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Dear ICA Members,

Hope you are enjoying a wonderful new season of music making with fulfilling activities and events. Many exciting things are happening in our organization. The ICA believes that if you do good things, good things happen! I want to thank everyone who has contributed to our Capital Campaign. We especially wish to thank Alan and Janette Staneck for their amazing gift of $11,250.00 to fund our competitions for the coming ClarinetFest® 2018. The ICA is grateful for your generosity and the generosity of all Capital Campaign donors. Please visit www.youcaring.com/internationalclarinetassociation to make your donation today. We would love to hear your story and look forward to our continued campaign which will last through ClarinetFest® 2018. Also, visit www.clarinet.org/donor-wall to check out our donor wall with many photos and thank-yous to those who contributed to the ICA for ClarinetFest® 2017.

It is the hope of the ICA board that the Capital Campaign will not only help to secure the future and continued success of our wonderful organization, but will help those in need in the clarinet world. We seek to assist, particularly those younger students, who cannot afford membership, equipment that is up-to-date or who might wish to apply to young artist competitions, or travel grants.

Thank you to those who submitted surveys for ClarinetFest® 2017 and for our youth committee initiative. Our younger members are our future, and we are making a concerted effort to get more of them involved in the ICA. Please encourage your students to join. Thank you to Mitch Estrin for chairing this important committee, and thank you also to those on the committee for your innovative ideas and insight.

Please encourage your students to enter all of the various competitions. We are excited for the composition competition which will feature a work for clarinet quartet (3 B-flat clarinets and B-flat bass clarinet). The deadline is December 20, 2017; the winner will receive a $1,000 prize and a performance of the work at ClarinetFest® 2018. Antonio Fraoli is coordinator. Please visit clarinet.org for details.

Stay tuned for exciting updates on ClarinetFest® 2018 in Ostend, Belgium hosted by Artistic Director, Eddy Vanoosthuyse, Chantal and Bert Six and the Ostend team. Visit www.clarinet.org/clarinetfest/clarinetfest-2018 and be sure to read the article in this issue about the journal for important ClarinetFest® 2018 information. The lineup of artists is amazing, with many exciting concerts and tourist attractions.

The ICA is honored to announce the Guido Six International Clarinet Choir festival which will be part of ClarinetFest® 2018 in Ostend. This will be the inaugural Clarinet Choir Festival to honor the late Guido Six who did so much for the clarinet worldwide. The Guido Six International Clarinet Choir festival will take place at all future ClarinetFest® conferences.

Thank you for your continued support of the International Clarinet Association. Stay tuned for many exciting events ahead, and in the meantime, please accept my best wishes to you and your families for Happy Holidays and a blessed 2018!

Caroline A. Hartig
President, International Clarinet Association

Follow me on Twitter at @ICAPres for ClarinetFest® updates!

Caroline A. Hartig @ICAPres
President, International Clarinet Association

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Chinese clarinet legend Tao Chunxia

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The ICA wishes to thank Stephan Vermeersch for four years of dedicated service as International Representative. We are currently working to redefine the international position and the new Chair of International Relations will be announced in the March 2018 journal along with details regarding this new position.

Contact information for national chairpersons is available at www.clarinet.org

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The first edition of the Cyprus Clarinet Festival was organized by George Georgiou and Radovan Cavallin. It took place from June 14-19, 2017. The festival, which hosted nearly 25 participants, featured master classes taught by George Georgiou (Cyprus) and Angelos Angelides (Cyprus). International artists included Radovan Cavallin (Croatia/Spain), Nuno Pinto (Portugal) and Hedwig Swimberghe (Belgium). The faculty performed a series of concerts, which included Pinto performing works for clarinet and electronics by João Pedro Oliveira and Nikola Resanovic. Georgiou performed works written by Cypriot composers for contemporary clarinet. Cavallin performed the Cyprus premiere of Oscar Navarro’s Second Clarinet Concerto with clarinet ensemble, directed by Kristine Dizon. In addition, Swimberghe performed works for solo clarinet and a duet for clarinet and bass clarinet with Pinto. Angelides performed works for clarinet and delay step. The final concert concluded with students performing in a clarinet ensemble directed by Swimberghe.

BUFFET CRAMPON USA CELEBRATES 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF SUMMER CLARINET ACADEMY

by Matt Vance

Buffet Crampion USA recently celebrated the 10th anniversary of their Summer Clarinet Academy at the University of North Florida in Jacksonville. Held July 10-15, the Academy hosted 20 undergraduate and graduate students from around North America for a week of clarinet education with Buffet Crampion clarinet artists J. Lawrie Bloom (Chicago Symphony Orchestra), Victoria Luperi (Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra), Pascual Martinez-Forteza (New York Philharmonic), André Moisan (Montreal Symphony Orchestra) and Mark Nuccio (Houston Symphony Orchestra). Every student received a one-on-one lesson with each artist, in addition to daily master classes. The students also studied instrument technology with BCUSA woodwind technician Bruce Marking, learning basic care and maintenance.

Students were given the opportunity to tour the Buffet Crampion USA Headquarters during the academy to try Buffet Crampion clarinets and accessories. Several students purchased instruments and accessories during the week, including barrels, bells, mouthpieces and ligatures from the ICON accessory line.

At the conclusion of the academy, awards were presented to students that showed excellent musical growth and collegiality during the week. Olivia Galante, a student at the Eastman School of Music, was selected to receive the Stanley Drucker Award and was presented with a new Buffet Crampion Tradition B-flat clarinet hand-selected by the artist faculty. A full tuition scholarship for the 2018 Academy was presented to...
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Northwestern University student Steven Zhang in recognition of his outstanding progress at the academy, and Taylor Overholt of the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music received honorable mention.

The 2018 Summer Clarinet Academy will be held July 16-21 and will welcome Philippe Cuper (Paris National Opera Orchestra), Florent Héau (Paris CRR), Inn-Hyuck Cho (Metropolitan Opera Orchestra), Victoria Luperi (Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra) and Alcides Rodriguez (Atlanta Symphony Orchestra) to the artist faculty. Audition and application information will be posted on the academy website (www.bcsummerclarinetacademy.com) and Facebook page soon!

**22ND ANNUAL BELGIAN CLARINET ACADEMY**

*by Kimberly Fullerton*

The 22nd annual Belgian Clarinet Academy took place from July 4-11, 2017, in Ostend, Belgium. A total of 24 students from various countries including Spain, Belgium, France, Germany, Russia, Cuba and the USA, were in attendance. Faculty for this year’s academy consisted of Robert Spring, Deborah Bish, Eddy Vanoosthuyse and Philippe Cuper.

Each day started off with a group warm-up led by Spring, which consisted of technical exercises and the introduction of extended techniques such as double-tonguing and circular breathing. Students then had the opportunity to attend and participate in a rotating schedule of group lessons and ensemble coachings given throughout the day by members of the faculty.

In addition to lessons and rehearsals, daily master classes were given on multiple topics. Spring started off the week with a demonstration on how to make your own reeds. The next day, Cuper gave a presentation on the history of the clarinet. On the third day, Vanoosthuyse discussed the audition process and how best to prepare. Bish concluded the series of master classes with a presentation on practice techniques and clarinet repertoire.

