

From Beginner to Intermediate Clarinetist

Crossing the Break

Going from the Chalumeau to the Clarion Register

Chalumeau Register

Clarion Register



Beginner

Intermediate

William R. Higgins

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Introduction

The most difficult time for beginning clarinet players comes when *crossing the break* occurs. Crossing the break refers to playing notes that move from the chalumeau to the clarion register or vice-versa (figure #1). The difficulty in doing this lies in the need to have all 9 fingers move in a coordinated effort to cover or uncover holes and depress keys at exactly the same time

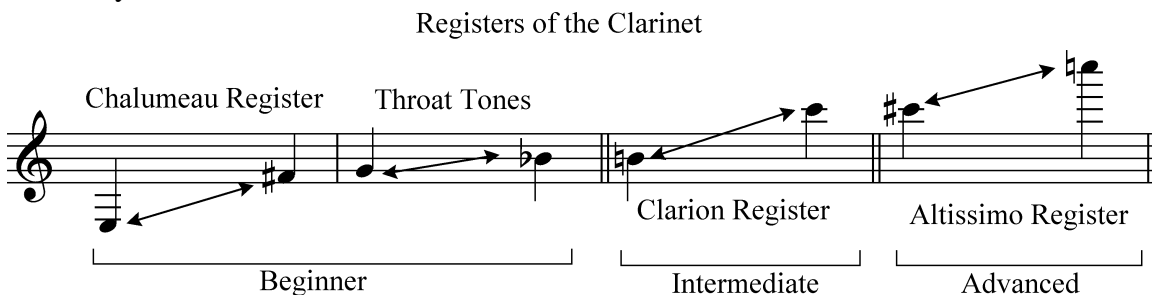


Figure #1

Basic Preparation

1. Students must have developed excellent hand positions.
2. Students must have developed a firm embouchure.
3. Students must be able to play the complete chalumeau register from throat Bb to low E in F major.
4. Students must be able to begin any single tone in the chalumeau register from throat Bb to low E.

Ideal Hand Position

The Left Hand “Guide Position”

1. The left thumb is held close to the index finger in order to place the side of the index finger on the G# key and at the same time over the end of the A key (figure #2).
2. The third finger is stretched as necessary to reach and close the C hole.
3. The little finger rests on the edge of the low E key.
4. Fingers 1 and 2 curve onto the E and D holes respectively.

A Practical Left Hand Position for Young Hands

The unfortunate problem with hand position for young students is the size of the hands and the difficulty they have getting their hands in an ideal position. The goal is to have their hands in the “best” possible position so, as they grow, they will develop an ideal position with as little adaptation as possible.

The Right-Hand “Guide Position”

1. *The entire weight of the clarinet must be supported by the right thumb.* This is a major problem for young students and is the cause of much of the problems with hand position. Frequent rests are necessary to build up strength in the right-hand thumb. A neck strap to assist in holding the clarinet can be useful at this time.
2. The thumb must be straight and form a “backward C” with the index finger. The thumb should not be permitted to touch the index finger at any point. The index finger may not assist in holding the clarinet by touching the side Eb key.
3. In general, the thumb should place a “fingerprint” on the back of the clarinet so that the weight of the clarinet is placed on the “side” of the thumb. While there are permissible variations in the thumb position, the clarinet should not be supported by the thumb nail. A thumb pad is recommended for beginning students until they build up a callous on the side of the thumb
4. Fingers 1,2,3 are placed on the Bb, A, and G tone holes respectively. This may require a “reach” of the arm for small students.
5. The little finger rests on the low F key.

Important Note:

The hands and arms should not be moved from these positions when playing. If the hands and/or arms must be moved in order to play low F and E, the student may not be physically big enough to find success in crossing the break.




Figure 2


Left-Hand Preparatory Exercises


Practice each exercise TEN times keeping your hands in "Guide Position" at all times

