

# Grace & BALANCE

**A glimpse into the multi-faceted career of Mary Karen Clardy**

*In the variety television shows of the '50s and '60s, one of the biggest crowd-pleasers was the acrobatic performer who balanced multiple plates on spinning sticks, giving just the right amount of attention to each delicate balance and never letting a single plate drop.*

*Dazzled audiences couldn't help but ask themselves, "How does he do that?" It's a question Yamaha flutist Mary Karen Clardy can relate to.*

Clardy makes brilliance look easy, and she does it with grace, charm, and a sense of humor. For two decades, Clardy has carefully nurtured and maintained a multifaceted career. She is a full-time Professor of Flute at the University of North Texas College of Music. She performs around the world as a soloist and chamber artist, and previously also squeezed in symphonic work as alto flutist with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra. She is also very involved with the National Flute Association, as well as performing nationally and internationally. A sought-after educator, she gives masterclasses in the US and abroad. She is the author of three books published by European American/Warner, which are all in multiple reprint. She is also an active recording artist, recording for the Klavier label with the chamber group Wood, Wind, and Silk. And without exception, she acts in each of these roles with the highest standards of excellence. Her's is a career that often leaves peers, fans, and students wondering: "How does she do that?" But Clardy says it's really no big mystery.

"Mine is a very equal approach to a professional career," says Clardy. "I often think in shapes: when you have a triangle, for example, sometimes one of the points becomes more dominant. I try to look at it in a more circular fashion, in that a portion of every day is devoted to all three parts. At the center is the fact that I'm motivated

by a genuine love for music, and a creative search to push the envelope as a player. That has to drive every thing else—like the spokes of a wheel, it all extends out from that.”

But Clardy admits readily that a love of music is only part of the equation. Holding together a multidimensional career with a minimal amount of stress requires excellent organizational skills.

“I do believe in a daily schedule—not only for myself, but also for the people that I impact,” she says. “I’m very insistent about it, because so often I encounter these phenomenally creative people who have been urged to believe that a lack of discipline is going to get them someplace! That might get you through your first contest at age 18, but after that you’re going to find yourself up against decent, disciplined competitors—the ones that are successful at winning auditions.”

### The Early Bird...

Clardy’s approach to scheduling may seem a little unusual to some, but there’s no question that it works. After taking the early morning hour to sip some coffee and take care of daily correspondence, Clardy has soon finished her personal practice for the day and is ready to begin teaching.

“I do my own practicing and teaching early in the day,” she explains. “Playing early in the day tends to get the pipes flowing, so to speak. So most days through the university year I’ll start my teaching at 8 am; I’ve even

been known to start at 7. I know it’s not terribly popular, but by the end of the year—to a person—everyone says it works and they’d never change the system.”

And while those who prefer a more easy going schedule might call Clardy’s approach madness, there’s a true method to this madness and it’s hard to dispute. Far from being rigid, Clardy says that her scheduling technique is merely a means to allow her the freedom to enjoy all the various aspects of her career without undue physical or mental stress.

“If I’ve gotten my own personal technical regime out of the way, it leaves me free after one or two o’clock to plan and put together repertoire for the new concert season,” explains Clardy. “If I haven’t started technical work until after I teach, then I’m faced with a couple of hours of just scales and the kind of things that I need to do before I can get into repertoire. Frankly, it’s just a time issue.”

The clear and simple sense of it all helps answer that question of “How does she do that?” It also goes far in explaining the level of success her students have achieved, many of them going on to win competitions throughout the world like Rampal, NFA, and MTNA, as well as building promising teaching careers of their own. Clardy uses the principles that guide her own career, and she shares them with her students continuously.

“I have a motto,” she says. “‘Organization allows creativity to flourish.’ Some students have been encouraged to believe that creativity is freedom. But freedom is only creativity

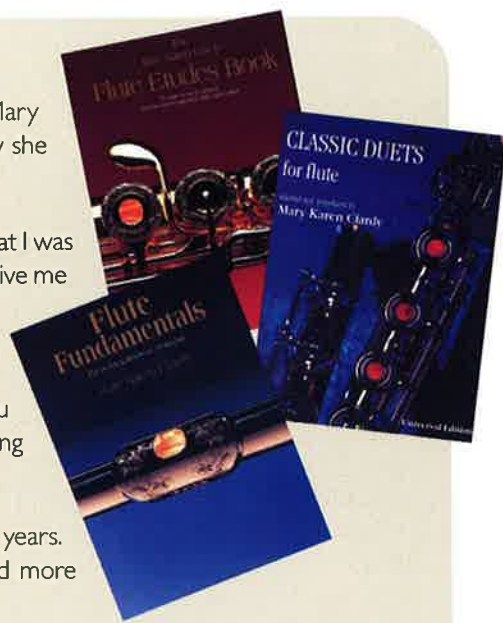
## Performer, Teacher... and Now, Writer!

As if her multifaceted career as performer, teacher, and clinician weren’t enough, Mary Karen Clardy is increasingly known as an author of flute studies. Here, she shares how she got started, along with a few tips on how she manages this part of her hectic life.

“Over 10 years ago, a publisher came to me and said they’d really like to be a part of what I was doing. My first reaction was shock—but I told them to let me know what they wanted, give me a date, and I’d be happy to write it. That wasn’t the way they wanted it to work: they told me to choose a topic, and then fit it into my own schedule. I felt like a kid in a candy shop! I tried to think of what would I really find useful. I remembered all the times my students would say, ‘I just loved this one exercise, but I’ve forgotten it; could you please help me remember how to practice it?’ So, that first book actually wound up being a compilation of things.