The final two days of the academy were reserved for student performances.
Students had the opportunity to perform their solo and chamber repertoire for their peers and host families. The clarinet choir then gave the closing performance with Vanoosthuyse, Cuper and Bert Six as conductors. Featured soloists for the performance were Kristi Hanno (USA), Rebecca Ankenbrand (Germany) and Katherine Breeden (USA).

The BCA would like to give special thanks to Chantal Six-Vandekerckhove for her invaluable knowledge and expertise which help to make the academy a success year after year. The BCA would also like to thank the host families, whose kindness and generosity helped to make the academy a home away from home.

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY 17TH ANNUAL HONORS HIGH SCHOOL CLARINET CHOIR

by Todd Waldecker

On March 18, 2017, the Middle Tennessee State University School of Music hosted its 17th annual Honors High School Clarinet Choir, welcoming over 40 of the most accomplished high school clarinetists from the region for a day of clarinet choir fun. The event was hosted by Todd Waldecker, professor of clarinet at MTSU and graduate assistant Michaela Cundari. Members of the MTSU Clarinet Studio assisted throughout the day and led sectional rehearsals. The day concluded with a concert featuring the Honors High School Clarinet Choir performing works by Holst, Gershwin, The Beatles and Frank Perkins.

The MTSU Clarinet Choir also performed on the final concert and presented works by Harvey, Ronkin and the world premiere of Eric Whitacre's Five Hebrew Love Songs arranged and conducted for clarinet choir and percussion by MTSU music major Katiana Nicholson. The arrangement was completed in partial fulfillment of Nicholson's MTSU Honors College thesis.

For more information about the 2018 MTSU Honors High School Clarinet Choir, contact Todd Waldecker at todd.waldecker@mtsu.edu.
KEY CHANGES AND CLOSING CHORDS

Compiled by Jessica Harrie

KEY CHANGES

Amitai Vardi was recently appointed assistant professor of clarinet at the Kent State University Hugh A. Glauser School of Music.

Afendi Yusuf was recently appointed principal clarinet of the Cleveland Orchestra.

CLOSING CHORDS

George Townsend (1932-2017), Western Illinois University professor of clarinet emeritus, passed away on March 18, 2017. A tribute can be found in this issue.


Bulgarian clarinetist Petko Radev (1933-2017) passed away on September 23, 2017. Radev is an honorary member of the ICA. A tribute will appear in an upcoming issue.

Retired National Symphony Orchestra clarinetist Loren Kitt passed away on September 4, 2017. A tribute can be found in this issue.

Harvey Hermann, longtime woodwind assistant to the director of bands at the University of Illinois and creator of the University of Illinois Clarinet Choir, passed away on August 4, 2017.

Information in this column is gathered from the Clarinet Jobs Facebook Group and submissions to clarinetnews@gmail.com.

IUP CRIMSON SQUAWKFEST

by Rosemary Engelstad

The Indiana University of Pennsylvania clarinet studio and Rosemary Engelstad hosted their inaugural Crimson Squawkfest on March 4, 2017. The featured artist for the one-day event was Pittsburgh-based clarinetist, Amanda Morrison. The festival began with a large clarinet ensemble rehearsal that brought together 35 clarinetists from Western Pennsylvania and Maryland.

Following the rehearsal, Morrison led an exciting discussion about preparing and performing Eric Mandat’s Double Life. IUP clarinetists Catherine Kasun and Jenn Dibert also had the opportunity to work with Morrison in a performance class.

The morning activities ended with a large group discussion that focused on strategies for performance preparation.

The afternoon began with a potpourri recital in Gorell Hall featuring performers Amanda Morrison, Rosemary Engelstad, David Martynuik, Evan Engelstad and IUP student Anthony McDonnell.

The Squawkfest concluded with a large ensemble performance directed by Rosemary Engelstad and IUP alumna, Marykate Kuhne. The day was a success, packed full of fun and clarinet fellowship. The IUP clarinet studio looks forward to hosting the second Crimson Squawkfest on April 7, 2018.
The Lift Clarinet Academy wrapped up its fourth successful summer in June at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colorado. Created in 2014 by Wesley Ferreira (Colorado State University) and Jana Starling (University of Western Ontario), this invigorating festival continues to bring in the country’s finest upcoming clarinetists. An established pedagogue joins Ferreira and Starling each year, and the three work as a team to mentor and guide students both musically and personally. Robert Spring, esteemed clarinetist, pedagogue and professor of clarinet at Arizona State University joined the trio this year. Ferreira and Starling were both pupils of Spring which created an intimate and family-like atmosphere for the academy.

Upon arrival, students gathered for the annual faculty performance held in the Organ Recital Hall. Ferreira and Starling opened the show performing Freebirds by Scott McAllister, a work they often perform together, which was originally premiered by Spring. Following this full circle experience, Spring, Starling and Ferreira performed a handful of light-hearted trios by Jacques Bouffil and Peter Schickele.

The week then began in full force, starting out with topic classes, lessons and quartet rehearsals. The beginning half of the week at the Lift Clarinet Academy is dedicated to technical and musical training. Students were placed in topic classes based on their pre-determined personalized goals and in quartets based on their audition recordings. Classes and quartet coachings facilitated by faculty were inspiring and uplifting, covering topics including articulation, tone production, altissimo, extended techniques, intonation and warm-up. A highlight of the week was Wednesday night’s roundtable on performance anxiety, in which students were given the opportunity to speak via Skype with clarinetist Christine Carter, an expert in the field.

The personalized training during the first three days prepared students for the latter half of the week. Thursday morning began with a passionate masterclass by Spring, focusing on musical details such as rhythm, style and emotion. The class concluded with a heartfelt talk between Spring and the students where he shared his own musical path and offered career suggestions. On Friday, Ferreira and Starling brought a perfect combination of personal inspiration and clarinet pedagogy to their joint master class.

In addition to musical training, the Lift Clarinet Academy places a high value on personal connection to music, musical peers and life experience. Throughout the week the students connected while enjoying a hike up to Horsetooth Reservoir, a festival gathering in the park and an afternoon in Fort Collins’ Old Town. The week culminated in a final concert featuring four student soloists, student clarinet quartets and the full Lift Clarinet Academy choir performing Rikudim by Jan Van der Roost. Students and faculty then gathered for a beautifully catered reception to celebrate the week’s success.

See you next year!
FIRST ANNUAL HENRI SELMER PARIS SUMMER CLARINET ACADEMY AND COMPETITION

by Amy Humberd

The inaugural Henri Selmer Paris Summer Clarinet Academy and Competition was held on the beautiful campus of Michigan State University from May 31 - June 4, 2017. Academy Artistic Director Guy Yehuda (Michigan State University, Lansing Symphony Orchestra) hosted the festival, which boasted an all-star faculty of guest artists including Philippe Berrod (Paris Conservatory, Orchestre de Paris), James Campbell (Indiana University Jacobs School of Music), Michael Rusinek (Pittsburgh Symphony, Curtis Institute of Music and Carnegie Mellon University), Robert Spring (Arizona State University), Tasha Warren (Michigan State University) and Stephen Williamson (Chicago Symphony Orchestra, DePaul University).

The five-day festival offered energetic, engaging master classes with six of the faculty as well as individual and group lessons, chamber music and two student recitals. In addition, each guest artist was featured in one of three electrifying night concerts scheduled throughout the week with repertoire ranging from Carl Maria von Weber and Luigi Bassi to William O. Smith and Phil Nimmons.