1 

2 

3 

4 

5 

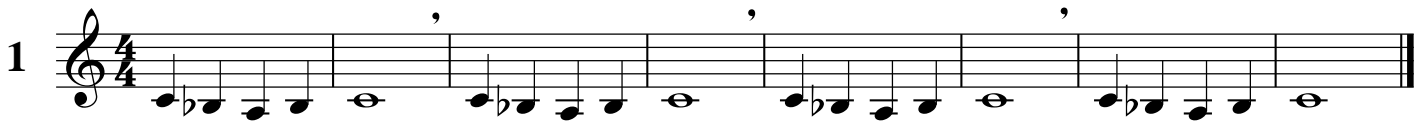
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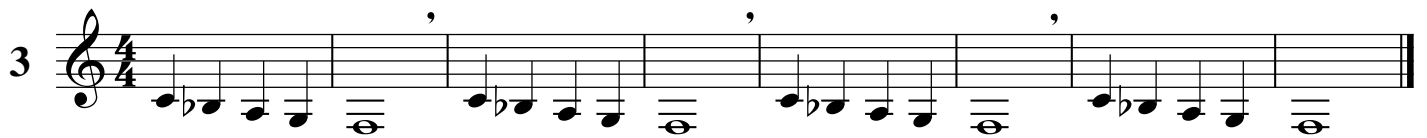
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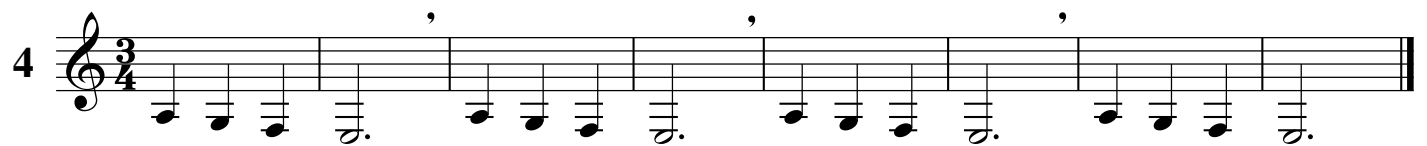
Right-Hand Preparatory Exercises

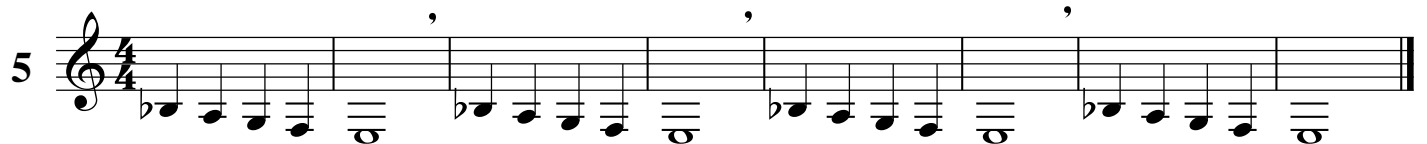
Practice each exercise TEN times keeping the hands in "Guide Position" at all times.

1 

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Exercises Going Above the "Break"

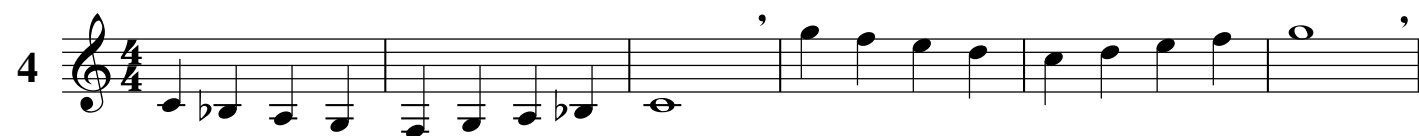
Only the "tip" of the thumb moves to open the register key when changing registers.

1 

2 

3 



4 



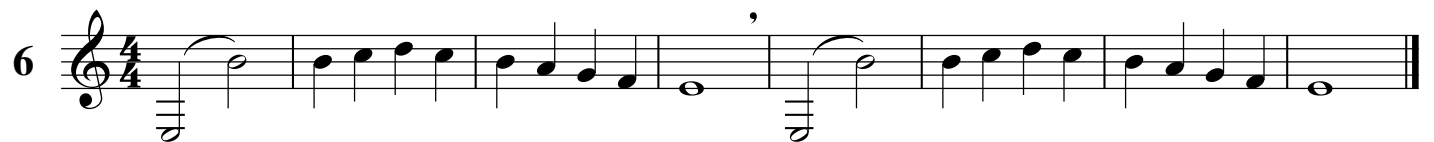
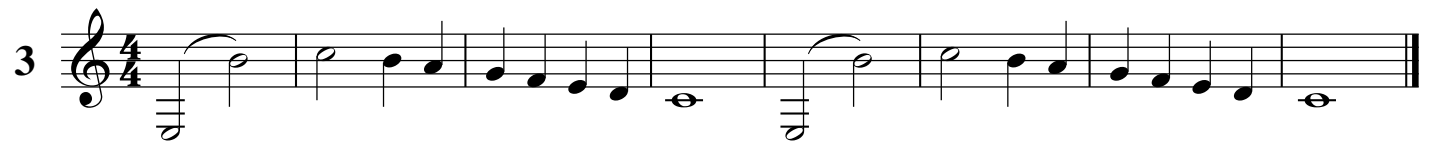
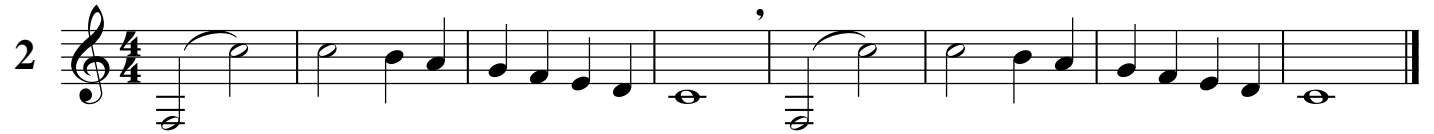
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7 

