

Right from the Start: Building Healthy Clarinet Technique

University of North Texas Clarinet Faculty

Daryl Coad

Deborah Fabian

Kimberly Cole Luevano

John Scott





Introduction

- ❑ We are not medical professionals, simply clarinet instructors with over 125 years combined professional experience.
- ❑ We simply wish to share our collective experience with you.
- ❑ Over the years, we have noticed students with physical problems caused by an unnatural, inefficient approach to their clarinet, and we, ourselves, have experienced physical problems.



Introduction, continued...

Our goals:

- ❑ To share our observations regarding common physical problems and the consequences of those problems;
- ❑ To help you be able to identify these issues that may develop in your own students;
- ❑ To give you helpful tips and strategies to help students develop a healthy, ergonomic approach to their instrument from the beginning.

Introduction, continued...

- ❑ Developing an awareness of relaxed, ergonomic, efficient body use is a constant process.
- ❑ “No pain, no gain” is a falsehood!
- ❑ If there is ever pain, it must be addressed at once.

Ideas to consider throughout our presentation today...

- ❑ What approaches are ideal for preventing injury?
- ❑ What approaches are undesirable, even unacceptable?
- ❑ What unhealthy tendencies do we most often observe in lessons?
- ❑ What are some strategies for spotting and fixing the “undesirable”?

Posture & Breathing

- ❑ From the core to the bell: one mechanism.
- ❑ Swabs and balloons?
- ❑ Open, relaxed throat for inhalation: a *natural* breath.
- ❑ Barrels, bells, or Scott tissue?
- ❑ Engaging from the core...a constant.
 - ❑ Balance exercises: balance board and one-footed playing.



Shoulders & Arms

- ❑ Goal: Balanced, tall spine.
- ❑ Shoulders are easy, relaxed, free.
- ❑ Arms dangle from shoulders, just hang.
- ❑ Simply pick up hands/arms from the elbow and allow flexibility in shoulder blades.
- ❑ Why does this matter?



Hands & Thumbs

- Holding vs. gripping?
- Clarinet balances on the thumb. Hand position.
- Most ergonomic shape and action?
- Is a student's equipment encouraging grip? (Is the clarinet out of adjustment?)
- Use of neck straps, longer thumb rests, and other aids.

Facial Structure

- ❑ Jaw and embouchure should serve as a relaxed, peaceful, tonal window.
- ❑ “My jaw hurts....” What is TMD? (Temporomandibular disorder)

Temporomandibular joint

Temporalis muscle

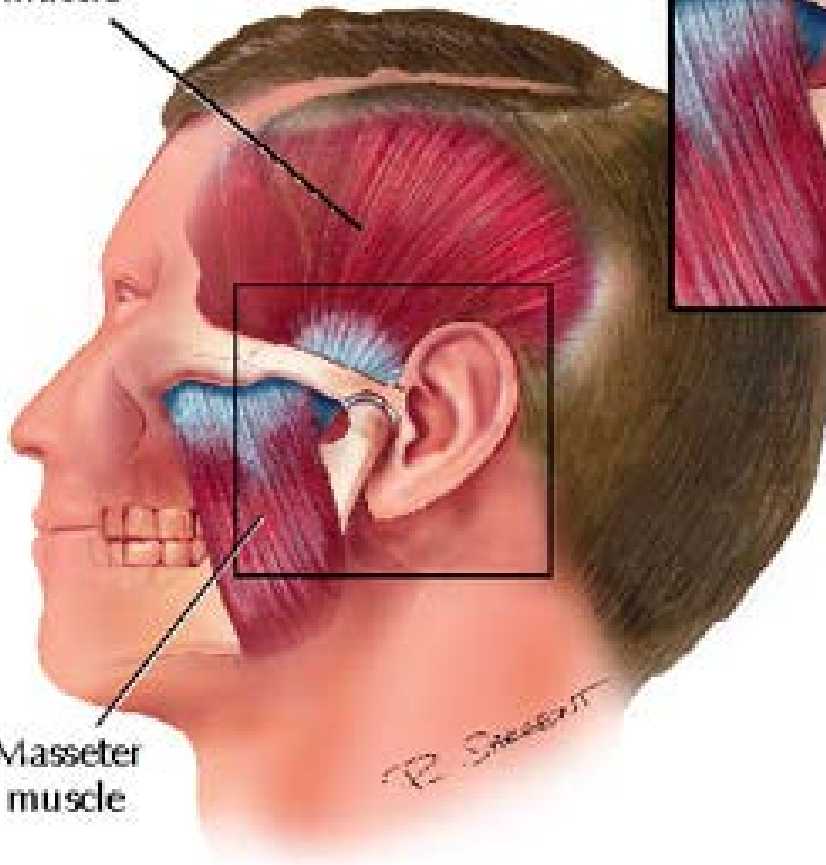
Zygomatic arch of the temporal bone



Cartilage

Mandibular bone

Masseter muscle



R. Stebbins

Facial Structure, continued...

- ❑ What can contribute to TMD?
- ❑ Equipment choice?
 - ❑ Mouthpiece?
 - ❑ Reed strength?
 - ❑ Use of “Ezo” or other teeth coverings?
 - ❑ Clarinet in good adjustment or pads leaking?
- ❑ What to do when the pain mainly relates to clarinet playing.
- ❑ Choosing the right specialist.
- ❑ Exercises and devices to help.
- ❑ Advantages of practicing with a double lip embouchure.

Questions?

- ❑ What questions do you have for us?
- ❑ What are your personal experiences with students?

How can we help?

Please feel free to contact us if we can be of assistance:

Daryl.Coad@unt.edu

Deborah.Fabian@unt.edu

Kimberly.Cole@unt.edu

John.Scott@unt.edu

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