

The Clarinet



INTERNATIONAL
CLARINET
ASSOCIATION

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DECEMBER 2025

A CONVERSATION WITH MATT JOHNSTON



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THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear ICA Members,

Today, we begin a new chapter in our journal and in the ICA's history. This is the first issue under the direction of our new editor, Michael Thrasher. Michael and the editorial team have worked together to create a compelling and outstanding issue. I am excited for the future of *The Clarinet* and the direction of our journal. Thank you to all our editorial staff and to everyone on the editorial board for their contributions to *The Clarinet* and *The Clarinet [Online]*. It is an honour to work with you all.

In September we also welcomed our new International Vice President, Lara Díaz. From day one, Lara has been busy with meetings, discussions, votes, and the many Board emails that help keep the ICA moving forward. In addition to her thoughtful contributions as a board member, Lara also helps to represent our association's many Spanish speakers. This is another step in the strides we are making towards becoming an organisation that is truly international.

We are thrilled to have welcomed more international partner organisations this fall, including the Thailand Clarinet Association, the Thailand International Clarinet Academy, and the Istanbul Klarinet Derneği. We continue to seek out partnerships with clarinet organisations across the globe. If you have suggestions for future collaborations, please feel free to contact me (president@clarinet.org) and/or Lara Díaz (internationalvp@clarinet.org). Our organisations are stronger together.

Registration is now open for this summer's conference in Incheon, South Korea! This is going to be a spectacular ClarinetFest® that you will not want to miss. Wonkak Kim and his team have been busy curating an incredible festival for us all. Whether it is your first time in Korea or you call Korea home, I encourage you to join us for one or more of the excursions that the ICA has planned. These excursions are a great way to spend time with your clarinet colleagues, meet new friends, and experience South Korea's many cultural and culinary offerings. After the success of our inaugural Prelude event in Texas, we are offering a Prelude to ClarinetFest® 2026 in Incheon for our enthusiast community.

If you are someone who reads the journal within the first few days it is released, you still have time to participate in the ICA's Giving Tuesday activities! Giving Tuesday is on December 2 this year and is an important fundraising event for the ICA. If you are reading this issue after Giving Tuesday and have missed the event, don't worry! Your contribution, at any time of year, helps support the work of the ICA. As 2025 comes to an end and we look forward to 2026, please consider donating to our programs and scholarships.

Sincerely,

Catherine Wood
President, International Clarinet Association



The Clarinet



Matt Johnston (contrabass clarinet) with the Klarinetensemble Lignum on tour in Estonia, June 2024.

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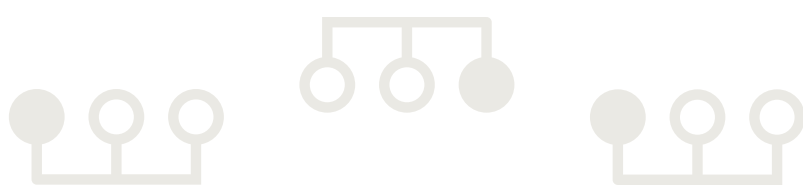
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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

by Michael Thrasher



Michael Thrasher is Professor of Music and Dean of Arts & Humanities at Troy University. An experienced academic leader, arts administrator, educator, and scholar, he has served in faculty and administrative roles at Florida State University, the University of Texas at Tyler, and North Dakota State University. A Fulbright Scholar, Thrasher has published broadly on academic leadership, clarinet literature, and health and wellness for musicians. His writing has appeared in journals such as *The Clarinet*, *The Department Chair*, and *the Journal of Performing Arts Leadership in Higher Education*. Currently serving as an Associate Editor of the forthcoming *Oxford Handbook of Musician Health Advocacy* (Oxford University Press), he maintains an active agenda in research and advocacy. Thrasher holds both the Doctor of Musical Arts and Master of Music degrees from the University of North Texas and a Bachelor of Music Education from Northwestern State University, along with a Certificate in Crisis Leadership in Higher Education from the Harvard Kennedy School.

As I undertake my first issue as Editor of *The Clarinet*, I do so with a tremendous sense of humility and responsibility. This journal boasts a legacy of more than five decades of service to the worldwide fraternity of clarinet players and enthusiasts from all walks of life. On my office shelf, I still have my original copy of the July–August 1991 issue—my first as an ICA member and journal subscriber. Over time, I am pleased to have expanded my collection to all volumes back to the original October 1973 publication.

In a 1992 issue, Rosario Mazzeo shared a witty anecdote recounting the arrival of the latest copy of *The Clarinet* in his postal box. He wrote, “Immediately, I followed my usual practice of setting aside the project in hand and read the issue from cover to cover.” I know that I have often felt the same way about *The Clarinet* through the years—that sense of excitement, satisfaction, and discovery that accompanied each new issue. Tearing open the thick outer envelope, I would quickly survey the contents to see what new literature or technique would be discussed, or what eminent performer might share some bit of expertise that I could apply to my own work.

In reflecting back through those past issues, I am reminded that all of us work, in one sense, as interim caretakers of the tasks assigned to us. We are almost always building on the foundations that others have laid, while also expanding frameworks that will serve those in future generations. That is certainly true of *The Clarinet*. Rachel Yoder, who served as Editor for ten years, leaves massive shoes to fill. She is that unique blend of the true artist-scholar. An eminent expert of the instrument, she has brought skill, balance, insight, a diverse perspective, and an uncanny sense of detail to the pages of the journal. She has also been unfailingly kind and patient in sharing her expertise as I assume this

role. We all owe her a significant debt of gratitude for her selfless service to the profession, and I can only hope to uphold the same standard that she has set.

I also reflect back on the work of our longtime Editor—and my own teacher and mentor—Dr. James Gillespie. Dr. Gillespie served as my major professor throughout my graduate studies at the University of North Texas. Of course, he was an immaculate model as a clarinetist: that remarkable control (which he made look so easy), the beautiful tonal color, the impeccable intonation. And I have yet to find anyone else with the encyclopedic knowledge of literature that he possesses. Beyond all of that, though, he exemplified what a higher education faculty member should be: dedicated yet affable, supportive yet demanding, inspirational yet comforting. As I approach almost thirty years of work in higher education, I can only hope that I have lived up to similar standards—both in my professional work, and now in the pages of *The Clarinet*, the journal that he led so brilliantly for so many years.

Previous Editors, including Rachel Yoder, Jim Gillespie, and Lee Gibson, have laid the foundation for a journal of international scope and remarkable breadth. Although times and formats may have evolved, I am eager to steward that resource, to build upon its considerable strengths, and to expand that reach for others. Truly, my goal is to ensure that *The Clarinet* remains, for all readers, that irresistible publication that leads us to set aside whatever project is at hand and read “from cover to cover.” ♪♪



CLARINOTES

A NIGHT TO REMEMBER: BUFFET CRAMPON'S 200TH ANNIVERSARY AND TOM LEE MUSIC PRESENTS LES BONS BECS

by Maria Wong Ka Yee,
ICA Hong Kong National Chair

On the dazzling evening of August 4, 2025, at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University Jockey Club Auditorium, music, artistry, and community came together in spectacular harmony. Celebrating Buffet Crampon's 200th anniversary, Tom Lee Music proudly presented Les Bons Becs – Crazy Winds, a concert that concluded with resounding success and left audiences both moved and inspired. Our deepest gratitude goes to every attendee who joined us in person, sharing a night brimming with creativity, surprise, and musical brilliance.

Flying in from France, the world-renowned Les Bons Becs Clarinet Ensemble



delivered a performance unlike any other. Famous for their signature blend of humor

and virtuosity, the ensemble masterfully fuses classical, jazz, and pop influences with theatrical mime and visual storytelling. In their long-awaited Hong Kong debut, the first half of the evening, entitled Crazy Winds, swept the audience into a whirlwind of sound and spectacle. Clarinetists and music lovers alike were treated to an unforgettable performance that sparkled with wit, artistry, and technical mastery.

The atmosphere inside the packed auditorium was nothing short of electric. Thunderous applause and joyous laughter echoed between each number, as the ensemble's expressive gestures and imaginative narratives enchanted everyone—from children experiencing live performance magic for the first time, to seasoned concertgoers drawn to the group's world-class musicianship. Without uttering a single word, Les Bons Becs transcended language and cultural barriers, uniting the hall through the universal language of music and joy.



The second half of the evening expanded the celebration with a vibrant and diverse musical journey. Opening with 200 Years of Sound, a Lifetime of Stories, a tribute film honored Buffet Crampon's bicentennial legacy. The program then turned to a moving rendition of Gordon Jenkins's *Goodbye*. This heartfelt performance—led by Florent Héau, members of Les Bons Becs, and Hong Kong clarinetists Martin Choy, Maria Wong, and Anthony Wong—was dedicated to the late clarinet legend Michel Arrignon, a towering figure in the clarinet world and a cherished

member of the Buffet Crampon family.

The evening continued with a historic moment: the world premiere of *24/7 Day and Night*, an original work by Lo Hui-man. Featuring 95 Hong Kong clarinetists, the piece vividly captured the rhythms of urban life—its restless energy, its stillness, and its cycles of renewal. Then, in a jubilant finale, audiences witnessed history in the making as 448 clarinetists filled the stage for a spirited rendition of *Quizás Quizás Quizás*. This arrangement, by Florent Héau and Anthony Wong, not only brought the evening to a joyous close but

also set a new Guinness World Record for the largest clarinet ensemble.

The concert was more than a performance—it was a testament to the power of music bringing people together across cultures, generations, and communities. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Buffet Crampon and Vandoren Paris, to our talented performers and collaborators, to the dedicated teams working behind the scenes, and most of all, to the audience who shared this once-in-a-lifetime evening with us.

WOOD, HEALTH, AND SOUND SYMPOSIUM IN TOKYO

by Masatoshi Tanaka

The “Wood, Health, and Sound” International Symposium was held on September 17, 2025, at the Mokuzai Kaikan (Wood Building) in Shin-Kiba, Tokyo, Japan, with simultaneous online streaming. The event was organized as part of a 2024 agreement between the governments of Japan and Austria that promotes cooperation in forest management, wood use, education, and cultural exchange.

Centered on the three themes of *Wood*, *Health*, and *Sound*, the symposium brought together specialists in architecture, medicine, music, and public policy to examine how natural materials influence human well-being and social understanding.

In the “Sound” session, clarinetist Masatoshi Tanaka performed and presented on the relationship between wood and sound—not only in musical instruments, but also in architecture and the ways that humans physically experience sound. His

presentation highlighted how music can help people connect with nature, memory, and emotion.

The symposium illustrated how inter-

disciplinary collaboration continues to deepen understanding of the ways that sound and materials shape human experience across fields and borders.



The symposium opened with a short rendition of “Wien bleibt Wien,” played like a fanfare.

BELGIAN CLARINET ACADEMY 2025

by Leah Price and d'Art Richard

From July 16th to July 24th, the sounds of Brahms sonatas, Beethoven excerpts, and Mandat multiphonics sang from the windows of the Conservatorium aan Zee in Ostend, a coastal Belgian town. Clarinet students from five different countries gathered here for a week of instruction,

performance, and fun at the 30th annual Belgian Clarinet Academy. The event's faculty included Deborah Bish from Florida State University, Robert Spring (professor emeritus, Arizona State University), and Stephan Vermeersch, an instructor and performer from Belgium.

Dr. Spring welcomed students each morning as he led us in his signature

warm-up routine. A drone note always subtly played from his speaker in the background, preparing our ears for a day of good intonation. As a group, students played long tones, scales, arpeggios, thirds, and articulation exercises. There was noticeable improvement each day. Students sounded more and more confident as they settled into the routine.



Belgian Clarinet Academy 2025 students and faculty

Students received individual lessons that were open for all to attend, allowing students to hear one another, ask questions, and gain new perspectives. The excellent faculty ensured lessons were engaging and beneficial for everyone present. Each faculty member also presented a masterclass, providing insight into their specific areas of expertise. Spring demonstrated his reed-making process, allowing students to pass around his tools and unfinished reeds. Bish provided a deeper understanding of how people really learn, and Vermeersch shared valuable research and strategies for expressive playing.

Students also had the opportunity to perform at multiple levels, from solo works to a large clarinet choir. In an unfortunate turn of events, the pianist was unable to accompany students on the solo recital, and the musicians had to work fast to come up with various solutions. Some simply played their pieces without piano, some chose different pieces not requir-

ing accompaniment, and one particularly crafty student performed Navarro's *Il Concerto* with Vermeersch clapping the rhythmic accompaniment. The small ensembles were composed of five clarinet quartets and one trio, with works ranging from those written just two years ago to ones written over *two hundred* years ago. The large clarinet choir, conducted by Bert Six, included all 23 students playing works by Goddaer, Rossini, and Sousa.

The BCA welcomed students from Belgium, Canada, China, the Netherlands, and the United States of America, and attendees were able to appreciate the historic beauty of Belgium on their day off. Some went to the nearby city of Bruges, where they climbed the Belfort tower, visited the Basilica of the Holy Blood, and enjoyed authentic Belgian chocolate and waffles. Others visited Ghent, where they admired the numerous cathedrals, ascended into the Ghent Belfry to look over the city, and happened upon the Ghent Festivities, an

annual music and theater festival held in the city.

The camaraderie fostered at the academy was incredible. Students quickly formed friendships, joining each other to shop at the neighboring Aldi to gather food for a beach picnic, explore shopping areas for local restaurants, or watch the fireworks for Belgian National Day. Everyone gathered for lunch at the conservatory, prepared by Chantal Vandekerckhove and her family. Here, students shared everything from stories of past performances, to future plans, to opinions on barrels and mouthpieces. Some students found intrigue in comparing the cultures of their respective countries, sharing details about traditional foods, sports, and customs.

