

Teacher's notes

Paul Harris's Clarinet Basics

INTRODUCTION

In writing these companion notes for each Stage in *Clarinet Basics* I'm hoping that you are familiar with **Simultaneous Learning (SL)** and its principles and methods.¹ One of the delights of teaching is that you usually don't know what is coming around the corner. The true Virtuoso Teacher's top quality is always being able to respond sensitively, imaginatively and appropriately to a pupil, however that pupil reacts to an instruction. As such it's impossible to present anything more than suggestions here. However I've tried to indicate, as often as possible, the potential for making appropriate connections – you must then use your expertise as a pro-active Simultaneous Learning teacher to create that *flow* that characterises any good lesson. In addition I've tried to ensure that each of the **4Ps** (**p**osture, **p**ulse, **p**honology and **p**ersonality)² is represented in every Stage.


If you can have the CD/MP3s available in lessons (as well as for practice), that will always lend another exciting and colourful dimension. The piano parts (in the Teacher's book) are deliberately straightforward and fun to use – even if it's just the left hand! Also many teachers have a laptop (or similar device) that can be connected to the Internet, offering a hot line to You Tube. It's a useful device.

Improvising

Just a word about this extremely useful teaching tool. If you don't already use improvising in your lessons, do begin now! It's not jazz and it's not difficult. Try using some basic ingredients to make up some music. Here, for example, are some ingredients:

C major (the first 3 notes: C–D–E)

4
4

Crotchets (quarter notes): 

Now improvise a single bar using those ingredients, e.g. four crotchet Cs (fine!) or C–D–E–C. That's all there is to it. An improvisation might be just one bar long. With experience your confidence will grow and you'll be using improvisation all the time! Getting pupils to explore ingredients in this way (with you leading) is easy, useful and lots of fun.

¹ **Improve Your Teaching**, **Teaching Beginners** and **The Virtuoso Teacher** (all published by Faber Music) discuss Simultaneous Learning in detail. There's also a useful article on my Website: paulharristeaching.co.uk

² For a full explanation of the 4Ps have a look at **Teaching Beginners**, Faber Music

STAGE 1: The first lesson

So begins that most exciting of lessons – the very first one!³ Both enthusiasm and expectation are very high. The first thing any pupil wants to do is make a noise on their instrument. So, put the instrument together, ask pupils to moisten their reed in their mouth and then carefully secure the reed to the mouthpiece for them. Then provide as succinct an explanation as you can on the basics: **posture**, **embouchure** and **breathing**.

Posture

Stand (preferable to sitting) upright with shoulders relaxed. The right-hand (RH) thumb supports the instrument and goes under the thumb rest between the nail and the first joint. But rather than explaining this as a supporting action (which psychologically often causes pupils to think their thumb is getting tired), describe the thumb as simply helping to keep the clarinet in the correct position. Check that the thumb rest itself is in the best position for the player – it often needs to be moved further up the instrument in order to avoid overstretching the thumb joint. (An instrument technician is able to do this easily and some clarinets have an adjustable thumb rest.) And – *very important* – don't let the RH index finger support the clarinet under the trill keys. Some players may like to use a strap to help support the instrument.

It's worth taking a little trouble over the position of the left-hand (LH) thumb in this very first lesson. Get it in the right position and it will prove a very good investment for the future! The best position is at an angle with the thumb pointing at about 1 o'clock and sufficiently covering the thumb hole. This will mean it's in the correct position eventually for operating the speaker key efficiently.

Embouchure

Some teachers like their pupils to make the first sounds on the mouthpiece alone, others with it attached just to the barrel, and others will use the whole clarinet. It's up to you and, to a degree, on the disposition of your pupil.

Instruct your pupil to:

- keep their head up and shoulders relaxed
- with mouth closed, put the tip of their index finger on the front of their lower lip
- gently stretch the lip over the lower teeth – keep the chin flat and slightly stretched downwards
- place about 1.5cm of mouthpiece on the lower lip (which is still resting on the lower teeth)
- rest top teeth lightly on the mouthpiece with the upper lip drawn downwards over the teeth to make an air-tight seal
- make sure that seal is just firm enough – too much 'bite' (probably best to use the term 'pressure' when talking about this to pupils) at this critical moment can take months, if not years sometimes, to undo!

Breathing

Take a deep breath through the sides of the mouth (no shoulder movement), finger the note E and then instruct pupil to begin blowing gently through the instrument. Slowly increase the airflow and, with luck, the reed should kick in and the clarinet will sound. Repeat a few times, each time trying to make the note a little longer. Ask pupil to listen for evenness of tone – no wobbles! Now ask questions! Describe the sound – how many interesting words can pupil come up with? Help if

³ How much you actually do in the first lesson depends on you and your pupil's progress. What I'm suggesting here may well take more than one or two lessons.

necessary: is it warm/hollow/firm/flimsy? Try some more imaginative words: is it red/green/yellow/blue? Is it serious/dark/light/chocolate-like? And so on.

Tonguing

Now a major decision: to tongue or not to tongue? If your pupil is successfully producing a reasonably sustained and even tone, now's probably the time to do so. If not, wait until the second lesson. When you do introduce tonguing, keep it simple. Start the note again (with the air), keep it going firmly for a few seconds and then move the tip of the tongue sturdily towards the tip of the reed, eventually placing the tongue lightly on the reed, and pushing it (the reed) very gently against the mouthpiece to stop the note. **IMPORTANT:** sustain the air pressure while the tongue is on the reed. Then, almost immediately, release the tongue. *Hey Presto!* – your first tongued note. Repeat the process a few times until pupil feels comfortable about starting the note with the tongue.

Adding a pulse

Now set a pulse going, with pupil clapping in groups of four: 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4 1 2 3 4, etc., with a slight emphasis on the first beat.

Play the note (E) again, this time beginning it with the tongue, for four medium slow beats (about ♩ = 60). Count aloud while pupil plays.

Ask pupil to try counting four beats internally (1 2 3 4), then tongue the note (on the next '1'), keeping it going for a further four beats. Pupil is now playing and counting at the same time! No problem!

At some point teach the notes D and C in the same way.

Simultaneous Learning (SL)

We may have filled one or two lessons with the work so far (lots of ideas for imaginative first lessons and practice can be found in *Teaching Beginners*, pub. Faber Music). When to introduce reading from notation is a major decision. It's very important, however, always to introduce new pieces in the Simultaneous Learning way with some aural and musicianship activities before opening the book and playing from notation.

The main ethos of Simultaneous Learning is that you set up activities pro-actively, respond to your pupil and then move on, resulting in ongoing and positive achievement and very few 'mistakes'. Each activity is really dependent on how your pupil reacted to the previous one. Here's a way you might work at the four 'lift' pieces in this Stage (with the book closed):

- Set up a four-in-a-bar pulse; pupil claps four beats with slight emphasis on beat 1 while you play a sequence of semibreves (whole notes) on notes E, D and C in any order for a while.
- Get pupil to play the three notes, giving guidance on breathing, embouchure and hand position. Ask them to listen to quality and evenness of sound.
- Call-and-response work is key to Simultaneous Learning and is very easy to manage. Just make up one- or two-bar phrases using the ingredients you want to explore and teach. Here are two ideas:
 - you play sequences of three semibreves and pupil copies.
 - you play sequences of three semibreves and pupil improvises an answer that is slightly different from your 'call' (e.g. pupil plays the notes in a different order)

You may think of more activities, but at some point soon you'll want to introduce the notation.

