

On the lower joint, the A clarinet has separate posts and rod for the right-hand A/E flat key. The new design means less stress and wear on the screw and longer playing life for the spring. The register key also has a unique ergonomic design, supplied with all Ridenour clarinets with the option to replace it with a conventional register key at no extra cost. For me, the ergonomic key is a huge advantage as it requires less movement from the thumb to operate. The padding and consequent seal on Ridenour clarinets is excellent, with double skin pads on the lower joint and Valentino synthetic pads on the upper. Other padding options are available.

The sound on all Ridenour clarinets projects well, maintaining the warmth, evenness and rounded beauty that are integral to the core sound, unlike some wooden clarinets which can have an unpleasant, harsh, cutting, edgy sound, especially in the altissimo. The throat tones around the break in the upper chalumeau area (G to B flat) are the clearest and purest I have ever experienced. Crossing the break in very quiet dynamics – for example in the notorious opening of the Debussy *Rhapsodie* – is smooth and effortless.

Knowing that these clarinets are manufactured in Asia, many players

have concerns about the strength of the keywork. But, as previously stated, I have used them for many years and they have never let me down. I own the least expensive models: the 576 B flat and the 575 A. The difference between the 576 and the top-of-the-range Libertas is that the Libertas has more anchored posts and a slightly more focused sound with the same accurate tuning scale.

All Ridenour clarinets have in-line jump trill keys, similar to the original Leblanc design trill keys. Normal trill keys have some sideways movement when depressed (particularly the first and second side keys – E/B flat and the next one along) and lift off the tone hole at an angle. This means that the pad may not always return to the exact previous position on the rim of the tone hole, particularly as the mechanism wears. The in-line system guarantees that the pad goes down in the exact same position each time.

BASS CLARINETS

The Ridenour bass clarinet plays in a very similar way to the other clarinets in the range, in as much as it crosses the breaks with ease and there is no increase in resistance in the clarion or clarinet register. One feels that there is not a

fight with the instrument, whereas with wooden bass clarinets there is often a discernible change of character in the sound when crossing over to the next register, and the clarinet becomes harder to blow.

Like all the other Ridenour clarinets the bass will not crack – an important matter for such a major financial outlay. The quality of throat notes is superb, especially when compared to much more expensive bass clarinets. This inexpensive hard rubber low C bass is good news for professional players and students on a budget.

At the Royal Welsh College of Music, where I teach, the bass clarinets are kept in a storeroom which has very cool and dry air conditions. These wooden, extremely expensive bass clarinets have cracked almost beyond redemption, leaving them sounding dull with little beauty or interest in the sound. Having got them repaired to a level where they could be played, they promptly cracked again – so, for me, hard rubber clarinets are definitely worth considering.

Having come to admire these instruments without ever being paid as a sales representative, I am now acting as their sales agent in the UK. You can find more information on my website (www.lesliecraven.co.uk). ■

RIDENOUR CLARINET PRODUCTS UK

Lyrrique clarinets:

- Bb, A & C
- Bass clarinets to low C

Accessories:

- ATG reed system,
- Maintenance and repair
- DVD's
- Thumb Saddle

Clarinet books:

- Clarinet Fingerings
- Educator's Guide to the Clarinet

"Les, the RCP 576b is a fantastic clarinet, it has great tuning...is easy to play, effortless crossing of the break, evenness of note - chalumeau to altissimo is amazing, lovely, even, dark, warm sound in all dynamics and registers. I'm delighted and I play it in "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory"

JAMES MAINWARING

one of London's finest clarinetists,
solo artist, west end musicals
and recording sessions



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