The festival also afforded an intensive two-part competition of solo unaccompanied works by Stravinsky, Husa and Carter, with three winners being selected from the five competitors in the final round. Third prize winner, Steven Gooden (Northwestern University), received a Selmer Concept mouthpiece, second prize winner, Chia-Yun Yeh (Michigan State University), received $1,000 USD and first prize winner, Aileen Razey (University of North Texas), received a new Selmer Presence clarinet.

The festival ended with a farewell reception and presentation given by representatives from Henri Selmer Paris and Conn-Selmer in the Hart Recital Hall.

For more information about the festival, a tentative schedule, faculty information or announcements regarding the 2018 academy visit www.henriselmeracademy.com.

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REMENBERING LOREN KITT

by Lora Ferguson

On September 4, 2017, the clarinet world suffered a huge loss with the death of Loren Kitt (1941-2017). Kitt died in Glens Fall, New York only a little more than a year after his retirement as principal clarinetist with the National Symphony Orchestra in 2016.

Kitt was revered by his colleagues for his artistry and musical leadership. After receiving word of his passing, NSO acting assistant principal clarinetist Paul Cigan, remarked, “He was one of the great musical leaders of the orchestra. We’ve lost an incredible musical voice.” Kitt’s solo work on numerous recordings with the orchestra and with chamber groups is highly regarded by musicians throughout the world. As a teacher at Oberlin Conservatory, Peabody Conservatory, Catholic University and the University of Maryland, he influenced countless students, many of whom went on to important positions in orchestras and colleges.

A native of the state of Washington, Kitt studied with Ronald Phillips of the Seattle Symphony. In 1959, he enrolled at the Curtis Institute as a student of Anthony Gigliotti, receiving the artist’s diploma in 1963. After graduating from Curtis, Kitt played with the Buffalo Philharmonic for one year and the Milwaukee Symphony for three seasons as principal clarinet. Antal Doráti appointed Kitt as principal clarinet with the NSO in 1970.

Kitt was a founding member of the Smithsonian’s Twentieth Century Consort, the American Chamber Players and the National Symphony Chamber Players. He performed with other chamber ensembles nationally and internationally, including the Emerson String Quartet, the Beaux Arts Trio, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and the Festival of Two Worlds in Spoleto, Italy.

Survivors include his wife Catherine Kitt of Camden, Maine, daughters Sandra and Karen, stepchildren Cindy and Chris, a brother, a sister and three grandchildren.

REMENBERING GEORGE TOWNSEND (1932-2017)

by Kathy Karr (Townsend’s daughter; principal flute of the Louisville Orchestra; flute professor at the University of Louisville)

George Townsend was professor of clarinet and chairman of the wind and percussion area at Western Illinois University. He began teaching at WIU in 1964 and became professor emeritus when he retired. Townsend also served as a faculty member at the Interlochen Arts Camp from 1973-2003, teaching clarinet and chamber music. He was highly regarded as an adjudicator of international clarinet competitions and was a frequent performer at clarinet conventions.

As a performer, Townsend was a founding member of the Camerata Woodwind Quintet which was formed in 1966 as the first ensemble in residence at WIU. The quintet gained international fame with their series of recordings Music Minus One. During Townsend’s tenure the quintet toured extensively throughout the United States, Mexico and Yugoslavia. The quintet made its Carnegie Hall debut in 1983, receiving rave reviews in the New York Times.

Townsend served as principal clarinet with the Knox-Galesburg Symphony and bass clarinet with the Quad City Symphony and the Traverse City Symphony. He began his career as a clarinetist in the President’s Own Marine Band in Washington D.C. He received his bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral degrees from the University of Illinois.
TWO OF A KIND

Paul Harris explores the history of UK clarinet duets

I don’t know about you, but I always play duets with pupils at some point in a lesson… and as a particular pupil and I were playing a really exhilarating duet by Henry Lazarus the other day, it gave me the idea for this particular letter. I thought I’d look, in general terms, at the history of U.K. clarinet duets, for there is quite a rich and impressive catalogue of works to be discovered.

It would seem that the first-ever duets date back to 1803 with the Four Concertante Duetts to be found in the Oxford-born, Irish clarinetist John Mahon’s New and Complete Preceptor for the Clarinet. Mahon had a brother, William, who was also a clarinet player, and maybe this was the reason he was inspired to produce some music for two clarinets together. Though concertos for two clarinets were written around this time, these may be the first ever duets for unaccompanied clarinets. They are quite substantial, too – number four lasting nearly 20 minutes!

There seem to be no more duets written by English composers until the great Henry Lazarus produced his magnificent three-volume New and Modern Method in 1881. Inside this mighty tome you will find a considerable number of such works. In the first volume, we have the 20 Easy and Progressive Duets, suitable for players of really quite elementary level, and full of inventive music. Among them are many duets influenced by any number of European dance styles: polonaise, tyrolienne, redowa, mazurka, polka. In the second volume there are the 24 Easy Duets on Operatic and Standard Melodies, intended, as Lazarus charmingly puts it, to “form the style of the pupil.” These are all arrangements and among them are some really effective concert items – Lazarus’s version of Mozart’s Non Piu Andrai being especially good. It’s the third volume, though, where you will find the real treasure. On opening the very first page we are plunged into what Lazarus ambitiously entitles Three Grand Artistic Duets. In fact, these are three monumental works, each made up of multiple movements and certainly worthy of performance as well as technical and musical study. Lazarus takes great pains to ensure that both parts have equal status and engagement. They really are rather special. And that’s not all. Later in the volume we find Three Operatic Duets, similarly large-scale and written to get the best out of the instrument. The final of these operatic duets (and my personal favourite), Robert Le Diable, is a real winner with audiences. Very bold and dramatic and not too lengthy, it makes for a very colorful concert item.

Lazarus was my teacher’s teacher’s teacher – John Davies/George Anderson/Henry Lazarus – all of them living to great ages, which is why I can trace my clarinet lineage so far back in so few connections. So I have a rather special place for these wonderful works. Do explore them if you haven’t already.

As the 20th century moved forward, various new tutors and methods emerged complete with occasional duets – but nothing of particular significance, so I’ll restrict myself to various one-off duets written by important composers. The first is the Suite for Two Clarinets by Alan Frank (of the famous Thurston and Frank Clarinet Method), published in 1934 and written for Thurston and Ralph Clarke, who together constituted the clarinet section of the BBC Symphony Orchestra for many years. Alan was senior editor at Oxford University Press, the publisher of this Suite. The duet is comprised of four short, witty and imaginative movements. A recording exists played by the two dedicatees on Volume 1 of The Clarinet: Historical Recordings on Clarinet Classics. It’s a real treat to have this performance available!

Next is the first of two works by Gordon Lewin, a delightful man whom I met a number of times towards the end of his life. Two of a Kind was published in 1953 and is made up of five short movements. Similar to the Frank suite, they are lighthearted and very playable. Gordon was always proud of being a member of the orchestra that had recorded the incidental music to two iconic television programs – “Dr. Who” and “Thunderbirds!”

The Short Sonata for Two Clarinets was written in 1956 for my teacher, John Davies, by Antony Elton and published by J.W. Chester. Born in 1935, Elton was a composer, conductor and lecturer in music at Durham University before moving to Australia. It’s certainly worthy of study. The work is in a more contemporary style and concludes with a fast-moving and exciting finale. Nearly 10 years later,
John McCabe wrote his Bagatelles – eight short (and quite complex) pieces full of polyrhythmic writing. Perhaps not for the faint-hearted, but as with all of McCabe’s music, it is top quality. They have been recorded by the Chicago Clarinet Trio (or at least by two members thereof!).

