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Historical Perspectives of Excellence for Clarinetists

ClarinetFest® 1999
John Cipolla

Summary of Lecture

This lecture explains why it is important for musicians to study the greats of the past, understand what made them stand out from their peers and how to apply these traits to themselves. Through brief profiles of Carl Baermann, Ernesto Cavallini and Buddy DeFranco, 5 traits are introduced which today's musicians can develop to improve their musicianship and artistry. Also included is an article called *Internalizing the Music* which describes the process of learning that these great players go through when practicing.

Five Traits for Today's Musicians to Develop:

1. Playing with spirit and emotion
2. Having a deep theoretical, historical and overall knowledge of music
3. Playing with flawless technical command of instrument
4. Developing an individual style and sound
5. Internalizing the music

Good morning, it's an honor to be here at this year's ClarinetFest® in Oostend, Belgium. I'd like to first thank Guido Six for hosting this wonderful festival and Keith Koons, Michele Gingras and Maurita Murphy Mead for selecting me to present this lecture today. Also thanks to my sponsors Yamaha Corporation of America, Rico International and to Coda Music maker of the computer accompaniment system, Vivace-Smart Music.

It wasn't until a number of years after I finished school that I realized why history is such a fascinating subject. It is because it gives us a perspective of where we stand today - who were the great artists that came before us and what they achieved in their lifetimes. These people and their achievements help us to see where we stand today.

What I hope you can leave here today with are some traits to think about which great players through history had that I think we can all use to improve the musicianship of both ourselves and our students. So today I'd like to talk about history, but not the history that we all remember from school. I would like to look at history from the perspective of a performer.

In teaching I often make references to great players like Jasha Heifetz, Arthur Rubinstein, Art Tatum or Charlie Parker. I would often get blank faces when I mentioned the names of these people. This taught me that no matter how great some of these artists were, if our students are not introduced to their work and their names are not kept alive, people forget about them. It's our job as teachers to educate our pupils about these people throughout history so that our students have an ideal to strive for and people to look up to.

If we look at these great artists through history we realize that they all lived during different eras. So if we were to make a musical "Time Line", these people would be spread through different eras. Clarinetists such as Joseph Beer, Klosé, Baermann, LeBanchi, Cavallini and Buddy DeFranco mostly lived during different eras.

Today I chose three artists based on their contributions as both players and teachers. They are Ernesto Cavallini, Carl Baermann and Buddy DeFranco. Through very brief profiles, we will introduce five traits that these players had which we can apply to ourselves and to our students to create better musicians. And I'll also play two musical examples.

The traits are:

1. Playing with spirit and emotion.
2. Being a rounded musician - having a solid theoretical, historical and overall knowledge of music.
3. Playing with flawless technical command of the instrument.
4. Playing with an individual style and sound.
5. Being able to completely internalize the music (learning the music extremely thoroughly so as to require little or no conscious thought to play).

Let's begin with Cavallini. He lived from 1807 to 1874. This was a golden era for music and particularly opera. Composers such as Rossini, Verdi and Puccini were at the height of their work, producing the world's most beautiful music. The music of this era evoked passion, spirit and emotions. Cavallini, playing at LaScala, was surrounded by this music. According to reviews and articles, Cavallini played with beautiful spirit and emotion. He had the perfect combination of technical prowess and spirited playing. In fact Verdi and Rossini admired his playing so much that they wrote many of the clarinet parts in their operas for them.

So the first trait to look for in these great players, *playing with spirit and emotion*, can be found in Cavallini. The second and third traits, *being a rounded musician and playing with flawless technical command of the instrument*, can be found in all three musicians. Firstly they were all very accomplished composers. Cavallini composed his 30 caprices for clarinet as well as countless other compositions. Carl Baermann composed his Method for Clarinet in five parts as well as many original compositions. And Buddy DeFranco has composed countless jazz compositions and arrangements as well as his latest educational contribution, Hand in Hand with Hanon. This book is a collection of the Hanon piano exercises transposed into all twelve keys for the clarinetist to develop facility in all the keys.

Carl Baermann lived from 1820-1885. Carl was the son of the famous virtuoso clarinetist Heinrich Baermann. They both composed as well as played the clarinet. In fact it is interesting that some of the great musicians of this era wore many hats. The duties of a musician were not as clear as they are today. One might be known as a musician who played the clarinet, composed, played some piano and taught. This is what Baermann did.

Cavallini is also a good example of this Renaissance quality. He actually lived in St. Petersburg for a number of years and taught voice and composed many vocal compositions.