Introducing the notation

When you do introduce notation, it is imperative that you do so very systematically. *Teaching Beginners* gives a full account of how best to give your pupils their first taste of notation. Remember that it is crucial to:

- set up a pulse with pupil counting/feeling the beats
- get pupil to clap the rhythmic durations
- get pupil to hear the notes internally and to sing the notes *before actually playing them!*

Start with the four 'lift' pieces. Do prepare each piece carefully, making sure that pupils really know what the musical outcome will be before setting off. At some point you should give a performance of some (or all) of the pieces and ask pupils for their reaction to your sound and your characterisation of the music. When pupils perform the pieces (in the lesson) make it special for them. Listen attentively and praise warmly. Use the CD if possible (tracks 2–5) or the accompaniment – it makes a real difference!

Having now played the four 'lift' pieces, we can continue to explore them by devising new activities and making more connections. You could make connections:

- **with technique:** refining the sound and finger position and movement
- **with tempo:** try the pieces at different speeds
- **with musical expression:** can you give each piece some expressive contrast? Can *Going up* sound tired? Can reaching the *Top floor* sound triumphant?
- **with memory:** can pupil play some (or all) of the pieces from memory?
- **with composition:** can pupil make up their own lift piece using the same notes and time value?
- **with theory:** can they write it down?
- **with aural (1):** play different versions of the pieces for pupils to repeat aurally (either singing back and/or playing back)
- **with aural (2):** play one of the three-note pieces and ask pupil to identify which one you are playing.

These kinds of activities/connections are virtually endless. Once you get into this Simultaneous Learning flow you're only restricted by your imagination (and time!).

If you're working in a group you could assign each of the four 'lift' pieces to a different pupil and play as a continuous piece. Or you could try changing the order and seeing whether different orders work. You can also combine *Going down* with *Going up* and *Further down* with *Top floor!*

Coincidentally, the pupil parts of *Saucer* and *Rainbow* can also be played together as a duet with either of the teacher parts. (Why are these pieces so called?) You'll note that *Saucer* and *Rainbow* have breathing ticks: these are in fact the only two pieces where I have marked breathing places. All developing players have different breath capacities so it's really up to you and your pupils to decide effective and practical places to breathe. The only important rule really is to place them with minimum interruption to the melodic line.

The activity box

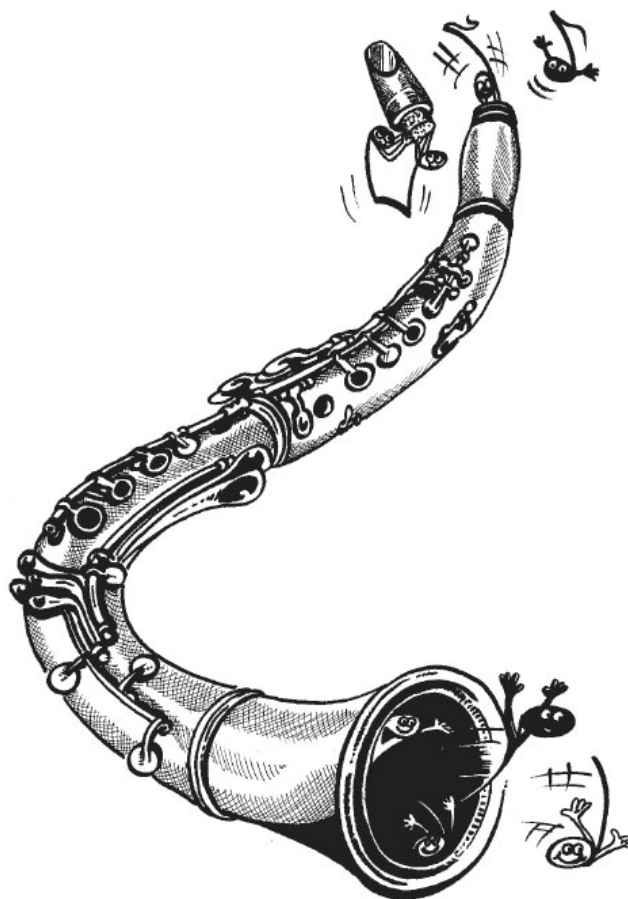
Give some guidance to support the composition in the activity box. Which note would sound good to begin on? Should that be used as the final note too? Why? Would it help to give the piece some shape? How many notes should the piece have – an odd number or an even number? And so on...

Home practice

Talk to pupils throughout the lesson about what/how they are going to practise and always review this at the start of the next lesson– it should be a very important part of that lesson's content before moving on to new material. *Be really certain that pupils know how to do the work you set for practice. If they come back with mistakes learnt we get into that negative culture of having to spend time correcting them.* Try using the *Simultaneous Learning Practice Maps* to indicate what is to be done for practice.⁴


Always make a suggestion for some listening each week too. You Tube, Spotify, CDs, iTunes – there is a wealth of sources. I'll give some ideas as we proceed. Perhaps for the first practice, suggest something exciting like the 10-year-old Julian Bliss playing some jazz!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=joVb9fW2pP0>



⁴ See **The Practice Process**, Faber Music

STAGE 2





This Stage is all about minims (half notes): 

- After reviewing any work done in practice, do lots of clapping games, beginning with the exercise in the rhythm box. Continue by making up your own similar exercises, eventually with instruments, delivered in a call-and-response manner based on the rhythmic and melodic patterns found in this Stage.
- Play some long notes on C, D and E, listening to and refining the sound. Talk more about the breathing process – nothing complicated, just reinforcing and slightly developing work already done. Introduce the dynamic ***f***. All the pieces in this Stage are marked ***f*** but for some pupils you could explore a march-like ***f*** (*March of the clarinet teachers*), a funny ***f*** (*Circus polka*) and a fruity ***f*** (*Mango tango*). Ensure that the airflow is continuous and firmly supported by the appropriate muscles.
- Review and refine tonguing, then do some call-and-response work using ***f***, minims and short two- or four-bar patterns in C major as your ingredients.
- Next, work through the pieces, always remembering to do some improvisatory work on interesting ingredients first. *Circus polka*, for example, introduces the interval of a 3rd – talk about this and have fun with 3rds for a few minutes! Then, for each piece: **c**lap first, **h**ear the piece internally, **s**ing it (not essential but great if pupil is happy to do so; some pupils will hum more readily) and then finally **p**lay (**CHSP**). If you always work at pieces like this, the difference that making these connections will have on your pupils' developing musicianship will be enormous. Always try to use the duet parts and either the Teacher's accompaniments or backing tracks.
- At some point in the lesson do some duet improvising, with your pupil using the ingredients as above and you having some fun!
- Give some help towards the composition – this is the first time pupils will use bar lines. If the rhythms have been understood, then it should be clear that each bar will include two minims. Encourage pupils to begin and end their pieces on the same note and talk about why this might be a good idea.
- Talk about what to do in practice: games and activities to develop technique and some guidance on how to work on the pieces (e.g. giving them shape; clarity of tonguing; counting rests accurately; giving performances to family and friends with the backing tracks and so on). Encourage pupils to set up their Personal Dossier⁵ and suggest another short YouTube clip to watch/listen to: some exciting clarinet playing for added inspiration would be good. Here's an amazing performance by a Russian clarinetist playing *Flight of the Bumble Bee*... http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QCv9DHO_7AQ You may want to suggest something more modest!

