

A Mutual Influence: Solo and Chamber Works for Clarinet by Students of Paul Hindemith

Laura Armstrong

Paul Hindemith (1895-1963) composed many solo and chamber works for clarinet, and most are standard works in the clarinet repertoire. It may be interesting to clarinetists to know that many of his students have done the same. While most of these works are largely unknown to most clarinetists, they would greatly add to their repertoire. In this presentation I will discuss some of these works written by his students, and introduce these composers to clarinetists. While in no means does this imply that Hindemith was the only person they studied with, or that he controlled everything they ever wrote, this will serve as a new way of looking at some more recent music that has been written for the clarinet.

Hindemith taught at the Berlin Hochschule für Musik from 1927 to 1937, Yale University from 1940 to 1953, and the University of Zürich from 1949 to 1957. He also held other positions for a brief time at SUNY-Buffalo, Cornell University, Wells College, and the Berkshire Music Festival at Tanglewood. Some of the most talented composition students were drawn to study with him based on his fame as a composer, and his reputation as a teacher. He was a very demanding, strict, and critical teacher, but was very dedicated and matched his students' efforts with his own enthusiasm about their work.

In his biography of the composer, Geoffrey Skelton writes:

He was a remarkable teacher, but also, for all but the strongest, a dangerous one. Even a cursory glance through his educational books will reveal his talent for explaining things clearly and interestingly, mainly by the use of apt and striking metaphors. His pupils, both in Europe and in America, bear witness to the invigorating effect of his classes, to his unrelenting insistence in and involvement with each one of them individually. The danger lay in the fact that his personality

was so forceful and his style of writing so very much his own that his pupils were tempted into copying him. All young American composers, Aaron Copland complained at the time Hindemith was teaching at Yale University, seemed to be writing Hindemithian music.

Stressing the importance of exercises in counterpoint and harmony was the basic principle of his teaching. For example, to be admitted into his theory and composition programs at Yale, students were required to pass his difficult written examination in harmony and counterpoint in which an excellent score was fifty percent. He treated the majority of his students as though they were beginners until they could prove their skills in these areas were superb. This approach led to his book, *Unterweisung im Tonsatz (The Craft of Musical Composition)*, which outlines the methods he used with his students.

While some critics believed that this style of teaching was too rigid, Hindemith felt that his was a less rigid method than the twelve-tone method used by his contemporary Arnold Schönberg. According to Skelton, “the twelve-tone system, as he [Hindemith] saw it...was consequently restrictive. What he was aiming at was a definition of tonal and intervallic relationships which could serve composers as a guide, enabling them to move, freely but logically, in the direction their ear indicated.” Although Hindemith freely used all twelve tones of the chromatic scale melodically and harmonically in his compositions, he insisted on maintaining a sense of tonality.

Hindemith’s musical style can be expressed as neo-classical: his mature music was modern, but not *avant garde*, and he used traditional forms. He was seen as the leader of the *neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity) which was the German counterpart of the French neoclassical movement led by Igor Stravinsky and the composers of *les Six*. While some critics

viewed Hindemith's music as anti-romantic, others felt he was a "true inheritor of the mantle of [Johannes] Brahms, the romantic conservative."

Hindemith himself composed many solo and chamber works for clarinet including the Sonata; Concerto; Quartet for Clarinet, Violin, Cello, and Piano; and Quintet for Clarinet and String Quartet. He also includes the clarinet in other chamber works such as the *Kleine Kammermusik* for woodwind quintet; the Septet for Flute, Oboe, Clarinet, Bass Clarinet, Bassoon, Horn, and Trumpet; and in his Octet for Clarinet, Bassoon, Horn, Violin, Two Violas, Cello, and Double Bass. In 1960, he even encouraged Josef Horák, the Czech bass clarinet virtuoso, to perform his Bassoon Sonata. It is clear that Hindemith enjoyed the clarinet and greatly enhanced its repertoire; as a consequence these works have been widely performed and studied.

