

# The Full Orchestra Toolbox for Clarinet

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The role of the clarinetist changes from wind ensemble to orchestra. Wind ensemble clarinet sections are generally larger than other wind ensemble sections and are sometimes referred to as the “violins of the wind band.” In an orchestral setting, the clarinetist takes on a new role as soloist that requires an expanded skill set.

## 1. Role Change: from section player to soloist.

Clarinetists in full orchestra will need to develop confidence and control throughout a wide dynamic range. A “clarinet specific” exercise that addresses the unique acoustical characteristics of the instrument is a good place to start. Choose an exercise with slurred register shifts from – chalumeau to clarion – that allow the player to concentrate on sound, a smooth connection between the registers, and the ability to practice a wide dynamic range (pp to ff) with a focused sound and no change in pitch.

The exercise below is a good place to start.

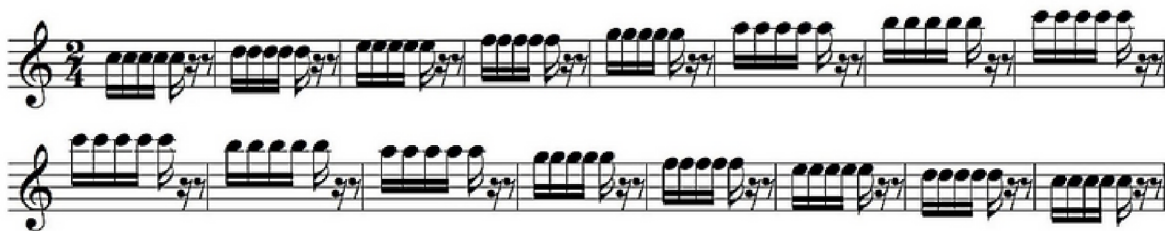
(Larry Combs) from Daily Workouts – [www.clarinetcity.com](http://www.clarinetcity.com)

The image displays a musical exercise for clarinet in G major, consisting of six staves. Each staff begins with a slurred half-note in the chalumeau register (lower register) and a slurred half-note in the clarion register (higher register), demonstrating a register shift. The exercise is marked with dynamics *f*, *p*, and *f*. The first staff starts with a forte (*f*) chalumeau note, a piano (*p*) clarion note, and a forte (*f*) clarion note. The second staff starts with a piano (*p*) chalumeau note, a piano (*p*) clarion note, and a piano (*p*) clarion note. The third staff starts with a piano (*p*) chalumeau note, a piano (*p*) clarion note, and a piano (*p*) clarion note. The fourth staff starts with a piano (*p*) chalumeau note, a piano (*p*) clarion note, and a piano (*p*) clarion note. The fifth staff starts with a piano (*p*) chalumeau note, a piano (*p*) clarion note, and a piano (*p*) clarion note. The sixth staff starts with a piano (*p*) chalumeau note, a piano (*p*) clarion note, and a piano (*p*) clarion note. The exercise is marked with dynamics *f*, *p*, and *f*. The word "simile" is written below the second staff. The exercise is in G major and 4/4 time.

## 2. Practice the skill away from the literature – Articulation

- Articulation is of critical importance, particularly ‘note starts’ in exposed entrances.
- Articulation may not improve unless you isolate and practice this skill specifically.
- A focused sound is essential before articulation can be addressed.
- Air is always an issue. Many problems stem from lack of air support.
- Try playing only on the barrel and mouthpiece (F#) when diagnosing articulation problems. Errors are more apparent when variables are reduced.
- Tip of the tongue near the top of the reed.
- Speed is directly related to the distance of the tongue from the reed. Keep the tongue as close to the reed as possible to minimize motion and produce the best sound.

### Option 1



from Daily Workouts – [www.clarinetcity.com](http://www.clarinetcity.com)

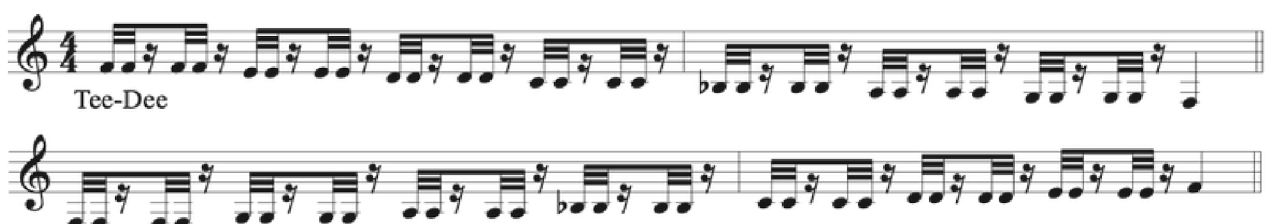
### Option 2

<https://www.dansr.com/resources/32nd-articulation-and-staccato-exercises-for-clarinetists>