⁵ See **The Virtuoso Teacher**, page 64

STAGE 3

Quite a few new ingredients here:

- ✓ a new note: F
 - ✓ crotchets (quarter notes): 
 - ✓ a new dynamic: **mf**
 - ✓ new terminology including 'time signature' and some Italian words.
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- It's up to you how much time you wish to spend over the term 'time signature'. Some explanation is necessary, but you may not wish to go much further than simply explaining that each 'bar' has four crotchet beats in it.
 - Clap the rhythm in the rhythm box, setting up the pulse carefully first. Teach the new note and do some long-note work, exploring the two dynamic levels we now have. Remember that dynamic level and volume are not connected in any real sense – dynamic levels are all relative, so the difference between **f** and **mf** can be quite marked.
 - Next, improvise in $\frac{4}{4}$ using crotchets, minim rests and the two dynamic levels.
 - Clap the *Warm up* before playing it and talk about how your pupils 'see' it. Can they 'see' the first four notes as a unit like a word, for example? Begin to introduce the idea of reading music like we read words.
 - Talk about 'phrases' when introducing *Fast-food rag*. How many phrases are there in this piece? Are any of them similar? What is a rag? Improvise some patterns that match each phrase (both rhythmically and using the step-wise scale pattern) before the usual **CHSP** routine (clap, hear, sing, play).
 - Explore 3rds and the  rhythm when making your SL connections, using a strong four-in-a-bar pulse in preparation for *Burgers 'n' chips*. Always remember to set the pulse before any playing.
 - In preparation for *The bells*, explore the rhythm  and ask pupils to compare it to the  rhythm from the previous piece. Enjoy making a full, rounded sound in the minims to suggest the bells of the title. What kind of bells are they?
 - There's the interval of a 4th (C to F, bars 3–4, 8) in *Smooth mover* – incorporate that into your preparatory work. Improvise a piece just using Cs and Fs. Aim for a gentle sound here, and see if you can further refine tonguing so that the beginning of the note doesn't start with any kind of accent. It's very useful to get pupils to compare pieces: have we had any similar patterns in earlier pieces in this Stage?
 - Do some detective work on *The sun shines hot*. Are there any repeated phrases? Where are the 3rds?
 - A third player can play Cs all the way through *The bells*, *Sword dance* and *The sun shines hot* (using the rhythm of the pupil's part).
 - *Clarinet Basics* is ideal for individual or group work. When working in groups there are always many ways you can develop suitable activities. For example, in *Fast-food rag*, a group of four pupils could each take a phrase, and then repeat playing a different phrase. This piece also works as a round.
 - If extra manuscript paper is needed for the composition in the activity box, it can be downloaded for free from the Basics website.

STAGE 4

New ingredients here are the note G and the interval of a 5th.

- Do some long-note practice on G. This is the first of the clarinet's so-called 'throat notes', which can often sound rather weak and thin.
 - ✓ Make sure pupils' own throats are 'open' – starting to make an 'ah' sound without actually sounding it will get the throat into an appropriate open position. Or get pupils to yawn and keep that open shape. One teacher I know asks that their pupils imagine that the back of their throat is a big cave!
 - ✓ Give the G lots of 'fast air'. You might begin to use the term 'breath support' here, which really means blowing a firm and constant flow of air through the instrument. Demonstrate this in your favourite ways! Play a non-supported sound and ask pupils to compare it with a fully resonant supported sound.
 - ✓ Watch out for pupils who might bite on the mouthpiece when learning to play G. There is a temptation to do this because there are no fingers to support the instrument. Many teachers encourage the use of a neck strap to support the instrument. It's a good idea, especially for smaller pupils; indeed, many professional players use neck straps these days.
- In your SL preparation for *Step ladder*, do lots on that five-note micro-scale pattern. You may actually like to introduce the term 'scale' (or micro-scale perhaps) in as upbeat a manner as possible! Scales are fun! Listen that pupils sustain the tonal quality right through the semibreve.
- Using the ♯ ♯ ♯ ♯ | ♮ pattern, improvise a *canon*: pupil begins and you repeat their pattern one bar later. Try it with you beginning and see if your pupil can do it (keep it very simple)! It could turn into quite a fun activity with groups of three or four pupils!
- The C major micro-scale can be part of the preparatory SL work on all pieces in this Stage except for *Good King Wenceslas*. For those who are disappointed not to have the full tune – once they've done Stage 16 they'll have all the necessary notes!
- In your SL preparation for *Giant leaps*, work on the big intervals (4ths and 5ths). Technically, look for precise finger coordination in these intervals. Experiment with different slow tempi, always sustaining the tone through each note to produce the heavy character.
- Perhaps base some improvisatory work around the rhythms of bars 10 and 11 when preparing *Sweet and sour chicken*. Again spot repeated patterns when you introduce the notation. How many times does the interval of a 3rd between the D and F occur, for example? Can pupils find some appropriate Chinese music to listen to on YouTube? The famous riff that the accompaniment is based on is known as the *Oriental Riff*.
- Some pupils may like to look up Beethoven (*Ode to joy*) and find out some interesting facts about him. How do the two lines of the piece differ? You might like to introduce the idea of *crescendo* and *diminuendo* to shape the phrases. The terms need not be actually used and you could do it all aurally through demonstration.
- Practice for this Stage could include learning one piece from memory as well as composing a Christmassy piece. Perhaps suggest that your pupil writes a little Christmas poem to go with their tune. Extra manuscript paper can be downloaded free from the Basics website.

STAGE 5

New ingredients here are the note B, the crotchet (quarter-note) rest (♩) and the whole-bar rest (■).

- When introducing B, pay special attention to the position of the right hand: check that the *pad* of the finger covers the tone hole and recheck the position of the RH thumb regularly. Small hands may result in the thumb creeping too far across the thumb rest – watch for this as poor hand and finger position will become more difficult to correct later.
- There is lots of fun to be had in preparation for *Spooks*. Base some improvisatory work on crotchets and crotchet rests, making the sound as *misterioso* as possible!
- In *Minty March* use the sequence in bars 5 and 6 for some interesting musicianship/improvisatory work. Include the pattern beginning on E and D too. Remember to **CHSP** in preparing each piece!
- *Bubblegum* is the first piece in very simple ternary form (A–B–A) – you may like to talk about this. Why is it useful to know that it is in ternary form? Where does the A section return?
- *Oteng'teng'*, is a dance song from Kenya and is about a creeping plant weaving its way around a classroom. The tradition of *call and response* was born in Africa and you can do some really effective call-and-response work using the various two-bar phrases from this piece and making up more based on similar patterns. Swap round and get pupil to do the call while you (or another pupil) responds.
- Make sure the rhythm is really secure in *When the saints go marching in*. If you can find an accompanist going spare or have the backing track available, try improvising a duet part – there is scope for some effective imitation here.
- Here's a legendary performance of *When the saints go marching in* by Louis Armstrong: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wyLjbMBpGDA>
- In composing the march (activity box), perhaps suggest pupils use the clapping rhythm given just above.



