

# MUSIC EDUCATORS JOURNAL

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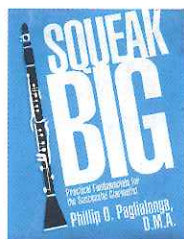
Listening Can Be Creative



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# For Your Library



## ***Squeak Big: Practical Fundamentals for the Successful Clarinetist***

by Phillip O. Paglialonga, Medina,

NY: Imagine Music, 2015; <http://www.imagemusicpublishing.com/>

Big squeaks! These are two words that conjure up anxiety in reed players, but Philip Paglialonga flips them in the clever title of his new book *Squeak Big: Practical Fundamentals for the Successful Clarinetist*. A fantastic overview of fundamentals for successful clarinet playing, *Squeak Big* will appeal to clarinetists of all abilities as well as to school band directors who can use it as a resource for helping their clarinet sections improve.

Beginning with the basics of good embouchure formation, Paglialonga guides the reader in a step-by-step process aided by the use of photographs. An accompanying chart that highlights audible issues, possible causes, and solutions (p. 8) is vital in helping players diagnose potential problems they may have as a result of a poor embouchure. Additional photographs and exercises go beyond the initial embouchure lesson and provide a backdrop for discussion on tonal development in subsequent chapters.

Music teachers will find the chapters on fingering choices and articulation particularly beneficial to their students. Throughout my years of teaching, I have found that many students are unaware of the alternate fingerings on clarinet or they *only* use alternate fingerings, having never been taught the standard fingerings.

Paglialonga clearly delineates five basic principles (pp. 41–45) of fingering on the Boehm system clarinet—principles that are critical to the development of clean technique. Diagrams and exercises support the discussion so that even without a private teacher, students will be able to quickly grasp the ideas and correct deficiencies.

As to articulation—the scourge of clarinetists (and their directors)—Paglialonga reinforces concepts from two masters of clarinet articulation—Daniel Bonade (former principal clarinet of the Philadelphia, Cleveland, and NBC Orchestras) as well as his mentor, Fred Ormand (professor of clarinet emeritus, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor), and additionally offers a unique way for students to actually witness the vibration of the reed (p. 50). By having students blow through the wide end of the barrel as it is connected to the mouthpiece, students are afforded with a much better understanding of the way the reed vibrates in their mouth. This has the dual effect of allowing students to hear and see changes in reed vibration.

*Squeak Big* would function well as a textbook for music education technique classes, serving as a sort of owner's manual for nonclarinetists. Several of the broader concepts, such as relaxation and good practice habits, will appeal to all musicians, making it a valuable resource for all music educators—one to be visited time and again.

While there are many great pedagogical resources on clarinet playing, Phillip Paglialonga adeptly combines many of the most accepted performance practices with new ideas in a clear and concise manner. His thorough yet easy to understand style makes this book a must for clarinetists and educators alike.

—Elizabeth A. Crawford

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## ***El Sistema: Orchestrating Venezuela's Youth***

by Geoffrey Baker.  
New York: Oxford University Press, 2014;  
[global.oup.com](http://global.oup.com)

In recent years, El Sistema has become an inspiration for community and school music programs around the world. In Venezuela, this orchestral model with its intensive schedule has been reported to have nearly 400 operating youth orchestras with 350,000 participants—many of whom are from the poorest echelons of Venezuelan society. The advocates for the program claim that this musical endeavor not only provides musical development but rescues children from social peril and is a vehicle for social reform. The architects of this organization contend that El Sistema is not only a savior for children from lower socioeconomic strata but also for the future of classical music.

Despite its growing popularity worldwide, there has been little critical examination of El Sistema or its claims. Baker investigates the organization using an ethnographic design and after spending more than a year in Venezuela doing fieldwork. The author uses hundreds of formal and informal interviews from stakeholders and past participants of the El Sistema program to inform his understanding. Baker pulls back the curtain on this organization, exploring its leadership, history, resources, and musical practices, as well as the social impact on its participants. Baker's account is enormously intriguing, alarming, and, at times, dispiriting.

Baker dismantles each component of the organization in how it fails to meet its mission. He presents the founder of the El Sistema movement, Jose Antonio Abreu, not as a musical or philanthropic visionary but as savvy political agent who