



Lesson 16: Becoming a Section Clarinetist for the National Arts Centre Orchestra

Presented by
Evelyn-Jade Clarkin

Presented for
Designing Your Future

Qualifications, Education,
Career Pathways, and
Health Risks

What is a Section Clarinetist?

A professional clarinetist that performs within an ensemble like an orchestra, contributing to the overall harmony of the group.



What qualifications & education are needed to enter this field?

The pathway to becoming a professional clarinetist takes from 5 to 10 years of study and practice. It includes training, auditions, and advanced degrees. There is no one prescribed path, and the practice to get there is versatile.



Apprentice Path

Extensive private study with professional

Leads to → Freelance & chamber music

Degree Path

Bachelor of Music (BM) , Diploma or Artist Certificate from Conservatory

Leads to → Entry-level orchestral roles or Private teaching

Advanced Degree Path

Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA) and Master of Music (MM)

Leads to → Orchestral career



How and Where

How and where can you acquire the qualifications and education needed?

Apprenticeship and Mentorship

One example is the *National Youth Orchestra of Canada* (NYO Canada) that recruits young talented musicians across Canada. Participants get hands on practice at events like the NYO Canada Chamberfest.

Degree Path

For certification there are colleges, such as Humber Polytechnic. The type of diploma, degrees, and experiences differ at each location.

Advanced Degree Path

Some universities, such as Carleton University, offer degree programs up to Masters in Music & Cultures. From Bachelors to Masters takes approximately six years.

Continuing Ed

What kind of on-the-job training or continuing education might be involved in this destination?

Ongoing professional development at the NAC includes a global mentorship program where musicians engage in one-on-one training with orchestral experts. There is technical skill building, and the program emphasizes professional maturity by integrating students directly into the orchestra's working environment. This allows them to experience the realities of the professional music career firsthand.



Alternatives

What three other occupations are related to this field of work?

Beyond performance, the music industry offers a variety of roles for skilled musicians. Whether you enjoy mentoring individual students, leading large ensembles, or working behind the scenes in a studio, these three occupations represent sustainable career pivots for trained performers.



Private Teacher

Provide one-on-one specialized instruction to students of all ages.

High School Teacher

Lead a school's music department by directing ensembles such as concert bands, choirs, or orchestras.

Session Musician

This occupation can involve performing and recording high-quality tracks for video games, film scores, or commercial advertisements.

Health Risks

What health and safety issues are the most important when considering this occupation?

