

# The Essential Role of Student Equipment

## Advice from Andre Canabou

*Clarinetist Andre Canabou has been active as a clarinet teacher and performer in North Dallas for the last fifteen years. He received a BM in Clarinet from the University of Cincinnati and a MM in Clarinet from Northwestern University. He has performed as a member of the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, the Boise Philharmonic and the Sacramento Philharmonic. Based in Plano, TX, he has a large and diverse studio ranging from beginning students to advanced students who perform in All-State and the Greater Dallas Youth Orchestra.*

### Can you tell us a little about your program/studio?

Texas has some of the best music programs in the nation and I am fortunate to work with students from Richardson and Plano ISD, two districts with excellent bands. I work with a very diverse group of students who range in ability from beginning 6th graders to some of the most advanced 11th and 12th grade high school students. The level of playing in North Texas is very high so I have been fortunate to typically have 4 or 5 students each year selected for the Texas All-State and many of my students perform with the Greater Dallas Youth Orchestra, and Lone Star Symphonic Youth Winds. I am delighted that many of my students continue to perform in college programs as varied as Harvard, MIT, Northwestern, University of Texas and Yale.

### What role do you believe equipment plays in a student's success?

I believe that having the correct equipment and properly matching the mouthpiece, reed and ligature to the clarinet is essential for clarinet players of all levels and especially for beginners. It is simply impossible for a student to develop correct articulation if he/she uses a reed which is too soft. It is also impossible for a beginning student



to play into the clarion or altissimo registers with a soft reed. The “back of the envelope” idea that a beginner starts on a 2.5, progresses to a size 3.0 reed in 7th and 8th grade and then moves up to a 3.5 or 4.0 in high school is not useful; the teacher must account for the type of reed and type of mouthpiece being used. Finally, teachers need to pay close attention to the tuning of mouthpieces. The complaints I hear most often from band directors about their clarinet players are in regards to tuning and articulation. It is simply impossible for a student to successfully develop these concepts with a mismatched setup.

Letting a student blow flat, using a very soft reed on a sharp mouthpiece, may allow the student to “zero” the tuner but it almost guarantees that the student will have mushy articulation, inconsistent intervals and an unfocused sound. I find that it is much better to start students on a mouthpiece and reed combination into which they can grow and to address issues of proper voicing and tongue position right from the start.

### What products have you found work well for your students?

I find that Vandoren products are essential in helping my students play and perform at a high level. I have a strong preference for the 13 series (A=440) Vandoren mouthpieces. I like to start students on the M15 (13 series, profile 88) mouthpiece with M/O ligatures. Many

of my most successful students have used this setup. I also find that with older students, I have good results with the M30 Lyre and the new BD5 13 series, which I have also recently started to play. Both take a slightly softer reed than the M15 and on these mouthpieces, I like the 56 rue Lepic reeds, size 3.5 or 3.5+. Many of my students have also had very good results with the Vandoren V•12 reeds.

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