

THE CLARINET ENTHUSIAST'S

# **QUALITY IMPROVEMENT GUIDE**

**SAMPLE**

Part 2: Technique

by MARILYN FLEMING

The Clarinet Enthusiast's Quality Improvement Guide  
Part 2: Technique

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Second Edition, 2024

## About the Author

Marilyn Fleming is a retired computer entrepreneur. She made first chair clarinet at All-State in high school, continued to play a bit in college, then put the instrument away in a closet while pursuing a different career path. Returning to the clarinet in her retirement years, she approaches clarinet education from a student's perspective. Marilyn is fascinated by use of technology, particularly the use of computers and recording equipment to turbo-charge practice sessions. She is a regular in the Clarinet Mentors community, and a founding member of two Facebook Etude of the Week groups. She formerly served as QA Advisor for the Modacity music practice app, and recently co-authored a clarinet method book with Dr. Deborah Andrus. During the Covid "lockdown" she played weekly online via JamKazam with three chamber music groups.

## Acknowledgements

This book is dedicated to **Mary Ellen Brehony** (1925-2019), who brought me back to music after almost 50 years in another world.

For developing my thoughts on the clarinet in general and clarinet practice in particular (in chronological order):

**Michelle Anderson**, founder of Clarinet Mentors, one of the largest online clarinet educational resources in the world. Michelle single-handedly turned me into a "Clarinet Enthusiast".

**Dr. Jenny Maclay**, of Boot Camp fame, who patiently and thoughtfully led me through the fundamentals of clarinet playing that I never learned in my youth. Jenny never met a scale she didn't like!

**Marc Gelfo**, founder of Modacity, who taught me how to use principles of cognitive science to turbo-charge my music practice.

**Dr. Deborah Andrus**, an inspirational teacher, great friend, and co-chair with Michelle Anderson of the ICA Clarinet Enthusiast Committee. Debbie excels as a diagnostician -- she can watch a student play, identify a problem, and develop a corrective exercise on the fly. Many of the somewhat original exercises in this book are spin-offs of exercises Debbie developed for me.



# Contents

## **Introductory Material**

Introduction	1
Tips for Successful Practicing	2
Typographical Conventions	3
Introduction to Minor Scales	4

## **Scales and Arpeggios**

Twelve Days of Christmas Scales	5
Quick Warmups in Major Keys	8
Large Type Klose Scalse	22
Large Type Langenus Arpeggios	25
Marilyn's Scales and Arpeggios	28
Large Type Baermann Scales	51

## **Mechanism Exercises**

Marilyn's Finger Fumbles	142
Looping Over the Break	144
Large Type Klose Mechanism Exercises	146



# Introduction

This is Part 2 of a three-part series of self-study books for the *Clarinet Enthusiast*.

So, what is a clarinet enthusiast? When I was about 10, I started taking piano lessons. Every week my mother gave me a dollar bill and sent me off to the piano teacher who lived in the next block. My teacher chose my exercise book, and told me what exercises and etudes to practice. I would go home and practice my (mother-enforced) 30 minutes a day, playing through each exercise starting at the top. At the end of the week I would go back and play for my teacher, who decided whether I needed a do-over or was ready to go on to the next exercise.

This is the polar-opposite of an enthusiast. A clarinet enthusiast is someone who plays clarinet because he or she wants to, not because he has to. Often an adult who is either returning to clarinet after a long layoff or learning it later in life. As an enthusiast, you set your own goals, decide what you want to practice, and how much you want to practice. In short, you think for yourself. My goal with this series of books is to provide information to help you make informed decisions. I am not a clarinet teacher -- I am an enthusiast just like you. In this book I'm sharing my personal philosophies, strategies, tools, and exercises in the hope that they will be useful to you.

