

BANDMASTER STUDIO

Clarinet / Sax / Flute

“The Art of Practicing”

Good things to remember:

1. Practice involves working on material with the concept of making corrections and improvements.
2. Playing involves doing what you already know how to do.
3. Practicing correctly yields higher proficiency. It is the key to greater success.
4. Question: How do I practice correctly/effectively?
Answer: Establish goals in your practice. Determine what are the areas of greatest need relative to each piece.
5. Question: How do I know what “areas” to focus on in my practice?
Answer: Listen—use your ears. Observe—use a mirror for embouchure check, hand position, etc. Monitor tempos.
6. Practice makes permanent, so having a systematic approach to proper practice is important.

Recommended Practice Session:

1. Warm up (Long tones—Work for greater control and beauty of the sound)
2. Technical Studies (Concentrate heavily on scales, thirds, and arpeggios)
3. Etudes (Approach them as an unaccompanied solo)
4. Solos and Excerpts (Reflective of and dependent on the level of the player)
5. Sight Reading (Duets and rhythmic patterns)

Practical tips before starting to Practice:

1. Determine what you intend to accomplish. Some sessions might focus more or less in certain areas, but know what you need to work on and stick to it. Having a list is a great idea, and use it to check things off as you go!
2. Work with your metronome. Practice at a variety of tempos, always progressing slower to faster as controllable.
3. Utilize a variety of articulations when practicing scales and arpeggios.
4. Apply what I call the “3 to 5” rule. If you can play something accurately 3 times in a row at a certain tempo, try going for 4 or 5 times in a row accurately and cleanly at the same tempo, or increase the tempo slightly and start again.
5. Above all, learn to be a critical listener. This doesn’t mean you beat yourself up every time you make a mistake, but that you genuinely begin to evaluate your own playing. Don’t be lured into proud mediocrity.

Practical factors for good tone production:

Characteristic embouchure, proper breath control, good posture, and listening.

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