

The Clarke Variations

A new approach to the popular exercises



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Trumpet Edition

The Clarke Variations

Introduction

There are two essential books that just about every trumpet player has studied; Arban's Conservatory Method and Clarke's Technical Studies. The Arban is fondly referred to as "the trumpet player's bible". If that is the case, then the Clarke should be "the new testament". I consider Herbert L. Clarke to be the "George Washington" of trumpet, as he was the one of the first Americans to achieve greatness as a performer on the cornet. He was also one of the first notable pedagogues and taught such greats as Rafael Mendez and Claude Gordon, who was my teacher. I am fond of telling my students that they are the great-grandchildren of H. L. Clarke, one of our country's first great virtuosos.

The impetus for this set of variations is based on the idea of an "Expanding Scale" or "Expanding Range". Each set will start with a small range of notes covering an interval such as a 5th and will expand over the course of the study to the whole range of the trumpet. The idea is to imagine you are "holding one note" and let your fingers do the rest. This concept is, of course, metaphorical but if employed will greatly enhance your technique and efficiency.

This is a progressive course, so it is recommended that you practice the studies in the order they are presented. Make note of the intervals in each study. Study 1 is all chromatic, so it is easier to transition from one note to another. The second group is based on Clarke Study 5 and is all diatonic. The third group is based on Clarke Study 2 which is diatonic with some thirds. The fourth group is based on Clarke Study 3 which is arpeggios. So with each group the intervals get a little more challenging. I've also included more chromatic work based on Studies 7 & 8.

The studies also start in the middle register and then work upward, leaving the lower register for the end. This is a great way to develop a sure setting for the entire range of the horn.

General considerations

1. You should have familiarity with the original Clarke Technical Studies. The Variations are not a replacement for the original, but rather a supplement.
2. Imagine that each exercise is "one long note" similar to flow studies. Try holding the first note of #1 (G) and imagine you are fingering the rest or lightly finger on your leadpipe. Keep the air "on" the whole time. There should be a feeling of movement to the air as if it is going forward all the time.

3. Practice at an even dynamic. The original Clarke had one initial dynamic – pp, followed by what I call “trumpet dynamics” which are crescendo as you ascend and decrescendo as you descend. It is OK to add some gas as you ascend at first, but be conscious of it. By playing at a consistent of *mp* – *mf*, you will develop the discipline and technique necessary to play the entire range of the horn at any dynamic.
4. Take notice of excess movement. There is no such thing as no movement in trumpet playing. However, one of the secrets to playing over the entire range of the horn with one embouchure setting is to limit excess movement. This is most notable with the jaw. If you notice an excess of jaw movement (sometimes called “pivoting”) while playing the early exercises, try to limit it and see what happens. You may notice that you have developed a habit of “over-pivoting” which is quite common.
5. Use a metronome. Find a tempo you can play the exercise comfortably and start a notch or two below that. Write your tempos in the margin and try to notch up every day or when you feel comfortable.
6. Don’t use a metronome. If you are using a metronome give yourself one day per week off the click. Also all these exercises can be played slowly while gradually accelerating to your top tempo.
7. Play with a beautiful, open sound. Pretty general trumpet advice but often overlooked when practicing technical studies. After all, they’re just scales, right? WRONG!! It’s all music, all the time.
8. Strive for smoothness and great connectivity. More general advice. Brass instruments and players have breaks between certain notes on the horn, most notably ascending from an open or first position note. For example there is a break between C and D on trumpet. These exercises can help you identify your breaks and by following the concept of “holding one note” can smooth them out. Listen to a clarinetist play the exercises and try to emulate their smoothness.
9. Play each exercise in one breath. Every exercise in this book can be played in one breath. It may be difficult at first but that is our goal. This is not just for breath control, it develops the discipline necessary to play the entire range with one setting.
10. Follow the instructions and play in order.

Clarke Study I

Instructions

This first group of variations is based on the chromatics from Clarke Study I and the first group in Clarke's Setting-Up Drills. Using the concept of an expanding range it begins on G and gradually expands to the entire range of the horn.

With proper rest, the entire set can be practiced in one session. Rest 2 - 5 minutes between each Variation.

I suggest you begin by slurring and repeating as written. When you are comfortable with the exercises, you can begin adding more repeats eventually playing 8 - 16x in one breath.

Variation I (exercises 1 - 6) Slur and repeat as written at a comfortable dynamic.

Imagine you are holding the first note and the fingers do the rest.

Start slowly. It is okay to speed up as you gain the feel and technique.

Variation II (exercises 7 - 13) Same as above but ascending. It may be more difficult to maintain the feeling of "holding one note" while ascending. Try playing #1 followed immediately by #7. Do this a few times until they feel the same then proceed with Variation II.

Variation III (exercises 14 - 19) Starting in the middle we are now covering one octave. Review #1 & #7 to prepare and continue into Variation III.

