BASS CLARINET

Performance Notes for 2012-2013 All-State Band Auditions
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JUNIOR BAND: First Book of Practical Studies for Clarinet, Hovey / Belwin // p. 14, #21, play first three lines; quarter note = 126.

- This etude is marked “Robusto”; it should be played confidently with a strong, full sound from beginning to end. Please note that I have recorded it a little faster than your instructed tempo; it is best to aim for the suggested tempo of quarter = 126.
- Always practice with a metronome on eighth note subdivisions. Practice it slowly until it is perfect, gradually increasing the tempo.
- Isolate the measures that are difficult for you, working them very slowly with the metronome, repeating them several times until perfect.
- Count the dotted-quarter-note-eighth-note rhythm very carefully, making sure to give the dotted quarters their full 1.5 beats and place the eighth notes on the up-beats.
- Carefully observe all articulation markings, doing exactly what is written.
- Play all tongued eighth notes staccato, as you would in a march. Play the other notes with a longer articulation.
- Take a breath every four measures, and do NOT breathe after measure 6. It is tempting to breathe after this half note, but this is actually the middle of the phrase and the low F should be sustained for its full 2 beats.
- The Bs in measures 7, 9, and 13 are marked with a natural – use the middle finger here, not the first finger!
- There are a few places in this etude where you have to cross the break: measures 10, 11-12, and 14. In every case you are going to C, so put your right hand down on the note before the C, including your right-hand pinky finger. (You can always put your right hand down before going over the break on throat G, G-sharp, A, and B-flat). Ask a more advanced clarinetist or your band director to check your fingerings.
- Put a slight crescendo on the last phrase and end with confidence!

CLINIC BAND: Concert and Contest Collection for Bass Clarinet / Voxman / Hal Leonard // pp. 8-9, "Allegro" from Concerto No. 8 in B-flat by Handel, start after the eighth rest in measure 50 and play to the end; quarter note = 104.

General Comments:
The challenge in this solo is keeping the tonguing light while going over the break AND playing piano. Make sure that your piano is soft but not softer than you can play with a good, clear, supported sound. Keep the air moving through the sixteenth notes. Keep your right hand down on the throat tones to make going over the break easier. Keep the tongued
notes fairly short but not “pecky” – they should be light and sound “easy” but not too short. Carefully observe all dynamic markings. Take nice big breaths on the rests, but stay in tempo.

Always, always, ALWAYS practice with a metronome. Go over the difficult sixteenth note passages very, very slowly using altered rhythms. Make sure the sixteenth notes are even and whatever you do, don’t rush them!

Specific Comments:
- Measure 57 is tricky because of the trill, followed by the decrescendo, and the breath mark. Practice the eighth notes under the trill without the trill for a while, carefully counting the dotted-eighth-sixteenth rhythm. Once you are comfortable with that, add the trill back in. Don’t worry about the decrescendo too much – the notes are descending and they are at the end of a phrase, so there will be a natural decrescendo. Take some extra time on the breath to get a good, healthy breath but don’t take forever – practice this transition.
- Really go for the forte in measure 64 but make sure that your crescendo leading up to it is steady and consistent.
- Note the poco ritard at the end. Save most of the slowing down for the last four notes.


General Comments:
Practice this solo very, very slowly with a metronome on the eighth-note subdivision. Make sure that the dotted-quarter notes are held for exactly 1.5 beats – the tendency is to rush these. Isolate the sixteenth-note passages, going over them very slowly, making sure that they are even, not too fast (we all tend to rush technical passages), and that you are playing the correct accidentals. Also practice the sixteenth-note passages tongued, and practice them with altered rhythms. As you are learning the piece for the first time, mark the correct left and right pinky fingerings, making sure that you never “slide” between keys. (You may need to ask a more advanced clarinetist or your band director for help with this.) Also, keep your right hand down in the throat register as much as possible to make going over the break easier.

This solo not only shows off your technical abilities, but it also shows the judges your ability to play musically and expressively. The composer has given you detailed instructions, using lots of “hairpin” crescendos and decrescendos, and dynamic markings from pp to ff. Follow these instructions carefully. The person listening to you should know which dynamics you are playing without looking at the music. Show the judges what a mature musician you are---they will be impressed.

Specific Comments:
- Hear the eighth-note subdivision in your head before you begin, and count the dotted quarter very carefully. Keep this subdivision in your head throughout the entire solo.
- Start very softly, because the first piano sets your dynamic levels for the rest of the piece.
- Note the long crescendo beginning in measure 17 and ending on the D in measure 23. Come down in enough in measure 16 to give you plenty of room to crescendo, and don’t get too loud
too soon. Make sure that the *ritard* in measure 22 is gradual – do most of the slowing down in measure 24 to set up the *a tempo*.

- Take a healthy breath before the *a tempo* but make sure that you return to your original tempo. The overall feeling of this section should be a bit “brighter” and move forward slightly.

- There are two places with slurs over dots: in measure 26 and in the synonymous measure in the next phrase, measure 30. This looks confusing, but all it means is to lightly tongue the notes under the dots *legato* style.

- Note the syncopated rhythm in measures 33 and 35--- count carefully, and subdivide into eighth notes.

- The accents in measures 40, 46, and 47 are not in same style as accents you might find in marches, for example. Simply “lean” a bit on these notes, as if they had *tenuto* markings on them. Whatever you do, do NOT hit them harder with your tongue, separate the notes, or “huff” on them--- that’s not what the composer is asking for.

- If you really want to impress the judges, take care to make the *pp* on the recapitulation of the theme in measure 49 substantially softer than the *p* you used in the opening, or at least in measure 48.