance timeline...don't rush the learning process.
22. When learning a new work, learn the difficult passages several times slower than the ultimate tempo...this will eliminate the player from "freaking" out and learning an otherwise not so difficult passage incorrectly. You should also be able to play it much faster than your final tempo. Learn the extreme tempos to be absolutely prepared and controlled.
23. Memorize difficult passages- often when we learn a passage, we identify it by sight as a difficult one...even when it has been sorted out, the brain tells the fingers the figure is difficult and we lose concentration and "blow" the passage. Think of the difficult passage as part of the music, rather than a difficult stubborn passage that is prohibiting you from success
24. Practice the difficult figure or technical passage the way you would practice an etude or scale...ask yourself if you are blowing the same way you would blow your favorite and most secure forte scale such as F Major.
  - a. Often a technical passage becomes difficult because the player is backing off the wind.
  - b. Blow the passage without the clarinet and then add the clarinet...the wind should never stop...it usually stops at the hard interval or difficult note...be cautious of this
  - c. Also be mindful of the partial that you are playing and how the difficult figure may move through the various partials. You may notice that the mistakes tend to happen where the new partial begins due to a lack of wind control or motion in throat or embouchure.
- 25. FINALLY...REMEMBER THAT "ONE NOTE OR PASSAGE DOES NOT A PERFORMANCE MAKE..." THINK ABOUT THE OVERALL MUSICAL PRESENTATION. ENJOY THE PERFORMANCE AND FEEL FREE TO MAKE MUSIC!!! YOU HAVE DONE THE WORK—SO HAVE FUN!**