The BCA is grateful for the sponsorship of Henri Selmer Paris and Backun Musical Instruments. We are also thankful for the hospitality of Chantal Vandekerckhove, Bert Six, Thibo Six, and the wonderful host families who made students feel at home.

THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MINNESOTA CLARINET ACADEMY

by Lisa Perry

The annual Minnesota Clarinet Academy celebrated its 10th anniversary on July 15-19, 2025, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, hosted at St. John's Episcopal Church. The

workshop was founded in 2015 by Alexander Fiterstein, professor of clarinet at the Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University. Participants over the years have included clarinetists of all ages from across the globe. Faculty for the 2025 workshop

included Fiterstein; Sang Yoon Kim, assistant professor of clarinet at the University of Minnesota and principal clarinetist of the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra; Lisa Perry, assistant professor of clarinet at East Tennessee State University; and

Katrina Clements, assistant professor of woodwinds at McNeese State University. Throughout the week students participated in master classes on solo repertoire, clarinet technique workshops, presentations, and ensemble sessions. The workshop culminated with a faculty and participant recital of solo performances and ensemble pieces in memory of clarinetist, and former academy participant, Glen Peterson. The program included selections by: Beethoven, Yosuke Fukuda, Chausson, Stravinsky, Kinan Azmeh, Soo-Hyun Park, and the premiere of *Impressions for Solo Clarinet*, composed and performed by Fiterstein. More information about the Minnesota Clarinet Academy can be found at: minnesotacclarinet.com.



Photo by Alexander Fiterstein

Faculty and Participants of the 2025 Minnesota Clarinet Academy

TRIBUTE TO MAURICE GABAI (1935-2025)

by Jean-Marie Paul

From Cyrille Rose to today, the Paris Opera always has clarinetists who are renowned for their phrasing. Maurice Gabai did not have an international career, but he was recognized by his peers as one of the best players in Paris.

The story began in a music store of Carcassonne, a lovely city in southern France, where he was born on October

9, 1935 (the same year as his friends Guy Dangain and Michel Portal). When Gabai was 13 years old, he discovered a harmonica in his pocket, and also tried the trumpet. Through a chance meeting with a clarinetist and upon seeing the instrument in the music store, the clarinet became the instrument he would never leave. The clarinet corresponded to his taste for virtuosity and lyricism.¹

THE MUSICAL CAREER

Gabai received First Prize in clarinet at the Toulouse Conservatory in the class of Armand Médous in 1950. He was a student of Henri Dionet at the Versailles Conservatory and did his military service at the Musique des Troupes of Satory-Versailles (notably with Guy Dangain). In 1953 he joined the class of Ulysse Delécluse at the Paris Conservatory, winning a unanimous First Prize in 1955, and a First Prize for chamber music in 1956. Gabai spent 32 years with the Opéra National de Paris (1964-1996), including performing as the principal soloist (successor to François Etienne). He also performed with the Republican Guard Band for six years (September 1959-August 1965). He taught as professor at several conservatories around Paris: Montreuil (1966), Bobigny, Saint Germain en Laye, and in Montreux, Switzerland (mid-1970s).

Among the notable concerts he gave as a soloist with orchestra, several stand out, including those of the Salle Pleyel in Paris (with the Mozart *Concerto* and the opera orchestra), and a concert in Colmar, Alsace, with the Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra conducted by Karl Munchinger. Notably in his discography, Gabai recorded the Francaix *Concerto* with the composer conducting the opera musicians.

After the opera position, he retired in the Var region, French Riviera (not far from the cane fields and from some of his clarinet friends, notably Guy Dangain who conducted a clarinet choir). In his later years, Gabai was one of the first to propose videoconferencing for students and he helped an amateur band (Harmonie du Pradet). Gabai died in Le Cannet des Maures (Var) on August 2, 2025.

THE MAN

Behind an artist, there is always a personality that a biography cannot describe. His colleagues and I remember that he liked big motorcycles and cars (Jaguar notably), chess playing, golf, miniature trains (he had a large circuit at home), theatre, good wine, and cuisine (he was a good cook).²

A TASTE FOR BEAUTIFUL TONES AND VIRTUOSITY

Gabai always loved his job in the orchestra



Maurice Gabai, excerpt from Yamaha poster



Opera section 1986: Crocq, Arrignon, Meyer, Cuper, Gabai.

and playing lyrical works because the clarinet is well used in this music. He was invited to play at ClarinetFest® 1989 in Minneapolis and loved to listen to Eddie Daniels.

In a 2017 interview with Rachel Yoder, the Paris-based clarinetist and composer Carol Robinson commented on working with French clarinetists Portal and Gabai. Concerning Gabai, Robinson notes: “in addition to having brilliant technique, he had a particularly expressive vocal way of playing... These French musicians offered another vision of clarinet playing, and were both important to my musical development.”³

The reputation of Gabai as an opera and ballet orchestral musician occurred, for instance, from the Tosca solo, the Delibes music (*Coppelia*, *Sylvia*), and his virtuosity in solos like the *Rigoletto Fantasia* and the Saint-Saëns *Sonata* which he loved.

GABAI AND THE MAKERS

Gabai played a Buffet-Crampon Prestige⁴ clarinet and later switched to Yamaha. For him, an instrument needed to facilitate a well-centered full tone (timbre), round and fluid; an instrument which enables you to be the closest possible to truth and what you want to say, including the mouthpiece.

For that purpose, starting from his B45, he designed with Vandoren a mouthpiece with large wings that enabled more ease for the upper lip, better slurs, and less fatigue (Patent FR2542482, international GD10D9/02).⁵ It avoids air leaks, and the reed vibrates more on the whole width. He used it in his CD about the

Margoni Studies. Only a few copies of the mouthpiece were made, and it was not sold in stores. Gabai also wrote a book about scraping reeds; he designed an accessory that was sold with the book.⁶

DISCOGRAPHY

N.B. Many recordings are available on YouTube.

Saint-Saëns: *Sonate*. Annie d'Arco, piano. Calliope, 1975. Reissued on CD by Indesens.

Françaix, Jean. *Concerto*. Ensemble Instrumental des Musiciens de l'Opéra, conducted by Jean Françaix. Cybelia CY650, LP, 1980s; reissued as Etoile Production EDP 9904, CD, 2003.

Poulenc, Francis. *Musique de chambre*. Includes *Sonata for Two Clarinets* with Michel Portal. EMI, CD, 1989. Recorded at Salle Wagram, Paris, 1973.

Brahms, Johannes. Sonatas, op. 120, nos. 1 and 2. Schumann, Robert. *Fantasiestücke* and *Romances*. Jean-Yves Sebillotte, piano. Etoile Production, CD, 2003.

Pierné, Gabriel, and Luigi Bassi. *Rigoletto* (with Sylvie Perret, harp). Tchaikovsky, Boieldieu, and Françaix (*Cinq Piccoli Duetti*, arr.). Éditions de Plein Jeu, DMP9416C.

Milhaud, Darius. *Concerto*. Ensemble Instrumental des Musiciens de l'Opéra, conducted by Alain Lombard. Cybelia, LP, 1985.

Françaix, Jean: *Quintette*. Milhaud, Darius. *Trio pour clarinette, violon et piano*. Ensemble Arte Da Camera, *Musique Française du 20^e siècle*, with Gérard Torgomian and Sotiris Kyriazopoulos, violins; Michel Michalakakos, viola; Jean Barthe, cello; Claudine Mellon, piano. Cybelia CY 648, LP, c.1984.

Margoni, Alain. *10 études dans le style contemporain*. Agate CO1001, CD, 1989.

Ravel, Maurice. *Introduction and Allegro*. Marisa Klinko, harp; Benoit Fromanger, flute. Paris Opera Soloists. EMI HMV 5 73452 2, CD, 1993.

Gabai recorded many solos with the Paris Opera. For instance: Delibes, Léo. *Sylvia* and *Coppélia* (excerpts). Orchestre de l'Opéra de Paris, conducted by Jean-Baptiste Mari. EMI, 1992.

ENDNOTES

1 *Allegro* (Buffet-Crampon), no. 7 (November 1989).

2 *Ibid.*

3 Yoder, Rachel. “Interview with Clarinetist Carol Robinson,” www.seattlemodernorchestra.org/2017/05/10/interview-clarinetist-carol-robinson/.

4 *Allegro* (Buffet-Crampon).

5 Paul, Jean-Marie. “Un nouveau bec Vandoren: interview de son concepteur Maurice Gabai.” *Clarinette magazine* 23 (1992): 13.

6 Gabai, Maurice. *Le Lim'anch* (Paris: International Music Diffusion, 1999). www.arpegges.fr/fr/editions-musicales/le-lim-anch_25055#tab_Comment

2025-2026 ICA 100% STUDIO ENROLLMENT

Congratulations to the University of Nebraska Lincoln on being the first studio of the 2025-2026 calendar year to reach 100% studio enrollment in the ICA!

Joining the ICA opens a world of clarinet information and scholarship, including access to 50 volumes of *The Clarinet* in the James Gillespie Library; discounts on instrument insurance through Anderson Insurance; access to NAXOS Music Library, FORZA Excerpts, and the ICA Resource Library; the ability to attend ClarinetFest® and other virtual and in-person ICA events; and entry to compete in annual ICA competitions.

The discounted collegiate student memberships rate of just \$10 has been extended to December 31, 2025! See clarinet.org for more details.

For more information about how your school or studio can reach 100% enrollment and be featured in an upcoming issue of *The Clarinet*, contact EDO@clarinet.org.



Front row from left: Diane Barger, Elizabeth Bowen, Yukina Higashi, Anna Leahy, Alyssa Rine, Ellie Brielmaier, Madeleine Condon, Lauren Sieck
Back row from left: JoAnne Lundahl, Willa Sharp, Heather Ryan-Christie, Mark Scott, Grant Westerman. Not pictured: Ethan Zzulka

ICA ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALL FOR HONORARY MEMBERSHIP NOMINEES

In accordance with the International Clarinet Association bylaws (Article V, Section 6), a special category of Honorary Membership has been created for persons of "unusual distinction." The International Clarinet Association board of directors invites the general membership to nominate living individuals for Honorary Memberships from the areas of professional service, teaching, performance, and/or lifetime achievements. Nominators should include a brief biographical sketch of the candidate along with further information as specified below. There is a limit of one nomination per person. Nominations must be emailed or postmarked no later than **December 31, 2025**, and sent respectively to secretary@clarinet.org or by mail:

International Clarinet Association
Attn: Secretary
829 Bethel Rd #216
Columbus, OH 43214 USA

Nominations for Honorary Memberships should include:

- 1 Printed name of the nominator
- 2 Nominator's address, phone number, and email address

- 3 Name of nominee
- 4 Nominee's address, phone number, and email address
- 5 Biographical sketch of nominee
- 6 Supporting documentation of nominee's qualifications

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SITE SEARCH – CLARINETFEST® 2028/2029

Interested in hosting a future ClarinetFest®? The ICA board of directors is soliciting the assistance of the general membership in identifying potential international and USA sites for ClarinetFests® 2028 and 2029. In order for the proposal to be considered, all documents must be submitted by the proposed Program Director(s) and include:

- Cover letter by proposed Program Director(s) stating intent
- Detailed biography and contact information for proposed Program Director(s)
- Three letters of recommendation for proposed Program Director(s)
- Names of proposed artistic team members
- Proposed dates, which are typically Wednesday through Saturday, in July or early August (4-day festival with 3 days of exhibition)

- Written proof of financial support from various agencies
- Complete addresses and detailed maps of all hotels and performance/exhibitor venues, including an outline of their proximity to each other
- Proposal addressing all site requirements as listed below

Being sought are locations with the following attributes:

- **Performance Spaces** – Superior acoustical space with multimedia capabilities conducive for the presentation of concerts, recitals, lectures, and master classes. Having two or more performance venues in the same location is considered optimal. Minimum capacity of the large hall should be 1,000-1,200 seats.
- **Exhibition Space** – Approximately 15,000-25,000 sq. ft. exhibition/ballroom space located in or near the same facility where program presentations will take place. Four additional nearby smaller rooms to be used as instrument manufacturer tryout spaces. All exhibition spaces must have the ability to be secured during non-business hours.
- **Housing** – Hotel with a variety of price options able to accommodate budgets ranging from students to corporate executives. Capability to house a minimum of 800 individuals, with additional hotels nearby.
- **Travel** – Access to major transportation centers (e.g., airports, train stations).
- **Excursions** – Interesting tourist activities in, or within the vicinity of, the city/area of the venue.
- **Other** – Incorporation of area musical resources (e.g., professional symphony orchestras, jazz ensembles, chamber musicians, military ensembles) adds greatly to the local experience for those attending ClarinetFest®.

