

The clarinet



Vol. 42 • No. 4
September 2015

Historical Reprint:
A Conversation with
Buddy DeFranco
(1923-2014)

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The Canadian Royal Conservatory's *Clarinet Syllabus*

The Royal Conservatory Certificate Program published its Clarinet Syllabus in 2014, an exciting new resource for clarinet repertoire.

by Peter Stoll

I am thrilled to introduce readers of *The Clarinet* to The Royal Conservatory Certificate Program and its curriculum for clarinet. In 2014, the clarinet curriculum was revised and for the first time in the organization's 129-year history, a complete series of materials was published to support it. Founded in 1886, The Royal Conservatory is the largest and oldest independent arts educator in Canada, serving more than 500,000 active participants each year. The curriculum of The Royal Conservatory is made available and accessible to students across North America through The Royal Conservatory Certificate Program. The Certificate Program provides a recognized national standard of musical achievement through an effectively sequenced system of study from beginner to advanced levels. The program inspires excellence through individual student assessments and allows students to celebrate accomplishments with others across North America. The *Clarinet Syllabus, 2014 Edition* not only details examination requirements and policies of the Certificate Program, but also serves as a comprehensive guide to progressively-leveled clarinet repertoire, etudes and technique.

The *Clarinet Syllabus* is organized into levels from preparatory to Level 10 and culminates with the ARCT (Associate of The Royal Conservatory) Diploma. Each level comprises several components:

repertoire, etudes, technique, musicianship (sight reading and aural skills) and orchestral excerpts (for the upper levels only). A smooth upward



progression of range, difficulty, and length is one of the hallmarks of this approach. The earliest levels introduce the full range of the instrument gradually, from primarily left-hand notes at the preparatory level, to the full chalumeau at Level 1, and then on across the break from there. Much thought was put into aligning the range and keys of technical requirements at each level with the demands of the repertoire and etudes listed.

It is worth noting that at each level, there is a vast choice of repertoire, etudes and orchestral excerpts, and the teacher and student are only required to choose a limited number from the lists.

For example, the preparatory level requires only one repertoire selection from each of the two lists of approximately 20 titles (List A, faster; List B, lyrical). Similarly with etudes, only one from each of the two lists of approximately 15 titles (technical and lyrical) is required for preparation.

In looking at the concept of this assessment system overall, I find that there is tremendous benefit in a systematic approach requiring not just the performance of pieces, but also contrasting etudes and technique. Sightreading and aural skills (such as identifying intervals and clapping back rhythms) are also tested as part of each examination, which further helps to train complete young musicians and not just clarinet players. I also like the fact that scales and arpeggios are a central part of this system, promoting a solid technical foundation for each player and tying in with their developing musicianship as they learn to spot these patterns as the melodic “backbone” of their music. Having regular goals to strive for from year to year can be a powerful motivational tool with our students and can in fact provide the underlying structure of much of their private studies.

The repertoire lists for each level cover a wide range of styles and eras; even at the preparatory level students have their pick of traditional dance forms such as Handel’s *Minuet* and *Passepied*, standard pieces like Bartók’s *Lament* and familiar melodies including *The Sidewalks of New York*. Students are required to perform two contrasting pieces of repertoire up until Level 10, one predominantly lyrical in character and one more technical. These

are typically compositions or arrangements for clarinet with piano accompaniment, with unaccompanied options consistently introduced at the intermediate levels.

American, Canadian and British educational materials make up the lion’s share of the early and intermediate levels, with some repertoire highlights being *A Funeral March for a Bad Reed* by James Rae at the preparatory level (with a written-out squeak at the end!), *Deep River* and *The Water is Wide* at Level 1, examples from Paul Harvey’s *Jazzy Clarinet* books at the early levels, as well as several choices from Carl Strommen’s *Gershwin by Special Arrangement*. Advancing levels feature Paul Harris’ excellent compositions, pieces by William Grant Still, Schumann, Mozart, Finzi and Stephen Foster, along with Christopher Norton, “Take Five” and klezmer-inspired arrangements.

By Level 6, the repertoire features original works for clarinet with contemporary examples by Randall Cunningham, Sean Osborn, William O. Smith and Béla Kovács alongside familiar

titles by Finzi, Stamitz, Tartini and Crusell. Orchestral excerpts begin at Level 7, and only three or four are required per level until Levels 9, 10 and the final ARCT diploma examination. Keeping the length of the assessments in mind, care has been taken with the amount of material asked for, so even at Level 10, concertos may only require two of the three movements. Level 10 is the first level to have three repertoire lists: Baroque, Classical and Romantic works, 20th- and 21st-century compositions, as well as a list of unaccompanied pieces.