The origin of this project -- I have very poor eyesight. Working on Klose Scales, where all 24 major and minor scales printed on one page, I realized I had more trouble reading the notes than playing them. Not only was the type too small, the staff was so cluttered with accidentals and slurs, that I couldn't find the notes. So I created the "Large-Type" version, spread across three pages, with accidentals replaced by key signatures and large amounts of white space on the page. Immediate improvement. Then I moved on to other classic public-domain method books that share the same problem. Then I added a few of my own exercises and philosophies, and it turned into a book. Actually, a series of three books. First to be released is Part 2: Technique. Parts 1 and 3, will come later. Below is a brief outline of the series.

## Part 1: Tone

Long tone exercises, breathing/endurance exercises, plus a special section on altissimo.

## Part 2: Technique (this book)

### Scales and Arpeggios

*Twelve Days of Christmas Scales* – introduction to major and minor scales for the beginner. Credit Jenny Maclay for the “Joy to the World” major half. I added the “What Child is This” minor half.

*Quick Warmups in Major Keys* – one page for each major key up to four sharps/flats, no notes higher than Altissimo E. Cover the three basic elements of a warmup (long tones, scales and arpeggios, articulation) in less than 5 minutes.

*Magnani Major/Minor Warmup* – a 2-line major/minor scale etude based on exercises in the 1900 edition of Aurelio Magnani’s Complete Clarinet Method. Up to six sharps/flats, notes to altissimo G.

*Large Type Klose Scales; Large Type Langenus Arpeggios* – covers all major and minor keys up to six sharps/flats in one exercise. No notes higher than altissimo G. Time to play through a complete set is 2-5 minutes, depending on tempo.

*Marilyn's Scales and Arpeggios* – similar to the Baermann exercises, but less advanced. All major and minor keys up to five sharps/flats. Play time 8-10 minutes per key signature.

*Large Type Baermann Scales* – advanced exercises based on the 1917 edition of the Baermann Conservatory Method, edited to improve readability and standardize the range and format. Covers all major and minor keys up to six sharps/flats, plus additional interval exercises. Notes up to super-high C, with optional version up to altissimo A only. 14 exercises for each key signature, 60-90 minutes per key signature.

Mechanism Exercises (short “loops” to develop smoothness in awkward finger transitions)

*Marilyn's Finger Fumbles* – two-note patterns that I find particularly challenging.

*Looping over the Break* – all 4-note major scale patterns across the break (transition from throat tones to clarion register)

*Large Type Klose Mechanism Exercises* – reformatted exercises from the 1879 edition of the Klose Conservatory Method

## Part 3: Quality Improvement Approaches

This is where the “Quality Improvement” in the title comes into play. This part focuses on developing a practice strategy that results in improvement in your playing rather than simply iterations of it.

# Tips for Successful Practicing

Since Part 3 is not available yet, here are a few “Quality Improvement” thoughts for practicing scales and mechanism exercises.

It is important to have a goal in mind when we practice. Also to listen to or watch what we play since, in the absence of a teacher, we are responsible for identifying and correcting our mistakes. Audio recording is good for identifying note errors, rhythm errors, and air and finger breaks. Video recording can identify body tension and poor hand position.

Should we practice scales and arpeggios for accuracy, smoothness, or speed? Answer Yes, meaning all of the above. But not necessarily all at once. Eventually we want to play them both fast and fluidly, with our fingers on autopilot, so they sound easy. I see it as a multi-step process, with a different goal for each step:

**Step 1 Accuracy.** Play slowly without a metronome and be careful to play the correct notes. Also, be on the lookout for fingers that do not connect smoothly. Are there different fingerings that may work better (particularly options for L/R pinkies)? The goal in this phase is correct notes.

**Step 2 Smoothness.** Once you are sure of the notes, try to play evenly with the metronome. Listen carefully for uneven rhythms, breaks in air, or breaks in tone. Be alert for body tension, because it will prevent you from developing the speed you want. Here the goal is smoothness of rhythm, fingers, and air. Start at a slow metronome setting and increase it gradually.