While many of Hindemith's students composed multiple works for clarinet, Harald Genzmer (1909 – 2007) was the most prolific. His output includes the Fantasy for Clarinet; a sonata for bass clarinet; a sonatina for clarinet and piano; a sonata for clarinet and piano; a concertino; a concerto; the Capriccio for Two Clarinets; a concerto for two clarinets; a trio for clarinet, cello, and piano; a trio for oboe, clarinet, and bassoon; a quartet for clarinet, violin, cello, and piano; a quintet for clarinet and string quartet; and several more chamber pieces involving clarinet. Genzmer's music, although at times containing many difficult technical passages, is extremely accessible to most listeners and is enjoyable and rewarding to play. I have been surprised to discover that there are so few recordings of his works for clarinet. His conservative style, which strongly reflects Hindemith's influence, may have had something to do with this, but I feel that his music deserves more attention than it has received and will be a major focus of this presentation.

Other students of Hindemith have also composed extensively for the clarinet, and many of their works have also been neglected. Violet Archer (1913 – 2000) wrote one unaccompanied piece, a sonata, a duet with alto saxophone, and several other works. Arnold Cooke (1906 – 2005) and Alvin Etler (1913 – 1973) also composed sonatas along with other works, although these two composers are more familiar to most clarinetists. Many of these pieces contain similarities to Hindemith's music, especially with regard to harmony and melodic structure.

While some of Hindemith's students embraced his compositional methods completely and maintained the same style throughout their careers, others developed their own methods into styles that were often entirely different. Ruth Schonthal (1924 – 2006) used an expressionistic style and her work for clarinet and prepared piano, *The Bells of Sarajevo*, is hardly reminiscent of Hindemith's style.

My goal for this presentation is to show the degree to which Hindemith's influence as a teacher can be found in their works for clarinet. But it is not my intention to show that all of the music presented is primarily influenced by Hindemith. All of the composers to be discussed in this project had multiple composition teachers and a variety of other influences, were talented individuals, and went on to have successful and independent careers. I am hoping that learning more about these composers and their works will encourage clarinetists to perform more of these works. All of these works are worthy additions to the clarinet repertoire and should be programmed more often.

I will provide detailed information on composers and perform brief excerpts of Howard Boatwright's *Suite for Clarinet* and Harald Genzmer's *Fantasie für Klarinette*.

SOURCES

- Adler, Samuel. *Canto XIV (A Klezmer Fantasy for Clarinet Solo)*. Grafton, OH: Ludwig Music, 1998.
- _____. Program notes to Samuel Adler. "Canto XIV for Clarinet Solo." *First Chairs: Adler – Cantos for Solo Instruments*. Albany, NY: Albany Records 306, CD. 1998.
- Boatwright, Howard. *Suite for Clarinet Alone*. Fayetteville, NY: Walnut Grove Press, 1985.
- Bok, Henri. "The Bass Clarinet." In *The Versatile Clarinet*, edited by Roger Heaton, 91-99. New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Catherine Parsons Smith. "Schonthal, Ruth." In *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/47049> (accessed September 3, 2009).
- Culot, Hubert. Program notes to *The Music of Alan Shulman*. New York: Bridge 9119, CD, 2003.
- Epstein, Selma. "Composer Interview: Ruth Schonthal." *International Alliance for Women in Music Journal* (February 1994): 5-8. http://www.iawm.org/articles_html/epstein_schonthal.html (accessed October 8, 2010).
- Eric Wetherell. "Cooke, Arnold." In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/06392> (accessed September 3, 2009).
- Gaulke, Stanley Jack. "The Published Solo and Chamber Works for Clarinet of Arnold Cooke." DMA, diss., University of Rochester, Eastman School of Music, 1978. ProQuest (AAT7816653; accessed September 3, 2009).
- Gilbert Chase and David Wright. "Foss, Lukas." In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/10031> (accessed September 14, 2009).
- Gillespie, James E. *Solos for Unaccompanied Clarinet: An Annotated Bibliography of Published Works*. Detroit: Studies in Music Bibliography No. 28, 1973.
- Giselher Schubert. "Hindemith, Paul." In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/13053> (accessed September 3, 2009).