STAGE 6

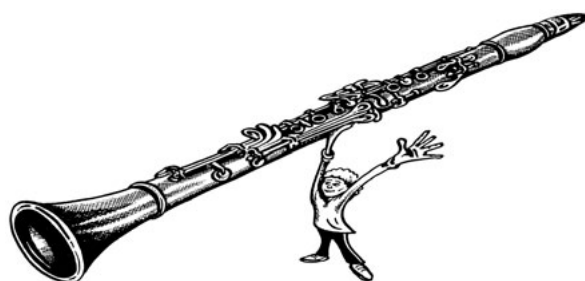
This Stage introduces the new note A, and two important new musical ingredients: slurs and a minor key.

- In the warm up part of your lesson, do a lot of improvisatory work using slurs. It's important to let your pupils hear slurs being played before they attempt them, so give them some lovely two-note slurs to listen to and ask them to try to describe the sound. How do slurred notes sound different from tongued notes?
- When teaching pupils to slur, ensure that they maintain the flow of air from note to note. The air stream is always steady and continuous – only the fingers move.
- Make up some tuneful call-and-response phrases with two-note slurs – sometimes with pupil copying you and sometimes improvising their own response. Listen carefully and make sure that the note after the slurred one is *tongued clearly*. Pupils often get into bad habits here and it's good to catch them before they develop!
- Notice that all the phrases move by step in *Rhino*. Work at producing a strong and heavy sound to give character to the piece. Sustain the tone through each note by maintaining firm breath support all the time.
- *Up the Nile!* is the first piece in *Clarinet Basics* that uses a minor key. The micro-scale of A minor (A–B–C–D–E) and the micro-arpeggio (A–C–E–C–A) should be important ingredients in your SL warm up. Before you go into the **CHSP** sequence, ask pupil to look at the notation and find recurring patterns. Get them to 'read' the first bar like a single word.
- *Skip to m'Lou* was a popular partner-stealing dance from America's frontier period – the word 'Lou' was the Scottish form of the word 'love'. Challenge pupils to go home and find all this out for themselves – it's all easily discoverable on the Internet! Use the triad of C major as one of your ingredients in preparation; it's up to you whether you introduce the term 'triad' itself.
- *The birch tree* is another piece in A minor. Can pupils spot the micro-scale? Some pupils might like to find out which famous Russian composer used this tune in one of his symphonies (and listen to the appropriate movement too!) Pupils could improvise/compose their own Russian tune based on the same ingredients (i.e. the notes of the micro-scale of A minor, repeated note patterns and crotchet and minim patterns). Also note that, unusually, this piece is based on three-bar phrases. Here's a great performance of *The Birch Tree* by the Russian Red Army choir: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SKC4M0dQ8AE>
- Pupils could add some notes to the rhythm in the activity box and use this as the basis for their composition.

STAGE 7

New ingredients here are the throat note A, $\frac{3}{4}$ time, longer slurs and a new dynamic marking: *mp*

- Though you are probably monitoring posture and technique all the time, now would be a good moment to give your pupils a bit of a check-up. Are they standing correctly with feet slightly apart (in line with their shoulders), firmly on the ground and with weight evenly distributed? Are there any undesirable tensions creeping in? Check especially the position of the head as well as neck, shoulders, upper arms, wrists and angle of fingers on the clarinet. Check right-hand thumb position in relation to the thumb rest and look for any inappropriate placement of the right-hand index finger.
- Play long notes on G and A. Listen carefully for unevenness – throat notes are particularly prone to wobbling! Monitor breathing – are breaths deep, but not so large as to cause muscle strain? Players often cause throat notes to be sharp as a result of too tight an embouchure, so take care not to squeeze or bite.
- In *Warm up*, *Finger gym* and *Play it again Sam!*, carefully observe the movement of the index finger as it moves to and from the A key. The development of a rocking-like movement is important – don't let pupils *jump* onto the A key; use the side of the curved finger to depress the key.
- Play a lot of three-in-a bar games in your preparatory work for the $\frac{3}{4}$ pieces, first clapping activities and then lots of call-and-response work. Get pupils improvising in $\frac{3}{4}$ and introduce lots of three-note slurs.
- In preparation for *Dance of the broken clarinet reeds*, work at the move from A down to C (bars 4–5, 12–13); it's the movement of the index finger that is so important as it travels from the A key to cover the first tone hole. There are quite a few dynamic markings here too – explore them in your SL preparatory exercises (for example, you could use them to shape scale passages, using the notes C–A).
- Look for the structure in all pieces in this Stage – where does the opening music return? Revisit the idea of musical phrases having a similar function to spoken phrases – they form complete meaningful units.
- In practice, pupils can begin to explore phrases – they can repeat them and experiment with different shapes and dynamics. Ask them to memorise one piece for performance in the next lesson.



STAGE 8

This Stage introduces B flat and therefore the flat sign: \flat

- *Warm up* and *A BAD piece!* explore lowish notes; see whether pupils can produce a warm, round and even sound here. Ensure that their blowing is firm and controlled; watch for any rising of the shoulders or any general muscle stiffness. And *always* remember to tell pupils to decide on the pulse (speed of the piece) and then count at least one bar in (silently) before they begin.
- *Babbling brook* is really in F major, even though the key signature is not yet introduced. During your preparation you should work on the scale pattern F down to A. You needn't label this a scale pattern – just the note pattern that the piece is based on. Also work on the three-note pattern F up to throat A. Make interesting connections with dynamic levels too – a marked contrast is necessary between *mf* and *p* – do some call and response in $\frac{4}{4}$, using both F patterns, in a flowing style and with strongly discernable dynamic contrasts and then get pupils to improvise using the same ingredients. When you open the music, ask pupils to find where the opening music returns; are there any differences in the repeat?
- There is lots of fun to be had in *Haunted house*. Use the sudden change of dynamic (bars 8–9, 11–12) as an important ingredient for preparatory creative work. Although *staccato* is not yet introduced, experiment with shorter note lengths to achieve the *stealthy* effect. Introduce the interval of a semitone (bar 1) and explore this – ask pupil to play A while you or another pupil plays B flat; talk about the sound and the emotions it creates. Can pupils work out which other next-door neighbour notes have the same sound (E–F)? Use the interval of a 5th (A–E) as another ingredient. Again look for repeated melodic and rhythmic patterns when the notation is finally revealed.
- In *The woods so wilde*, explore the A–F (the widest interval so far used); what other intervals of a 6th can be played with the notes so far learnt? Does this interval occur in a later piece in this Stage? Why is 'wilde' spelled with an 'e'?
- Encourage pupils to add extra dynamic markings in *Judge's dance*.
- Work at the two arpeggio patterns (bar 2 and bars 5–6) in your preparatory work for *Chiapenecas*. What is its character? This would be a good piece to suggest as the one to be learned from memory in this Stage. Send pupils home to discover what the title is all about and perhaps, using similar ingredients, to make up their own Mexican dance. Here's a wonderful You Tube performance with dancing! <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5tVb-jk2M4>
- Here's a good activity that makes connections with both aural and performance: choose a piece from this Stage to perform to pupil(s) and make a change – can they spot it?

