

## **Air and Breath Support**

1. Well-developed breath support, along with a well-developed embouchure, helps to create a resonant, beautiful sound. The clarinet requires much more air than one might imagine. This air must be controlled and very fast. One way to develop good breath support is to imagine blowing all the way through to the bell of the clarinet, making sure that the air feels as though it is spinning inside of the clarinet. It is important to breathe deeply and to activate abdominal muscles when playing. However, concentrating too much on the abdomen can cause tension. Instead, if one simply imagines blowing a very fast, compact air stream through the entire clarinet, with some practice, proper breath support and control will be achieved. The best way to practice breath support and speed is through long tone/embouchure exercises.
2. It is important for students to develop the following breath support techniques:
  - A. One must develop excellent breath control and speed independent of the technical difficulty of a passage. The first thing a young clarinetist does when faced with a difficult technical passage is back off on his or her air. This will actually make the passage much more difficult.
  - B. It is important to learn to blow through large intervals. When one is faced with a large interval, especially one that reaches into the altissimo register, he or she often uses poor breath support or backs off on the air speed. He or she may be worried about squeaking, however, it is the lack of breath control and speed that actually causes the squeak.