Variation IV (exercises 20 - 25) We are now ready to cover 2 ½ octaves in this study. Start slowly and try to maintain an even dynamic throughout. It is okay to start slowly and pick up speed as you gain the feel and technique. Remember the goal is to feel as if you are playing one note the whole time.

You may want to review #1, #7 and #13 in preparation for #20 and Variation IV.

Variation V (exercises 26 - 32) Same as Variation III but covering the low register.

Variation VI (Exercise 33) The test. Should be played 2X in one breath.

Models for further practice:

1. Slur 1X and tongue on repeat.
2. All tongued.
3. Slur 2, tongue 4.
4. Slur 3, tongue 3.

Each model should be practiced for at least one week.

Variation IV

20

Musical notation for Variation IV, measure 20. Treble clef, key signature of one flat. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes with various accidentals. The bass line features a similar rhythmic pattern with accidentals. A repeat sign is present at the end of the measure.

21

Musical notation for Variation IV, measure 21. Treble clef, key signature of one flat. The melody continues with eighth and quarter notes. The bass line maintains the rhythmic pattern. A repeat sign is present at the end of the measure.

22

Musical notation for Variation IV, measure 22. Treble clef, key signature of one flat. The melody continues with eighth and quarter notes. The bass line maintains the rhythmic pattern. A repeat sign is present at the end of the measure.

23

Musical notation for Variation IV, measure 23. Treble clef, key signature of one flat. The melody continues with eighth and quarter notes. The bass line maintains the rhythmic pattern. A repeat sign is present at the end of the measure.

24

Musical notation for Variation IV, measure 24. Treble clef, key signature of one flat. The melody continues with eighth and quarter notes. The bass line maintains the rhythmic pattern. A repeat sign is present at the end of the measure.

25

Musical notation for Variation IV, measure 25. Treble clef, key signature of one flat. The melody continues with eighth and quarter notes. The bass line maintains the rhythmic pattern. A repeat sign is present at the end of the measure.

Clarke Study V

Instructions

This group of variations is based on the major scale studies in Clarke Study V. The concept of an expanding scale is used starting with a range of a 5th and progressing to two octaves.

Variations I - V should be practiced in one session, with at least 5 minutes rest between sets. These exercises are not nearly as long as the original Clarke Study V, therefore, you can play more of them in one session.

All exercises should be played in one breath.

If you are having trouble with high notes in any of these exercises, stop, rest and try again. If you don't make it, leave it and move ahead to the next variation. Make a note of how high you have gone and see if you can equal or surpass it the next day.

When you can play Variations I - V comfortably, you can start adding the lower keys presented in Variation VI.

Variation I (exercises 34 - 41) Slur as written. Play slowly at first concentrating on smoothness and connectivity. Repeat as many times as needed until you feel like you are just holding a note. Keep the air "on" during the line.

Variation II (exercises 42 - 47) Same as above but now covering over an octave. If you are having trouble, review #34 then straight into #42.

Variation III (exercises 48 - 53) Extending the range even more. If needed, review #34, #42 then go right in to #48. Each exercise is always in one breath.

Variation IV (exercises 54 - 59) Extends the playing range more by adding two lower keys and then continuing higher. Review #34, #42 and #48 then play #54 and Variation IV. Rest 5 minutes.

Variation V (exercises 60 - 65) Covers the full two octaves. A good test in one breath. Go as high as you can comfortably. Rest.

Variation VI (exercises 66 - 95) Covers the remaining keys in the lower octave. Each key is presented with the exercises from Variations I - V. Add one each day or play just Variation VI.

Models and suggestions for further practice:

1. Slur 1X and tongue on repeat. Or begin slurred and start tonguing in meas. 2.
2. All tongued.
3. Slur 2, tongue 2, etc.

You can also pick a key and focus on it. Example #28, #36, #42, #48 and #54 all in C.

Clarke Study V

Variation I

Musical score for Variation I of Clarke Study V, consisting of eight staves of music. The score is written in treble clef with a 4/4 time signature. The key signatures for the staves are: 34 (C major), 35 (B-flat major), 36 (D major), 37 (B-flat major), 38 (F major), 39 (B-flat major), 40 (D major), and 41 (D major). The music features a consistent eighth-note rhythmic pattern across all staves, with some staves including slurs and ties. The notation includes various note values, rests, and accidentals.

Clarke Study II

Instructions

Clarke's Second Study is probably the most popular trumpet exercise in existence. Players in every genre the world over practice this exercise and have for decades.

It is presented here in an expanding range format with the original "theme" and five variations. The Theme and Variations I - III can easily be practiced in one session.

Variations IV and V provide some higher and lower keys that can be added as you are ready.

