



YAMAHA

Educator Series

WIND INSTRUMENTS



Mary Karen Clardy

Mary Karen Clardy, Professor of Flute in the College of Music at the University of North Texas, tours as a solo and chamber artist throughout the US, Europe, Asia and South America. Renowned as a teacher, her students regularly win top prizes in national and international competitions and hold positions in orchestras, universities and colleges throughout the world.

How to Practice

By Mary Karen Clardy

Daily practice is necessary for flutists at every stage, including beginners, intermediate, advanced, and professional performers. Tone and technique are developed and maintained through practice, and a routine should be constantly revised in order to work on specific difficulties, new concepts, and to avoid boredom, which occurs through the repetitive process of using the same methods or materials on a daily basis. In addition to embouchure strengthening and muscle development, practice should be an opportunity to explore solutions for difficult finger patterns, breath control issues, and questions of musical phrasing. Individual strengths and weaknesses change constantly, so remember to listen and adjust practice to reflect current challenges. Here are my suggestions to increase efficiency in practice and “raise the bar” in your own flute playing.

Identify the key and time signature. Play the scale and arpeggio in various ways (slurred, articulated, backwards, forwards) to prepare for all musical situations. Count several measures aloud to establish the meter and pulse.

Visually scan the music. Identify musical patterns such as scale/ arpeggio fragments, sequences, repetitions, transpositions, similar rhythms, etc., to improve accuracy and reduce practice time.

Count and sing/verbalize. Practicing once aloud before adding the complication of the mechanics of playing increases efficiency in learning. Even if you aren't on the way to a career at the Metropolitan Opera, sing or say the names of the pitches aloud as you finger the notes to speed up the learning process!

Play perfectly the first time. Choose a slower speed than marked in order to play perfectly the first time. This builds confidence, musical accuracy, and improves the final product by eliminating the need to correct a mistake that occurs when playing too fast the first time.

Create an exercise from the difficult parts. After you identify the challenging technical passages, write your own exercises for practice. This develops independence of thought and increases concentration skills. Try these examples: up or down an octave, different rhythms, transposed, order of pitches reversed, etc.

Record your practice. Listen to the recording as you watch the score, identifying and marking the mistakes you hear. This will develop listening skills and focus on the issue of “what we play” versus “what we think we play.” Accurate listening involves guidance from teachers and conductors plus experience, so establish good listening habits by recording practice sessions.

Vary your practice routine. Changing the order of daily practice eliminates mental boredom, adding excitement and energy to your practice. For example, alternate repertoire with exercises or etudes, then leave some “free time” for sightreading, duets, or improvisation.

Enjoy your practice. Attitude determines success in every activity, so approach practice with a positive attitude. Keep your energy level high by taking breaks, then reward great practice with an activity you enjoy such as a walk outside, a glass of water, a telephone call to a friend, etc.

Learning new practice methods develops concentration and improves technique at any age, so try these simple suggestions for immediate results in your daily practice. Remember, “More enjoyable practice leads to more practice!”



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