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**BACK TO
SCHOOL**

Squeak Big: Practical Fundamentals for the Successful Clarinetist

Review

Review by Dr. Jennifer Tinberg

The many elements involved in playing the clarinet can be challenging to both beginning and advanced clarinetists. For educators that do not specialize in clarinet, the multitude of possible problems in a clarinet section can be frustrating. Dr. Phillip O. Paglialonga's book, *Squeak Big: Practical Fundamentals for the Successful Clarinetist*, addresses all aspects of clarinet playing in both practice and teaching.

Squeak Big is presented in four sections: Pedagogy, Effective Practicing, Daily Elements, and Additional Resources. Of these sections, Pedagogy is the largest, encompassing the full spectrum of clarinet fundamentals. It includes basics, such as breathing and embouchure, as well as more advanced ideas, such as tone development and legato finger motion. In these chapters, Paglialonga describes each concept, includes visual examples, and provides both conceptual and practical exercises. Concepts such as posture, tone development, and relaxation are given equal weight to more traditional method book exercises, which most often highlight finger technique and articulation.



Paglialonga's descriptions and examples of concepts are some of the most attractive parts of his method book. The addition of conceptual exercises is very useful for educators working with beginning students, since they allow students to see or feel the concept in a basic form before applying it to their clarinet playing. Concepts such as tonguing are often simple to explain, but very challenging in practice. The inclusion of exercises that allow students to see and experiment with reed vibration and pressure is a huge benefit when teaching something that we cannot accurately monitor visually. By linking these simple demonstrations to more standard tonguing etudes, educators are provided with excellent teaching strategies for all levels of clarinet students.

The section on embouchure would be of particular interest to non-clarinetist music educators. Besides excellent descriptions of forming and maintaining a good embouchure, this section also includes a chart of common issues heard in clarinet playing, with the corresponding embouchure problem and methods to correct the issue. Unlike many other clarinet methods, *Squeak Big* encourages students and music teachers to be aware of the great variety of clarinet tones found when listening to professional performers. This fosters ideas of musicality and expression, while providing strong fundamentals in basic techniques. A discussion of practice techniques and a proposed scale routine are additional resources that round out Paglialonga's comprehensive guide to clarinet playing.

Squeak Big is a unique resource that is accessible to all levels of clarinet playing. The clear descriptions, visual examples, and complete scope of topics makes it a fantastic book for both advanced clarinetists and music educators. *Squeak Big* is published by Imagine Music Publishing, and can be purchased at www.squeakbig.com.

Paglialonga, Phillip O., *Squeak Big: Practical Fundamentals for the Successful Clarinetist*. Medina, NY: Imagine Music Publishing, 2015.

Dr. Jennifer Tinberg is a lecturer of music at Troy University, where she has taught music theory and applied clarinet. She maintains a studio of middle and high school clarinetists in addition to her active performance schedule.

