Starting Beginning Flute and Clarinet Students

A Focus on Teaching Characteristic Tone Quality

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An Overview …

- What IS “Characteristic Tone” and why is it important?
- What does it *sound* like?
- What does it “*look*” like?
- How do I go there?
- Learning to hear and observe problems.

Characteristic Tone Quality

- Beginners can sound ***GREAT***!
- Flute: Edgy, dense, focused
- Clarinet: Dark, dense, focused
- Know what good tone sounds like.
- If you cannot produce characteristic sound, find someone who CAN.

Embouchures

- Correct embouchure formation drives a great sound!
- Must have a mirror on each stand…Get cheap unbreakable ones.
- Learn to use a step-by-step process of instruction…
- Simple instructions always.

Flute Embouchure

- Lips together NATURALLY: no smiling, puckering, or other contortions
- Blow an air stream through the middle of the lips: Hole (aperture) in lips must be tiny and air must be FAST
- Take index finger across air stream and listen for “WHOOSH”

Flute Whoosh

Now, let’s add the flute…

- SAME relaxed embouchure…
- Place the head joint so that the inside edge of the tone hole is right where skin of the lip meets the skin of the chin
- AND the tone hole is aligned with the air stream
- And lip plate parallel to ground
- You should be able to stand directly in front of the flute student and just see the dip of the tone hole.

Flute With Head joint

Flute Logistics

- Remember: Start with NO part of the instrument (whoosh)
- Progress to head joint
- When tone is clear and edgy, THEN assemble the instrument
- First note: G (more stable)
- Next notes: A, B
- Three note songs

Clarinet Logistics

- Assemble only the mouthpiece, barrel, ligature, and a 2.5 strength reed.
- Align the reed on the mouthpiece, making sure you can just see a rim of black behind the tip of the reed.
- Make sure the reed is straight on the flat part of the mouthpiece.
- Just tighten the ligature until the screws catch.

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Clarinet Embouchure

- While holding the barrel and mouthpiece, place approximately 1/2 of the lower lip over lower teeth
- Place the top of the mouthpiece in contact with the upper teeth - with about 1/2 inch mouthpiece in mouth
- Bring the corners of the mouth in, as if saying “Q” and make a seal around the mouthpiece
- Blow “Heeee” - COOL air.