

## Tone for Clarinet Ensemble



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### Abstract

Tones for Clarinet Ensemble is a music composition based on a pedagogical subject of sound production on clarinet. Its compositional materials derive from sound controlling techniques, such as, blowing through a mouthpiece in different pitches and various intensities, and realisation of overtone series of selected pitches.

The piece is comprised of three sections. The first part introduces a technique for mouthpiece playing along with a hint of experimental music, which demonstrates a teaching session introduced by the clarinet section leader who would choose a certain pitch played through the mouthpiece. This part begins with a series of long holding notes and gradually progresses into a larger interval. The second part demonstrates overtone series based on selected fundamental tones in order to help the clarinetists of the ensemble to get accustomed to the overtone series and correctly apply this knowledge into their concept of tone production. In the last part both mouthpiece playing technique and overtone series playing are uniformly combined. The portamento technique on mouthpiece playing is emphasized. The clarinetists have to cope with an expanded range melodic line where they have to apply the skill of tone production introduced in the early part to achieve the musical expression and musical goal in dissimilar musical contexts.

In music composition procedure there are experimental sessions with the clarinetists in the subject of tone production by learning it through playing on mouthpiece, recognizing over tone series, and rehearsing those techniques with the ensemble leads into results. The clarinetists who could not play as many pitches on the mouthpiece will not be able to connect notes smoothly and to accomplish a good tone quality while playing through an extreme dynamic change. In contrast those who achieve in playing mouthpiece with wider

range and well recognize the overtone series will have better control over high notes, full resonated sound, better legato on expanded range, precise tone attack, and evenness of tone in different intensity.

## Background

Possessing a good tone quality is one of the most important properties of musicians.<sup>1</sup> Since sound is subjective, it is difficult to explain in words by the teachers. Listening is a main tool for teaching in sound production and in playing musical instruments.

Keith Stein<sup>2</sup> referred that the beginning clarinet students cannot produce a better sound than pre-determined concept of tone. Therefore, it is necessary for teachers to demonstrate by playing some notes or melodies and introduces a good sound model from legendary clarinetists for the students. The clarinetists who vigorously want to develop their tone quality mostly increase their sound experience by attending concerts, listening to CDs of the famous musicians not restricted to their own instrument and could emulate those tone in order to improve sound quality and to possess a unique and great tone.

Improving clarinet tone requires a better understanding of sound elements as a physical phenomena. Then the clarinetists try to connect the idea to musical instruments' playing. John Borwick referred to harmonics in sound that "a great intensity of sound from most musical instruments is a result of patterns of simultaneous establishing of several modes of vibration when one plays a musical instrument. In example, a vibrating reed of a clarinet can oscillate a whole to generate the fundamental tone that setting up the pitch of the note we hear."<sup>3</sup> Reginald Bain gave a definition of overtone series that comprises of a set of frequency elements present above a musical tone.<sup>4</sup> While harmonic series is a better word for a clear understanding and is used extensively both in music and mathematics. Michèle Gingras supports the idea in that seeking series or harmonic partials of clarinet sound especially when playing the fundamental note the realisation overtone series will help the clarinetists adjust their embouchure for a proper airflow's direction and make continuous air stream when connecting large intervals seamlessly and adjusting to a precise intonation.

<sup>1</sup> Kohut, Daniel L. Musical Performance: Learning Theory and Pedagogy. (Illinois: Stipes Publishing L.L.C., 1992) p. 56.  
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<sup>2</sup> A well known clarinet teacher and author of The Art of Clarinet Playing

<sup>3</sup> Stein, Keith. The Art of Clarinet Playing. (New Jersey: Summy-Birchard, 1994) 31.

<sup>4</sup> Gingras, Michèle. Clarinet Secrets: 52 Performance Strategies for the Advance Clarinetist. (Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2004) p. 64.

### Problem Statement/ Statement Significance

Almost 20 years that the researcher has involved in teaching and developing Thai clarinetists, the improvement on clarinet's playing technique becomes noticeable especially increasing difficult level of fast fingering technique from the clarinet repertoire used among the high-school to college clarinet students. Mostly the students would select the repertoire required technical dexterity, and often ignore to emphasize playing with good tone quality. They often participate in marching band competitions in Thailand with their school band. In this type of music, the students will need play with loud dynamic frequently, which is hard to control a good tone quality as to compete with the louder brass and percussion. The way of playing this music causes a poor sound concept greatly. Therefore this research aims for a realisation of vocal tract control, as well as, learning and controlling overtone series of fundamental notes on clarinet. This knowledge of sound production will help the students well understand a correct sound production. Consequently the researcher has applied the concept of sound production to write a music composition for clarinet ensemble and clarinet students from Silpakorn University. Having learning experiences through workshops regarding to the sound production's concept and the rehearsals of the music composition will help the students develop a better tone.

#### Fundamental practicing and tone improvement

1. An ability to play a reference pitch on Bb clarinet's mouthpiece and the mouthpiece with barrel can help identify a proper formation of embouchure in that the students who get a note higher than the reference pitch will often tend to have too loose embouchure, on the other hands, the ones who get the lower pitch than that relates to an excessively tight embouchure. Ricardo Dorado Freire said that to achieve a better musical result playing a clarinet is a complicate task, which associates with a coordination of facial muscle, the vocal tract and aural feedback. A successful clarinet practice and performance relates to managing and comprehension of sound information as stated some insights in Psychoacoustics.<sup>5</sup>

Clarinet performance is a very complex activity in which it is necessary to coordinate facial muscles, the vocal tract and aural feedback in order to get a good musical result.