Crossing the "Break" Coming Down

Keep hands in "Guide Position" at all times
Move quickly and smoothly from one fingering to the next+



*  Keep Right Hand Down

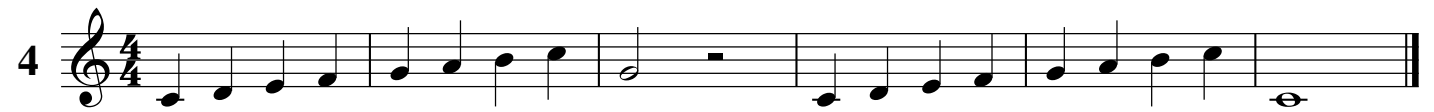
Crossing the "Break" Going Up

Keep hands in "Guide Position" at all times
Move quickly and smoothly from one fingering to the next+

1 

2 

3 

4 

5 

6 

7 

8 

*  Keep Right Hand Down

Melodies that Cross the "Break"

Go Tell It On The Mountain

African-American Folksong

1

Musical notation for 'Go Tell It On The Mountain' in 4/4 time. The melody is written on a single staff in treble clef. It begins with a quarter rest, followed by a series of quarter notes: G4, A4, B4, C5. This is followed by a half note G4 with an accent, then a quarter note E4. The melody continues with quarter notes: F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4. The piece concludes with a half note G4 with an accent, followed by a quarter note E4.

Green Grow The Lilacs

Irish Folk Tune

2

Musical notation for 'Green Grow The Lilacs' in 3/4 time. The melody is written on a single staff in treble clef. It begins with a quarter note G4, followed by quarter notes: A4, B4, C5. This is followed by a half note G4 with an accent, then a quarter note E4. The melody continues with quarter notes: F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4. The piece concludes with a half note G4 with an accent, followed by a quarter note E4.

All Through the Night

Welsh Folksong

3

Musical notation for 'All Through the Night' in 4/4 time. The melody is written on a single staff in treble clef. It begins with a quarter note G4, followed by quarter notes: A4, B4, C5. This is followed by a half note G4 with an accent, then a quarter note E4. The melody continues with quarter notes: F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4. The piece concludes with a half note G4 with an accent, followed by a quarter note E4.

Lonesome Dove

American Folksong

4

Musical notation for 'Lonesome Dove' in 4/4 time. The melody is written on a single staff in treble clef. It begins with a quarter note G4, followed by quarter notes: A4, B4, C5. This is followed by a half note G4 with an accent, then a quarter note E4. The melody continues with quarter notes: F4, G4, A4, B4, C5, B4, A4, G4, F4, E4, D4. The piece concludes with a half note G4 with an accent, followed by a quarter note E4.

* Keep Right Hand Down

Song of Thanksgiving

Netherlands Hymn

5

Musical notation for 'Song of Thanksgiving' in 3/4 time, featuring a melody with various note values and rests.

Yankee Doodle

American Folksong

6

Musical notation for 'Yankee Doodle' in 2/4 time, featuring a melody with eighth and sixteenth notes.

Black Is The Color Of My True Love's Hair

American Folksong

7

Musical notation for 'Black Is The Color Of My True Love's Hair' in 4/4 time, featuring a melody with dotted notes and rests.

Red River Valley

American Folksong

8

Musical notation for 'Red River Valley' in 4/4 time, featuring a melody with eighth notes and rests.

This Train

African-American Folksong

9

Musical notation for 'This Train' in 4/4 time, featuring a melody with eighth notes and rests.

Londonderry Air

Old Irish Tune

10

Musical notation for the Londonderry Air, measures 10 through 13. The piece is in 4/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes with various rests and accidentals.

Rock-a My Soul [Keep Right Hand Down At All Times]

African-American Spiritual

11

Musical notation for Rock-a My Soul, measures 11 through 12. The piece is in 4/4 time. The melody features eighth notes, quarter notes, and half notes, with some notes marked with accents.

Polly Wolly Doodle [Keep Right Hand Down At All Times]

American Folksong

12

Musical notation for Polly Wolly Doodle, measures 12 through 14. The piece is in common time (C). The melody is characterized by eighth-note patterns and quarter notes, with some notes marked with accents.