**Step 3 Speed.** To practice for speed, set the metronome faster than you can actually play. Then try to play evenly, in short bursts, at the aggressive tempo. Maybe 4 notes with a break after each 4. Then 8, etc. until you have connected the whole exercise. When doing this, you may need to break out difficult note combinations to work on more slowly before adding them back to the burst exercise. This style of practice develops the ability to play the phrase rather than thinking about the individual notes.



# Typographical Conventions

## Courtesy Accidentals

In the interest of “reducing visual clutter” I have tried to avoid unnecessary accidentals while, at the same time making sure the first accidental in each measure is correctly marked. However, in the case of melodic minor scales, I used accidentals in parentheses to indicate the first change from notes raised  $\frac{1}{2}$  step on the way up then returned to normal on the way down. Example:



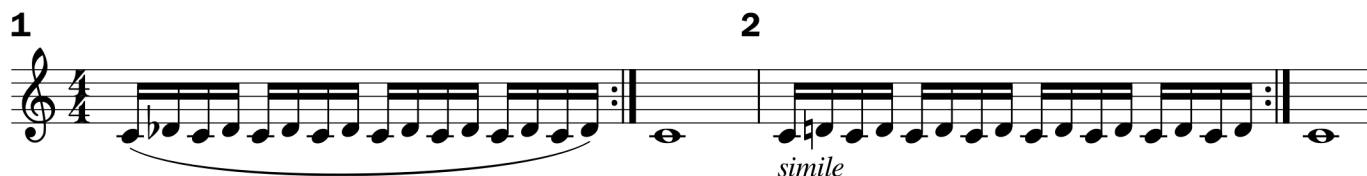
## Optional Super-Altissimo

You can play these exercises up to super-high C if you wish. As an alternative, you can drop down an octave for anything higher than A, where the lower note is shown full size and the upper option is small. (If nothing else, this gives you a helping hand on recognizing those high notes.) Example:



## *Simile*

A directive to perform a passage in a similar manner as the previous passage. Example, where simile means to slur exercise 2 as it was notated in exercise 1:



# Introduction to Minor Scales

Most of you are probably familiar with the major scale, and the concept of "equal temperament" which make it possible to transpose music without altering the fundamental sound. Minor scales are less familiar. Each major key has a relative minor scale with the same key signature. In fact, there are three types of minor scales: melodic, harmonic, and natural. Melodic minor is the most common, and most of the minor exercises in this book are in melodic minor. Here is a short explanation of the relationship between major and minor for the key of C. Other keys follow the same principle.

1. Start with the C major scale (no sharps or flats). Number the notes from 1 to 8



2. Keeping the same key signature, start on the 6th note (A) and play up 8 notes. This is the *natural* A minor scale. The minor scale that has the same key signature is the *relative minor*, So A minor is the relative minor for C major.



3. Now raise the 7th note by 1/2 step. This is the *harmonic* A minor scale.

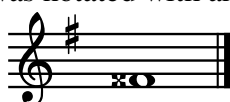


4. The third form of the minor scale, called *melodic* minor, raises both the 6th and 7th notes by 1/2 step only when moving up. Coming down melodic minor is just like natural minor.



These rules for raising notes by 1/2 step can result in some unusual note markings which trace back to time before the equal-tempered scale. If you start with E and raise it 1/2 step you get F, right? True today, but back in time they called it E# because 1/2 step increase was always a sharp.

