Peter Hirschhorn

Woodwind Techniques Midterm Essay

(Note: For the purpose of clarity, this assumes the three lessons take place on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.)

**WEEK 1:**

The first week will be dedicated to learning about the construction, maintenance and mechanics of the clarinet, as well as a little bit of history and exposure to the instrument. We will start by watching a (short) video of a famous clarinet piece/performer and talk a little about it. For the remainder of the time, we will put the clarinet together, go over the names of each part, and discuss how to care for it. The student will be given homework for Friday; to find a clarinet piece they like and write three+ sentences about why they liked it. Wednesday we will talk a little about the history of the instrument and talk about why it works and makes the sounds it does. We will quickly revisit how to put it together and care for it. Friday we will discuss the video and paper they brought in, finish up any left over details and go over everything we learned that week.

**WEEK 2:**

This week will be devoted to the barrel and various barrel exercises. We will learn about embouchure and tone, and work to develop the students understanding of the barrel. Tone will be the prime focus, along with articulation and pitch. We will use this as an avenue to start listening for tuning, both with the piano and another barrel. On the second and third day we will start introducing rhythm, and start reading and articulating rhythms using the barrel. In each lesson, we will take a break to listen to a professional player, both learning more repertoire and preventing a headache from 50 minutes of F#. Homework will be to practice the tone, then to practice some of the rhythms we learned.

**WEEK 3:**

Monday will be kept open to go over and correct anything that we’ve learned up to this point. There is a good chance the student will still be struggling with the embouchure or rhythms, so this day is insurance in case week 2 isn’t enough to get a solid grounding in the techniques. The rest of the week will be on the clarinet (always starting on the barrel first), we will learn “C,” “D,” and “E.” I will teach the fingering and work to achieve the pitch before learning the note names and location on the staff. We will continue to work on tone quality, making sure that the embouchure transfers from the barrel to the full instrument, and rhythm development. I am putting a heavy emphasis on rhythm at the beginning because they don’t yet have a lot of notes and fingerings to keep track of. We learn a few exercises and songs using those notes and various rhythms. Hot Cross Buns and Mary Had a Little Lamb are good starting points. Homework will be to practice what we did, as well as learn a (small) new exercise or song for the next lesson.

**WEEK 4:**

By now the student should have a good grounding of understanding with the instrument, and the embouchure should be more consistent. The next two weeks will be used to learn the rest of the C, F, and G scales in the Chalumeau. Building off what we know, we will have learned G below the staff to G on the staff (all the notes that don’t use pinkies, naturals only). Again, we will use short songs and exercises to develop reading ability, dexterity and rhythm. In addition, we will start focusing on tuning and matching pitch on different notes. Homework will always be two exercises, one that we learned in the lesson and a new one they haven’t seen before.

**WEEK 5:**

In week 5, the rest of the Chalumeau will be developed. We will learn E and F below the staff, A on the staff, and play a C major scale on Monday. Wednesday we will learn Bb (both of them) and the F major scale, and Friday we will learn F# (both of them) and play the G major scale. Throughout this we will be continuing with exercises and building off of everything we have been working on. Homework continues in a similar fashion as the week before.

**WEEK 6:**

Week 6 is a development week, focusing mostly on reinforcing what we’ve already learned and playing more difficult music with the knowledge and skills we already have. On Friday we will introduce the three-register study. We will also learn the a minor scale and e minor scale, as they fall easily into what we already know. Homework continues in a similar fashion as the week before.

**WEEK 7:**

The three-register study is now a part of our warm up. This week will be spent filling out the rest of the Chalumeau register. I will have the student learn the chromatic scale by rote first, just copying what I am doing, and learning about the left and right hand ways to play some notes. Then we will assign note name to the new pitches and develop our understanding. Homework will continue similarly, however there will be a larger assignment over the weekend, where I will write a (slightly longer) piece that uses most of the chromatic pitches we learned. The student will need to mark what is left-handed and what is right-handed. The piece will have somewhat difficult rhythms and skips to really develop dexterity and understanding of the instrument.

**WEEK 8:**

The final week will begin with by going over the larger homework assignment and developing that more. We will then talk a little about the Clarion register, explaining how the pitches relate to the Chalumeau and naming them as we do the three-register study. Wednesday will be focused on the break and maneuvering around it, and the final Friday will be a review. We will go over maintenance again, as well as the Chalumeau and what we can do in the Clarion. We will end by playing a piece (maybe a duet) that involves the Clarion in a relatively minor way to ensure that the student understands how the register works when they move on into individual practice.