Proposals are accepted electronically on a rolling basis with the above listed requirements. Interested parties can find a copy of the ClarinetFest® Artistic Director Handbook [HERE](#). Please send materials to:

Catherine Wood
ICA President, President@clarinet.org
Jessica Harrie
ICA Executive Director, EDO@clarinet.org

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SITE SEARCH – LOW CLARINET FESTIVAL 2027

The ICA board of directors is soliciting the assistance of the general membership in identifying potential international and USA sites for Low Clarinet Festival 2027. In order for the proposal to be considered, all documents must be submitted by the proposed Program Director(s) and include:

- Cover letter by proposed Program Director(s) stating intent
- Detailed biography and contact information for proposed Program Director(s)
- Three letters of recommendation for proposed Program Director(s)
- Names of proposed artistic team members
- Proposed dates have typically been Wednesday through Saturday and historically in January. However, the total number of conference days and the month in which the conference is offered could be flexible as needed so long as it does not conflict with ClarinetFest®
- Written proof of financial support from various agencies
- Complete addresses and detailed maps of all hotels and performance/exhibitor venues, including an outline of their proximity to each other
- Proposal addressing all site requirements as listed below

Being sought are locations with the following attributes:

- **Performance Spaces** – Superior acoustical space with multimedia capabilities conducive for the presentation of concerts, recitals, lectures, and master classes. Having two or more performance venues in the same location is considered optimal. Minimum capacity of the large hall should be 250-300 seats.
- **Exhibition Space** – Approximately 5,000 sq. ft. exhibition/ballroom space located in or near the same facility where program presentations will take place (space for between 15-20 tables). Two additional nearby smaller rooms to be used as instrument manufacturer tryout spaces. All exhibition spaces must have the ability to be secured during non-business hours.
- **Housing** – Hotel with a variety of price options able to accommodate budgets ranging from students to corporate executives. Capability to house a minimum of 200 individuals, with additional hotels nearby.
- **Travel** – Access to major transportation centers (e.g., airports, train stations).
- **Excursions** – Interesting tourist activities in, or within the vicinity of, the city/area of the venue.
- **Other** – Incorporation of area musical resources (e.g., professional symphony orchestras, jazz ensembles, chamber musicians, military ensembles) adds greatly to the local experience for those attending Low Clarinet Festival.

Proposals are accepted electronically on a rolling basis with the above listed requirements. Please send materials to:

Catherine Wood, ICA President, President@clarinet.org
Jessica Harrie, ICA Executive Director, EDO@clarinet.org



2026 ICA RESEARCH COMPETITION

ClarinetFest® 2026 / Incheon, South Korea

Coordinator: Madelyn Moore –
clarinetmadelyn@gmail.com

Deadline: April 1, 2026

The ICA solicits proposals for research presentations (such as papers or lecture-recitals) on any topic related to the clarinet.

PRIZES:

First prize – \$1,000 and publication in
The Clarinet journal
Second prize – \$500

Visit clarinet.org for full competition rules
and application details.



2026 ICA YOUNG ARTIST COMPETITION

Coordinator: Christopher Nichols –
presidentelect@clarinet.org

Eligibility: Competition participants must not have
reached the age of 27 as of June 30, 2026.

Application: Deadline for the submission of application
materials is **April 1, 2026**. Visit clarinet.org for full com-
petition rules, registration, and application details.

Recorded Preliminary Round Repertoire:

1. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: *Concerto in A Major, K. 622* – III. Rondo: Allegro (any edition)
2. Choose one of the following:
 - (a) Béla Kovács: *Hommage á R. Strauss*
 - (b) Béla Kovács: *Hommage á Z. Kodaly*
 - (c) Béla Kovács: *Hommage á A. Khachaturian*

Piano is required for the Mozart Concerto.

AT CLARINETFEST®

Semi-Final Round

The following repertoire will be required of all semi-fi-
nalists:

1. Isang Yun: *Piri* (1971) for solo oboe or clarinet – Teil I
2. Carl Maria von Weber: *Grand Duo Concertant* – Mvts.
2 and 3 (any edition)

Final Round:

The following repertoire will be required of all finalists:

1. Amanda Harberg: *Clarinet Sonata* (All movements)

PRIZES

First prize – \$5,000; the ICA will also feature the first prize
winner in a solo performance at its 2027 conference.
Second prize – \$2,000
Third prize – \$1,000

Financial aid may be offered to students in need;
please email edo@clarinet.org for more information.

KEY CHANGES AND CLOSING CHORDS

Compiled by Emily Kerski

KEY CHANGES

Erik Franklin was appointed bass clarinetist of the York
Symphony Orchestra.

Autumn Heath won the principal clarinet position in the
Washington Idaho Symphony Orchestra.

Alex Ladstätter joined the Vienna Philharmonic.

Javier Morales-Martinez was appointed acting prin-
cipal clarinet of the Kansas City Symphony for the
2025-2026 season.

Iván Villar Sanz was appointed professor of clarinet at
the Royal Conservatory of Music of Granada, Spain.

Luke Vasilarakos joined the Washburn University fac-
ulty as applied clarinet adjunct.

Robert Walker was appointed associate principal and Eb
clarinet of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra.

Johnny Wang was appointed associate principal and Eb
clarinet of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra.

CLOSING CHORDS

George Mellott passed away on April 10, 2025, at the
age of 92. A versatile clarinetist and kindhearted educa-
tor, Mellott earned his PhD from the University of Iowa.
He served as professor of music at Southern Illinois Uni-
versity at Edwardsville from 1964 until his retirement in
1994 as professor emeritus. Mellott also served for 20
years as a US Air Force and Air National Guard pilot,
while performing as a jazz and classical clarinetist and
saxophonist. A longtime active member of the ICA, he
contributed numerous interviews and event reports to
The Clarinet, and was a dedicated conference attendee.
Mellott appeared with orchestras including the St. Louis
Symphony, St. Louis Philharmonic, Ballet Orchestra of St.
Louis, and as a backup musician for artists ranging from
Rod Stewart, to Tony Bennett, to Luciano Pavarotti.

Send information for this column to associateeditor@clarinet.org.

2026 ICA JUNIOR YOUNG ARTIST COMPETITION

(Formerly High School Solo Competition)

Eligibility: Competition participants must be 18 years old or younger as of June 30, 2026.

Application: Deadline for the submission of application and other application materials is **April 1, 2026**.

Junior Young Artist Competition Coordinator: Cecilia Kang – kangceci@iu.edu

CONTEST RULES

To submit a proposal, send the following:

- 1 **Application Fee:** \$35. All applicants must be members of the ICA and submit the Competition Application.
- 2 **Recording Instructions:** Please provide a high-quality video recording containing all repertoire in the exact order as listed in the competition announcement. Record unedited, separate videos for each piece. *Multi-movement works should be recorded in a single video.*

Choose one of the following two works:

- Miklos Rozsa – *Sonatina for Clarinet Solo*, op. 27 (First Movement Only)
 - Astor Piazzolla – *Tango Etude No. 3*
- AND
- Jeanine Rueff – *Clarinet Concertino*, Op. 15

JUDGING

Preliminary judging will be by recorded audition. Finalists will be chosen by the committee. Notification will be sent by May 1, 2026. The final round will be held at ClarinetFest® 2026, in Incheon, South Korea, July 7-11.

PRIZES

First Prize: \$1,000 and a professional clarinet to be announced

Second Prize: \$750

Third Prize: \$500



2026 ICA ORCHESTRAL AUDITION COMPETITION

Eligibility: The competition is open to clarinetists of all ages who are not employed full-time as salaried members of a professional symphony orchestra.

Application: Deadline for the submission of application and other application materials is **April 1, 2026**.

Orchestral Audition Competition Coordinator: Calvin Falwell – falwellc@usf.edu

CONTEST RULES

- 1 **Application Fee:** \$35. All applicants must be members of the ICA and submit the Competition Application.

- 2 **Recording Instructions:** Please provide a high-quality audio recording containing the following excerpts, in the exact order. Recordings should not be edited and only continuous performances of entire works or movements are allowed.

Mozart: Concerto, K. 622, Movement I, exposition only – unaccompanied

First Clarinet Excerpts:

- 1 Bartók: *Der wunderbare Mandarin*, Cadenza No. 2, mm. 22-25
- 2 Beethoven: *Symphony No. 6* – Movement 1, mm. 474-493
- 3 Brahms: *Symphony No. 3* – Movement 2, mm. 1-22
- 4 Kodaly: *Dances of Galanta* – mm. 31-65
- 5 Mendelssohn: *Symphony No. 4* – Movement 4, mm. 1 – downbeat of 18
- 6 Puccini: *Tosca*, Act 3 – 11-12
- 7 Rimsky-Korsakov: *Capriccio espagnole* – Movement 1, A-B, C-21 m. after C
- 8 Rossini Overture to *Semiramide* – mm. 178-187
- 9 Schubert: *Symphony No. 8 "Unfinished"* – Andante con moto, 7 after D-E

JUDGING

Preliminary judging will be by recorded audition. Finalists will be chosen by the committee. Notification will be sent by May 15, 2026. The final round will be held at ClarinetFest® 2026, in Incheon, South Korea, July 7-11.

PRIZES

First Prize: \$1,000 and a clarinet mouthpiece to be announced

Second Prize: \$500 and a clarinet mouthpiece to be announced



ICA 2026 COMPOSITION COMPETITIONS

SOLO COMPOSITION COMPETITION

The ICA seeks new works featuring the soprano clarinet (B $\flat$ or A), 5 to 15 minutes in length. Compositions may be for clarinet and piano, or other solo clarinet genres such as unaccompanied clarinet, or clarinet with electronic media. To be eligible, compositions must have been completed between January 2023 and present, and must not have been performed previously at ClarinetFest®.

CHAMBER COMPOSITION COMPETITION

The ICA seeks new clarinet chamber works for 2-5 players, 5-15 minutes in length. Submissions should feature at least one member of the clarinet family (B $\flat$, A, bass, E $\flat$ or others) but may include any other instruments. Exception: Submissions with clarinet and piano as the only two voices will not be accepted, and should be submitted to

the solo composition competition. To be eligible, compositions must have been completed between January 2023 and present, and must not have been performed previously at ClarinetFest®.

DEADLINE AND PRIZES

The deadline for the competitions is **December 20, 2025**; the winners will each receive a \$1,000 prize and a performance of their work at ClarinetFest® 2026, depending on availability of performers/instrumentation.

Contestants may enter only one piece per category each year.

For details, please visit clarinet.org or contact Carrie RavenStem, coordinator (carrieravenstem@gmail.com).

ELIGIBILITY

The competition is open to composers who desire to further the repertoire of clarinet music with an original composition.

JUDGING

The New Music Committee will conduct the judging of the scores and parts. The winner will be notified via email by March 15, 2026. The winning chamber music composition will receive a world premiere performance during ClarinetFest® 2026 in Incheon, South Korea from July 7-11, 2026, contingent upon the availability of the necessary instrument performers. The ICA will provide the clarinetist for the premiere performance. All scores and parts will become the property of the ICA Research Center at the University of Maryland Performing Arts Library and will not be returned. In addition, the winning work will be included in the ICA New Music Database.



CALL FOR EDITORIAL BOARD MEMBERS – THE CLARINET

The ICA invites members to apply for a vacancy on *The Clarinet* Editorial Board. The Editorial Board is primarily responsible for the quarterly review of feature articles submitted for journal publication. Board members may also be asked to recommend topics/writers for future articles and provide other feedback on journal decisions as requested by the editorial staff. To apply for the Editorial Board, please send a letter of interest and CV to Jessica Harrie, ICA Executive Director, at EDO@clarinet.org.



CALL FOR REVIEWERS – THE CLARINET

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PEDAGOGY CORNER

by Shawn Copeland and Jackie McIlwain

PART 1 — INHALATION: WHEN BALANCE BREATHES FOR YOU

We came into this world with the instinct to breathe. No one taught us the first inhale. It arrived as a quiet unfolding of ribs and diaphragm, a reflex that welcomed us into a relationship with the world. If breath is so natural, why bring it into pedagogy? Because life intervenes. Families, schools, cultural messages, and the pressures of achievement shape how we move and how we breathe. Bodies learn patterns from what we practice and from what we survive. Some information we have received is accurate, while some is more well-intentioned. Over time, we carry a patchwork of cues that add work where none is needed. The result could be a breath that is loud when we want quiet, late when we need readiness, or small when the music asks for space.

Balance is the condition that returns the inhale to its primal design. Balance is not a position. It is a living coordination that involves the feet, legs, pelvis, spine, ribs, shoulder girdle, arms, and head.

When this coordination is available, the inhale occurs as a reflex synchronized with the musical task. No grabbing. No gulping. No collapse.

Without balance, the body reaches for control. We lift the shoulders or pin them. We spread the lips or pull the corners. We press the tongue down to force an open throat. We push the belly forward because we were told to breathe into it. None of this opens space for air. It narrows the airway and agitates the nervous system. A strained inhale is the body's way of saying it does not feel safe. When the system shifts from performance pressure to embodied safety, breath organizes itself. This is not abstract. It is practical. It is teachable.

THE ESSENTIALS OF A FREE INHALE

- The inhale is a whole torso event. The ribs, spine, diaphragm, lungs, pelvic floor, and suspended throat structures work together.
- The lungs do not pull air in. Sur-

rounding structures change shape and pressure, and air flows as a result. The ribs are the primary bony drivers with many small joints.

- The upper ribs matter greatly. Significant lung volume lives high and back under the collarbones.
- The diaphragm organizes the inhale.
- The shoulder girdle floats. As ribs swing, the sternum rises and the clavicles move a little. Forbidding all movement often creates more tension and less air.
- “Open throat” is not a muscle action. The pharynx is open when not swallowing.
- Reflexive inhalation can be trained. Finish the exhale and wait without gripping so the costal cartilages and elastic tissues invite an easy return.
- A free breath is a product of a balancing body. When weight is carried through bone, muscles are free to move those bones rather than hold them. That freedom is what allows quiet, responsive breathing.

Photo by Swak Photography
and Karen Cubides Agency



Shawn L. Copeland is a pioneer in the fields of musician wellness and performance training. His innovative, creative, and transformational approach has set him apart as a multidimensional musician, pedagogue, and entrepreneur. His unique methods have established him as a leader, culminating in the founding of [mBODYed, LLC](#), a company that is reshaping the landscape of performance training for musicians, actors, and dancers. Shawn is a performing artist and clinician for Buffet Crampon USA, Gonzalez Reeds, Inc., and the Silverstein Group.