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<sup>5</sup> Freire, Ricardo D. "Psychoacoustic effects of overtones and undertones on clarinet voicing: developing the tone through collaborative practice with two clarinets." (Paper presented at the meeting of ClarinetFest International Conference, Assisi, July 24-28, 2013) p. 1.

Psychoacoustics offers some insights on how people could organize and comprehend sound information that will lead to an effective clarinet practice and performance.

2. Adjusting embouchure to accommodate an accurate pitch of mouthpiece and barrel is certainly beneficial for a better intonation. As a sensitive musician, a quick intonation adjustment is required. The idea of this practice should be applied not only adjusting after starting a note, but also preparing a pre-determined pitch before beginning of the sound. Commonly to adjust an embouchure for a precise intonation needs very small increment of adjustment. However if the clarinetists can play more pitches on mouthpiece which can be extreme as wide as an octave on both up and down direction, this can be connected to a glissando technique. The clarinetists who could produce a sound similar to that of string instruments' technique called 'portamento' has showed that they are able to gliding notes on mouthpiece in both ascending and descending direction. The smoother of the gliding notes, the more effective glissando technique the clarinetists can accomplish.

3. Realisation of overtone series is tremendously beneficial for improving tone quality. A proper embouchure formation can be achieved by recognizing the overtone series produced by the fundamental notes and playing the overtone series from an inner hearing will allow the clarinetists to obtain a richer resonance and a better sound projection.

### Objective / Aim

1. Introduce essential fundamentals for clarinet tone production
2. Extend repertoire for clarinet ensemble

### Methodology

1. collect relevant data of clarinet tone production
2. devise sessions of workshops and rehearsals to collect necessary materials used in the music composition
3. apply the selected materials into a compositional material
4. write a music composition as based on planned structure
5. rehearse and correct the music score for best possible sound
6. perform the piece in the concert venue

### Conclusion and significance

Tones for Clarinet Ensemble helps teaching and learning clarinet's tone production systematically. The beginning of the experiment regarding to tone production conducted in

several workshop sessions where the researcher uses as a tool for developing compositional materials and improving skill of the clarinetists in tone improvement. The observation of the conducted sessions demonstrates that only a few students could play several pitches on the mouthpiece. As the sessions progress, more students could expand a wider range on plying mouthpiece, and this allow them to be able to play glissando technique effectively.

Using the overtone series in clarinet playing helps the clarinetists play higher notes more accurately and connect the wide intervals smoothly. Nevertheless, playing an extreme large intervals can cause an inaccurate intonation among the clarinetists. Therefore it is necessary to include such practice in a daily practicing basis.

The students improve their tone quality as a result of practicing, participating, and rehearsing through their individual part, workshops, and rehearsal

1. Associating a pedagogical content in a musical composition has shown a significant improvement of a certain technical skill among the musicians in the ensemble. Similar to playing etudes or exercises, rehearsing and performing the piece based on a teaching aspect can develop the musicians through playing experiences. Learning how to perform music properly, especially in ensemble playing, requires hours of practicing and a better understanding of how to achieve a particular playing technique within a playing strategy offered by the colleagues who can do the technique successfully. Tones for Clarinet Ensemble features clarinet tone techniques and provides elements of a sound environment giving the students experience of producing a good tone quality through workshops and rehearsals of related sound component to the music composition. As a result, the students playing in the clarinet ensemble can successfully apply the knowledge and the fundamentals of tone production in the actual performance of the composition. The clarinetists develop their tone through the sound of the ensemble because learning to produce a good sound can be successful only through imitating the best sound of a superior musician.

## Bibliography

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- Weerts, Richard K. The Clarinet Choir. Journal of Research in Music Education, 3 (Autumn, 1964): 227-230.

**Program Note Form including these details :**

**Song title** Tone for Clarinet Ensemble

**Composer's name** Yos Vaneesorn

**Brief history of song**

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have to apply the skill of tone production introduced in the early part to achieve the musical expression and musical goal in dissimilar musical contexts.

**Presenter's name**    Yos Vaneesorn



**Presenter's profile picture**

#### **Brief biography of Presenter**

Yos Vaneesorn graduated with a Bachelor Degree in Music Composition from Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok Thailand in 1996. In 2002 and 2004, he was offered full scholarships from Louisiana State University and University of Missouri at Kansas-City to pursue his clarinet study in Master's and Doctoral degrees in Music Performance. His teachers include Nopachai Choltidchantha, Stanley Hasty, Steven Barta, Steve Cohen, and Jane Carl.

In 2007, Yos granted a teaching position at Kasetsart University. Currently he is a clarinet professor at Faculty of Music, Silpakorn University in Bangkok and a principal clarinet of Bangkok Symphony Orchestra. He frequently appeared as a solo clarinetist with Thailand National Symphony Orchestra, Galyani Vadhana Institute of Music Orchestra, and Bangkok Symphony Orchestra. He also actively involved with many chamber music concerts. Recently, Yos was selected to be part of the research project focusing in music research funded by the Thailand Research Fund led by Professor Natchar Pancharoen. The project target to help standardise music researches in Thailand.

**Youtube link (song to perform 4 minutes).**[https://youtu.be/INWNI\\_NO41s](https://youtu.be/INWNI_NO41s)

**Note:**

The performance of creative works must be research-based and should be clearly stated in the abstract

The performance of the creative work may be solo or ensemble based

Please provide a Youtube link to a four minute video except of your performance in the space allocated in the online submission form. This performance video must not be more than 12 months old. 2-3 pages description of the research component (background, contribution & significance) should also be submitted.