STAGE 9

New ingredients are low G and the key signature of F major.

- Work at an F major scale pattern (from F down to A) and an F major arpeggio pattern (F–C–A) in preparation for *Steam train*. Get pupils improvising two- and four-bar phrases after the usual call-and-response copy activities. Talk about the teachers part in the duet version – what does it represent?
- Explore particularly the rhythm in bar 2 of *March of the guinea pigs* in preparatory work. When you do turn to the notation, get your pupil to spot the repeated patterns.
- Add more dynamic markings to *Daisy, Daisy*. Some pupils will enjoy doing some research into the history of this Music Hall tune and there are many You Tube versions to watch and listen to. At the time of writing, there is even a You Tube performance of this very version!
- Explore the interval of an octave (G–G) in preparatory work for *Swanee river*. You can also include A–A. Where has the rhythm in bar 4 occurred before? Also include playing long notes (as in bars 7–8 and 15–16). Interestingly this piece includes all rhythmic durations ranging from one to six beats in length – use this in your aural activities.
- If you or your pupil is up for it, one of you could sing the words to *One a penny shoe shine* (given below the piece) while the other plays!



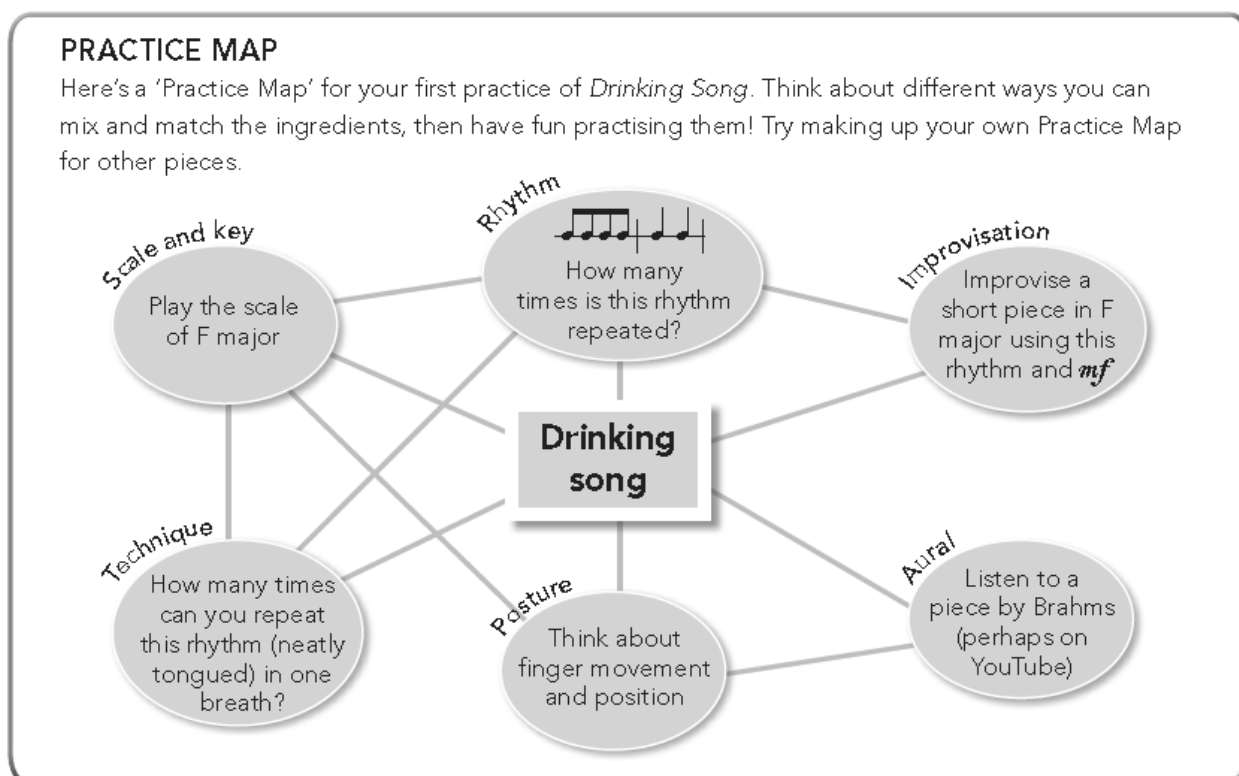
STAGE 10

This Stage introduces low F, quavers/eighth notes (♪) and the $\frac{2}{4}$ time signature.

- The first question to consider is which fingering to teach for bell-note F. For pupils with smaller hands, probably the left-hand little key; for pupils with a larger reach, go for the right hand as this means that moving from F to G (or G to F) is kept neatly in one hand. Also F major patterns become very much a case of simply peeling off one finger at a time (right hand then left, rather than left, right and left). *Whichever you do decide to use, watch that any stretch necessary to depress the F key doesn't cause any compromise over the position of other fingers (especially the index fingers).*
- Enjoy the scale! If you can improvise in the jazz style then use the second line in the Teacher's book as a starter and keep going for as long as you like! One repeat is certainly necessary. Watch that pupils lift their fingers neatly and not too far from the tone holes (and keep an eye on the position of the right-hand thumb). It's a good idea to play the scale using different dynamics, perhaps ***f*** and ***mf***, making a good distinction between them. Do some improvising using these notes and, in your call and responses, use the ♪♪♪ rhythm. Make sure you use the CD for a fun accompaniment (track 47).
- Work in a similar way with the arpeggio.
- Guessing why the next two pieces are so-called should not be a problem, but I have come across one or two pupils who didn't work it out! Talk about these pieces being in the key of F and that this means they use the notes of F major. Pupils should *always* feel the pulse before playing but it's particularly important they do so when working at these pieces. Get pupils to make up some more food pieces generating the rhythm from appropriate words (e.g. have another biscuit; soup with bread and butter, etc.). You'll find lots of additional and fun activities in *Improve Your Scales! Clarinet, Grade 1–3*, page 4.
- Their first Sonata next. There's an interesting project here for any pupil who might like to delve a bit deeper into the musical context. (Remember to encourage pupils to keep their Personal Dossier/passports up to date – projects might be an important part of their content.⁶) Lots of rhythmic ingredients here to play with in your preparatory work. Can pupils work out which pattern the first two bars are based on? Introduce an extended arpeggio pattern (bell F to throat A) and also the arpeggio pattern A–A. Ask also: in which piece have we already had the rhythm in bar 5? Make good contrasts between the ***f*** and ***mf***. Take out the ♪♪♪ figure (bar 5, 7, etc.) and have fun with it on different notes.
- The next two pieces introduce the up-beat. If pupils have really got used to (*always*) counting in and feeling the pulse, this will be no problem. Again, there are lots of rhythmic ingredients with which to have fun.
- There is a short digression into C major for *Happy birthday to you* (do mention this and notice that everything else in this Stage is in F Major). Another project – when was *Happy birthday* composed? The answer is quite surprising.
- Another drinking piece rounds off this Stage. The tune is from Brahms' *Academic Festival Overture* (and it *is* a drinking song!) – enthusiastic pupils might like to listen to it on You Tube or Spotify. Get pupils to make up some words. For the real enthusiasts, mention the great Brahms Clarinet Sonatas (more connections – we've done *Sonata* and introduced *Brahms*!) and they may like to listen to excerpts on You Tube.