Baermann's famous Method for Clarinet contained five parts. Parts two and four are full fledged compositions with piano accompaniments. They are structured to focus on technical, stylistic and musical challenges. The technical drills are ingeniously enclosed within the compositions so the student is almost not even aware they are drilling difficult passages because they are involved in playing the music.



Now I'd like to play one of Baermann's compositions from his Opus 63 part 2. This work is in Bb minor.

The fourth trait, playing with a unique and individual sound, I like to think of as answering the telephone. Often we answer the phone and know who it is just from the sound of their voice. Certain musicians had this quality in their playing; people like Heifetz, Charlie Parker and Art Tatum. These artists are all recognizable after only a few bars of listening to a recording.

This uniqueness doesn't happen overnight. It happens slowly with the development of enough technical facility and understanding of music in general. The barriers seem to break down and our unique and individual sound emerges because these issues are no longer impediments.

Buddy DeFranco is an excellent example of this. Buddy was one of the pioneers of a very still modern music called BeBop. He came up in the 1940's and 1950's in New York City. What is interesting about Buddy's sound was not only his unique tone but his strong harmonic and rhythmic concept. He liked to use certain sounds like playing on the upper parts of the chords, the 9th, 11th and 13th, when improvising. They also played certain scales like diminished and whole tone scales often. This is something that the BeBop musicians were known for.

The final point, which I think is the most important, I call Internalizing the Music. This is really how these great artists practice their craft. It is our glimpse into how they got to their level of artistry. These people seem to play music with out any effort at all. Of course with artists of the past who lived before recordings were available, like Baermann and Cavallini, we must examine their works and what was written about them. And judging from the extreme thoroughness of their treatises, we can certainly see how thorough their preparation was.

Jasha Heifetz used to say that he would prepare for a concert so that he felt he was playing up to 150% of his abilities. So that after all the distractions and mishaps that happen so often at concerts and on concert tours, he would still have reserves of 80% to 90% of his abilities.

Buddy DeFranco told a story a couple of years ago at David Etheridge's University of Oklahoma Clarinet Symposium. He was playing with Charlie Parker and Bird called the tune All the Things You Are, which is usually played in Ab. Buddy was happy because he had been practicing this tune and felt he knew it well. Then just as Bird was counting the tune off he said let's play it in the key of D today. Buddy was very surprised and after it was over he said he learned some important lessons. First he learned to practice his tunes in all

keys and second he learned how truly complete a musician Charlie Parker was. Keys didn't matter to Bird. He played in all the keys with equal ease. This is a skill that Buddy has completely mastered. In fact his book *Hand in Hand with Hanon* demonstrates his dedication to this thorough training. Because the book takes the player through every key on each pattern.

As a reminder, the point of this talk today is to learn to recognize and apply these traits to make ourselves better musicians. And this is what Buddy did, he picked things up from others and applied them to himself.

One final point. When these artists learned things they learned much more thoroughly than most people do. In fact they learn things so thoroughly that the execution of the music requires little or no conscious thought. This is done through slow repetitive practicing and analysis of the music. This slow repetition ingrains things into our subconscious. The goal is to feel as if things play themselves. The key to remember is that we're not usually used to learning things this thoroughly.

Below are two articles and a resource list which were included in the handouts given to the audience members at lecture.

In closing, I encourage both students and professionals, to listen to recordings and examine the work of the great artists. Look and listen to their work and learn to apply these traits to yourselves to make yourself a better and more complete musician.

Internalizing the Music

As players, so often we are taught to read music and follow the directions on the page. We read the music, put our fingers in the right place and blow the air. The more notes and the faster they occur the more difficult the music is said to be. We often tend to judge music on how "difficult" it is. But what actually is "difficulty" in music? Difficulty is trying to lift a heavy weight. But playing fast sixteenth notes or high notes are not difficulties in music. They are simply areas which we not as "familiar" to us. These are areas that haven't been explored as much as a C scale for example.

The Process

Internalizing music means to learn a piece of music or a technique of playing music so thoroughly that it no longer requires any conscious thought to execute. The process of internalizing music is a matter of slow repetition of very small segments of a piece of music or a technique of playing the instrument. This repetition ingrains what is being learned deeply in our subconscious. The goal is to work on something until it seems to "play itself."

The Steps

The first step in practicing something is to understand what areas of the piece or scale are less familiar to us, what we used to think were the "hard" parts. The next step is to spend time visiting and revisiting those areas until our fingers, ears and breathing become comfortable and familiar with them. Sound too simplistic? Maybe it is, but it is true. The catch is that it may take weeks or months or sometimes years for our bodies to allow these actions to occur without conscious thought.