The same year saw the publication of the first of two duets by Richard Rodney Bennett. Conversations has five movements in a very accessible style. Richard is perhaps best known for his film work (Murder on the Orient Express, Four Weddings and a Funeral and many others) but his concert music is very fine. These duets can be played by more intermediate students and are very attractive indeed.

Two years later, Richard wrote his superb Crosstalk. This really is a terrific work for the medium. Richard and Thea King were deep in conversation one evening at the Dartington Summer School talking about repertoire. The next morning Thea woke up to find Crosstalk on her floor by the door, Richard having written it overnight! It’s a must if you don’t know it!

Views of the Blues, also by Gordon Lewin, was published by Boosey and Hawkes in 1986. This very versatile composer has served up three jazzy and fun movements in this collection – not too complicated and certainly a winner with audiences. My final duet is the 1988 Divertimento by Malcolm Arnold (published by Queen’s Temple Publications), a fascinating work and one of his last. There are six enigmatic movements with much of the material derived from his Ninth Symphony. I came to know Malcolm well some years after he had written this piece, but he would never reveal why he’d written these duets. They seem to be from another world – long and deeply contemplative melodies contrasted with short, witty episodes. Audiences find these intriguing, but they do need some words of introduction for best effect.

So, there are lots to choose from, whether you just like to play duets with pupils or friends or are looking for some interesting and unusual concert repertoire. Hope you enjoyed your fall and can find some occasions for more duet playing this winter!

ABOUT THE WRITER

Paul Harris is one of the U.K.’s most influential music educators. He studied the clarinet at the Royal Academy of Music, where he won the August Manns Prize for outstanding performance and where he now teaches. He is in great demand as a teacher, composer and writer (he has written over 600 music books and compositions), and his master classes and workshops continue to inspire thousands of young musicians and teachers all over the world in both the principles and practice of musical performance and education.
About 10 years ago, a group of Colombian clarinet players were studying in Caracas as part of the Latin American Clarinet Academy organized by Waldemar Rodriguez. They were young and willing to develop new projects such as starting a clarinet quartet. Hernán Dario Gutierrez, Guillermo Marin, Fredy Pinzòn and Juan Alejandro Candamil (Bass clarinet) started the adventure of creating a clarinet quartet that could represent their country and culture. Today, the Cuarteto Colombiano de Clarinetes (Colombian Clarinet Quartet) displays the culture of Colombia to audiences around the world. The ensemble is recognized by the Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their performances in Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Costa Rica, Equator, France, Guatemala, Portugal, Venezuela and Uruguay.

RICARDO DOURADO FREIRE: When was the Colombian Clarinet Quartet formed and what was the initial idea for the group?

HERNÁN DARIO GUTIERREZ: The Colombian Clarinet Quartet was formed in February of 2007, in Caracas, Venezuela. All members were fellow students at Simón Bolívar University studying for the Masters of Music with emphasis on instrumental execution. The group initially formed to fulfill the requirements for a chamber music course. We all had previous experience playing in clarinet quartets, but we had never played together as a group before.

RF: As an ensemble, how have you developed original repertoire and which experiences helped the group to find a musical identity?

HG: At first, we looked at the standard international repertoire for clarinet quartet. Very soon after, we began to write our own arrangements of Latin American music. These first arrangements were well-received by the public and our professors. At our exams, the jury of the examination proposed that we continue with this project in the following semesters. Thus, we wrote and organized many more arrangements of Latin American pieces and over time, the standard repertoire was displaced. The quartet started to gain prestige and performed several recitals in Venezuela. In 2008, we received support from Simón Bolívar University to attend the European Festival for Clarinet Ensembles held in Ghent, Belgium. This was our first international performance, and all works presented were Latin pieces.

RF: How did you have the idea for the veggie clarinets and to compose a piece for organic instruments?

HG: By 2009, the Colombian Clarinet Quartet had already joined the national concert series promoted by the Banco da Republica from Colombia. This series is considered one of the strongest cultural institutions in the country, featuring programs for music, visual arts, theater and literature in many theaters throughout the country. In 2012, the quartet was programmed for a series of eight

The Columbian Clarinet Quartet in 2007
children’s concerts at the most prestigious hall in Bogota, the Luis Ángel Arango Theater. We needed to think about doing something entertaining for children, and we started looking for alternatives. We came across some musical games and found a video on the internet of Linsey Pollac showing how to construct a clarinet with a carrot. Using his idea, we made a Claricarrot and explored other vegetable products. After some research, we built similar instruments with a green banana, creating the Banananet and with the cassava, creating the Jucaphone. Different vegetables had specific timbres and we had to work on tuning to allow the instruments to be played in an ensemble and simultaneously with the clarinets. Once this was done, we had to think about what we could do musically. From there, we had to write a piece so that we could show different phases of the sound that are strange and shocking for the audience; because they do not believe the sound is possible alone, let alone together.

The piece presents a small improvisation for the Claricarrot alone. The tune is then accompanied by two clarinets and bass clarinet. There is a small part where the Claricarrot, Claricassava and banananet play with the bass clarinet simultaneously. The piece ends with a Cumbia where we added two hoses tuned in F-sharp and C-sharp to play the bass line. Because organic instruments don’t last for more than three days, we need to build and tune new instruments for each concert. There is a trick, however, in the construction of the instruments. Saxophone mouthpieces are used to make the instruments more comfortable to play.

This piece that was meant to be just something entertaining for children, but it reached a wider audience, and has become a requested piece in our concert programs. We have been able to present the work regularly in Uruguay, Brazil, Ecuador, Portugal and Colombia, and in many other international clarinet festivals.

RF: What are the major contributions from the Columbian Clarinet Quartet to Latin American clarinet players?
HG: I think our most important contribution is providing an example for other ensembles by keeping the group together and successfully
promoting the group nationally and internationally, since most groups disappear after a short period of time. Another way we have contributed is that we have shared a good amount of repertoire with beginning quartets. Young groups use the repertoire for concerts and in some cases for chamber music competitions in Colombia.

RF: What are the plans for the next 10 years?
HG: Since 2013, the Columbian Clarinet Quartet has been given the status of National Artist affiliated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Colombia. We take part in the plan to promote Colombian culture around the world. Our immediate plan is to take part in scheduled concerts at Colombian Embassies around Latin America and Europe. We are also composing, arranging and commissioning original compositions that will be in our first CD, due to be recorded in 2018.

The quartet has a fifth member, Oscar Gutierrez, who contributes by playing percussion, guitar, cuatro (a four-string small guitar, similar to a baritone ukulele) and writing arrangements. The presence of percussion and harmonic instruments allows the clarinets to play with freedom and offers a variety of timbers that enrich the musical possibilities for the clarinet quartet.

It is a challenge to start a chamber group, but it is even harder when all members play the same instrument, because you are never going to all have jobs in the same city. After a few years, it is very difficult to keep the interest and to maintain the same goals as a group. The Columbian Clarinet Quartet has shown that they have the strength to look forward for 10 more years. We will continue to compose, arrange and play concerts with the same youthful enthusiasm and love for playing the clarinet.