⁶ See *The Virtuoso Teacher*, page 64

- The Practice Map is a new and very exciting way to approach practice. Instead of a 'list' of things to do (which may or may not get done and may or may not be understood), here pupils can actually see how the various ingredients connect and therefore doing each activity will make much more sense. SL in a clear graphic form! Pupils might like to create their own, or you can purchase pads of 50 Practice Maps (and learn more about them) from <http://www.fabermusicstore.com/Simultaneous-Learning-Practice-Maps-0571597319.aspx> or from music shops.



- There is also some useful material to back up this Stage in *Improve Your Sight-reading!* Clarinet Grade 1–3, Stage 3.

STAGE 11

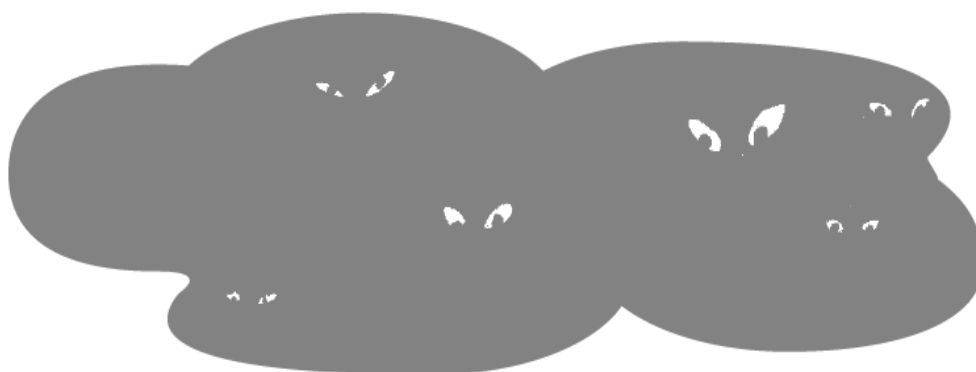
New ingredients include the sharp sign (#), G major and more quaver rhythms. Here's a real teaser! How did the sharp sign evolve? Pupils who can find this out should get a special prize!

- Enjoy playing F sharp as a long note. Firm breath support is essential. How long is your longest long note now? Mention the rule about one sharp sign affecting all similar notes in the bar. And keep reminding pupils about it! Repeat both *Grooving* and *Great grub* at least once and vary the dynamic levels.
- Make strong connections with G major, especially with the arpeggio pattern. There are four different one-bar rhythmic patterns in *Rock solid*. Work at these thoroughly in your preparatory SL activities. Don't begin the piece until pupils are really familiar with them. And there's an interesting 'theory' connection here: are there any other arpeggio patterns in this piece – which 'key' do they represent? The tongue action needs to be sturdy but don't let the character of the piece cause it to become heavy. The 'heavy' sound should result solely from firm breath support.
- Another project: what can you discover about the 'hornpipe' – what is it? where would you hear one? and why does it have that characteristic accent on the 3rd beat? Do some fun ingredient work on accents: accents should make your audience jump out of their seats! Work pupils towards improvising their own hornpipes in your preparatory activities, maybe even writing them down. The octave jump will be a fun ingredient to explore too. Spend some time on the rhythm in bar 3 – how many times does it appear? Can pupils find a word (a place, for example) to help them with the pattern? ('Liverpool' is a good fit!)
- The Cornish *Floral dance* will need a lighter and less boisterous character. Play a G major arpeggio in different styles to develop the idea of contrasting character: heavily (*Rock solid*); robustly (*Hornpipe study*) and bright and light (*Floral dance*).
- Spot the scale and arpeggio patterns in *Fight the good fight* and enjoy some activities in a more gentle style.
- You might like to extend the final idea suggested in the activity box for this Stage. Pupils might like to gather together three or four of their favourite pieces and present a little recital to family and friends (complete with a programme).
- There is also some useful material to back up this Stage in *Improve Your Sight-reading!* Clarinet Grade 1–3, Stage 4 and in *Improve Your Scales!* Clarinet, Grade 1–3, page 6.

STAGE 12

New ingredients here are Bell E, *crescendo* and *diminuendo* and *ff*.

- Get pupils to play their long Bell Es into a corner – the resulting sound (caused by the note being bounced off and between walls) will be even more rich and resonant. Try to emulate this sound when playing in a more normal place! Experiment with a range of dynamic levels.
- Intonation of the lowest notes on the clarinet is often a problem (they tend to be flat) and there's no reason not to give this some consideration even at this early stage of learning. If you have a tuner (there are some very cheap and reliable tuner Apps available), see where pupils' pitch lies. Cheaper clarinets may be a factor here, but appropriate all-round embouchure (lip) pressure is important (firm but don't bite or pinch the reed) and a steady and firm air stream will help.
- Enjoy the rich, full and warm tone in the pieces in this Stage. They all use the lowest notes. Keep an eye on posture, hand, and finger and thumb position – watch that no tensions creep in. There's much potential for exploring character in these pieces. Pupils will enjoy improvising in a *creepy* manner for *Things that go bump in the night* – discuss which ingredients to use (e.g. low notes, short notes, soft and occasionally loud notes, etc.). When you decide to open the music, look for repeated patterns and don't forget the **CHSP** sequence.
- Here's another project for the final piece in the Stage: can pupils dance a Minuet?! Lots of ingredients here to explore in your preparatory work: F major, scale patterns, octave leaps, leaps of a 5th, the sequence. There are numerous performances to listen to on YouTube or Spotify.



STAGE 13

So we arrive at Throat B flat (there was no deliberate intention to do this in Stage 13!). Because it only uses a relatively small length of the tube the sound is often a little thin, so firm breath support and an 'open' oral cavity is important. (This just means thinking an 'aw' shape in the mouth to give maximum potential for the air to resonate.)

