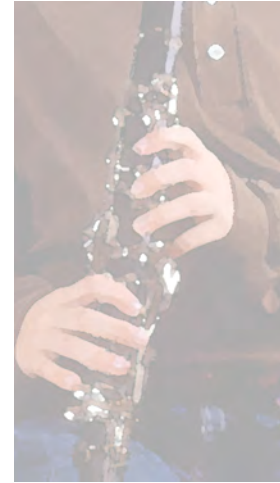


# Building a Better Band

## Tip#3 Mouthpieces Wear Out!



### **There is a theory...**

that says clarinet mouthpieces made of ebonite do not wear out. Based on that theory, you can buy one mouthpiece and use it until you decide to quit playing the instrument. (We hope you never quit!)

### **Unfortunately, the theory is not true.**

Ebonite is a rubber-type material that is compressed by heat, which creates the clarinet blank (the first step of a mouthpiece). Ebonite was discovered as the best replacement to wood for mouthpieces because of its ability to conduct the sound waves produced more accurately than wood. As hard as the substance may seem, the truth is they do wear out. Cleaning the mouthpiece on a regular basis, important for performance and hygiene, results in wearing down the facing. The dimensions of a mouthpiece are so small, that gentle rubbing over time will result in the rails of the mouthpiece going out of alignment, or the facing being altered so the relationship to the tip is not the same.

### **If my mouthpiece is worn, why don't I feel these changes?**

Playing a worn mouthpiece is like wearing a pair of old shoes. Once your shoes were new and performed at the maximum. Over time they get old and you adjust to them as they wear. You don't realize they're worn, until your feet start hurting. In the case of a worn mouthpiece, intonation and articulation are the first things that go. And it may be so subtle that you don't recognize it at first. You may not recognize it until you're performing. Finding out at a performance or before an adjudicator is finding out too late.

### **What are the recommended guidelines?**

You should change your mouthpiece every three years at the minimum. It doesn't mean you have to change the type of mouthpiece, but you should replace your mouthpiece to insure maximum performance out of your clarinet and so your playing continues to improve.

### **REMEMBER!**

It's important to clean your mouthpiece! • Mouthpieces do wear down from cleaning • Change your mouthpiece every 2-3 years