ABOUT THE WRITER
Ricardo Dourado Freire is professor of clarinet at Universidade de Brasília (UnB) in Brazil. He studied at UnB with Luiz Gonzaga Carneiro, and at Michigan State University with Elsa Ludewig-Verdehr. Freire is an enthusiast of Latin American music, both classical and popular, and has participated in clarinet events in Brazil, Colombia, Italy, Peru, Portugal, USA and Venezuela.
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“PLAY PRETTY”

For as long as I can remember, my mother has always told me to “play pretty” before every performance. If she was not able to attend, she made sure to call me and tell me those words, and when I would hear them I would immediately feel a sense of calm wash over me. Even now as she suffers from Alzheimer’s, she remembers to impart those special words to me when I call to tell her I have a performance. These two simple words have become my elixir over the last forty-plus years of playing the clarinet, and I say them to each and every one of my students before they walk on stage to perform.

“Play pretty” also reminds me of how hard I have worked to find my sound over the years, as well as my continuous quest to improve upon that tonal concept. In a recent interview, I was asked if my concept of sound has changed over the years since my foundational work with Frank Kowalsky and Robert Marcellus as a college student. Most definitely it has, due to the number of musicians with whom I have been fortunate enough to collaborate and who have influenced my playing throughout the years. As many musicians may note, that is one element of your playing that is constantly evolving – finding your signature sound and embracing its evolution.

When first developing my sound/voice, I was greatly influenced by my teachers. My ideal was the Marcellus sound, having listened to endless recordings of this master teacher and artist during my early development. That school of playing (Daniel Bonade) was identified as rich, pure and full of sparkling color. I was also mesmerized by my other teacher, Frank Kowalsky, whose tone quality was like liquid velvet (or, “like buttah” for those of you who watched the “Coffee Talk” sketch with Mike Myers as Linda Richman on Saturday Night Live in the 90’s). His tone was smooth and colorful, touched with a hint of vibrato at times to further color his musical voice. (Note: I once asked Frank about his use of vibrato at times to color a note. His response, “Oh, I use vibrato?” It was so instinctual and natural in his playing; it was purely a part of his voice and concept of sound.)

So, what are the qualities that one searches for along this journey? As Charles West so succinctly wrote in his 2001 Midwest Clinic handout, a beautiful clarinet sound consists of: “depth, stability, focus, clarity and an appropriate balance of ‘ring’ and ‘darkness’ that could be called color.” Those qualities are controlled by our breath support, embouchure, oral cavity and tongue position, and our equipment. As we develop the basic fundamentals on our instrument, our journey towards developing our tonal concept begins. Building a strong foundation is the key to discovering your sound. While this article cannot possibly venture into the numerous roads taken on that tonal journey, I would like to highlight the fact that no matter what your tonal concept is, you will always sound like you, no matter how hard you try to sound like your clarinet idol. Learning to “play pretty” with great breath support and a fast, cool airstream focused through your unique oral cavity with the ideal tongue placement, along with an embouchure that provides the proper foundation for the best reed response, will allow you to play with your most ideal, unique tone quality. As for equipment, again, the best tools will simply allow you to reach your full potential and help you better achieve your concept of sound, but they will not make you sound like Player X.

In helping students find their tonal concept, besides encouraging them to listen to many clarinet players and styles of playing, many teachers play frequently in lessons for their students or with their students, as one of the best ways we learn is with our ears. Other teachers do not play as frequently in lessons, allowing students to find their own voice or shape to the phrase, often guided by the teacher’s words or hand gestures (conducting) while playing. I fall into the latter category, as my teachers did not perform often for me in lessons, only when they knew I needed to hear them play, which almost always resulted in an “aha” moment. Hearing Frank Kowalsky taper the end of a note in a phrase while maintaining the purity and center of the sound or listening to Robert Marcellus voice beautifully articulated altissimo notes in an orchestral excerpt during a lesson had a profound influence in my playing.

This was particularly true when working on musicality and phrasing. Some of my best playing occurred when my teachers would simply conduct me while playing, as their musical gestures with their hands demonstrated what I needed to be doing with my airstream to create more shape in my phrasing. (So much so that I would often ask, “Could you sit in the front row during my recital and do that!?!”)

In addition to playing with my best sound at all times and shaping the phrases with an intentional airstream, the phrase “play pretty” reminds me to
enjoy the performance. To this day, I have a very old, weathered piece of scrap paper (laminated several years ago to help preserve it) that Frank Kowalsky gave me before I left to perform at the Robert Marcellus annual summer clarinet master class at Northwestern University during the summer of 1985.² On it he wrote: “Di: Good luck! Remember: if you allow yourself to be fallible you will perform more successfully and enjoy it more!” I keep that laminated piece of paper of 32 years in my clarinet case and carry it with me wherever I go so I am always mindful of that gentle wisdom from my beloved teacher. While consistent and persistent practice can certainly make a performance successful, the attitude with which one walks on stage makes a significant impact, as well. The idea of allowing oneself to be fallible – to risk making a mistake – offers a sense of freedom to a performance and helps keep the inner judges at bay. Again, we practice not so we get it right, but so we do not get it wrong in performance. And yet, things happen, even to the best of players. We often do not hear when a great artist “makes a mistake” because they have wowed us with their personal artistry and do not grimace or show the audience that they made an error. They simply move on and continue to perform with confidence. And that word – confidence – brings me to my final thought on the phrase “play pretty.” When I offer those words to my students before they take the stage to perform, I hope it instills in them a sense of encouragement and a positive outlook for their performance that they have been so diligently working towards. It’s my way of saying, “you’ve got this; you have put in the time and effort, and now it is time to have fun and enjoy the moment.” That super power called self-confidence is what helps make the magic happen on stage. That, and a lot of tireless effort and determination. “Play pretty,” my friends.

ENDNOTES


2 For full access to the audio archives of the Robert Marcellus Master Classes (1977-1990) visit this link: <https://media.northwestern.edu/catalog?f%5Bcollection_ssim%5D%5Bcollection_s%5D-Robert-Marcellus-Master-Class-Audio-Archives>.

ABOUT THE WRITER

Diane Barger is Hixson-Lied Professor of Clarinet and member of the Moran Woodwind Quintet at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, where she was the recipient of the 2013 Anis Chaikin Sorensen Award for Excellence in Teaching. She is principal clarinet of Lincoln’s Symphony Orchestra, ICA pedagogy chair (2016-2018) and Nebraska state chair (2010-present), and previously served as artistic director of ClarinetFest® 2012 and ICA treasurer (2000-2010). She is a Buffet Crampon Artist, D’Addario Woodwinds Artist/Clinician and a Silverstein Works PRO-Team Artist.
“Historically Speaking” is a feature of The Clarinet offered in response to numerous inquiries received by the editorial staff about clarinets. Most of the information is based on sources available at the National Music Museum, located on the University of South Dakota campus in Vermillion (orgs.usd.edu/nmm). Please send your email inquiries to Deborah Check Reeves at dreeves@usd.edu.

In 1905, Harry Pedler immigrated to the United States and started working for C.G. Conn and Company in Elkhart, Indiana. In 1916 (although some advertising materials say 1914), he partnered with William Gronert (who had also worked for Conn) to establish the American Manufacturing Company. The Elkhart Truth announced in late 1919 that, with the death of Gronert, the company was now known as Harry Pedler and Company.
In 1927, Pedler announced in the *Music Trade Review* that they had added a silver clarinet to their production of woodwinds. A catalog from 1927 confirms that two models of silver soprano clarinet had been added to their line of clarinets that were made from grenadilla and ebonite.