One of the most important steps in this process of learning is to not look at a printed page of music. Play things without looking at the music. One might say, "I can't memorize things so easily." Well this is not memorization. This is learning something very deeply. Play a small portion of a phrase over and over. But while playing it, use your ears and listen to the music you're playing. Then try to sing the phrase away from the instrument. Try to play the phrase starting on different notes. If this seems too overwhelming take another approach.

Happy Birthday Exercise

Sing the first few bars of the song "Happy Birthday". Now play the song on your instrument starting on any note. Now once you figure it out and it feel comfortable, play it starting on other notes. When this feels comfortable playing the tune on all twelve notes you can feel confident you "know" that tune. The same holds true for learning any music. The only difference is that some music is longer than a simple tune like "Happy Birthday", so one needs to spend more time with it. But the concepts are the same. Only work with very small segments of music and don't move on to other areas until that one area is thoroughly learned.

Brushing Our Teeth and Learning to Walk

Here's another analogy. When we brush our teeth, we put the toothpaste on the brush, put it in our mouth and begin brushing. We don't miss our mouths when we put the brush in. We've done it so many times that this action is familiar to our muscles and we do it without thought.

How about walking? Try looking at a child learning to walk. They look a little like Frankenstein. Their legs are stiff and their balance is unsure and after a few steps they fall. But an older child or adult doesn't give walking a second thought. In fact, they literally don't give the action of walking any conscious thought at all. They have

a thought like, "I'd like a glass of milk ", then they get up and go to the fridge and get it without having to tell their legs what to do.

Learning music is the same. When we ingrain the techniques of playing an instrument and understanding the rudiments of music so thoroughly we remove the need for conscious thought to help us execute the music. At this point one's unique voice can be expressed through the music.

Charlie Parker and Art Tatum

Two of the greatest musicians to ever live, Charlie Parker and Art Tatum, often played their repertoire in many different keys. In fact Art Tatum might start a tune out in one key, then play the bridge in a different key. Charlie Parker would play his repertoire in many different keys. Keys didn't matter to these musicians because they were "familiar" with all 12 keys equally.

What these artists have in common is the ability to let the music flow through them without their egos, opinions, fears and technical difficulties getting in the way. They've achieved this level of artistry by slowly and methodically internalizing the many aspects of music and playing their instrument. They've done this to the point where they don't have to consciously think about executing the music. The music within them is able to flow freely through them. There are no little voices saying "uh oh - here comes the hard part".

How Should I Practice?

One might say, "that sounds all well and good but I practice 3 hours a day and don't get to that level of proficiency." Well the point is not the number of hours spent practicing. The most important point is to "master" what you do practice before moving on to other things. "Master" means to learn something so thoroughly that one always executes it correctly - similar to the analogy of brushing the teeth. This type of practicing can seem to take a long time. One might say, "I can't spend too much time on this scale or pattern now because I have two etudes to learn, some orchestra music and my other study material." The volume of demands becomes overwhelming and the practice session is spent skimming over things and not really learning any one thing thoroughly.

But the time spent internalizing something is shorter than one thinks. Try to remember the times when you practiced a piece over and over and there were a few passages that were always difficult which never felt quite right. You perform the piece and "kind of get through" those passages and say to yourself "glad that's over". But then some years later you have to play the piece again for a student or for a recital and those same passages are no easier.

If one took the time to properly internalize that music it would not only always be with you but any of the problems that were conquered while spending time with the piece would carry over to other pieces that have similar challenges.

What happens then is that the more material which is learned in this thorough manner, the easier music in general starts to become. When enough facility is gained, most music played will be done with little or no conscious thought, thus allowing one's unique personality to emerge. This will happen because there will not be any technical hurdles to conquer in the music or on the instrument.

When practicing, don't try to conquer an entire work at once. Live with a small passage until it becomes easy. One teacher said "something is properly learned when one can play it flawlessly six times in a row." Generally, if something is not learned thoroughly enough, there will probably be a lapse in concentration when trying to play something six times in a row perfectly. So use this "six times" rule as a test. If a mistake is made, then go back and spend more time working the passage slowly until you don't have to "think" about what you are doing.

Patience and Having Fun Practicing

Most importantly, remember not get discouraged. Have patience with yourself, carefully listen to what you play-find the problem areas and fix them through slow repetition. Also enjoy the "process" of practicing and the sounds you produce. Music is fun and food for the soul and this includes music made while practicing.

Recommended books: The Inner Game of Music by Barry Green with W. Timothy Gallway published by Doubleday; Effortless Mastery by Kenny Werner published by James Aebersold Jazz.

