



ClariNotes



Circular Breathing 4 Steps Toward Longer Phrases

1) Play With Your Cheeks Out (Dizzy Gillespie Style)

- Get used to the sensation of playing your clarinet with your cheeks puffed out. Circular breathing is accomplished by filling the cheeks with air. You need to train your cheek muscles to maintain tone quality while pushing the air out of the cheeks and through the clarinet.

2) Expel / Inhale

- Without the clarinet, fill your cheeks with air, while squeezing the air out of your mouth (with a very small aperture at this point), inhale through your nose. Try and coordinate these actions simultaneously. Use a straw in water as well to visually confirm the air expelling through the straw while inhaling through your nose.

3) Mouthpiece/Barrel Exercise

- Repeat step two using the barrel and the mouthpiece. This F# will be less resistant and easier to produce. Make sure the note is played while inhaling through your nose. After inhaling, immediately start playing again. Before you are out of air, puff your cheeks and repeat the process. When this is starting to work, try this with the entire clarinet, using the throat tones.



4) Getting The Fingers Moving

- Start moving your fingers in 16th notes as soon as possible while circular breathing. This is surprisingly challenging at first given the concentration it takes to coordinate the breathing. Use the following patterns as exercises.



HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?

Learning anything new takes consistent daily practice. Circular breathing is no exception. It took me about one month before I could complete each of the above steps. Even then, it was obvious when I was taking a breath. Masking the breath is easier when playing descending moving lines. Coordination will

improve over time. After three months I was ready to use it in performance. It is a wonderful technique to learn and worth all of the effort. You never know when you might need an extra breath. This is a great technique to have in your bag of tricks.

About This Newsletter

My intention for this newsletter is to offer tips and techniques for teaching and playing clarinet. It is designed for teachers and students alike. The clarinet is unlike many of the other woodwinds in approach to voicing, articulation, and register change. I hope that this will become a great resource for anyone wanting to improve their clarinet technique.

Feel free to contact me with questions.

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