

# The 21st-century woodwind doubler

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<b>(Stereotypical) 20<sup>th</sup>-century doubler</b>	<b>The new 21<sup>st</sup>-century doubler</b>
Clarinet and saxophone, sometimes flute	Flutes, oboes, clarinets, bassoons, saxophones World, folk, historical instruments Electronic wind controllers? “Test pilot” attitude: sure, I’ll play that
Strong one one “primary” instrument, weaker/untrained on one or two others	Strong and well-trained on many instruments, no more “primary” instrument
Dusts off the doubles a week (or less?) before the gig	Committed to continual improvement on all instruments, plans practice schedule accordingly
Buys cheap/inferior instruments for doubling	Makes thoughtful, well-informed equipment purchases, with an eye toward future improvements in ability level
Limited stylistic vocabulary: a classically-trained musician who “can’t swing,” or a jazz musician who “lacks refinement”	Expert orchestral playing Authentic/informed jazz playing Understanding of world and historical styles, performance practices
Musical theater gigs: member of 4- or 5-piece woodwind section; instruments from 2-3 major/modern woodwind families; “soloist” on one instrument, “section” player on others	Musical theater gigs: often lone woodwind player; all woodwind instruments are fair game; solo-level playing on all instruments
Jazz gigs: 90-95% saxophone, with small, dumbed-down (or “optional”) passages of clarinet or flute	Jazz gigs: still mostly saxophone, but possibility of more demanding (and non-optional) clarinet and flute parts, including auxiliaries (bass clarinet, piccolo...), and convincing improvisation on all instruments
Studio gigs: specialist on 2-3 major/modern woodwinds	Studio gigs: solo-level playing on a battery of major/modern, world, folk, historical, and sometimes electronic woodwinds, including related styles and performance practices
Teaching gigs: “I don’t play the instrument, but I can teach interpretation and musicianship”	Teaching gigs: able to teach multiple instruments with a thorough grasp of technique, repertoire, and tradition ( <i>plus</i> interpretation and musicianship)

## Becoming a 21<sup>st</sup>-century woodwind doubler

- Start each new instrument as a committed beginner. Practice your “Hot Cross Buns.” No shortcuts.
- Get thorough, high-quality, ongoing instruction: private lessons (up to and including college/conservatory degrees?), camps, conferences, pedagogical texts, shop talk, audio and video recordings, concerts.
- Obtain good-quality equipment, the kinds currently used by people who play only that instrument (there are solid budget-conscious options available). Factor maintenance into your budgeting. Be wary of stuff “for doublers.”
- Understand, accept, and strategize about the real issue of highly-skilled doubling: the spreading thin of resources (time, money, etc.). Forget about the fake issues like “ruining your embouchure” or “mixing up the fingerings” that non-doublers will try to warn you about.
- Guts! Get on stage (or into the orchestra pit) with an instrument that isn’t your comfort zone. Fail. Practice some more and try again.
- Seek varied performance opportunities (including doubling and non-doubling gigs). Travel in many musical circles. Don’t be a snob.
- Prepare to teach from a place of knowledge, experience, and tradition. Get to know the repertoire, the equipment, the pedagogical thinking, the customs.



For more woodwind doubling stuff, visit me at <http://bretpimentel.com>