Articulating 32nd notes necessitates that the tongue stays close to the reed naturally because of the note speed. Follow the link above for a complete explanation on how to incorporate 32nd notes into your daily practice.

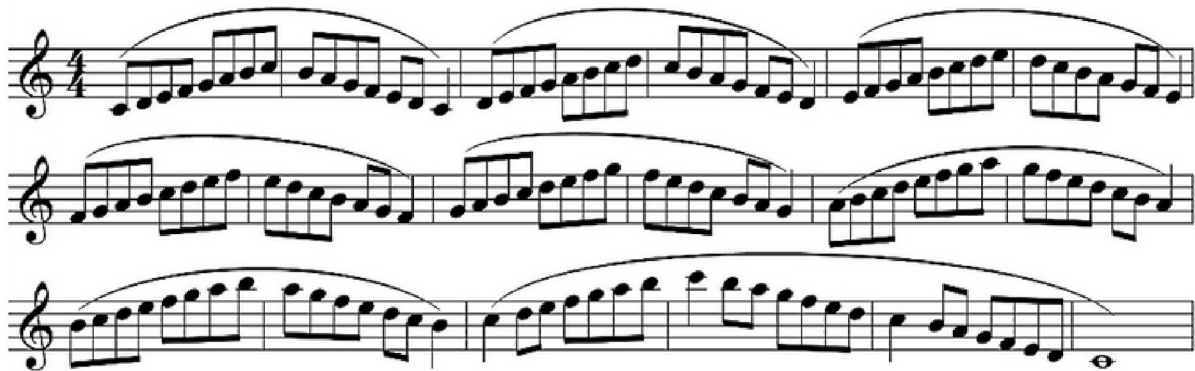


Next, apply this basic rhythm to scales that you already know. Here is an example:



## 2. Practice the skill away from the literature – fluidity and control in all key signatures.

In order to perform more difficult music, students must have excellent technical skill and control through the full range of the instrument at a variety of dynamic levels. These skills are of particular concern where students are being asked to play more "soloistically".



from Daily Workouts – [www.clarinetcity.com](http://www.clarinetcity.com)

## 3. Clarinet Intonation

**Clarinet has Limited flexibility. The choice may become 1) a focused sound or 2) in-tune.**

- Clarinetist cannot (should not) raise the pitch with embouchure adjustments. Clarinet does not “lip up.”
- Dropping the jaw and/or tongue (“lipping down”) to lower the pitch (aw) will create an unfocused sound.

**Instrument quality, mouthpiece, and reed choice matters.**

- A440 & A442 mouthpieces are available.
- Barrels are available in many different designs and lengths. and can completely change the timbre and intonation of the instrument.

**Practice with a drone pitch for tuning development.**

Adjustments should be made at the barrel primarily, but may also be made at the bell or middle joint if absolutely necessary.

Set drone pitch to starting pitch.  
 Slur everything.  
 Breathe only at fermatas.  
 Hold each fermata and listen for 'beats.'  
 Learn to determine flat/sharp pitch by ear, not just by sight.



If the original part is in A, play it on A.  
 Transposing may put the Bb in a difficult key signature, especially for tuning.

Have more than one reed that responds!

Clarinetists often count a lot of rests. Use a mouthpiece cap to help keep the reed from drying out when resting for long periods of time.



### Free Resources

**There are 12 articles in this location:**

<https://www.dansr.com/resources/celebrating-our-female-artists-paula-corley-and-her-educational-articles-for-clarinetists-of-all-skill-levels>

**There are 43 instructional videos on Clarinet City - Paula Corley channel:**

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgDFj\\_Bd873wqobJSBLy7ig](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgDFj_Bd873wqobJSBLy7ig)

**Book a free, virtual masterclass for any wind instrument section in your orchestra here:**

<https://www.pedagogicsproject.com/>

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