Clarke's Second Study consists of two patterns: 1-2-3-1 and 1-3-2-1. These can be transposed diatonically throughout the key that you are in to produce endless variations. It is sneaky though as there are some descending arpeggios as a result of two patterns a 3rd apart. In exercise 96, measure 2, beats 2 and 3 form an F arpeggio. In measure 3 there is a diminished arpeggio.

As with the previous studies, play as if holding the first note. Play slowly and listen for smoothness and connectivity. Maintain a consistent dynamic.

This study is a huge amount of playing, so it's unlikely you will want to cover the whole thing in one day. Once you know your keys, you can play *without repeat* so you can cover more ground.

Here are some suggested models for further practice:

1. Slur 1X, tongue on repeat.
2. Tongue all
3. Slur 2, tongue 2
4. Tongue 2, slur 2
5. Double tongue
6. Play without repeat

At the end of this study there are two additional sections.

1. Clarke's Etude II transposed to 12 keys. Practice each one for a week or two then move on to the next key.
2. Fun with fingerings. Follow the instructions on that page.

Clarke Study II

Instructions

Theme (exercises 96 - 101) Slur as written. This is the original exercise in six keys that we will use for the expanding range concept. Each covers a minor 6th.

Variation I (exercises 102 - 107) Same as above but now covering a minor 7th. Notice that we are starting where the theme left off, in the key of C. This is an effective way to practice these studies.

Variation II (exercises 108 - 113) Now covering the range of a major 7th. Every exercise should be played in one breath. Exercise 108 should feel the same as 96.

Variation III (exercises 114 - 119) Expands the range to a full octave. You may review previous studies in the same key to assure that you are keeping to the concept of “holding one note”. For example in C play exercises 101, 102, 113 and then proceed with 114.

Variation IV (exercises 120 - 147) We are now ready to add the rest of the keys. Variation IV is the previous exercises presented one key at a time. You may add one key at each practice session or alternately just practice Variations IV and V.

Variation V (exercises 148 - 167) Same as Variation IV but in the lower keys.

Variation VI (exercise 168 - 179) Combines the theme and Variations I - III into one exercise that is to be played in one breath. A good test is to play it two or three times in one breath. You may continue higher by playing exercises 168 - 179 8va.

Clarke Study II

Fun With Fingerings

The following are some fun and helpful fingering exercises that Clarke taught his student Claude Gordon, who taught them to me. I have added some of my ideas as well.

- #192** 1. Play with all E & A fingered 12.
2. Play all E & A with the 3rd valve. Note you do not use the 2nd valve.
3. Hold down the 2nd valve and play with all E & A fingered 3.
The result will be the key of E.



- #193** 1. Play with all E & A fingered 12.
2. Play all E & A with the 3rd valve. Note you do not use the 1st valve.
3. Hold down the 1st valve and play with all E & A fingered 3.
The result will be the key of D with some very odd fingerings.



- #194** 1. Play with all As fingered 12. Note you do not use the 3rd valve.
2. Hold down the 3rd valve and play with all As fingered 12.
The result will be the key of E with some very odd fingerings, different than #192.
3. Play with all As fingered 3.



- #195** 1. Play as written. Note you do not use the 3rd valve.
2. Hold down the 3rd valve and play with all As fingered 12.
The result will be the key of G with some very odd fingerings.
3. Do the same in the keys of B and C.



Clarke Study III

Instructions

Clarke's Third Study is one of the more demanding of the original studies. It is suggested that you have some familiarity with the original to get the most out of these variations. Studies I and V focused on chromatic and diatonic intervals. This has prepared us for Study III which is arpeggios with intervals of a 3rd and 4th. It is important to maintain the concept of "holding one note" and letting your fingers do the rest. Of course it is more difficult to do this when the intervals are larger but what is important is to keep our movement to a minimum. Remember there is no such thing as no movement in brass playing, we just want to eliminate any excess movement.

Theme (exercises 196-201) The original presented in six keys. It features the primary arpeggios; I, IV and V7, of each key. It is suggested that you tongue these exercises first. You may also play without repeat if you find that you are getting too tired. Maintain an even dynamic throughout each exercise, although you may vary the dynamic from one to another.

Variation I (exercises 202-207) Expands each arpeggio to the next higher degree. The goal is for these to feel the same and take the same amount of energy as the previous set. Each exercise now covers an octave.

Variation II (exercises 208-213) Expands the range of each exercise to an 11th. Try playing the first arpeggio in #196 and #202 and compare how it feels to exercise 208. The goal is to be able to play these three exercises with the same minimal amount of jaw movement and energy.

Variation III & IV (exercises 214-234) The exercises of the previous variations presented in higher keys. Add one key per week or practice Variations III & IV separately.

Variation V (exercises 235-253) The exercises of the previous variations presented in lower keys. You may want to attempt some of these before Variations III & IV.

This study is a huge amount of practicing, too much for any one practice session. Work the Theme and Variations I & II, then slowly add other keys. Rest frequently.