Although that catalog clearly shows soprano clarinets of metal, alto and bass clarinets remained out of “rosewood” and ebonite. It makes a Pedler alto clarinet from metal all the more curious. Just such an alto clarinet is at the National Music Museum in Vermillion, South Dakota. (1 & 2: NMM 1105 Pedler alto clarinet left and right sides.) NMM 1105 is stamped on top and bottom joints, inside an oval: [lyre] / HARRY PEDLER / & Co / ELKHART, / IND. This indicates that the instrument must have been made before 1936 when the company became known as “The Pedler Company.” The bell of this clarinet is engraved and surrounded by a geometric Art Deco design: PEDLER / Custom built (script) / ELKHART – IND. (3: NMM 1105 Pedler alto clarinet bell.) It is important to realize that Pedler was using “Custom built” as a model name. The instruments are not one-of-a-kind custom examples. Several metal bass clarinets carry the same bell design, but are stamped on the other joints, inside an oval: [lyre] / THE PEDLER / CO. / ELKHART, / IND.

NMM 1105 has a low E-flat key and is made in three sections: top joint, bottom joint and bell. The neck and mouthpiece are missing. At the top of the bottom joint, a metal hook can be found. This lines up with a post on the top joint. (4: NMM 1105 Pedler alto clarinet bridge key alignment guide.) When properly aligned, the bridge key is in perfect position.

On the top joint side of NMM 1105, an automatic throat B-flat and register vent mechanism can be seen. Third line B-flat is produced the conventional way by depressing the A and left-hand thumb keys. This activates a separate B-flat vent located lower on the instrument in the proper acoustic position. When the A key is released, as if continuing up the scale to B-natural and above, the B-flat vent closes, and the higher, correctly positioned register vent opens. (5: NMM 1105 Pedler alto clarinet B-flat and register vents.)

As curious as it is, NMM 1105 is not the only Pedler alto clarinet at the National Music Museum. There are seven other Pedler alto clarinets in the collections of which another five are metal. Among the five Pedler bass clarinets, three are metal.

**ABOUT THE WRITER**

Dr. Deborah Check Reeves is the Curator of Education and Woodwinds at the National Music Museum (NMM) in Vermillion, SD, and associate professor at the University of South Dakota. She received a doctorate in clarinet performance from the University of Iowa. She plays with the Sioux City Symphony Orchestra and directs T atag, the NMM’s Javanese gamelan performance ensemble. She is a contributing editor to *The Clarinet*, and serves as the ICA South Dakota State Chair and the Secretary of the American Musical Instrument Society.
In this issue we present an interview with clarinetist and teacher Wesley Ferreira about his online presence and interaction with the clarinet community on social media.

Wesley Ferreira has an active and varied career performing worldwide as a solo, orchestral and chamber musician. Born in Canada to parents of Portuguese heritage, he received his musical training at the University of Western Ontario (B.M.) and Arizona State University (M.M. and D.M.A.) studying with Robert Riseling and Robert Spring, respectively. In 2011, he joined the faculty at Colorado State University where he maintains a thriving clarinet studio as associate professor. Ferreira also has a personal website at www.wesleyferreira.com and has developed a breath support training program called Air Revelation which includes video lessons that can be streamed or downloaded.

CLARINET CACHE: As a collegiate teacher, in what ways do you incorporate technology into your studio?

WESLEY FERREIRA: Our students have grown up in a time of incredible technological advances. They are the first generation to have been raised with personal computers and smartphones. Everything is now available quickly and often at your fingertips. Unfortunately, this can sometimes be at odds with an art form where development can’t be rushed. As a collegiate teacher, we have a greater responsibility now more than ever to help guide our students through the noise. We can use technology to our advantage in the studio.

I have my students submit videos of their practice sessions via YouTube each month. This gives me an opportunity to comment directly on their practice habits and techniques. I have also had my students on occasion view each other’s practice videos and offer comments both positive and constructive on practice habits and techniques. This allows students to learn from one another.

I have also had my students use time-tracking software on their smartphones, tablets or laptops to analyze their practice sessions. I am able to review their practice logs each week and discuss with them any trends or issues that I can see.

Of course, students now have access to many audio and video examples of great clarinet playing. They also have access to examples of poor playing. I feel that it is important for the teacher to direct students towards which examples demonstrate the type of qualities that they should be striving for.

CC: In the past you broadcasted an interactive streaming recital program. Can you tell us more about this program and the inspiration behind it?
The interactive streaming recital occurred in the early days of web streaming before Facebook Live or Periscope made this common. I encouraged the public to select my recital repertoire by voting online. The works mainly consisted of the masterworks of our clarinet repertoire. I left it completely up to them until the concert date. Additionally, I encouraged audience viewers present in the concert hall and those watching all over the world to communicate and connect via Facebook and Twitter using a common hashtag. I projected these moderated comments live onstage while performing. I titled the recital “Clarinet in the Digital Age.” I knew that I was taking a chance in some regards, but I was very interested (and still am) in how the current technology of our day can be used to bring people together to appreciate music in new ways.

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**WF:** The most immediate project that I’m working on is a new recording which advances my doctoral research project. I’ve commissioned prominent Portuguese composers to create works that feature the clarinet and which exhibit Portuguese folk elements.

**CC:** You have a strong presence on the web within the clarinet community. What platforms or techniques do you apply to reach out to people?

**WF:** I feel that social media is an extension of one’s everyday life. It’s a way to build, maintain and foster a sense of community across wide distances and with people you would normally not get to see in person. I consider postings on social media to be the telling of a story. Whether intentional or not, the collection of any person’s posts describes who they are, what they feel is important, their general attitudes about life and work, their sense of humor, etc. Much has been discussed and written about the negative aspects of social media, but I aim to use social media for the forces of good. I hope that my postings exhibit Portuguese folk elements.

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One of the benefits of performing new music is that it gives composers or other new music performers a sense of confidence that you will be receptive to them if they approach you with an idea for a new composition or commissioning project. I find that composers are generally very enthusiastic when you contact them to begin a dialogue on a new project.

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**WF:** Do you have any new projects lined up?

**CC:** Your interest in new music has led to commissions of new works. What compositions have you been involved with, and how did you forge those connections?

**WF:** My interest in new music comes from a desire to be a part of a living process. Performing contemporary music is about being an active participant in the evolution and sometimes revolution of classical or Western art music. I have been involved in the sole commissioning of and consortium projects for some really fantastic new works for the clarinet. I’m also interested in performing newer works that I feel deserve exposure or which have been lost in time. My first solo recording, *Madison Avenue,* was an example of all this. It included works such as James M. David’s *Auto ’66* clarinet concerto with wind band, *Without Further Ado* for two clarinets and piano by Alasdair MacLean, and Nikola Resanovic’s *Clarinet Sonata.* Other works that I’ve been involved in commissioning recently include *Clarimba* for clarinet and marimba by Jorge Montilla, *Calcipher* for E-flat clarinet and piano by Theresa Martin, *Quelques Fleurs* for Clarinet, Cello and Piano by Karim Al-Zand, and the *Clarinet Concerto* with wind band by David Maslanka.
RETURNING TO THE CLARINET IN LATER LIFE

One of the most rewarding aspects of my retirement years has been playing the clarinet again and playing music with others. Like many, I had learned to play in elementary school, continued through high school and then stopped when I went off to college. I had always used borrowed school instruments, both clarinet and oboe, but had never taken private lessons.