Jackie McIlwain, D.M., is a passionate clarinet pedagogue whose innovative teaching infuses principles of Body Mapping and Alexander Technique, providing fresh ideas and perspectives that not only help her students grow musically but also challenge them to incorporate their whole selves into their music. Dr. McIlwain has been at the University of Southern Mississippi since 2013 and currently serves as associate professor of clarinet. She is also a Buffet Crampon performing artist and Vandoren artist-clinician.

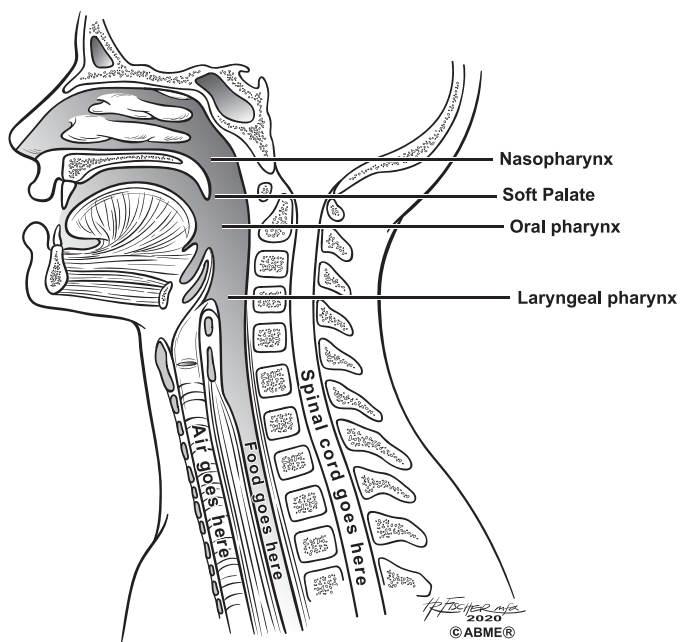


Figure 1: Upper Respiratory Spaces

MAP THE PATHWAY OF AIR, THEN REMOVE INTERFERENCE

On an inhale, air is either filtered and warmed in the nasal passages and sinuses or travels over the tongue. It then passes through the pharynx and enters the trachea, which sits in front of the esophagus, before continuing into the lungs. These passages are formed by tissues suspended between the base of the skull and the hyoid bone. They remain open when you do not contract them.

Let them rest so the airway stays spacious (see *Figure 1: Upper Respiratory Spaces*).

Confusing the locations of the trachea and esophagus often creates a noisy, effortful inhale. When the map is off, the body tries to steer the air with throat effort. Try this: place a relaxed hand at the front of your neck without squeezing. Swallow and feel the larynx move. The airway sits in front of the esophagus. Breathe and notice whether any extra effort arrives under your hand.

The tongue and pharyngeal muscles serve swallowing, articulation, and voicing. They do not need to contract for breathing.

CLARINET APPLICATION

- When breathing through the nose, let the tongue rest high and forward without pressing into the throat.
- For playing, inhale gently around the mouthpiece with soft lips, avoiding corner pulling or tongue tension.

LUNGS ARE TISSUE, NOT MUSCLE

The lungs are protected by your ribs. The tops of the lungs rise above the collarbones, and the bases rest near the bottom of the sternum and the dome of the diaphragm. They are three-dimensional and take up most of the rib cavity from front to back and top to bottom. Everything above the diaphragm in your torso, apart from the heart, is lung (see *Figure 2: Views of the Lungs*).

Imagine sponges made of tiny elastic sacs. The lungs are moist, stretchy, and designed for efficient gas exchange. They are moved by the ribs and diaphragm through changes in shape and pressure. When ribs swing up and out, they change the volume of the rib cavity, and the lungs fill because the pressure drops. We breathe because we move our ribs, not the other way around.

RIBS: YOUR BREATHING JOINTS

You have twelve pairs of ribs. Each rib meets the spine at small joints, and the first ten also connect in front through costal cartilage

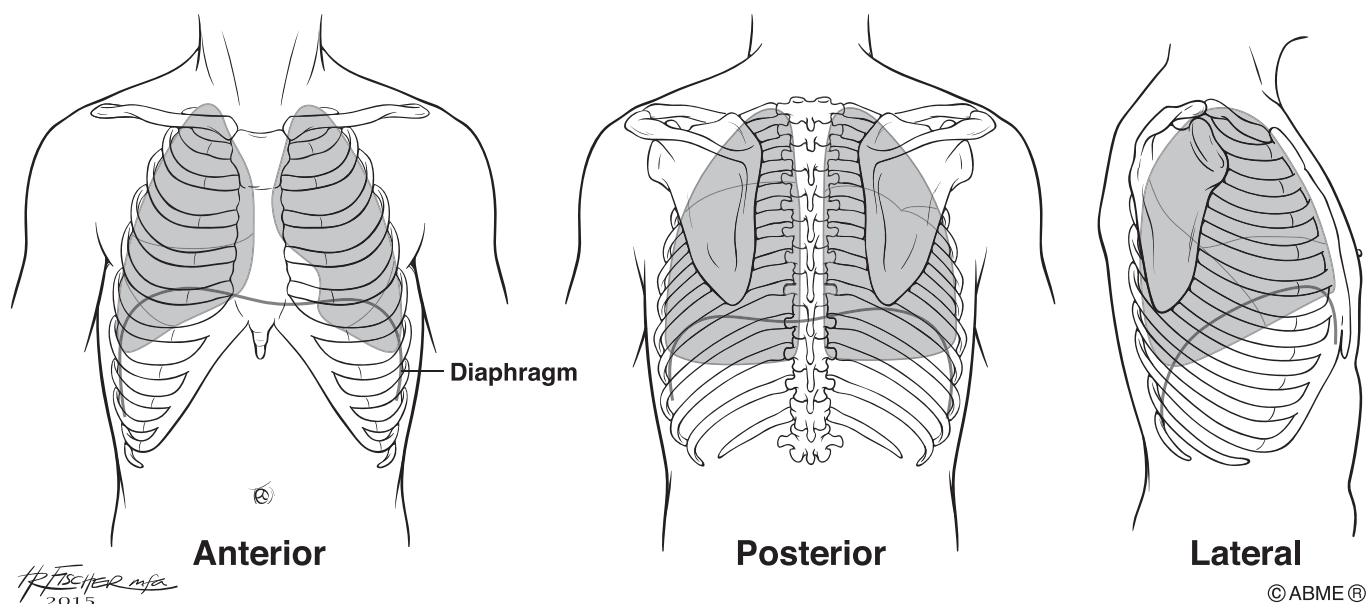


Figure 2: View of the lungs

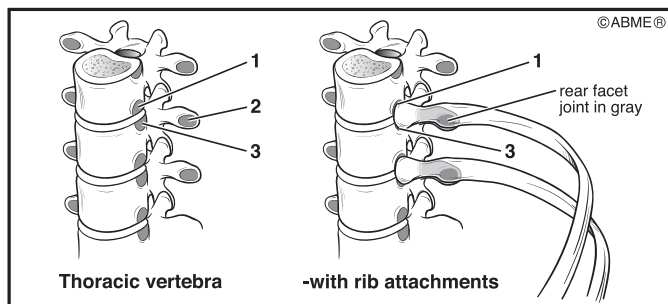
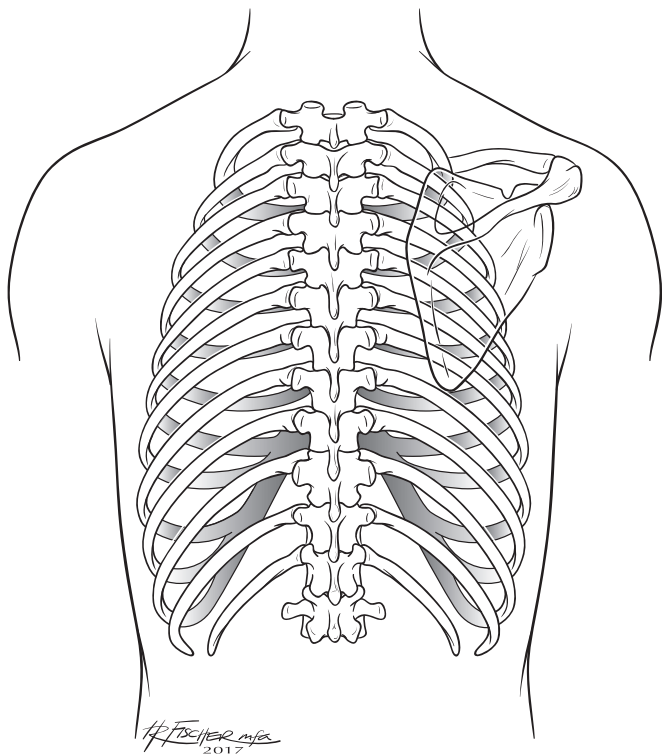


Figure 3: Breathing Joints

to the sternum. Think breathing joints, not a cage (see *Figure 3: Breathing Joints*). The cartilage in front acts like a spring that assists the return of breath.

Ribs do not expand themselves. They swing, and that swing changes the space within the torso in all directions. The expansion is forward, to the sides, and into the back (see *Figure 4: Diaphragm and Ribs on Exhalation and Inhalation*). In our experience, this is the most common missing element in the breathing maps of clarinetists. It is the movement of ribs that invites air. Are yours moving?

DIAPHRAGM AND ITS PARTNERS

The diaphragm is a dome-shaped sheet of muscle that attaches around the inner lower ribs and the sternum and to the upper lumbar spine through its right and left crura. When it contracts, it descends a small distance and widens the circumference of the lower ribs, which increases the volume of the rib cavity and lowers pressure so air flows in. Refer to Figure 4. The abdominal organs

yield (move) in all directions and the pelvic floor softens. None of this requires pushing the belly forward (see *Figure 5: Relationship of Diaphragm and Pelvic Floor in Breathing* and *Figure 6: Organs of the Thoracic and Abdominal Cavities*).

The diaphragm does not act alone. As it descends, the lower ribs swing and rotate, the spine subtly adjusts, and the abdominal wall responds with elastic give rather than a brace. For clarinetists, the useful cues are width and buoyancy. Sense the ribs spreading around the back and sides from about ribs seven to ten, while the clavicles float. Keep the abdominal wall quiet and available rather than firm or pushed. This preserves voicing options, keeps the throat neutral, and supports a silent, timely inhale matched to the phrase.

FLOATING SHOULDER GIRDLE

Rib movement is fundamental to unimpeded respiration, and it is linked to the arm. The first joint of the arm is the sternoclavicular joint, where the clavicle meets the sternum. When ribs and sternum rise on the inhale, the clavicles can float with them. The scapula joins with the clavicle, and the humerus joins the scapula. This entire chain can remain mobile and responsive during inhalation when we do not interfere. That matters because a large portion of lung volume lives in the upper third of the torso, directly under the shoulder girdle. Free the girdle and the upper ribs can join the breath. Holding the shoulders still or tightening the armpits significantly interrupts this coordination.

Experience: Pause for a moment as you are reading and hug yourself, placing your fingertips in your armpits and the palms of your hands over the sides of your ribs. Breathe deeply and experience the movement of the ribs rising up and out, filling the space beneath the shoulder girdle. In contrast, tighten this space by squeezing the armpits tightly and notice how this tension interferes with the movement of the ribs and the overall quality of your breath.

THE OPEN THROAT

The pharynx is not a rigid tube. It is suspended from the cranial base by small muscles, which allows openness and mobility for breath, swallowing, and voice. These muscles assist with swallowing. When they are not contracting, the throat is already open. (See *Figure 7: Extrinsic Muscles of the Tongue*.) These extrinsic muscles are the muscles that form the back of the throat or pharyngeal cavity.

This is where confusion creeps in. We want a free throat when playing. Directions such as “open the throat” encourage an action, so players depress the tongue to create a sensation of space. That movement narrows the lower pharynx and disturbs tongue position and articulation. Most often, we see that attempts to open the throat cause a swallowing or depression of the tongue, giving us the sensation of more space in the mouth. In reality, this could restrict space in the back of the throat and lead to a low tongue placement.

Why does this work when we hear it in masterclasses? The resting state of the tongue is at the roof of the mouth when the teeth are together. If the jaw moves, the tongue moves with it. The reverse can also be true. If we move the tongue, the jaw also responds. If we map opening the throat as depressing the tongue, what is actually happening is a release in the jaw, which increases

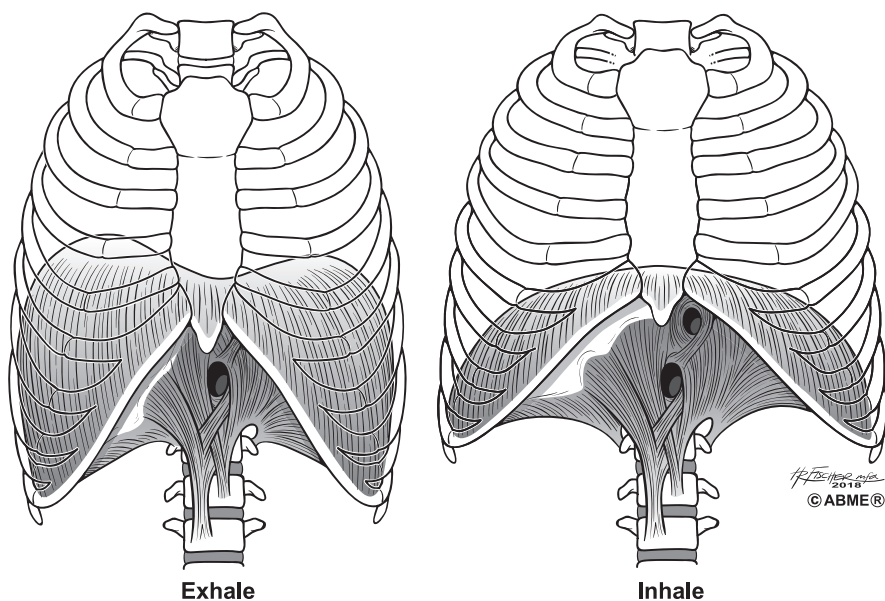


Figure 4: Diaphragm and Ribs on Exhalation and Inhalation

resonance in the sound. Thus, we equate the two. This movement disrupts tongue placement and articulation, so we need an alternative route.