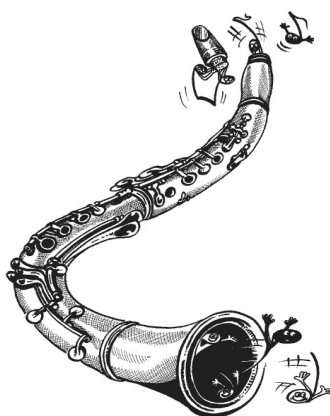
- Play lots of long-note B flats and take care that pupils place their fingers carefully– the finger and thumb *pivot* so that they are tilted on the edge of the two keys. Watch for pupils who may like to 'jump' onto the keys: when they do this they usually jump much too far along – it really is just the tip of the key that we use.
- Work through the *Finger gyms* carefully. Economical finger work and firm breath control are crucial. Note that there are trio versions for *Monday morning* and *Friday night!* in the Teacher's book. Put lots of character into these pieces.
- Spend some time on the rhythmic shapes in *Study in F* in your preparatory activities. Also use the scale and little repeated patterns. Where have we had that final interval of a 5th before? (Making connections between pieces is very useful.) What does the title mean?
- The interval of a 4th is a major ingredient of *Aura Lee* – some pupils may enjoy experimenting with 4ths. Who was Aura Lee (sometimes spelt Aura Lea)?
- *Frankie and Johnny* is, strictly speaking, in B flat major but written in a key signature of F (Bartók used to do this so I feel in good company!). Hopefully pupils won't question you too determinedly on this! If you feel they are up for it, work at gently swinging the quavers.



STAGE 14

G sharp and our first full one-octave minor scale are the new ingredients here.

- Ensure that pupils develop and maintain a curved index finger when playing G sharp (and A) and give them a lot of appropriate demonstration. As usual with throat notes, firm breath support is important. G \sharp –A and A–B \flat are semitones: talk about this smallest of musical intervals and how it can sound very bloodcurdling! Do some improvising!
- When playing the *Warm up Teacher's* duet part, sometimes replace the B sharp (bar 3) with a B natural and discuss the difference this makes.
- Play the A minor scale to pupils before they play it and discuss the character. Get pupils to play a long note low A while you repeat the scale. Improvise using the notes. Make sure the sound and patterns are really fixed into pupils' musical ear.
- What is a sarabande? What else did Henry VIII compose? (Interesting project work here!) Lead pupils towards some stately improvising in A minor, using the simple crotchet movement and the strong second beat.
- Discuss and explore G naturals and G sharps in your preparatory activities on *Down memory lane*. What does the title suggest and how is this related to the music? Talk about how the orchestrated accompaniment (track 65) helps to depict the character.
- You may have discussed two-bar phrases already – *Winter* is a good piece to explore these more, so use them a lot in your preparatory work. Explore A minor, scale patterns, soft dynamics and the rhythm patterns. Perhaps listen to a movement from the Vivaldi *Four Seasons* this week (especially if you encourage pupils to make up their piece about a season this time). Choose a minor key movement, such as the first movement from *Autumn*.
- There is some useful additional material in *Improve Your Scales!* Clarinet, Grade 1–3, page 8.



STAGE 15

We now move into the second, so-called 'clarinet', register (the low register is called the *chalumeau* after the clarinet's ancestor). This should present no problems, especially if pupils have now developed a secure embouchure (lips around the mouthpiece) and the ability to maintain a firm, even and supported airflow.

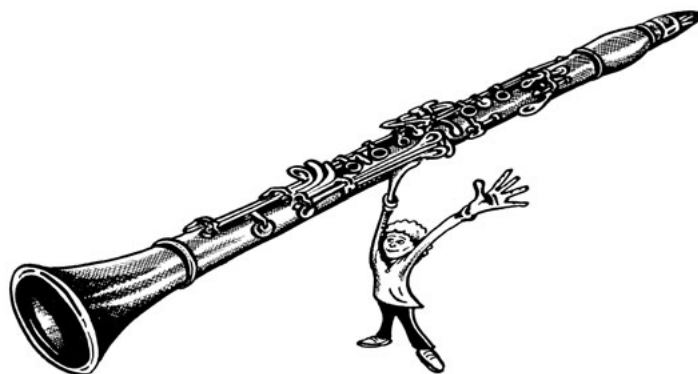
- Watch that pupils don't exert undue extra lip or jaw 'bite' to play these higher notes (this so often happens and leads to all sorts of problems later on).
- Watch the position and movement of the thumb as it opens the speaker (or register) key. Like playing throat B flat, the movement should be economical and snappy, with the thumb just pivoting onto the edge of the key.
- Listen and enjoy the purity of the sound in these higher notes. Unevenness and wobbles are often easier to detect in this register, so lots of careful long-note practice will be useful.
- Get pupils to develop a story for *Secret Agent*. Often a sense of narrative in a pupil's mind will help them give a much more meaningful and characterful performance. Explore *crescendo* and *diminuendo* in your SL preparation – it's an important feature of this piece.
- Another project idea: who was Henry Lazarus? As I write there are a couple of Lazarus pieces on YouTube. Also explore the ABA shape of this piece. Perhaps pupils can improvise/compose a simple tune using this shape.



STAGE 16

Crossing the break is not a problem if pupils have developed a secure breathing technique and fingers are always well positioned and held close to the instrument. Under these circumstances they should be able to cross the break with ease.

- If there are any problems with B or C not speaking easily, it may be that the pads (which cover the tone holes) are not seated securely. If there is any leakage, these notes will be difficult to produce and the instrument must be taken to a reliable technician.
- A firm and well projected air flow is needed for the B and C in the *Warm up* – the note B actually uses the full clarinet tube (as does low E) and pupils need to feel they are blowing right through the instrument.
- When playing the next four (Break) pieces, teach pupils to keep their right hand fingers 'down', which means covering their respective tone holes. This results in less finger movement, which aids in moving easily between these notes.
- The one-octave C major scale crosses the break and should be frequently re-visited until it can be played easily. When it's going securely add slurring.
- Use the appropriate scale and arpeggio patterns in your preliminary activities in *Yankee Doodle* and *Sweet Betsy from Pike*. More fun pieces can be found in *I Hate Crossing The Break*.⁷
- Pupils will now have all the notes to complete *Good King Wenceslas* (Stage 4). Make it a regular activity to go back and play pieces from previous Stages – refining them, perhaps learning them from memory and giving pupils the idea that they are building a repertoire.



⁷ Paul Harris, Queen's Temple Publications QT119

STAGE 17

Two new notes (F# and G) and dotted rhythms are the new ingredients.

- If pupils have been diligently feeling and internalising pulse – always thinking the pulse before they begin playing, and continuing to sense it *during* playing – then dotted rhythms are not going to present any difficulties. Do a lot of clapping activities and games and then a lot of call and response, all with a strong sense of pulse. Ensure that pupils can clap and hear the rhythms of the pieces before they play them – always! There is some useful extra material to be found in *Improve Your Sight-reading!* Clarinet Grade 1–3, Stage 6.
- Work at the G major scale as an ingredient in your SL activities preparing for *Round dance*. You might want to add the first octave to the scale, so producing your pupil's first two-octave scale. Also compare the G major scale with the other scales pupils now know (C & F majors and A minor). What are their similarities and differences?
- If pupils know the theme from *Eastenders* then you can probably just let them play the triplet crotchet rhythm without much comment; however two alternative, more straightforward, rhythms are given in the Teacher's book. Use the various scale patterns and the crossing the break patterns (bars 10 and 16) in your preparation activities.
- Britten wrote his *Waltz* aged only ten! There is at least one example of the original version (for piano solo) on You Tube. You might like to direct pupils to other interesting Britten pieces to listen to – the clarinet variation in his *Young Person's Guide*, for example. The interesting pattern that recurs in each bar (from 17–28) will be fun to explore. Get pupils to add more dynamic markings too.
- Pupils will now know all the necessary notes to be able to use and enjoy *Clarinet Basics Repertoire*, which explores many musical and technical ideas in the SL fashion.