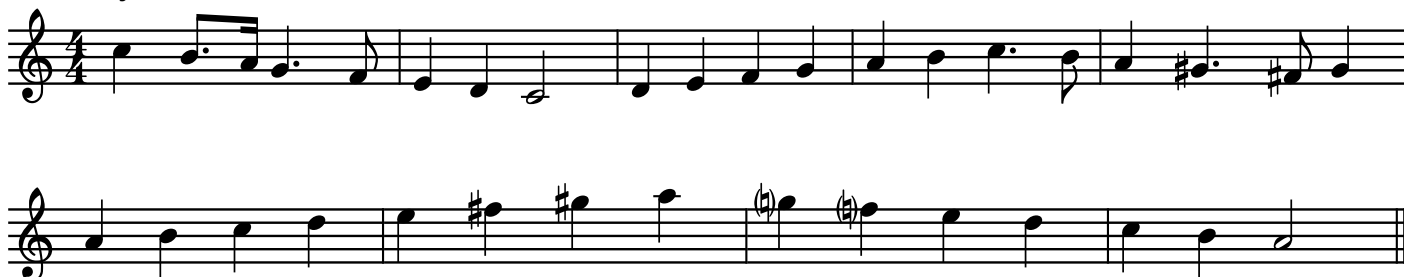
And what happens if you raise F# by 1/2 step? Today we call it G. Back then it was F## (F double sharp) which was notated with an x symbol like this



# Twelve Days of Christmas Scales

Marilyn Fleming (2021)

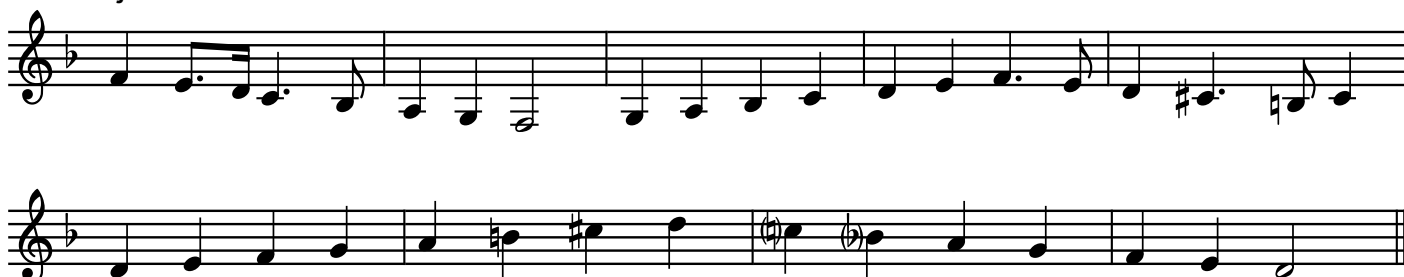
## 1 C Major/A Minor



## 2 G Major/E Minor



## 3 F Major/D Minor



## 4 D Major/B Minor



# Quick Warmups in Major Keys

Marilyn Fleming (2021)

## C Major

**1 Slow Long Tones**

**2 Two-Octave Scale**

**3 Arpeggio**

**4 Thirds**

**5 Returning Scale**

**6 Articulation**

# Magnani Major/Minor Warmup

ed. Marilyn Fleming (2021)

1 C Major



2 A Minor



3 F Major



4 D Minor



5 Bb Major




# Large Type Klose Scales


ed. Marilyn Fleming (2021)

to be played slurred (slurs omitted to improve readability)


**1** C Major




A Minor




**2** F Major




D Minor




**3** Bb Major




G Minor




**4** Eb Major



C Minor



**5** Ab Major



The image displays five groups of musical scales, each consisting of a major and a minor scale. Each group is numbered 1 through 5. The scales are written in treble clef with a common time signature. The notation includes slurs over the ascending and descending phrases of each scale. The scales are: 1. C Major and A Minor; 2. F Major and D Minor; 3. Bb Major and G Minor; 4. Eb Major and C Minor; 5. Ab Major. The key signatures are indicated by flats or naturals on the appropriate notes.