A better cue is to imagine the airway as a long, resonant passage from the trachea to the reed aperture. Let the tongue rest for-

ward to shape voicing for range and color. Think length and ease, not constriction.

THE REFLEXIVE INHALATION

One of the paradoxical commonalities between all wind players and singers (with the exception of oboists) is that we inadvertently hold our breath. We have been taught to think of air as a scarce resource, thus managing it to make it last as long as possible all the time. One way this manifests

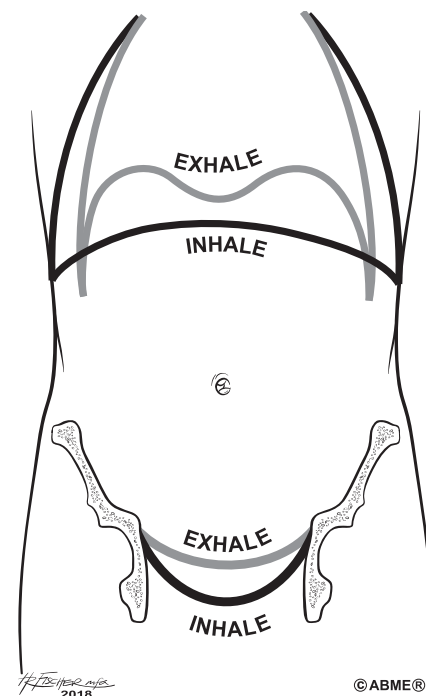


Figure 5: Relationship of Diaphragm and Pelvic Floor in Breathing

is that every time we take a breath, many of us have been trained to take a full breath, regardless of the phrase length or dynamic we are playing. In the end, we are often left with quite a bit of air left in the tank.

Try this for a moment: exhale (and don't inhale), now exhale again (see, there's

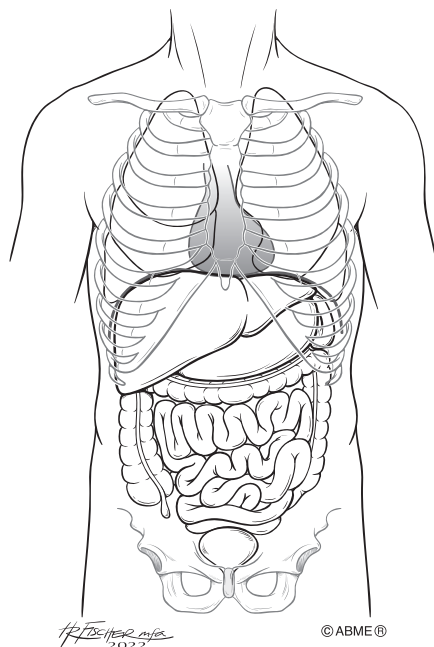


Figure 6: Organs of the Thoracic and Abdominal Cavities

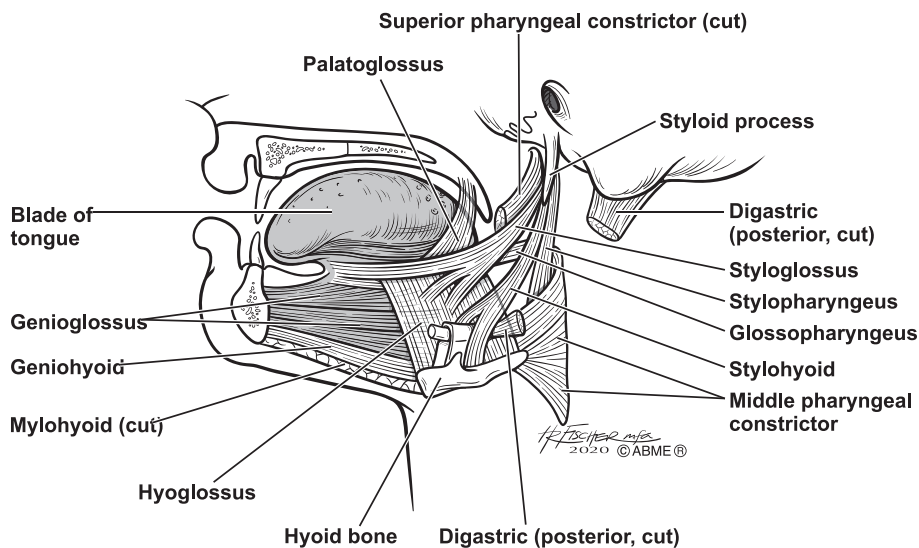


Figure 7: Extrinsic Muscles of the Tongue

still air), and exhale a third time (again without inhaling). Now wait without tightening your throat, suspend the inhalation until your body reflexively inhales. Now that you get it, do it again, and this time, notice the quality of that inhalation. Notice the effort, what moves, how does it feel? What is the quantity and quality of the air? It is effortless and full, and it happens in a fraction of a second.

This is available to us all the time if we stop thinking that air is a scarce resource. Air is abundant. What determines your next phrase is less how big you breathe and more how clearly you release the previous one.

BALANCE IS THE PRECONDITION

Shift from a posture mindset to a balance mindset. Balance invites continuous, adaptive movement through the ankles, knees, hips, lumbar region, ribs, shoulders, head, and neck. These areas are your breathing infrastructure. When they are free, the rib joints can spring and the reflexive inhale emerges without a grab.

The body is one connected structure. Words help us focus on parts, yet the parts work as a single design. If one area is tense or out of balance, the whole system adapts. Coordinated breathing is a product of coordinated balance. When tension

releases, breathing organizes itself around musical intention.

QUESTIONS TO DEEPEN YOUR CRAFT

- Where do you habitually hold in the moment before you play? Lips, tongue root, neck, upper chest, abdomen, or pelvic floor?
- Do you overfill before short phrases, or do you trust a small inhale that matches the task?
- What changes in color and articulation when you prioritize upper rib swing and back width rather than focusing on only belly movement? 🎷



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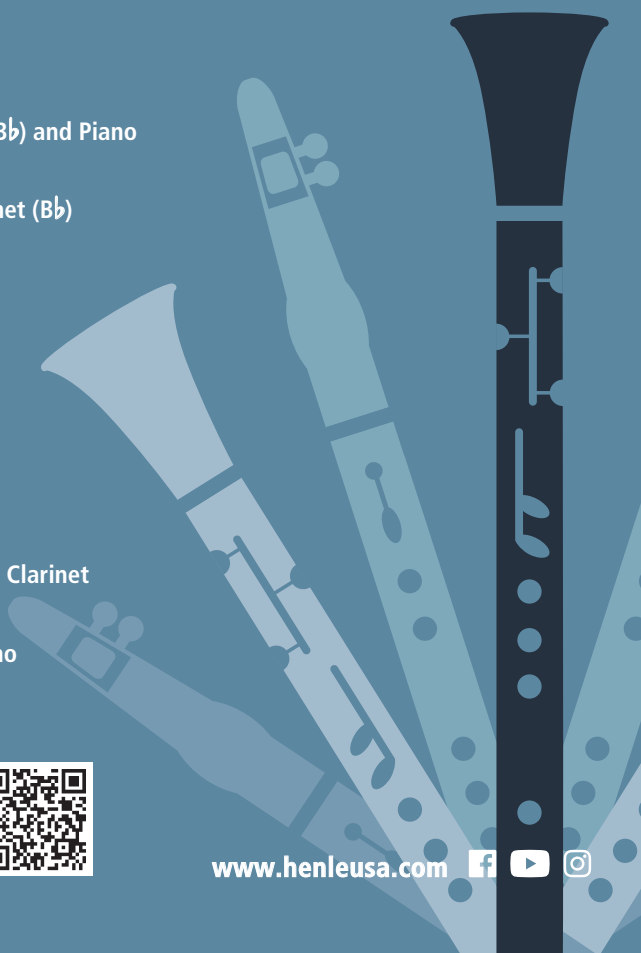
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FROM THE ICA COMMITTEES

by the ICA Pedagogy Committee

tone and technique, part 2

introduction

Technique is often equated with speed, but as clarinetists and teachers we know it involves much more. The following collection brings together insights from several performers and educators, each offering strategies that address tone, coordination, articulation, equipment, extended techniques, and even the mental approach to practice. While their perspectives differ, a common thread emerges: technical fluency grows from mindful, consistent work that prioritizes clarity, coordination, and musicality.

tone and technique

by George Stoffan

Students have often asked me about how they may improve their technique. In most cases, their initial focus is on building speed. It is how many students define technique.

I have learned to redirect this definition of technique towards concepts of coordination and clarity. With good coordination, there is clarity in the technique. Speed comes over time. In order to achieve good coordination, one must focus on such basic ideas as where and how the fingers land on the tone holes, the release of the fingers from the keys, the shape of the fingers and distance and position over the keys, and the general lack of tension re-

quired for fluid motion. This is, in essence, the “technique of technique,” and is where my focus is in my work with students who are seeking to improve their technique. There are some even more fundamental concepts that are essential to developing sound technique. I encourage all of my students to practice a variety of tonal exercises. When they do so, they simplify clarinet playing to its most basic elements. During this time, they focus their mind on the breath and preparation of the air, and the setting of the embouchure and tongue. This simple approach enables one to also listen carefully in evaluating the tone, and ensuring that each tone matches in dynamic, timbre and pitch through the scale, and connects for an even legato.

The fundamental tone building exercises aid in one’s overall development as a clarinetist. Our ability as clarinetists to execute long, legato phrases and large intervals with ease is the natural benefit of focusing on tonal exercises. However, our work on fundamental tonal exercises also serves our technique. When we have a solid foundation in tone production, we achieve better response from the instrument. The movement and motion of the fingers comes more readily when the instrument is responding with more ease. When this “technique of the technique” is better enabled because of the response of our instrument, and as a result of strong tonal fundamentals, our coordination

is improved. With improved coordination, and with consistency over time, the speed—and most importantly, the clarity—will come.

The slow practice of passagework is essential. It is important that slow practice is not done for the sake of slow practice, but that it is done in a considered and thoughtful way, with these concepts in mind. Practicing slowly allows us to utilize the skills we develop in our tonal development exercises and the attention in how our fingers move on and off the keys in technical exercises in the context of a passage we are learning. We should be listening, adapting, and adjusting according to these principles. Beyond incorporating these fundamental concepts into developing our technique, we always need to be mindful of the phrase, to find lyricism in the passagework, so that it is never static, stale, or mechanical in its execution. The forward direction of the air column, developed through our tonal work, has the effect of generating greater response from the instrument and better enabling our technique, but also allows for a more singing phrase and musical line.

We should aim to combine such fundamental work with some basic exercises within a passage. These include beat-to-beat work, altering rhythms, and playing passagework backwards. Beat-to-beat practice involves playing a single beat of notes to the first note of the following beat, doing so

several times, and then doing the same for the following beat. These two beats are then played together, and the process continues, adding one beat at a time. One doesn't need to always land on the first note of a beat. Stopping on different notes within a beat creates a variation of this exercise, and generates a variety of groupings. I often alter rhythms. For instance, in a 16th note passage, where there are groups of four notes per beat, I will organize the passagework in groups of three. Conversely, in triplet passages, I will organize the passagework in groups of four. A related approach is to break down a passage into various series of short and long notes. In a 16th note passage, one can play, for example, the four notes of a beat in a series of the following combinations: short-short-long-long, long-long-short-short, and long-short-short-long. One could also experiment with the many other rhythmic possibilities with reorganizing four notes within the beat, in this example. Finally, I will literally play the passage backwards, starting with the last note of a phrase or group of notes, and add a note, playing backwards one note at a time and back to the end, in continuous loops. These strategies have worked for me, and for my students. There are many effective methods for learning passagework beyond those I suggest here. We should aim to create and invent new strategies, as each passage has its own unique challenges.

I believe building technique comes in two parts: tonal development, and basic exercises within specific passagework. The tonal development comes in the form of tonal exercises, with the aim of building a solid foundation that will enable good coordination of the fingers, the "technique of the technique." This is all reinforced with slow practice. The basic exercises within specific passagework aids in learning the passage, and in building the speed required to perform it. As clarinetists and musicians, we need both the tonal and slow practice, and the basic exercises with specific passagework to be successful. It takes time to develop coordinated technique and to learn certain passages in the repertoire, but with patience and consistency in approach, we can develop stable and settled technique and enjoy our music making in the process.

PRACTICING FOR GOOD TECHNIQUE

by Julianne Doyle

Acquiring efficient technique requires solid fundamentals and organized practice strategies. The hands must be set up properly with relaxed curved fingers, and minimal finger motion and pressure will allow for good smooth technique.

To "practice" technique, begin slowly, as if playing a slow scale, utilizing practice rhythms in slow tempos:

- Begin in half notes and shape the line to phrase goals
- Next move to quarter notes, eighth notes, triplets, 16th notes, etc.
- Utilize fermatas holding on different parts of the beat with triplets or 16th notes
- Employ swing rhythms of long-short or short-long
- Work from the back of a passage and adding a note moving towards the beginning, in time but start under tempo

TARGET PRACTICE

Use the metronome and focus on short passages within a larger technical section, while practicing slowly. Gradually increase the tempo while maintaining relaxation. If the fingers begin to feel tense or you feel unsure of what is coming next, slow the tempo, reinforce where the passages feel comfortable, and stop at that speed for the day. In the next practice session, begin a couple of clicks slower, and aim to increase the tempo beyond your tempos of the previous session. Avoid practicing through tension as it will cause sluggish technique and inconsistent technical control.