Resource list (books, tutors, discography, Internet web sites) :

Books

Books by Pamela Weston. These books are excellent resource books to have around the band room. They can be used for students to glance through or as a resource to put together concert programs. Ms. Weston is a historian and scholar and has compiled a wealth of information about virtually every great clarinetist throughout history.

- Clarinet Virtuosi of the Past
- More Clarinet Virtuosi of the Past
- Clarinet Virtuosi of Today
- The Clarinetist's Companion

These can be ordered through Luyben Music Company by calling 1-800-2LUYBEN or 1-816-753-7111 (USA)

Tutors

The music in these tutors will give insight into the musical styles that the author teaches. The text can give clues that may help us understand the both the author's music and the teachings more thoroughly.

Carl Baermann Method for Clarinet, Two editions:

- Carl Fischer Edition
- Music Minus One Edition, The Virtuoso Clarinetist and The Art of Clarinet

The Carl Fischer Edition is comprised of four books: Parts 1 & 2 combined, (basic music theory and clarinet basics in text form plus a series of approximately 25 short pieces in etude form written with piano accompaniment, the accompaniment comes in a separate book, drilling various technical and musical challenges of a clarinetists studies), Part 3 (excellent scale studies), Part 4 (more advanced compositions in etude form drilling various technical and musical challenges of a clarinetists studies) and Part 5 (excerpts from some of Carl Baermann's larger compositions .

The Music Minus One edition The Virtuoso Clarinetist contains the 25 etudes from Part 2 and The Art of Clarinet contains the Part 4 etudes. All of these etudes have two versions of each etude so the student can hear the etude played with both the clarinet and piano parts then play it themselves with just the piano alone.

Cavallini

- 30 Caprices

The Cavallini contain short etudes that drill the technical areas of the clarinet as well as explore the operatic side of Cavallini's background (he was the clarinetist that Puccini and Verdi had in mind when they wrote the big solos in many of their operas).

Jean-Jean

- 18 Etudes
- 16 Modern Etudes
- 25 Etudes Techniques et Melodious, Part 1 and Part 2
- Etudes Progressive et Melodique
- Vade-Mecum du Clarinettiste

There are various collections of etudes by Jean Jean. They are beautifully constructed and explore the modern harmonies and rhythms that composers such as Debussy and Ravel composed with early in the twentieth century.

Klosé

- Celebrated Method

Klosé was one of the great clarinetists and teachers at the Paris Conservatoire. He not only taught students but also composed much of the music they played.

**These method books can be ordered through Luyben Music Company by calling 1-800-2LUYBEN or 1-816-753-7111 (USA)

Gustave Langenus

- Complete Method for the Clarinet in Three parts

Discography

"The Clarinetists' Discography III and 1996 Supplement"

The best resource on clarinet recordings that has ever been compiled is: "The Clarinetists' Discography III and 1996 Supplement" by Richard Gilbert. This book contains over 50,000 listings, 1000 reviews, etc.

It can be ordered by sending a check for \$58.00 (s&h included) payable to: Halcyon Productions, PO Box 1342, Olney, MD 20830-1342, tel/fax 301.774.0881.

Jazz recordings

Buddy DeFranco

- Nobody Else But Me, Hark Records PO Box 252 Sunnyside, FL 32461
- The Complete Buddy DeFranco and Sonny Clark Recordings on Verve, Mosaic Records

Artie Shaw

- any recording from the 1930's with his big band Benny Goodman, any recording with Lionel Hampton and Teddy Wilson

Charlie Parker

- Now's the Time, Verve #825 671-2
- Bird and Diz, Verve Records #831 133-2

Kenny Davern

- My Inspiration, Music Masters Jazz, #01612-65077-2

Jimmie Noone

- The Chronological Classics #651

Johnny Dodds

- Southside Chicago Jazz, Decca MCA Records #MCAD-42326

Art Tatum

- Any solo piano recording
- The Tatum Group Masterpieces with Buddy DeFranco, Pablo Records #2310-736

** There is a company called EVERY CD that requires a membership but offers CDs at significantly reduced rates. They have an annual membership fee of approximately \$40 US dollars which will be offset after the purchase of approximately 10 CDs. Their phone number is 1-800-EVERYCD.

Internet Web Sites

- Michael Moor's Clarinet page <http://edcen.ehhs.cmich.edu/~mmoors/>
- The Clarinet Discography <http://www.woodwind.org/clarinet/Databases/DiscoForm.html>
- The Online Clarinet Resource <http://www.ocr.sneezy.org/>
- Links to other Clarinet Sites <http://www.clarinet.org/OtherLinks/index.htm>
- The Klarinet Mailing list is a free e-mail list, open to anyone who has an interest in clarinets and who has a valid e-mail address. <http://www.clarinet.org/>

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