# Large Type Langenus Arpeggios

ed. Marilyn Fleming (2021)

**1** C Major

A Major

**2** F Major

D Minor

**3** Bb Major

G Minor

**4** Eb Major

C Minor

The image displays ten musical staves, each representing a different major and minor key. The staves are organized into four groups, numbered 1 through 4. Each group contains two staves: the top staff is for the major key and the bottom staff is for the relative minor key. The keys are: 1. C Major and A Minor; 2. F Major and D Minor; 3. Bb Major and G Minor; 4. Eb Major and C Minor. Each staff contains a single arpeggiated chord, with the notes written in a treble clef. The notes are connected by a curved line, indicating a continuous arpeggio. The keys are indicated by the number of flats in the key signature: C Major (0 flats), A Minor (0 flats), F Major (1 flat), D Minor (1 flat), Bb Major (2 flats), G Minor (2 flats), Eb Major (3 flats), and C Minor (3 flats).

# Marilyn's Scales and Arpeggios

Marilyn Fleming (2021)

This section contains standard scale and arpeggio exercises in all major and minor keys up to five sharps and flags. There are 11 exercises for each key:

Exercise No.			Articulation	
1	Major	Scale, played slowly	Slurred	
2		Scale	Slurred	
3		Arpeggio	Slurred	
4		Interrupted Scale	Slurred	
5		Scale in Thirds	Tongued	
6		Returning Scale	Tongued	
7	Minor	Scale, played slowly	Slurred	
8		Scale	Slurred	
9		Arpeggio	Slurred	
10		Interrupted Scale	Slurred	
11		Scale in Thirds	Tongued	

## Articulation Convention

When practicing scale exercises, conventional wisdom says to vary the articulation. Conventional book-writing wisdom tries to notate multiple articulations in the exercise, making it almost impossible to read. Here the articulated exercises are notated as staccato to make them clearly distinguishable from the slurred exercises. Some variations you might try:



You might also choose “standard” tonguing instead of staccato, or tongue the slurred exercises.



# C Major/A Minor

1

*play slowly*

2

3

4

5

6

The musical score is written for a single melodic line in 4/4 time. It is divided into six numbered sections. Section 1 is marked 'play slowly' and consists of a single staff with a melodic line of eighth and sixteenth notes. Sections 2, 3, and 4 are each a single staff. Section 5 consists of two staves. Section 6 consists of two staves. The music features various melodic lines, including eighth and sixteenth notes, and rests, with some measures containing multiple beamed notes.

7

*play slowly*

8

9

10

11

The musical score consists of five systems of staves. The first system (measures 7-8) includes the instruction 'play slowly'. The second system (measures 9-10) continues the melodic development. The third system (measures 11-12) shows further melodic complexity with many slurs and ties. The fourth system (measures 13-14) continues the piece. The fifth system (measures 15-16) concludes the section with a double bar line.

# Large Type Baermann Scales

ed. Marilyn Fleming (2021)

Exercises in this section are based on the 1917 edition of the Baermann Conservatory Method. The exercises were originally organized by exercise type. Here they are organized by key signature, with 14 exercises for each key:

Exercise No.			Articulation	Baermann Section No.
1	Major	Scale	Slurred	1
2		Arpeggio	Tongued	2
3		Interrupted Scale	Slurred	4
4		Arpeggio	Slurred	4 ½
5		Returning Scale	Slurred	5 ½
6		7 <sup>th</sup> Chords	Mixed	6
7		Scale in Thirds	Tongued	8
8		Scale in Sixths	Slurred	9
9	Minor	Scale	Slurred	1
10		Arpeggio	Tongued	2
11		Interrupted Scale	Slurred	4
12		Arpeggio	Slurred	4 ½
13		Scale in Thirds	Tongued	8
14		Scale in Sixths	Slurred	9

Following the key signature section there are two additional sections, one for diminished seventh chords and a second for octaves.

## Articulation Convention

When practicing scale exercises, conventional wisdom says to vary the articulation. Conventional book-writing wisdom tries to notate multiple articulations in the exercise, making it almost impossible to read. Here the articulated exercises are notated as staccato to make them clearly distinguishable from the slurred exercises. Some variations you might try:



You might also choose “standard” tonguing instead of staccato, or tongue the slurred exercises.