Be conscious that your practice does not become mindless repetition. Technical practice must be intentional and musical. Ask yourself:

- What key are you outlining in the passage?
- Are there modulations?
- What does this passage say musically?
- Are there augmentations or diminutions of melodic lines?
- How does this passage connect to the rest of the piece?
- When do I lose the shape and control, is that too fast?

Target small sections, shape the musical line, discover phrase goals—these are focal points to aid technical control. Often referred to as *anchor points* or *goal points*, use these notes to anchor the technique and shape the phrases.

Stay patient and consistent through your technical practice. If progress is rushed, technique will feel harried and tense. Consistent slow practice with relaxed fingers, mindful repetition, and phrase goals will allow for ease and technical mastery.

EQUIPMENT AND SETUP FOR TECHNICAL EASE

Equipment should always enhance what a player does, not impede progress. If the combination of reed/mouthpiece/ligature is not working efficiently, players will spend a large percentage of their energy generating the sound, leaving less energy to focus on mastering tone, technique, and musicianship. Strive for equipment that takes 5% of energy to create the sound. It shouldn't be too easy—you need some resistance—but make sure it isn't so much that it creates physical tension just to produce the sound. This leaves 95% of the mental and physical energy to focus on everything else. Many young players are more of a 40% production and 60% for everything else. The effort of generating the sound, if impeded by equipment, can distract and hinder progress.

Mouthpiece

Regularly clean and inspect your mouthpiece for damage and either replace the mouthpiece or see a craftsman to repair the damage. Most commercial mouthpieces wear down after four to five years and need replacing or refacing.

Reeds

Rotate reeds so there is always a healthy supply of old, current, and new reeds. Even synthetic reeds have a shelf life and need to be replaced. Make sure the reed allows for ease of response, good articulation, and generates the desired tone quality.

Instrument Leaks

Instrument leaks can feel like the keys need to be pressed harder, no reed works, and the instrument has extra resistance. If

it feels like the fingers won't seal the holes without extra pressure, have a technician examine the instrument for leaks.

Bridge Key

Bridge key alignment is crucial, and if not properly set up, can cause a host of problems. Sometimes visually the keys look aligned, but because of natural wear, you might need to offset the key just slightly. Good tests include:

- Check the “one and one” B $\flat$ above the staff; if it doesn't respond, likely your keys need adjusting. Shimmy the joints a little and try again. If it works, that is where you need to align the bridge until you see your repair technician.
- Finger the “one and one” B $\flat$ and tap the pad below the upper joint index finger. Does it move? If so, the pad is leaking! This will create unnecessary resistance and impede ease of sound production.

Pinky Keys

Sometimes the pinky keys take extra force to close; they shouldn't! A technician can assist in making sure all pads are sealing properly and the spring tension is adjusted accordingly.

Throat A Key

Be sure the throat A key has just a little wobble when lightly touched. Avoid adjusting the screw to the point the key is down too far with no wobble; this will create an added leak at the very top of the instrument.

Joint Leaks

The instrument joints should fit together firmly but not so tight that you cannot disassemble the instrument. If the tenon corks are compressed and loose, have a technician expand the corks or change them. In a pinch, use plumbers' tape or dental floss to wrap the tenon for a good seal at the joint. This will allow ease of sound production because the instrument is not leaking at the tenon.

Hands: Mind the Thumbs!

To aid the ease of the hand position, the thumbs must be in the proper positions.

Left Hand Thumb

The left hand thumb needs to hover be-

hind the hole when not in use, avoid dropping it down and resting it on the wood below, this causes sluggish register changes because the thumb will be delayed getting back up to cover the hole.

Right Hand Thumb

Right hand thumb placement is crucial to both hand position and the embouchure. Most thumb rests are positioned too low. Be sure the thumb is in a natural position for the hand. The right hand thumb also gently pushes the clarinet up into the upper teeth to create balance while holding the instrument.

Test: Pick up a water bottle and observe the natural proximity of your thumb to your index and middle fingers. This is where your thumb should be when holding the clarinet. Adjust the thumb rest accordingly. If your thumb rest is not adjustable, you can ask a technician to move your thumb rest up or replace the thumb rest with an adjustable that is in the right position for the hand. Utilize a neckstrap (recommend elastic/stretchy) that will help support the instrument, and a thumb cushion if you feel necessary.

See your technician regularly—minimally one visit a year for a COA (care, oil, and adjustment)—to ensure the instrument is always in working order. Keeping the instrument in excellent condition and using a good mouthpiece/reed set-up will allow ease of sound production and pave the way for beautiful tone and efficient technique.

ARTICULATION AND FINGER COORDINATION

by Gail Zugger

Technique is directly impacted by articulation and vice versa. When articulation is applied to the technique well, stylistic and expressive elements are well at hand. When articulation is less effective, the ability to communicate musical phrasing, direction, and ideas with consistency becomes challenging. Consider how challenging it would be to communicate something meaningful to someone using only vowels and no consonants?

One challenge clarinetists often face is aligning the fingers and the tongue. It is important to work on this as a fundamen-

tal exercise and to have strategies ready to employ when practicing individual spots. There are many ways to work on this in your practice. For instance, here are some exercises to employ finger/tongue coordination work in your daily warm-ups. Using a variety of tempi and scales will be useful and effective. Exercises A, C, and D can be played with any major or minor (all three types) scale in any octave. Exercise B can begin on any pitch.

There are many exercises to help work towards clear articulation. One to recommend is Bonade's “fingers forwards” exercise. It is tricky to describe in prose here, but there are many fine *YouTube* videos that demonstrate the concept. Using a staccato, short articulation, begin to finger the next note as soon as the previous note stops sounding, essentially during the silence between the notes. This technique can require a dramatic slow-down in tempo (almost as if in slow-motion), especially at first.

To apply fundamentals to specific tricky finger/tongue coordination passages, separate the two first to ensure each is working properly on their own. In other words, play the articulation required on one note, perhaps the starting note of the passage, listening for consistency of articulation length and quality. Play the passage all slurred ensuring the fingers are working evenly, and that the sound is even through any register changes. Consider adding expressive and interpretive elements in the music as well—such as dynamics, length, or tempo alterations—while separating the two.

Lastly, when putting it all together again, and throughout any work on finger/tongue coordination, always be mindful of air use and air support. Many articulation concerns are fundamentally air issues.

ÉTUDES AND REPERTOIRE FOR TECHNIQUE DEVELOPMENT

There are many études available to be used to challenge clarinetists and assist with technical development. They vary in difficulty level from beginner to advanced. Likewise, some are tried and true, having been used for clarinet instruction for two centuries, while some are newer. Here are a few to recommend:

Exercise A: *and so forth up the scale*

4 Exercise B: *and so forth up the chromatic scale*

7 Exercise C: *and so forth up the chosen scale*

11 Exercise D:

13

16

Exercises A, C, and D

SCALE BOOKS

Beginner/Intermediate

- Albert, J. B., *24 Varied Scales and Exercises*
- Denny-Chambers, *Finger Fitness Foundations*
- Denny-Chambers, *Finger Fitness Scale Connections*
- Denny-Chambers, *Prep Steps before You Kroepsch*
- Klose, *Studies*
- Parès, *Daily Scales & Exercises for Clarinet*
- Stievenard, *Practical Study of the Scales For the Clarinet*

Advanced

- Baermann, *Foundation Studies*, op. 63 (many editions)
- Jettel, *Klarinetten-Schule*
- Kroepsch, *416 studies*

ÉTUDE BOOKS

Beginner/Intermediate

- Denny-Chambers, *Finger Fitness Études, Books 1 & 2* (includes étude versions that include low C extension notes for bass clarinetists)
- Hite, ed., *Melodious and Progressive Studies, Book 1*
- Lester, *The Advancing Clarinetist*
- Lester, *The Developing Clarinetist*
- Lester, *The Progressing Clarinetist*
- Rae, *18 Concert Études*
- Rae, *40 Modern Études*
- Rose, *32 Études*
- Voxman, ed., *Selected Studies*

Advanced

- Anderson, *32 New Études for Clarinet*
- Cavallini, *30 Caprices*
- Denny-Chambers, *Finger Fitness Études, Book 3* (includes étude ver-

sions that include low C-extension notes for bass clarinetists)

- Hite, ed., *Melodious and Progressive Studies, Book 2*
- Jeanjean, *18 Études*
- Jeanjean, *Vade Mecum*
- Polatschek, *12 Études*
- Polatschek, *Advanced Studies*
- Rae, *12 Modern Études*
- Rose, *40 Études*
- Rose, *20 Grand Études after Rodé*
- Uhl, *48 Studies*

Here are some étude books with specific technical goals in mind:

- Filas, *Altissimo Studies for Clarinet* (boosts response and fingerings in the highest register)
- Kell, *17 Staccato Studies* (articulation/technique alignment)
- Opperman, *Modern Daily Studies* (each study devoted to particular tech-

- nical issues: left hand, right hand, register key, etc.)
- Stark, *Daily Staccato Exercises* (articulation/technique alignment)

With a wide variety of challenge levels, musical genres to choose from, and motivating material, just the right étude book is readily available to support our continued pursuit to improve our technical development for ourselves and our students alike.

LEARNING & PRACTICING EXTENDED TECHNIQUES

by Caitlin Beare

Extended techniques are methods of playing that extend beyond the standard physical requirements of instrumental performance. Over the past several decades, the clarinet repertoire involving such techniques has grown immensely, making extended techniques an essential component of contemporary clarinet study. Integrating extended techniques into your practice not only expands your expressive possibilities but also reinforces fundamental skills like voicing, tongue control, finger dexterity, and air support. Moreover, introducing extended techniques in earlier stages of musical development helps to normalize nontraditional approaches to performance and prepare clarinetists for more advanced studies.

This section focuses on three extended techniques—slap tonguing, microtones, and multiphonics—that are widely used as musical material rather than as mere effects. While only a small subset of possible extended techniques, these are prevalent in the contemporary clarinet literature and accessible to performers of varying levels. For resources on these and other extended techniques, review my compendium of pedagogical materials for extended techniques.

SLAP TONGUING

Slap tonguing is a percussive effect created by forming a suction between the reed and mouthpiece, then releasing the suction, causing the reed to “slap” back against the mouthpiece. Anchor tonguing—articulating with the middle of the tongue while leaving the tip “anchored” behind the bottom front teeth—is a useful method of working towards slap tonguing, and clarinetists who can anchor tongue may find slap tonguing easier to learn.

Tips:

- Practice on an old reed.
- Practice on a bass clarinet.
- Contain your practice to the lowest register—I suggest practicing slap tongue on a low E.

Begin by developing “lingual awareness”:

- Locate the tip and middle of your tongue by lightly scratching each area with your finger.
- Place the tip of the tongue on the reed, then allow the middle to make contact, noting the larger surface area.

Then, create suction with the tongue and release it quickly to generate the slap. Do this until the slap is consistent, then try slowly slap tonguing a few scales. Remember that the tongue is a series of muscles, so make sure to rest when you feel fatigued. Slap tonguing is a great way to improve control over tongue placement

One quarter-tone sharp	Three quarter-tones sharp	One quarter-tone flat
		

Example 1: Microtonal notation system with arrows.

One quarter-tone sharp	Three quarter-tones sharp	One quarter-tone flat
		

Example 2: Microtonal notation system with Tartini sharps.

and motion, which can lead to more clarity and precision in standard articulation.

MICROTONES

A microtone is any interval smaller than a half step. Since the modern clarinet was not designed to deftly play microtones, clarinetists must either manipulate the embouchure or, in most cases, learn unconventional, often unwieldy fingerings. Learning microtones can be cognitively demanding, akin to learning a new instrument, but the process refines ear training and finger dexterity, and, in the right context, can be accessible to even beginner and intermediate clarinetists.

While notation practices for microtones vary by composer, two systems are especially common: one system uses arrows and one uses Tartini sharps. The former system is composed of arrows attached to accidentals, indicating the direction of the pitch modification. In this system, the arrow always modifies the pitch by a quarter-tone.

The other notation system comprises signs for one quarter-tone and three quarter-tones sharps that were first used by Giuseppe Tartini in 1756; it also includes a backwards flat sign for one quarter-tone flats.

Right are three basic exercises that introduce microtones, progressing in difficulty. All three use the microtonal notation system with Tartini sharps. I recommend isolating each microtonal fingering before playing through each exercise. Once you have command of the fingerings, play the exercise slowly, listening for timbral and/or dynamic qualities related to the given microtones.

MULTIPHONICS

Multiphonics involve producing two or more pitches simultaneously, typically by using an unconventional fingering or changing the voicing on a conventional fingering.¹ While multiphonics

♩ = 60-80

repeat 2-4x

repeat 2-4x

5

repeat 2-4x

repeat 2-4x

Exercise 1

♩ = 50-80

sim.

