

**WOODWIND DOUBLING FOR THE 21ST-CENTURY SAXOPHONIST**  
**Increasing Versatility without Sacrificing Virtuosity**

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**SELECT YOUR WEAPON(S)**

- Saxophone with flute and/or clarinet is the classic double; still a great way to improve your employability. If you already play flute well, consider adding piccolo. Bass clarinet can be a valuable double, too, especially for a baritone saxophonist.
- Double reeds are not easy (or cheap) but can really pay off for dedicated doublers. There are a few common double-reed doubling situations in musical theater, especially oboe (and maybe English horn) with tenor saxophone and clarinet, and bassoon with bass clarinet and baritone saxophone.
- More and more, doublers are being called upon to play folk, ethnic, and period instruments in pit orchestras and recording studios. For a collection of instruments that are relatively easy to play, inexpensive, and versatile, I suggest investing in various sizes of the high-quality plastic recorders (Yamaha, Aulos) and pennywhistles (Susato), and maybe some bamboo or PVC simple-system flutes. Other good possibilities include the shakuhachi (Japanese endblown flute), dizi (Chinese transverse flute), duduk (Armenian double reed), and panflutes (Romanian, South American).

**GET SOME SKILLS**

- Start from the beginning. You NEED to do long tones, scales and arpeggios, and beginning methods/etudes on each instrument. No shortcuts! Suggested materials:
  - Flute: *Trevor Wye Practice Books* (especially *Book 1: Tone*), Taffanel and Gaubert *17 Daily Exercises*.
  - Oboe: Barret *Oboe Method Complete* (I like the Kalmus edition).
  - Clarinet: from the Klosé *Celebrated Method*: “68 Exercises of mechanism,” “Practical exercises,” and “Scales and exercises;” Rose *32 Etudes*. For a more advanced clarinet workout, try the Jeanjean *Vade-Mecum*.
  - Bassoon: Oubradous *Scales and Exercises*; from Weissenborn *Method*: “Fifty Bassoon Studies.”
- Get some help, even if it’s only a little bit. Take a lesson or three on the cheap from a graduate music student. For a little cash, they will happily parrot all their teacher’s best pedagogical gems. Embouchure should be a top priority, and reed help if you’re dealing with oboe or bassoon.
- Settle into a practice routine. I like for each instrument to get practiced a few days in a row for continuity, and then maybe set it aside for a day or two to get another instrument into the rotation. Something like this might work if, for example, you are trying to keep saxophone as a priority, while building up your flute, piccolo, and clarinet chops:

- Monday: Saxophone, flute, piccolo. Tuesday: Saxophone, piccolo, clarinet. Wednesday: Saxophone, clarinet, flute...
- If you don't have time to do a thorough practice session, spend the time you do have on fundamentals: warm-ups, tone exercises, scales and arpeggios.
- You don't have to be a virtuoso on each instrument to start picking up good doubling gigs, but you probably ought to be able to play, say, all your major and minor scales and arpeggios through the standard range of the instrument, with a characteristic orchestral-type sound and solid intonation.

## HOG ALL THE GIGS

- The following local people need to know about your doubling skills:
  - Other woodwind doublers; the musical director(s) of the most recent musical(s) at the community theater; church music ministers; school band and choir directors; university music professors; music store employees; recording studio and live sound personnel; that one guy in town who knows all the musicians and contracts all the gigs.
- Have business cards and recordings of you playing all your instruments. A website is a great way to make your sound clips and contact information available. Remember that people who might hire you are often (rightfully?) suspicious of musicians who claim skill at multiple instruments. Be able to point potential employers toward recordings that will impress them—or at least allow them to make an honest evaluation of whether you meet their needs.
- Be aware that union-type gigs often involve additional percentages for each double you play on the gig. If, like most of us, you are in a non-union town, you will have to negotiate this yourself, assuming the demand for your skills puts you in a bargaining position.
- If you are hoping to build a private studio of students on various woodwind instruments, here are a few of the questions you should ask yourself about each instrument:
  - Am I prepared to teach the tradition of each instrument, or will I be trying to make my saxophone teaching ideas fit non-saxophone students? Do I have some good sources for pedagogical materials?
  - Am I familiar with the repertoire? Can I name five good competition pieces for students at the level I intend to teach? Do I have a good sequence of method books or etudes? ...
  - Do I have some good, solid recommendations for instruments, mouthpieces, reeds, and so forth, suitable for the students I will teach? Have I tried them myself?

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Visit me at [www.bretpimentel.com](http://www.bretpimentel.com) for tons of tips on woodwinds and doubling.