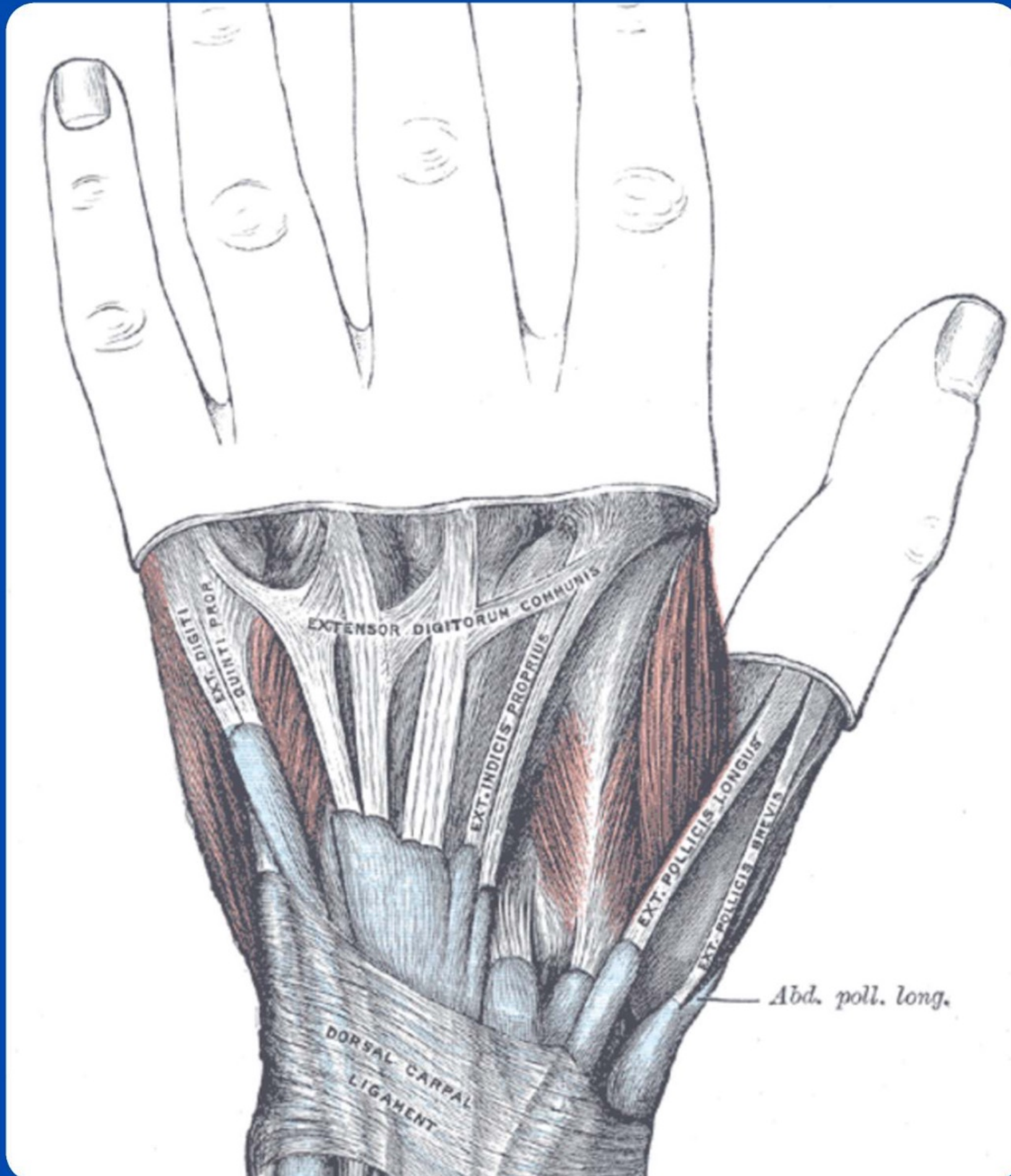
Trigger Finger

Osteoarthritis

Tenosynovitis

Nerve compression syndrome

Focal dystonia





Resources

- "Scholarships to Benefit Music and Engineering Students." Northwestern Magazine, 2021, magazine.northwestern.edu/impact/scholarships-to-benefit-music-and-engineering-students. Accessed 3 Apr. 2026.
- "Career Matters, Opportunities for the Future World of Work." Career Matters, 24 Jan. 2026, www.career-matters.org/. Accessed 3 Apr. 2026.
- "How to Become a Clarinetist: Career Path & Guide." Himalayas, 2026, himalayas.app/career-guides/clarinetist. Accessed 3 Apr. 2026.
- "NYO Canada - Canada's Pre-Eminent Training Orchestra for Musicians Ages 16 to 28." Nyoc.org, NYO Canada - Canada's pre-eminent training Orchestra for musicians ages 16 to 28., 2026, nyoc.org/about/overview/. Accessed 3 Apr. 2026.
- "2023 NACO Mentorship Program." Nac-Cna.ca, 2023, nac-cna.ca/en/video/2023-naco-mentorship-program. Accessed 3 Apr. 2026.
- "About Canada's NAC Orchestra." Nac-Cna.ca, 2025, nac-cna.ca/en/orchestra/about.
- "Guide to Orchestral Scoring in Studio One – Part 1 Intro & Basics: Woodwinds." Paul Cecchetti Music, 13 Dec. 2018, www.paulcecchettimusic.com/guide-to-orchestral-scoring-in-studio-one-part-1-intro-basics-woodwinds/.