“Not everybody publishes books. I’ve done a lot of writing on a daily basis, through the years. I’ve learned that it helps me focus my teaching, and it helps my students understand more clearly what I’m actually after if I can put it into very concise language.

“Keeping those particular ‘writing chops’ ready to go is just like keeping the scales ready to go. If you stop the act of writing, you lose that acuity, you lose the speed, and the flow. So I always make sure that I’ve done some writing, maybe even it’s just a chronicle of the day. I urge students to keep a journal of their practice, because they will find that a journal helps focus what they’ve actually done. I think it becomes more cohesive—you can remember it for the next day, and move on from there.”



that is organized. That's probably the most difficult thing to instill in students. They've got all these creative juices flowing and they're so excited. It's so hard to say to them, 'But you've got to learn the rules first.'"

Underneath that motto is a deeply rooted relationship to teaching that is a part of Clardy's own background.

## The Art of Teaching

"I have the benefit of having come from a long line of people who were marvelous teachers, and not just music teachers," she says. "People for whom the art of teaching—and I do think it's an art—was highly developed. It's a way of working with each individual person, rather than looking at people as a formula and just sort of plugging in the same thing from person to person.

"Students all come from a different vantage point, so they bring a set of circumstances with them. Sometimes you'll find that one technical area is highly developed, or there's maybe a lack of knowledge of basic use of tone quality or vibrato to go with that marvelous technique. I think that the job of the most highly developed teacher should be to look at each student, find their strengths, and move directly to their weaknesses. Working with those first develops them to where the whole becomes more balanced."

Above all, says Clardy, she tries to develop her students' focus on the force that drives a successful career in music.

"My motivator as a performer, teacher, and composite musician is a love for music and creative expression, and a belief that music is a language that transcends words," she says. "In the teaching process, I hold that above all else, meaning that it's the focus we all work for—then I try to allow tonal and technical development to move only toward that goal. That 'edge of the envelope' we all push for is such a high and noble goal that I think it helps all of us. That's probably the secret to why the students are doing so well. They're focused on the right thing, and that's simply the love of music. Otherwise, how do you develop and maintain a career across a 30-, 40-, 50-year span if you don't do it for the right reason?"

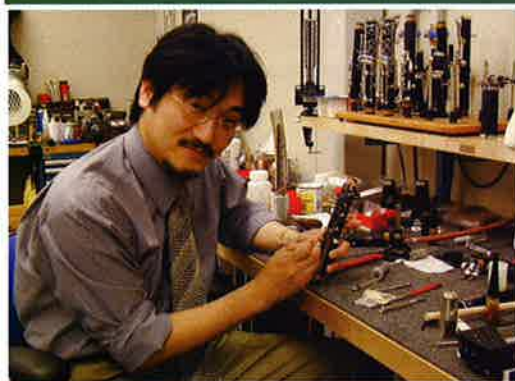
## Tools of the Trade

In Clardy's life, where everything has its proper place, it naturally follows that she emphasizes the importance of choosing the right equipment for the job. Clardy plays on Yamaha custom 800 series and 900 series flutes, but she feels Yamaha's high quality and consistency are benefits incorporated throughout the entire product range. "The new 500 series fills a previous gap," she says. "Playing on this instrument will develop embouchure, and as a result, intonation, dynamic range, and ensemble blend also improves. The 500 series reacts like a flute in a higher price range." She confidently recommends Yamaha flutes to her students: "Young players need an instrument that offers durability, ease of response, and consistency. Yamaha is the clear leader in all these areas, and the price point is comparable to or better than many other models on the market."

Significantly, Clardy also stresses the company's on-going support of student music. "Yamaha's commitment to music education as a part of culture is a very strong selling point," she says. For a committed educator like Mary Karen Clardy, this is one of the most valuable reasons to choose Yamaha.

—Clardy plays a YFL-994AH 14k gold flute.

## Woodwind Master Sets Up Shop in Grand Rapids



Yamaha is proud to welcome woodwind design master Hiroshi Nakajima. He has relocated from Japan to Grand Rapids to work with artists and developers in the newly constructed Brass and Woodwind Custom Shop. Inside the 3,000 square foot area, which was completed this summer, Nakajima and brass designer Bob Malone will team up to take the Yamaha Band & Orchestral Division to the next level.

Nakajima arrived in April from Hamamatsu, Japan, where he had been working as a member of Yamaha's clarinet design team for the past eight years. He has worked with soloists and performers from orchestras around the world.

While attending the Kyushu Institute of Design, Nakajima became fascinated with the study of acoustics. He also began to study the bassoon, and later, clarinet. His love of music and fascination eventually led him to Yamaha and musical instrument design. He joined Yamaha's clarinet design department in 1993, and was an integral part of the team that designed Yamaha's V series clarinets.

Though he will continue to travel, home is now Grand Rapids, and he will be a valued asset to Yamaha's artist relations outreach efforts. The benefits of his wisdom and expertise are immeasurable, and Yamaha eagerly looks forward to the results of Nakajima's presence at the Grand Rapids Custom Shop. Though he is still in the process of learning English, sound and music know no language barriers.