My interest in music was life long, and some musical activities continued throughout my adulthood, whether attending concerts or forming jug and bottle bands in places where I worked. My niece gave me her Vito student clarinet when she went off to medical school. A year before my expected retirement, I had the instrument refurbished, bought a method book and started taking lessons with Cory Kasprzyk, a saxophone student at Peabody.

One of the early problems I had was not being able to easily reach the right hand E/B key. A physical therapist friend recommended doing hand stretches with a rubber band, and I did that for a few months, eventually eliminating that problem.

After Cory decided that it was time for me to work with a clarinet specialist, I approached Eddie Palanker, then bass clarinetist with the Baltimore Symphony, who was willing to work with me as long as I was serious. When I retired, and planned to move to our beach house in North Carolina, Eddie’s last bit of advice was “find a group to play with.” Knowing that we were eventually going to move into Oak Hammock, a retirement community affiliated with the University of Florida in Gainesville, I contacted Mitch Estrin, clarinet professor at UF, who recommended a source in Wilmington, Delaware for purchase of a professional level clarinet. I now play a Buffet R-13 Greenline, and have since added Rovner ligature, Vandoren M-15 mouthpiece and Backun studio barrel and bell.

When my wife and I attended our first concert of the Wilmington Symphony Orchestra in North Carolina in the fall of 2008, I was chatting with the usher before the doors opened and mentioned that I was looking for a group to play with. She asked me where I was sitting. At intermission, a woman came over and said she was the oboist with the New Horizons Band at the University of North Carolina Wilmington.

I soon learned that New Horizons was an international support network for adult musicians that had been started in 1991 by an Eastman music education professor named Roy Ernst, which was active in a number of countries. Ernst had two basic rules – no competition, no intimidation. These groups had provided welcoming places to grow musically at any stage of adult life and to meet others in similar situations. Our conductors in Wilmington were Chris Ackerman and later John LaCognata, successive band directors at UNCW. Jazzmone Sutton, the student mentor for the clarinet section, was very helpful and supportive. I also joined a small chamber group that rehearsed at UNCW, and took lessons with WSO bass clarinetist Pam Merritt.

Soon after arriving in Gainesville in 2013, I joined the Gainesville Community Band, conducted by Gerald Poe and now by R. Gary Langford, retired director of bands at UF. Our retirement community did not have an instrumental group, so I put the word out about my interest in forming such a group. After four years, the Oak Hammock Chamber Players now numbers 20 musicians, and we have been fortunate to have had Gary Langford conducting us almost since the beginning. We are also members of New Horizons. Even though Gary does not work with us during the summer, the enthusiasm is high enough that most of us continue to meet each week and play through most of the summer. When I asked one of our flutists if she planned to be with us this past summer, she wrote, “I am happy I found your group. It has been a blessing in my life.”

Mitch Estrin has continued to be helpful in referring me to excellent local teachers, first two FSU clarinet grads, Danielle Levine Porter and then Amy McConn Freeman, both of whom had to discontinue due to other life priorities (like moving away and having babies). For the last two years, I have been working with UF master’s student Elizabeth Druesedow, who has now embarked on a doctoral program with Robert Spring and Joshua Gardner in Arizona. As of this writing, we are continuing to work together via Skype.

TAKE-HOME MESSAGES

There are a few things that are worth emphasizing based on my journey to get
back into music and to clarinet playing. Some of these would not be different for any musician. Others, however, may be more pertinent for older musicians or for me personally.

**Mastering the Instrument**
As with any developing instrumentalist, one must learn the characteristics of the instrument, practice fundamentals, and become familiar with such things as reeds, ligatures, and alternative fingerings. There is also the self-discipline of practicing and building confidence to perform. Retired people are likely to have the time to practice and though we do it only because we want to, it is still helpful to schedule times for practice as we may do for physical exercise or other things that we do on a regular basis.

Accepting limitations is important. I need to accept that I will never be able to play as fast as I might like to, and I often have to make pencil notes in my music to remind myself of accidentals or alternate fingerings.

**Musical Expression**
All of us work to master the notes, dynamics, intonation, phrasing, voicing and, ultimately, to play musically. Ernst observed that older musicians tend to exhibit an expression of feeling based on their life experience: “We chronologically gifted adults have some special strengths that we bring to performing music. We have a lifetime of music in our memories that influence our expressive choices. Our life experiences such as struggle, joy, birth and death, lead to very expressive music.”

**Balance of Work and Enjoyment**
As important as it is to master the fundamentals and to play challenging pieces, we ultimately play music for enjoyment, relaxation and even escape. Otherwise, why do it at all?

**Role Models**
I have always been grateful for teachers and conductors willing to work with older people. I have also found other resources valuable in my learning, including books, articles (many from The Clarinet), other clarinetists and online resources such as Michelle Anderson's Clarinet Mentors program. Each teacher and each experience, has contributed to my learning in a different way.

### More General Learning
Much of my learning has been of a more general nature. I try to learn more about theory, certain composers, conducting technique, various musical topics (e.g., film music) and music and aging.\(^5\)\(^,\)\(^6\) I also find that my playing leads me to listen to music with a different ear.

### Social Factors
One of the most valuable advantages of my playing has been the social aspects.** Meeting and playing with others provides support, sharing of both difficulty and enjoyment, new friendships, and the opportunity to organize musical groups or events.

### Personal Support
None of what I have done musically over the last decade would have worked so well if I had not had the support of my wife, Judy, whether it involved expenses for equipment, music and lessons, putting up with practice sessions, especially the early ones, working around rehearsal and concert schedules in our planning of trips and other events, attending concerts, and even helping me decide which of six new bells produced the best tone.

### CLOSING THOUGHT
Musical activity has many benefits in later life, whether physical, psychological or social. For me, music making has been challenging, stimulating, rewarding, sometimes frustrating, but mostly fun and very fulfilling, both individually and socially.

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### ENDNOTES

### ABOUT THE WRITER
Michael Plaut earned his Ph.D. in psychology from the University of Rochester in 1969 and spent most of his career on the faculty of the University of Maryland School of Medicine in Baltimore. Anticipating retirement, he resumed playing clarinet in 2007 after a 48-year lapse. He now plays in a number of settings, including the Gainesville (FL) Community Band, which he now serves as president, and the Oak Hammock Chamber Players, which he founded in 2013. He played in his first clarinet choir at ClarinetFest® 2017.

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The Victoria de los Ángeles Clarinet Ensemble of Madrid, Spain, is a clarinet choir with an unusually active performance history and an ambitious schedule of pedagogic concerts and collaborative projects, including performances with live dance. In 2017, the group is celebrating its 10th anniversary.

Founded in 2007 by its conductor and professor Carlos Javier Fernández Cobo, the group is in residence at Madrid’s Conservatorio Professional “Victoria de los Ángeles,” the professional conservatory of music named for the famous Spanish operatic soprano. Members include current clarinet students and some older clarinet graduates of the conservatory, now working as music teachers or in various professions, as well as two of Fernández Cobo’s former students from his prior teaching position at the University of Córdoba.