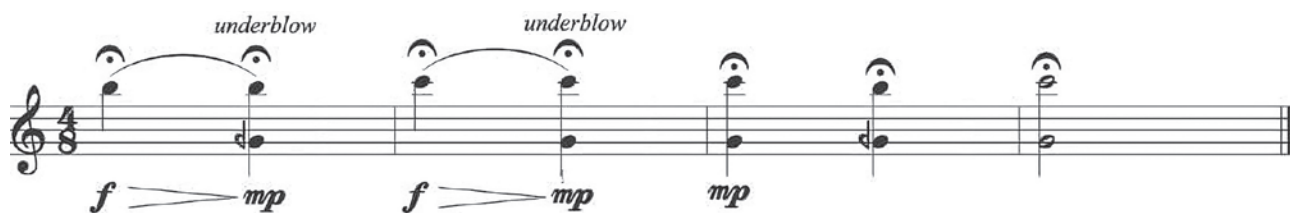
Exercise 2

♩ = 60-80

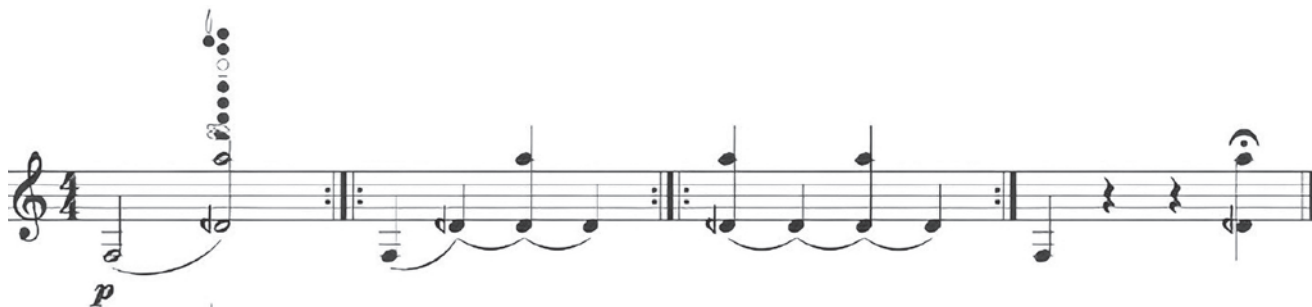
sim.

4

Exercise 3



Exercise 1



Exercise 2

are often used for their complex, colorful sonorities, practicing them also deepens a clarinetist's understanding of the tongue's role across registers. Approaching multiphonics as a study in voicing provides an opportunity to develop tongue control, as multiphonic production is essentially an extension of familiar voicing strategies.

The exercise above involves changing the voicing on a conventional fingering. This features "underblown" multiphonics, where you allow the lower pitch, or undertone, to speak. This undertone is the "grunt" that beginner clarinetists often produce unintentionally when attempting to play in the upper clarion register. Underblown multiphonics are usually played at soft dynamics. Try playing the desired pitches individually before attempting the multiphonic. Then, finger the upper pitch and relax the embouchure slightly to allow the lower pitch to emerge.

The next exercise uses an unconventional fingering for the multiphonic. Voice the upper pitch, then allow the lower pitch to fade in. Notice how voicing changes affect the balance of the multiphonic.

Just as practicing scales, arpeggios, and long tones improves our ability to perform difficult repertoire, establishing

a foundation in extended techniques is vital to both interpreting and physically performing contemporary repertoire. Moreover, exploring extended techniques helps cultivate flexibility, creativity, and a deeper understanding of the instrument, which directly enhances all aspects of clarinet playing. Incorporating extended techniques into regular practice not only equips clarinetists for contemporary repertoire but also fosters a more well-rounded contemporary clarinetist.

MENTAL APPROACH TO TECHNICAL PRACTICE

by Jennifer Branch

STARTING: DON'T ALWAYS CHOOSE THE BEGINNING

Have you ever noticed that starting a piece brings a freshness, a newness, a world of possibility? What if the opposite were true: what if we grew in confidence as we progressed?

This brings about a new possibility: start your practice sessions from different sections, or choose backward practice. If we start with the last measure, then play the last two measures, etc., we more likely will grow in confidence as we encounter that which is familiar, rather than dimin-

ish our confidence as the section becomes less familiar.

THAT TRICKY SECTION: ALTERED RHYTHMS²

Let's replay a familiar situation: we've started our practice session and (like usual) the beginning of the piece goes well. It's only after we've encountered that section that is "always" difficult that any mental negativity sets in. The challenging section won't be less so unless we hone in on ironing out the rough spots. As an example, if the challenging section is one bar of 16th notes, assign a variety of new rhythms throughout:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

By "rewriting" the challenging section, we mentally disassociate that bar as a challenge. We instead view it as creative and more playful.

Once you've finished bringing altered rhythms to your challenging section, be

sure to insert your productive practice back into the piece by entering and exiting the challenging bar as well.

EYES ON ALL REPEATED SECTIONS

If your piece has a return of a familiar section, be sure to put your eyes equally on the returning repeated section as much as the original. Definitely don't assume that because you've practiced looking at it on the left page, you don't have to view its return on the right page.

MENTAL PRACTICE "AWAY"

As suggested in the book *The Inner Game of Tennis* by W. Timothy Gallwey, once you've done the hard work, it is through the uncluttered mind—a mind free of obstacles—when we allow our best perfor-

mance to come through. Whether it's for an audition or simply for your practice sessions, that challenging section may always bring association of nervousness or anxiety. Before you start, take a brief moment before you begin to give a look through that challenging section: slow it down in your head, hear it slowly, and imagine the feel of playing it. This slower mental approach may bring good results during your once-through attempt.

CONCLUSION

While the contributors here emphasize different aspects of clarinet technique—tone, coordination, articulation, equipment, études, extended techniques, or mental focus—they converge on one truth: technical mastery is about clar-

ity, efficiency, and expression. Technique is not an end in itself but a pathway to artistry. By cultivating fundamentals and approaching practice with creativity and patience, clarinetists can achieve not just speed, but freedom in their playing. ♪♪

ENDNOTES

- 1 Multiphonics can also be produced by humming or singing while playing. For further information on these methods, see: Jeremy Ruth, *Humming and Singing while Playing in Clarinet Performance: An Evidence Based Method for Performers and Resources for Composers* (DMA Diss., Arizona State University, 2019), ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.
- 2 Graham Fitch, "On Dotted Rhythms," *Practising the Piano* April 25, 2011, <https://practisingthepiano.com/on-dotted-rhythms/>.



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SALON DE LA CLARINETTE

by Eric Hoeprich



Eric Hoeprich is a specialist in performing on historical clarinets in music from the Baroque to the late Romantic. Educated at Harvard University and the Royal Conservatory of Music in The Hague, he was for decades on the faculties of the Royal Conservatory of Music (The Hague), the Paris Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique, London's Royal Academy and at Indiana University, Bloomington. He was a founding member of Frans Brüggen's Orchestra of the 18th Century, where he served as principal clarinet for 40 years. His monograph, *The Clarinet*, was published in 2008 by Yale University Press.

This column, curated by Eric Hoeprich, explores the clarinet of the Classical and Romantic eras—the instrument, its players, its music, and its portrayal in images—through original columns and featured guest writers.

ASPECTS OF PERFORMANCE IN FRÉDÉRIC BERR'S *TRAITÉ COMPLET DE LA CLARINETTE* (PARIS, 1836)

The previous “Salon de la Clarinette” column dealt with virtuoso and Conservatoire professor Frédéric Berr's 14-key clarinet and a few technical aspects of playing the clarinet as related in his *Traité*—like choice of instruments, key layout, mechanism, mouthpieces, and embouchure. This column will address questions regarding performance, with attention to similarities and, perhaps more interestingly, some differences in interpretation between then and now (Figure 1).

Just as players today are often somewhat obsessed with tone quality, so too was Berr, nearly two centuries ago:

Sound is the means by which we relate to the performer; if it is beautiful, it pleases us initially and by itself, regardless of one's ability in the way of producing and inflecting it. It is to the ear what beauty is to the eyes. We cannot therefore be too excessively concerned with obtaining a beautiful quality of sound.¹

Naturally, Berr also addresses how to begin and develop a note, along with production of dynamics and shaping the sound. His remarks on “*messa di voce*” (*sons filés*)—how to employ this effect and when—echo well-known 18th-century predecessors like J.J. Quantz by suggesting this shape should be used on nearly every note (Figure 2):

It is still a rule that without exception all long notes must have the *messa di voce*



Figure 1. Portrait of Frédéric Berr c. 1830

[*sons filés*]. Even if the sign <> might not be written. Often even a quarter note must have the *messa di voce*; the expression is less perceptible, but it must nevertheless be there.²

Also, in common with all 18th-century sources, Berr then moves to the equally essential subject of articulation. It is initially surprising that he defines only two types of articulation: slurred (*lié*) and detached (*piqué*). But Berr immediately adds more detail for detached notes: the *pointé*, the *pointé-coulé*, and the *détaché*. The *pointé* and *détaché* are varieties of short notes,

Photo Courtesy of the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek, Berlin



Figure 2. Examples of *Sons Filés* (messa di voce)

the first indicated with a dot and the second with a vertical line. The difference is subtle, but Berr unmistakably defines the dot as slightly longer than the vertical line, and less “dry,” which we take to mean with resonance, i.e. longish, although still short. Notes with the vertical line are to sound more “dry,” so presumably more silence between the notes, i.e. shorter.³

For the *pointé-coulé* (dots and slurs together), players today tend to play these quite detached. Berr suggests a “gentle” articulation for this effect, reminiscent of Leopold Mozart’s instruction to keep the bow on the string for this type of articulation in his treatise of 1756.⁴ The effect is to have very little separation. This type of articulation was described as only with the breath in some 18th-century sources.

Dynamics are explored exhaustively, for in Berr’s opinion, “they are to melody what the play of light is to painting.” To begin with, as a general rule Berr suggests that:

All passages from low to high must be executed by increasing the

strength of the sound, and it is necessary to decrease it for the passages from high to low; that is to say to make the *crescendo* while going up, and the *diminuendo* while going down.

This simple rule of thumb proves itself over and over in effectively performing music from this period (*Figure 3*).

Leaving the subject of dynamics, Berr turns to what we usually refer to today as “bar hierarchy,” introduced as *Temps Forts* (strong beats), and conforms to a slight emphasis on what J.J. Quantz calls “note buona.”⁵ The formula is simple:

The strong beats are: the first in the two-beat measure; the first and third in the three- and four-beat measures. The second beat is weak in all measures, and so is the fourth in the four-beat measure.⁶

A particularly useful take-away here is avoiding an accent on the last beat of the bar, something many players may find dif-

ficult to take on board. In later music there might be an emphasis on a pick-up note, but generally not in music before 1830.

Proper execution of a variety of rhythms is considered at length. The triplet, for example, should always have a diminuendo and is generally used for a light and playful character. We have already noted that successive groups of four 16th notes would normally have a slight emphasis on the first of each group, subtly marking each beat.

The so-called “*vibration du son*” has been discussed at length in a previous “Salon de la Clarinette” column by Maryse Legault (Vol. 52, no. 3, June 2025), which appears to signify an expressive, oscillating shape of a given note, and may or may not indicate vibrato. Berr refers here to “Italian music,” which he relates to as a very sonorous, and full vocal technique, or “*bel canto*.” He describes giving a note “all the sound it is capable of.”

Ornamentation is discussed initially from the usual viewpoint of early 19th-century methods—three types, the trill, appoggiatura, and turn are defined, with the addition of the mordent. A tendency to rein in embellishments by this time is supported by Berr’s observation that, following compositions of Rossini, any ornaments desired by the composer are already written out in the music.⁷ Unlike methods from before 1800, he clearly does not support extemporaneous embellishment, which could be inappropriate or harmonically deficient:

It would be dangerous, moreover, to add or substitute certain notes

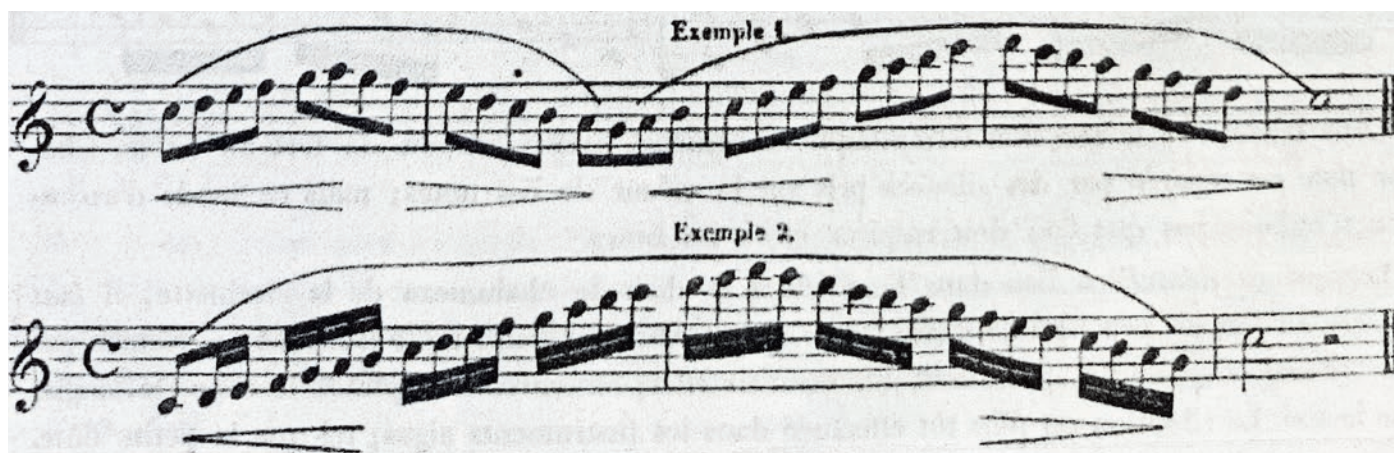


Figure 3. Examples of how to execute ascending and descending passages (page 32)

Nous recommandons aux clarinettes de ne pas craindre de s'étendre sur l'accent nuancé et prolongé à donner à l'appoggiature; cette note doit être chantée avec expression du fort au faible ➤

Exemple d'appoggiatures en dessus et en dessous.