The final ARCT Diploma examination requires students to prepare and perform a recital program of three works (a complete concerto, a sonata or suite and an unaccompanied piece) in addition to eight orchestral excerpts. Technically challenging pieces at this level include the Copland, Nielsen and Françaix concertos (and those of Katherine Hoover and Lowell Liebermann), as well as works by Mozart and Finzi. The Muczynski *Time Pieces* and Victor Babin’s *Hillandale*



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Waltzes are on the list of sonatas, as are those by Brahms, Jenner and Reger. The unaccompanied list includes the Denisov *Sonata*, Donatoni's *Clair*, works by Eric Mandat, the Martino *Set*, and plenty of other options. With such a comprehensive selection, it is hoped that students can build balanced performance programs and manage their workload and stress accordingly!

In addition to repertoire, students are required to prepare a selection of lyrical and technical etudes at every level. Etudes cover a wide variety of choices, from traditional favorites such as Demnitz and Langenus to Avrahm Galper, Ned Bennett's

C and D major and D minor scales are required, but by Level 4, two-octave scales and their accompanying arpeggios are required in G, D, F and B-flat major and E, B, D and G minor (harmonic and melodic), plus a two-octave chromatic scale starting on G. In keeping with this streamlined approach, Level 8 requires all the sharp keys, and Level 9 the flat keys, with only Level 10 requiring a comprehensive summary of all patterns. Articulations begin with "all slurred" at preparatory and then develop gradually into permutations of "two-tongued, two-slurred," and so on. An overview chart at every level clarifies the requirements.

balanced selection of the styles, textures, and eras represented in the *Syllabus* lists. As an added resource to facilitate learning the repertoire, each volume includes a CD with performances of each piece by professional clarinetists and pianists in addition to piano accompaniment tracks for student practice. Two volumes of etudes (preparatory to Level 4 and Levels 5 to 8) present technically engaging standard teaching pieces as well as contemporary compositions. Individual volumes of technique (preparatory to Level 10) and orchestral excerpts (Levels 7 to ARCT) round out the collection.

With a progressive approach to range, key, articulation, and difficulty; a wide selection of repertoire styles; and a balance of performance and musicianship skills requirements, The Royal Conservatory Certificate Program of assessments and related materials strives to provide structure and motivation for those studying the clarinet. Examinations are conducted three times yearly in more than 300 communities through a network of local centers. Each year, more than 100,000 students across North America participate in the Certificate Program. To find an examination center near you and to obtain a free PDF copy of the *Clarinet Syllabus, 2014 Edition*, please visit www.musicdevelopmentprogram.org. Look for the *Clarinet Series, 2014 Edition* in your local music store and please get in touch if you have any questions. Happy clarinet teaching and learning! ♦

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Absolute Beginners and Paul Herfurth's *A Tune a Day*. There are also selections from Bruce Pearson's *Standard of Excellence* band method for those students perhaps just getting their toes wet with private study. Ted Hegvik's *Melodic Etudes* and examples from Leon Lester's *Sixty Rambles* populate the intermediate lists, along with several James Rae possibilities. The *Syllabus* has been designed to allow students to continue to use the same etude books at successive levels to economize the materials required.

Scales and arpeggios are carefully chosen to mirror the etude and repertoire selections and to avoid overwhelming students who may not be familiar with performing from memory. The technical requirements are progressively structured to facilitate learning; for example, at the preparatory level, the first five notes of

For those who may wish to leaf through the *Syllabus*, I would like to call attention to the considerable listing of clarinet-related resources at the back of the book. This section offers an extensive listing of repertoire anthologies, etude and method books, jazz and klezmer publications, volumes about the clarinet's history, as well as materials on reedworking, repair and maintenance. A listing of a few websites (including that of the I.C.A.A.!) point to further information on these topics.

Teachers seeking a single source of high-quality materials to prepare for all categories of the curriculum outlined in the *Clarinet Syllabus* will find the *Clarinet Series, 2014 Edition* to be an invaluable collection. Each of the nine repertoire books (Preparatory to Level 8) features a

ABOUT THE WRITER



Clarinetist Peter Stoll performs regularly in Toronto as a solo, chamber, orchestral and contemporary musician, with recent tours to Japan in 2013 and China in 2014. He teaches

clarinet, chamber music, performance studies and the business of music at the University of Toronto's Faculty of Music, and is the Winds Discipline Specialist for the Royal Conservatory's National College of Examiners. Peter was the chief compiler of the new 2014 RCME clarinet syllabus, and his website is www.peterstoll.ca.