



## BOOK REVIEW

*Paglialonga, Phillip O. (2015).*

### SQUEAK BIG — PRACTICAL FUNDAMENTALS FOR THE SUCCESSFUL CLARINETIST.

Medina, NY: Imagine Music Publishing.

*Review by Leigh O. Barkley*

Ever have a band director tell you when you make a mistake to make it a big one? I know I have heard that slogan many times over the years and have used it myself with my own students in an effort to encourage confident playing. In his cleverly titled book *Squeak Big*, Dr. Phillip O. Paglialonga takes the guesswork out of clarinet playing by offering in-depth content on everything from the basic fundamentals of playing the clarinet to more advanced practice techniques and scale work, promoting confidence in clarinet players both novice and advanced.

The book is divided into four sections: pedagogy, effective practicing, daily elements and additional resources. Accompanied by inspiring (and often humorous) quotes by distinguished clarinetists, each chapter relays information through comprehensive pictures, charts and exercises as well as personal and professional experience. Practical information is conveyed along with an explanation of the theory behind those best practices to not only

inform the reader on what to do, but also to explain why what they are doing works. After discussing the fundamentals of embouchure, tone production, articulation and reeds, Dr. Paglialonga also includes over 40 pages of scale exercises developed over years of his own playing experience (revised and/or adapted from the teachings of the Philadelphia School of Clarinet Playing, Daniel Bonade, Carl Baermann, Daniel Gilbert and Fred Ormand) to put the academic content into practice.

One of the keys to successful pedagogy is not to just tell someone how to do something, but to show them. What Dr. Paglialonga does so well in his section on pedagogy is show the reader rather than just telling by including detailed pictures displaying proper embouchure, instrument angle, breathing exercises, fingerings, hand position, use of the tongue in articulations and reed essentials. Where pictures won't suffice, he includes charts and practical exercises to accomplish the goals discussed in each chapter.

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(cont.)

The following section on effective practicing outlines what many experienced musicians have come to know over years of trial and error, but many younger, less experienced students have often never been taught. He outlines several different approaches to practicing difficult passages including some excerpts from the clarinet literature and the specifics of how he approaches the technical challenges and why he selected that particular method of practicing, acknowledging that practicing is a personal endeavor and that each student has to find the technique that works best for them.

Overall, I was impressed by the clarity of the descriptions and techniques throughout the book and his succinct writing style. One example is his six steps to forming an embouchure. Dr. Paglialonga lists the steps in clear language any musician could understand, clarinet player or not, and then follows up with a helpful chart explaining potential issues, the probable cause and which specific steps in forming the embouchure to review. Another example includes his approach to creating a beautiful tone through relaxation and breathing. He explains how maximizing air with a relaxed throat and proper tongue position is essential to creating a beautiful tone on the clarinet, but he also includes exercises to help put the theory into practice. Many books on instrumental pedagogy contain the theory but don't always include exercises geared toward successfully mastering the technique or skill.

Squeak Big is a quick read at 109 pages, and those pages are packed full of extremely valuable information. This book is a great read for any clarinet player looking to improve their tone, technique, and overall musicianship. As a band director, this book is a valuable resource for building stronger clarinet sections, especially if the band director does not have a background in clarinet. Clarinet players squeak, my students squeak, and I tell my students that I still squeak from time to time. But by reading and adhering to the fundamentals in the book Squeak Big, you won't be hearing much squeaking anymore.

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