

From the “It Works For Me” Column

Building ARTC Musicians: Approach

by
Michael Dean

[The following is adapted from Michael Dean’s presentation, “Practical Suggestions for Building Great Clarinetists,” given at the Texas Music Educators Association Clinic/Convention in February of 2006.]

I have found that the best way to build great musicians is to focus on fundamentals. The simple acronym, ARTC (think “*Artsy*”), has proven very useful to me in my teaching and in my own practicing and performing. ARTC stands for **A**pproach, **R**elaxation, **T**one, and **C**ounting. As with most activities in life, the key to excellence is a mastery of the basics. The following is a short discussion of the first and most important word in ARTC, Approach.

Approach (or Attitude). The mind is the most important part of the body in preparing, performing, and enjoying music. Focusing on the “Mental Game” can liberate musicians to reach higher levels of performance. I have greatly benefited from the ideas of legendary UCLA basketball coach John Wooden.

Consider Wooden’s definition of success, “Success is peace of mind, which is a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing you made the effort to do your best to become the best that you are capable of becoming.” Results are never under our control. Therefore, I focus on what I do have control over, namely, my preparation and my effort. I constantly work to liberate myself and my students from “results-thinking” and focus instead on preparation and effort. I have found that this approach offers a higher level of preparation, performance, and musical satisfaction. (A list of Wooden websites, books, etc. is available on my website at www.michaeldean.ws/resources/rsrc_teaching.html.)

Dr. Michael Dean is Associate Professor of Clarinet and Saxophone
at Southeast Missouri State University.

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