# C Major/A Minor

1

Exercise 1 consists of four measures of music in 4/4 time. The first measure contains a continuous eighth-note scale from C4 to G4. The second measure contains a continuous eighth-note scale from G4 down to C4. The third measure contains a continuous eighth-note scale from C4 to G4. The fourth measure contains a continuous eighth-note scale from G4 down to C4. The exercise is written on a single staff.

2

Exercise 2 consists of four measures of music in 4/4 time. The first measure contains a continuous eighth-note scale from C4 to G4. The second measure contains a continuous eighth-note scale from G4 down to C4. The third measure contains a continuous eighth-note scale from C4 to G4. The fourth measure contains a continuous eighth-note scale from G4 down to C4. The exercise is written on a single staff.

3

Exercise 3 consists of four measures of music in 4/4 time. The first measure contains a continuous eighth-note scale from C4 to G4. The second measure contains a continuous eighth-note scale from G4 down to C4. The third measure contains a continuous eighth-note scale from C4 to G4. The fourth measure contains a continuous eighth-note scale from G4 down to C4. The exercise is written on a single staff.

4

Exercise 4, measures 1-2. The first staff contains measures 1 and 2, featuring a continuous eighth-note pattern with a slur. The second staff continues the pattern, ending with a whole rest in measure 2.

5

Exercise 5, measures 1-8. The first staff contains measures 1 and 2. The subsequent staves (2-7) each contain two measures, showing a continuous eighth-note pattern with slurs. The final staff (8) contains measures 7 and 8, ending with a whole rest in measure 8.

6

This system contains measures 1 through 6 of a musical piece. It is written in 4/4 time and features a complex, fast-paced melody. The notation includes many beamed sixteenth and thirty-second notes, creating a dense, intricate line. A large slur spans the first four measures, and another slur covers measures 5 and 6. The key signature has one flat (Bb).

7

This system contains measures 7 through 10 of the musical piece. It continues the fast-paced, intricate melody from the previous system, maintaining the same 4/4 time signature and key signature. The notation is dense with beamed notes, and the system concludes with a double bar line at the end of measure 10.

8

Measures 8-11 of a musical score in 4/4 time. The notation is on a single staff with a treble clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The melody consists of eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together. Measures 8 and 9 feature a descending eighth-note scale. Measures 10 and 11 feature an ascending eighth-note scale. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

9

Measures 12-15 of a musical score in 4/4 time. The notation is on a single staff with a treble clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The melody continues with eighth and sixteenth notes. Measures 12 and 13 feature a descending eighth-note scale. Measures 14 and 15 feature an ascending eighth-note scale. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

10

Measures 16-19 of a musical score in 4/4 time. The notation is on a single staff with a treble clef. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The melody continues with eighth and sixteenth notes. Measures 16 and 17 feature a descending eighth-note scale. Measures 18 and 19 feature an ascending eighth-note scale. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

11

System 11 consists of four measures of music in 4/4 time. The first two measures feature a continuous eighth-note melody in the right hand, with a descending line in the left hand. The third measure continues the eighth-note melody, and the fourth measure concludes with a half-note chord. The key signature has one sharp (F#).

12

System 12 consists of two measures of music in 4/4 time. Both measures feature a continuous eighth-note melody in the right hand, with a descending line in the left hand. The key signature has one sharp (F#).

13

System 13 consists of four measures of music in 4/4 time. The first two measures feature a continuous eighth-note melody in the right hand, with a descending line in the left hand. The third measure continues the eighth-note melody, and the fourth measure concludes with a half-note chord. The key signature has one sharp (F#).



14



# Large Type Klose Mechanism Exercises

ed. Marilyn Fleming (2021)

## Short Phrases for Daily Practice

1 2

3 4

5 6

7 8

9 10

11 12

13 14

15 16

17 18