During its history, the group has performed throughout Spain, including events such as the second European Clarinet Congress (Madrid), Úbeda’s International Music Festival (Jaén) and the fourth ADEC National Clarinet Congress, and at locations such as the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, the Euskalduna Auditorium in Bilbao and the Monastery of Uclés (Cuenca). The ensemble has also recently recorded for Spanish National Television (TVE), playing Bartók’s Romanian Dances.

To celebrate their 10th anniversary, the group traveled outside of Spain for the first time, performing at the Basilica of San Giuseppe al Trionfale in Rome, Italy, in a program of Spanish and Italian music featuring works by Michelle Mangani and Vence Biscontin.

Fernández Cobo, who holds a Ph.D. in music from the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, has performed with the Orchestra of Córdoba, the Ciudad de Madrid Orchestra, the Banda Sinfónica Municipal, the Pro-United Nations Orchestra and many other groups. He has taught and presented at courses and conferences in Mexico and Portugal and written articles and books about clarinet
pedagogy and history, including his new book about Antonio Romero: *Enseñanza, técnica y desarrollo del clarinete en la Europa de Antonio Romero* (Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, 2015). In addition to his position at the Conservatorio Victoria de los Ángeles, he is also professor at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. In a recent email interview, I asked him about his work with the ensemble and his goals for the future.

**MARGARET THORNHILL:** Ten years is a fine accomplishment for any group, even one based at a conservatory. Tell me about the history of your ensemble.

**CARLOS JAVIER FERNÁNDEZ COBO:** I founded this group one year after I arrived at this conservatory in 2006. Our history has been based on four elements: conception of the ensemble as a string chamber orchestra, pedagogical concerts, live music and dance and the performance of concerts outside of Madrid through exchanges with other musical institutions or clarinet ensembles. We have organized several interchanges with other ensembles, music schools and conservatories, playing in auditoriums and monasteries all over Spain in locations such as Córdoba, Adamuz, Santa Ollalla, Úbeda and Uclés, with selected and distinct programs depending on the place and the event.

**MT:** I was excited to learn about your concerts with dancers, especially flamenco. How did that come about? What music are you playing for the dancers?

**CFC:** Our conservatory shares the building with the Carmen Amaya Dance Conservatory. Ten years ago, a small group of teachers designed a performance where music and dance were mixed, titled *Amalgama* (“mix, combination”), and the following year, a select group of pupils recorded it for Spanish television. During the years, we have played choreographed compositions like John Williams’s *Schindler’s List*, Strauss’s *Tritsch-Tratsch*, Isaac Albéniz’s *Polka, Sevilla, Córdoba*, and *Tango*, Manuel de Falla’s *Danza del Fuego Fatuo* and Gustav Holst’s *St. Paul’s Suite (Ostinato)*, most of them...
arranged by myself to be played by a clarinet ensemble or clarinet quartet with dancers. The Albéniz Tango was also played at ClarinetFest® 2015 by the ADEC ensemble (where I play) with my beloved dance pupils from Carmen Amaya.

Three dance styles are taught in the Carmen Amaya Conservatory: classic, Spanish (flamenco is included in this style) and contemporary. One day, I listened to beautiful guitar music with a flamenco singer and saw a rehearsal of flamenco dance pupils. I asked Estefanía Palacio Vera, the teacher in the conservatory and choreographer of the dance, who composed it. She explained to me that it was Carlos Pucherete, our flamenco guitar teacher. I told them that I wanted to compose a clarinet ensemble part and they encouraged me to do it! Several years ago, I played a composition titled Poeta for orchestra, guitar, cantaor, and percussion with narrator at Granada’s International Flamenco Festival with the Córdoba Symphonic Orchestra, which inspired me to compose the clarinet ensemble part. It was very difficult because flamenco’s language, harmony and rhythms are very specific. I had to study and prepare a lot in order to compose it emphasizing the flamenco style without my own prejudice. This year, we recorded the music using technologies such as a drone or GoPro® camera on the stage. We are editing it at this time. You can find these videos on my YouTube channel and several links on our blog, http://grupodeclarinetesvictoriadelosangeles.blogspot.com.

MT: Some of your photos show collaborations with singers. What have you performed with voice?

CFC: In our pedagogical aspect, we have played for more than 5,000 people over the years, promoting music-making among students. In addition, we played in several museums under the program “New Music, New Public” organized by the Madrid education government. These performances have been offered to people with cerebral palsy, autism, Asperger’s syndrome … they are our favorite and very grateful public.

Pedagogical concerts, lovingly named “Clarigama” (Clarinet-Amalgama), are very important for us. On one hand, we promote our conservatory and music-making. On the other hand, through the money earned at these concerts, we are able to organize trips to offer our concerts, buy musical scores and pay for other activities for the ensemble. We combine music, dance and images/pictures. The conservatory has an auditorium with 300 seats and technical equipment which allows us to prepare performances as shows that are very attractive to the public.

I coordinate the concerts with music teachers depending on the student level or age. All of them are the result of several years of collaboration with schools and teachers. Two years ago, we were able to offer a pedagogical concert in the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid’s Education Faculty. We received a lot of congratulations for it.

MT: Some of your published arrangements or compositions for clarinet quartet are listed on your personal website. Have you arranged for larger ensembles as well?

CFC: I have published some arrangements for small clarinet ensembles or clarinet quartet, and I have more than 30 expecting to be published. It is difficult to get a publishing house interested in doing it. I have not arranged for bigger ones because most mid-level ensembles in Spain play in B-flat and bass instrumentation. This year, we started to play with E-flat, B-flat, basset horn and bass clarinet, and I am thinking about adapting some and making new ones for large ensemble.

MT: What are your goals for the future with this group?

CFC: One project next season (2017-18) will be to organize a concert with Spanish contemporary composers who have composed for clarinet ensembles, inviting them to assist at the rehearsals and work with us, offering a concert with their compositions in our auditorium and recording it in audio and video. There are some works that I will arrange for the ensemble, too. Some composers who have confirmed their compositions are Vicent Alamá, David Bellas, Arturo Medina, Paulino Martí, Alejandro Moreno, Enrique Muñoz and José Susi. In addition, I asked for two more works from María José Berenguer and Rebeca Valverde. It will be very special for us and it will be a challenge! I invite composers to compose for us or to send us their compositions!

MT: Is there anything else you would like to share about your work?

CFC: I always have tried to learn and remember the most important phrases or concepts of my teachers: love for the clarinet (Vicente Lloréns, my first teacher), dark sound (Jean Louis Sajot), “music always has to sound fresh” (Rafael Herrero), “the clarinet has to sound like a singer” (Manuel Rodríguez), orchestral sonority and embouchure (Ramón Barona), thoroughness of execution (Justo Sanz), clarity of passages due to a good technique (Silvie Hue), phrasing (Florían Popa), “the sound is in your brain” (Hedwig Swimberghe), “nothing has to be repeated twice the same way” (Carlos Riera), clarity of concepts when they have been explained (Javier Balaguer), naturalness and spontaneity (Walter Boeykens). Thanks to all.

ABOUT THE WRITER

Margaret Thornhill, D.M.A., is a performer and private teacher in Los Angeles who conducts the Los Angeles Clarinet Choir and is founder/director of the Claremont Clarinet Festival. Send her clarinet choir news or comments at her website: www.margaretthornhill.com
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