

The beginner should start his clarinet study under the guidance of a fine teacher. When attempting to learn an instrument without this aid, the many faults that develop are much harder to correct at a later time. This book is designed to bring out all of the important points for the beginner as well as the advanced student, and to show the connection between the legitimate and modern rhythm styles of playing.

In selecting an instrument, it is wise to choose one of the well-known makes and have your teacher check the intonation, quality, and resonance of this particular instrument. In choosing a mouthpiece, the beginner should not select one with too open a facing. It is a common fault for clarinetists to play on mouthpieces that are far too open. This means that they have to use a softer reed and keep a constant pressure on the lower lip in order to close the reed up to the normal playing position. It is therefore essential to use a mouthpiece that will not require too much pressure for the proper tone production.

Because the mouth, lip, and teeth formation of each person varies, there is no definite position of the embouchure which will apply to every player. There are certain basic principles, however, that I follow and recommend.

The upper teeth are placed lightly on the mouthpiece and the lower lip is rolled slightly over the lower teeth. The tongue is held so that when attacking a note, the tip of the tongue will touch the tip of the reed. Thus a clean attack is accomplished in two ways. (1) The tongue simultaneously stops the flow of air into the opening between the reed and mouthpiece. (2) It stops the vibration of the reed by touching its tip. The proper way to breathe is through the corners of the mouth. Further explanation of these points will be found in the following pages.

There are various opinions as to the proper kind of tone to produce on the clarinet. It is my opinion that due to the fact that music is judged solely by the way it sounds to the human ear, the proper tone of the clarinet is one that sounds pleasing and not one governed strictly by tradition.

After having compared the vibrato of the clarinet with that of the human voice, it seems odd to state that the clarinet vibrato is accomplished in an entirely different way. Yet with the clarinet it is necessary, first, to eliminate any trace of stomach or throat vibrato. Practice long notes with a perfectly straight tone. After this procedure, the proper vibrato may be practiced as follows: using a variation in the pressure of the lower lip on the reed to control the speed of the vibrato, practice long tones and change the pressure of the lower lip in values of quarter notes, then eighth notes, keeping the tempo slow and uniform. This pressure tends to make a pulsation in the flow of air into the instrument. This pulsation can be felt in the form of an oscillation of air in the mouth. The speed of this pulsation is a matter of individual taste. A good way to check this is to listen to the world's outstanding instrumental and vocal artists with the purpose of imitating them.

A great many clarinetists produce a vibrato by squeezing or relaxing the reed too much, thus giving a decided vibration in pitch and a rather offensive sound.

In studying this book remember to keep your playing clean cut and precise at all times.