

# Ugly Ducklings No More!

## IMPROVING OBOE SOUND PRODUCTION

The Power of **AND**

University of Wisconsin  
Eau Claire

Wesley Boehm, April Schneider, Dr. Christa Garvey | Music and Theatre Arts Department, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

### INTRODUCTION

The objective for this research project is to examine how oboe embouchure is taught to beginning students. Specifically we are targeting how future music educators teach oboe embouchure formation.



Successful oboe embouchure.

### WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR? HOW CAN WE TEACH THIS TO FUTURE TEACHERS?

Our first step was to decide what we are looking for in oboe embouchure. We first studied videos to understand the correlation between oboe embouchure formation and oboe sound production. After we had developed our own ideas/list of what a successful oboe embouchure should be, we then worked on ways to teach this to future educators.

### IS CHANGE NEEDED?

Beyond just looking at a student's oboe embouchure, one of the essential questions is: is change needed? If a student is producing an acceptable sound then change may not be needed even though the embouchure may not conform to models. This strategy is important for future teachers to learn so they can be flexible when teaching their future students.

### METHOD

Once we knew what we were looking for, we wanted to work with future teachers so they could implement them with students. We chose to focus on future teachers at our university drawn from Music 210: Woodwind Techniques.

### VIDEO

After the future teachers had been learning the basics of how to play the oboe for a few days, we had them use what they had learned so far to create a video of themselves explaining oboe embouchure as if to a student.

### ONE-ON-ONE MEETING/LESSON AND FLIPBOOK

We then scheduled a one-on-one meeting with each future teacher. In that meeting we went through a flipbook that we had created, containing pictures of different people playing oboe. The goal of the books was to expose future teachers to how different face shapes and embouchures could either be successful or unsuccessful.

After being exposed to more examples of embouchure, we had them describe what they were hearing and seeing in their own videos, pointing out what was both successful and unsuccessful.

### FINAL VIDEO AND REFLECTION

In order to help them bring together everything that they had learned, we had them create a new video on how to teach embouchure/beginning oboe to their future students. Through this, we were able to observe how their teaching and understanding of this topic changed throughout this process.



One example of bad embouchure (top photo) vs. good embouchure (bottom photo).

### “RESULTS”

Currently we are still working on gathering all of our results and conclusions because we are still getting information back from those we worked with. Based on the reflections and other information that we have gathered so far, we do have a few “results.” First of all, we found that many of these future educators did not have a solid understanding of oboe embouchure and, while they were able to describe the basics, they had a difficult time differentiating between successful and unsuccessful embouchures especially in children. Through their videos and meetings with us, the future educators started to be able to recognize different face shapes/embouchures, which was the goal of this project. Another really important aspect that many of the future teachers learned was how important it is to hear students play. Many of them had difficulty deciding if an embouchure was successful or not just based on the pictures and hearing the student would have helped. To go along with this, it is important to realize that there is some subjectivity when deciding if an embouchure is successful or not, because what works for one person may not work for someone else. Also, sometimes one small embouchure change will make a big change in their overall sound.



### NEXT STEPS

We will still be completing more follow up questions/meetings with the future educators, including finishing any last reflections. We want to make sure they understand the main components of oboe embouchure and that they feel more comfortable teaching oboe embouchure to their students.

We found we were successful with this project and future music educators we worked with gained experience that will help them be better teachers. Because of this, we would like to look into continuing this experience for classes in the future. We want to continue to contribute to the education of future teachers and do what we can to help them and their students.

Another possibility which we have been considering is presenting the ideas that we have developed at the Wisconsin Music Educators Association Conference in Madison. This could be a great way to share what we have concluded and help other music educators in an area that is typically difficult for them to teach and understand. We would also like to look at other conferences similar to this one to present our material.