STAGE 18

E flats and *staccato* are the new ingredients here (along with one piece in B flat major).

- Be careful to watch for good hand and finger position when playing the chalumeau E flat. The RH first finger doesn't have to move very far to operate the E flat key (it often moves much more than it needs to.)
- Explore slurring octaves in long note practice. There are lots possible now: a number over a two-octave span (beginning on low E, F and G) and the others for one octave: A, B \flat , B, C, D, E \flat , E, F, F \sharp and G. Use these for some improvisations.
- In playing *staccato*, keep the instructions uncomplicated to begin with. All things can be taught at various levels and the first introduction to a new concept needs to be clear and simple. The important points at this level are that *staccato* notes need just as much air as playing *legato*; don't tighten the embouchure and keep the tongue action minimal, quick and light. There should be no discernable movement of the chin or jaw.
- Introduce the B flat major scale in your preparatory activities for *Rush hour*. It's not difficult and if you've made a general point of connecting scales to pieces, it will be a natural thing to do. Do quite a bit of call and response, question and answer, in B flat major. Notice the *Liverpool* rhythm has appeared again – can pupils remember which other piece it occurred in? There's a lot of fun to be had with the character here, so enjoy accenting notes, exploring *staccato* and the dynamics in your SL activities.
- Talk about intervals again when exploring *Scarborough fair* – what does it begin with? where have we had that interval before?, etc. How contrasted can it be in character with *Rush hour*? I'd skip the connection with the scale/key here as it's in C minor and we probably need to leave that one for a bit. (Though for the really enthusiastic pupil they can certainly have a go – all the necessary notes are known!) There are a number of expressive performances on You Tube to listen to.



STAGE 19

Some new sharp notes are introduced here, giving us all the notes necessary for D major.

- Remind pupils about sharp signs retaining their effect on all similar notes in the bar (this rule simply has to be repeated many, many times. It will sink in eventually and for some, sooner than for others!)
- When preparing *King Richard's Pavane* (what is a pavane?), you might just introduce the first four notes of D major (D– E–F#–G) as used in the piece. That's sufficient to give the sense of key. There are a number of lovely pavaness to listen to during practice; work towards improvising/composing a short pavane using the ingredients from this piece.
- There are lots of patterns to use in your preparatory time for *TV movie*. Some interesting four-note patterns to explore are:



- It's interesting that not so many young people know the *National Anthem* today! Get them listening on You Tube. Here's a particularly stirring version:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wEBocDYWHyl&playnext=1&list=PLCBEE6709AE730719&feature=results_video
- The tune that forms *Twilight* is from the slow movement of Malcolm Arnold's Piano Concerto; here's a link to it: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zepLMp-ipw8>. I actually rang Sir Malcolm to ask permission to use this melody and what he thought of my title. He liked it.
- Explore the idea of *cantabile*. Get pupils to use lots of fast airflow to join notes, giving them the most flowing *legato* possible. Introduce the gentle *crescendo–diminuendo* shape so that pupils can begin to shape the music expressively. You might also like to put breathing marks in this piece, as breathing in an inappropriate place could spoil the character and flow of the music.

STAGE 20

The note G sharp (low chalumeau and clarinet register versions) and $\frac{6}{8}$ time are our new ingredients in this Stage.

- Keep an eye on hand and finger position for all the *Finger gym* exercises. Pupils need to aim for firm, well-directed and economical finger movement. Once *Finger gyms* 3 and 4 are understood, they can be played from memory and repeated often. Repeat them also with the speaker key open (i.e. a 12th higher) and make sure pupils know what notes they are playing.
- Introduce the idea of relative keys when working at *Can-can* and *Canon can-can*. Also (and here's another little bit of research pupil can do), what is a canon?
- There's lots of aural work in $\frac{6}{8}$ to be explored prior to *Can we go round the mulberry bush?*, *Watering can*, *Can of worms* and *Can't-do blues*.
- Get pupils to listen to the opening credits of *The Archers*. It might be the first time they've ever listened to the *radio*! Use the sequence (bars 9–11) as a useful ingredient to explore, rhythmically as well as melodically.



STAGE 21

Here we learn three new notes, which take us to the top of the clarinet register. They should have a pure, clean and round sound.

- Lots of long notes are on the menu here. Watch out for undertones; this is when there is an unwanted splitting of the note that results in a note of lower pitch – usually the fundamental, the note of the same fingering in the low register – sounding at the same time as the upper note. If this happens, check that the embouchure is sufficiently firm (without any bite) and that there is fast air delivered by good breath support. You might like to explore tongue position. If the back of the tongue is high in the mouth (think an 'ee' shape) undertones should rarely sound. Undertones may also occur if there is too much mouthpiece in the mouth.
- Explore the upper octave of C major in preparation for *Hit the roof!* and *Amsterdam*. Make sure pupils understand the significance of the title! Count both these pieces in six-in-a-bar, and make sure the dotted rhythm is clear.
- There are very few different rhythmic patterns in *Affair in Manhattan*; explore these in your preparatory activities. Think about what ingredients pupils can bring to the piece in order to play it expressively.
- There are many performances of *Greensleeves* on You Tube to listen to. Here's one actually using *Clarinet Basics*: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QWzAZVJxyh4> . If it's still available, pupils can compare it with their performance.
- In this Stage's activity box, perhaps encourage the composition/improvisation to be in $\frac{6}{8}$ time.

STAGE 22

Just one final note (B flat) and syncopation in this last Stage.

- First of all, be careful when playing B flat. The first finger doesn't have to move very far in order to depress the side key. Also watch for clean and rhythmic coordination of all three fingers when moving from B flat to C. Keep the air moving fast when playing these high notes.
- *Dark bluesy* has only a few different rhythmic patterns (including *Liverpool* yet again!)
- There are many performances on You Tube of *Stranger on the shore* by the legendary Acker Bilk and his very unique sound! Here's one:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q7jZeXvpyZQ>

NEXT STEPS

It's always a great moment when a pupil's first tutor book is completed. But what comes next?

- A programme full of interesting repertoire, taught in the Simultaneous Learning way, with improvisation and composition, projects and lots of listening to music.
- Playing in ensembles, bands or orchestras and as many performing opportunities as can be found.
- Dropping in for the occasional exam too is part of the process (as long as the pupil wants to and it's the right exam at the right time – simple moving from one exam to another is *not* the way forward!)

In this way pupils will always be positive and enjoy their playing. So, have fun and enjoy using *Clarinet Basics*! And do get in touch if you have any questions or queries. You can contact me through my website: paulharristeaching.co.uk