- Hartig, Linda. *Violet Archer: A Bio-Bibliography*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1991.
- Henderson, Heather. "Canadian Women Composers: An Annotated Bibliography of Solo and Chamber Music for Clarinet." DMA diss., Arizona State University, 2007. ProQuest (AAT3270584; accessed September 3, 2009).
- Hindemith, Paul. *Selected Letters of Paul Hindemith*. Translated and edited by Geoffrey Skelton. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995.
- J. Michele Edwards. "Diemer, Emma (Lou)." In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/45072> (accessed May 7, 2010).
- Jörg Riedlbauer. "Genzmer, Harald." In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/10881> (accessed February 8, 2009).
- Kay, Jennifer. "An Introduction to the Songs of Howard Boatwright: An Interpretive Approach." DMA diss., Boston University, 2008. ProQuest (AAT3308139; accessed September 3, 2009).
- Kater, Michael H. "Paul Hindemith: The Reluctant Emigré." In *Composers of the Nazi Era: Eight Portraits*, 31-56. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Kurt Stone and Michael Meckna. "Etler, Alvin." In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/09057> (accessed September 3, 2009).
- Linda Bishop Hartig. "Archer, Violet (Balestreri)." In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/01170> (accessed January 19, 2009).
- Margaret Campbell. "Shulman, Alan." In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/52906> (accessed September 29, 2010).
- Marie Rolf. "Adler, Samuel." In *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/02206> (accessed September 14, 2009).
- Neumeyer, David. *The Music of Paul Hindemith*. New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1986.

- Nichols, William Roy. "A Comprehensive Performance Project in Clarinet Literature with an Essay of the Wind Music of Alvin Etler (1913-1973)." DMA diss., University of Iowa, 1976. ProQuest (AAT7713154; accessed September 3, 2009).
- Noss, Luther. *Paul Hindemith in the United States*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1989.
- Perone, Karen L. *Lukas Foss: A Bio-Bibliography*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1991.
- Richards, Guy. *Hindemith, Hartmann, and Henze*. London: Phaidon Press, 1995.
- Roth, Eric Steven. "The Unaccompanied Choral Works of Harald Genzmer." DMA diss., University of Cincinnati, 1974. ProQuest (AATDP16026; accessed September 3, 2009).
- Schlegel, Ellen Grolman. *Emma Lou Diemer: A Bio-Bibliography*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2001.
- Schoenbach, Sol. "The Story Behind the Composing of the Osborne Rhapsody." *Journal of the International Double Reed Society* 11 (1983).
- Schonthal, Ruth. *The Bells of Sarajevo for Clarinet and Piano*. Kassel: Furore-Verlag, 1997.
- Sigma Alpha Iota International Music Fraternity. "Ruth Schonthal." Accessed October 8, 2010. <http://www.sai-national.org/home/ComposersBureau/SchonthalRuth/tabid/387/Default.aspx>.
- Skelton, Geoffrey. *Paul Hindemith: The Man Behind the Music*. London: Victor Gollancz, 1975.
- Snavley, John Albert. "Benny Goodman's Commissioning of New Works and Their Significance for Twentieth-Century Clarinetists." DMA diss., University of Arizona, 1991. ProQuest (AAT9136868; accessed September 15, 2009).
- Terence J, O'Grady. "Boatwright, Howard (Leake)." In *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/47173> (accessed September 3, 2009).
- Tibbs, Constance Hobson and Deborra A. Richardson. *Ulysses Kay: A Bio-Bibliography*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994.

Wheeler, John Eby. "The Music for Solo Clarinet by Arnold Cooke: The Influence of Paul Hindemith and a Comparison of the Music for Solo Clarinet by Both Composers." DMA diss., University of North Texas, 1987. ProQuest (AAT8713990; accessed September 3, 2009).

Willoughby, Angela Sue. "The Solo Piano Music of Violet Archer: A Study of Selected Didactic Works." DMA diss., Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, 1998. ProQuest (AAT9902670; accessed September 3, 2009).

Wyatt, Lucius. "Ulysses Simpson Kay." In Vol. 2 of *International Dictionary of Black Composers*, edited by Samuel A. Floyd Jr., 689-698. Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Pub., 1999.