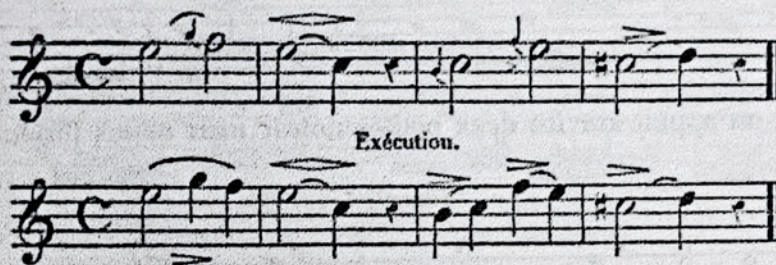


Figure 4. Examples of appoggiaturas (page 29)

to the author's own for those who didn't study a little harmony and composition, because they might not be part of the chords or might harm the character of the melody.

Much attention is devoted to the appoggiatura, and rightly so, given this is the most important expressive device music has to offer in this period. Berr sticks to the traditional definition of giving the "small note" (i.e., the appoggiatura) *half* the value of the note it precedes. It is essential for players to lengthen and otherwise empha-

size this ornament, whether is notated as a small note or written out (*Figure 4*).

When the appoggiatura is written out, it often happens that it is not recognized [by the player] and passed as an ordinary note: then the effect is completely missed, and the performer is rightly judged very unfavorably. It is therefore necessary to know the principles of harmony in order to perform well.

Although the trill is a relatively straightforward ornament, the question of whether

to begin on the upper note or the main note has been controversial. Generally speaking, any trill in music from before 1800 would have always started on the upper note so as to exaggerate the harmonic dissonance. In the early 19th century, in the music of Beethoven, for example, we can assume this sounded old-fashioned. Composers began to write out the upper note when this was what they wanted, suggesting that the rest of the time trills started on the main note. By the 1830s, upper-note trills would have been relatively rare, although not unknown.

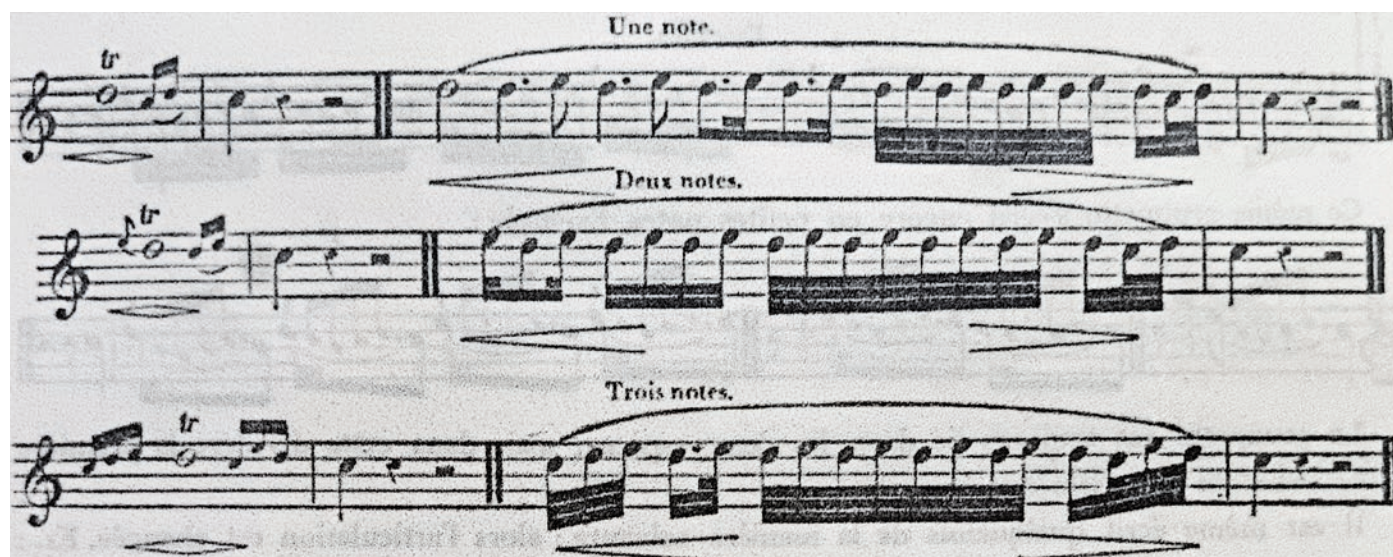


Figure 5. Examples of trills (page 40)

The speed of the trill always allowed for acceleration:

One begins piano and slowly, to avoid stiffness; one accelerates the movement, and one increases the sound little by little to obtain, in the forte, the last point of warmth, brilliance and pearl-like quality, without forgetting the equality of the beat [Figure 5].

Many players today fail to give proper expression to the final resolution at the end of a trill. Berr's advice on this is quite clear. Furthermore, not tonguing the final note would usually mean slurring over a bar line, which was not considered stylistically correct.

Here there are only two obligatory tongue strokes, the first on the preparation note, the second on the final note after completion. It is necessary to use only one breath ... It is very important to practice the trill daily to perform it well. It is by working on it that the player will achieve the most beautiful quality of sound that he can obtain; let his ear be attentive to grasp it in order to perfect it.

Along with an interest in sound quality, players are often preoccupied with playing rapid passagework (*du trait*); the faster and smoother, the better. This is worth quoting at length:

The way to perform passagework well is to give a gradual impulse of strength to the ascending notes, and to follow the reverse order for the descending notes. All notes must be made by the impulse of a single breath, with no break between them, either for slurs or for *piqué*. One must attack the first note with force, which will serve as an impulse for the following notes, without omitting the nuance for the crescendo, and descend with the last notes without hurrying and with grace. The last note should not be left abruptly; it must retain its value, and be given a soft vibration from the strong to the weak [i.e., resonance].

In order to put warmth into the passage, it is necessary, while observing the crescendo, to give a nuanced accent to the first note of each beat of the bar; because it is not the speed of the movement that gives warmth; if this were so, the cantabile would necessarily be devoid of it.

The students must first work slowly, emphasizing the first note of each bar, which they always do too quickly, and marking each beat of the bar. Taking care to execute what is indicated for the nuances, articulation and half breaths; they will gradually speed up, as everything becomes better coordinated.

After this, Berr gives extensive lessons on harmony along with broken-chord exercises and scales. And thus ends Part One of the *Traité*.

Part Two expands on exercises introduced in the first part, with little commentary and some 35 pages of studies designed to cover every possible difficulty. It is somewhat sad not to find any actual music, but for many instrumental methods from the period (especially in France) an interest in distilling the essence of playing the instrument down to a series of technical studies could be said to reflect the underpinnings of the "Enlightenment," which so gripped authors in the period. The influence of important and persuasive thinkers like Denis Diderot and Jean le Rond d'Alembert whose vast *Encyclopédie* (Paris, 1st ed. 1751) sought to codify information on a large number of subjects, including virtually every aspect of music. Although Berr is concerned with proper expression, he also reduces the "Art" of music to a series of exercises that seem to divide playing the clarinet into technique versus expression, and does not appear in any obvious way to combine the two. Gone are the little melodies from popular operas, and the original, heartfelt, and tuneful melodies in duets and sonatas we see in earlier methods, such as those of Amand Vanderhagen and Xavier Lefèvre. Reliable technique and a basic understanding of style seem to be enough, although we must add that the program for music education at the Conservatoire would have consisted of numerous classes on a variety

of subjects, not the least of which would have been performance of actual music under the guidance of superb and accomplished teachers like Frédéric Berr. ♪♪

ENDNOTES

- 1 Like many authors before him, Berr suggests the human voice is an essential model for sound production: "...one should train the ear by hearing and studying beautiful voices or instruments which have succeeded in imitating them, because the human voice is the most beautiful of all instruments."
- 2 J.J. Quantz, *On Playing the Flute*, trans. Edward R. Reilly (London: Faber & Faber, 1966), 166.
- 3 Xavier Lefèvre makes the same distinction in his *Méthode de Clarinette* (Paris: Imprimerie du Conservatoire, 1802), 6.
- 4 Leopold Mozart, *Violinschule*, trans. Editha Knocker (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1985), 97.
- 5 Quantz, 132.
- 6 It is likely that Berr does not mean that the third beat in music in three should be accented.
- 7 It is worth noting that Rossini basically stopped composing around 1830, at which time he was living in Paris, and probably knew Berr. Berr transcribed Rossini's string sonatas for flute, clarinet, bassoon, and horn c. 1828; these are still played frequently today.



EQUIPMENT MATTERS

by Michael A. Lomax

"Equipment Matters" features instrument repair technicians and mouthpiece experts writing on a variety of topics related to repair and maintenance. Please contact editor@clarinet.org with suggestions or contributions.



Michael A. Lomax is the owner of Lomax Classic and the inventor of HumidiPro cases, which provide an ecosystem to keep woodwind instruments at recommended humidity levels. He also designed the HumidiPro "Ultra" case cover to keep instruments at temperatures conducive to safe playing. He and his daughter Kathryn are committed to providing products that meet the needs of woodwind musicians. Visit their website at lomaxclassic.com.

TAKING CARE OF THAT AMAZING WOOD

My lifetime love affair with the clarinet started when I was 9 years old. I had a metal clarinet that had belonged to my cousin. I remember the day my first teacher opened up his case and I saw—lying in regal splendor inside their velvet covered compartments—these pieces of amazing dark brown wood, the color of coffee, decked out in silver keywork. I knew at that moment that someday I had to have a set of clarinets like those! I had no idea at the time that this wood was called African Blackwood or Mpingo by the African people who harvest it, which when translated means "the tree of music."

My goal in this article is to do two things: first, to try to dispel some of the myths and incorrect information that have been around for a long time concerning the care of our instruments; and secondly, to lay out a clear plan of action that anyone can take to keep their instruments in great shape for a lifetime. I say a lifetime because I truly believe that this is possible. Over the past forty-plus-years, I have carefully observed the results of this course of action, and I am convinced that your instrument can last you a lifetime if you take care of it properly. I reject the view held by many that our instruments get "blown out." Rather, I am convinced that the reason instruments play differently over time is due to the effects of three major enemies of this wonderful wood: *humidity* abuse, *temperature* abuse, and *chemical* abuse.

From the time we first bring our new instrument home, these enemies start their relentless attack. Observing this over many years and seeing its effect on our instruments was the motivation

that led me to seek to find ways to prevent this damage from happening, or to reverse the damage that had taken place. And the good news is that much, if not all, of the damage can be reversed because *wood has a memory*. It can and will return to its original shape if certain actions are taken. So, let's take a closer look at these enemies and see what the means are to defeat them.

1 Humidity abuse. This is created by the act of playing and having the instrument in a non-safe environment, such as humidity levels either below 45% or above 65%. Blowing moisture-laden air through the bore



Recently harvested *Dalbergia melanoxylon* tree.



Dalbergia melanoxylon tree in a typical ecosystem.

of the instrument creates stress. Moisture swells the bore, and the density of the wood prevents the moisture from evenly distributing throughout the body of the instrument. The environment adds to the problem if the humidity is below 45% or above 65%. The result is that critical bore dimensions change, tone holes change, and the size and fit of the tenons and sockets change. If this is allowed to continue, eventually even with a good piece of wood—and sooner if the wood has weak areas or flaws—the wood can crack, or at least the instrument will not play like it did when it was new.

Solution: Provide an environment that will allow the moisture content of the wood to be as equal as possible throughout. A humidity controlled ecosystem is the solution. This can be achieved in several ways. There is one product on the market that can add or subtract humidity from your instruments. It is made by [Boveda](#), and is a pack containing a substance that adds or subtracts moisture from the environment. Several packs can be kept in your case to achieve this ideal humidity level. If your case is airtight, the packs can last for nine to twelve months at a time. If you don't have an airtight case, they will need to be replaced every three to four months. The accurate way to check when they need to be replaced is to keep a hygrometer in your case, and when the reading drops below

45% or gets above 60%, it is time to replace the packs. Note: be sure to use the packs that say 49% on them.

2 Temperature abuse. This enemy rears its ugly head whenever the temperature differential within the body of the instrument is greater than approximately 20 degrees (for example, playing your instrument when the wood is at a temperature near or below 70°F/20°C). This creates stress on the wood because the outside of the instrument is not able to expand at the same rate as the bore is expanding. This creates a situation similar to pouring hot tea into a glass filled with ice cubes, which can crack the glass for the same reason.

Solution: The outside of the instrument must be warmed to a temperature that is within the safe zone of less than 20 degrees below the temperature of the air moving through the instrument. The outside of the instrument must be warmed before playing to prevent the danger of cracking. This can be done by putting your hands around the barrel and upper joint, or putting it under your arm, and or blowing on the outside of the wood for several minutes. You can also check out a modern alternative—a heated case cover—that slowly and safely warms the case and the instruments to the ideal playing temperature of 78°F/26°C.

3 Chemical abuse. This occurs from the harmful effect of our breath within the bore of our clarinets. God created our saliva to digest food. Unfortunately, it also tries to digest any organic material, including African Blackwood, Rosewood, Cocobolo, or any other exotic wood.

Solution: The solution is to create a barrier within the bore of the clarinet that can prevent or lessen the harmful effects of our saliva on the wood. Larry Naylor deserves most of the credit for the research on this subject. He found that if organic oil—similar to the oil that was in the wood when the tree was growing—is applied to the bore of the instrument, it provides protection against many, if not most, of the harmful chemicals found in our saliva. It also allows the “good moisture” to enter into the wood to help keep it hydrated. However, the oil must be organic, such as sweet almond oil, olive oil, or African blackwood oil. Oiling the bore of the instrument once every two months, and a complete oil bath when the instrument is being overhauled, will protect and keep the fibers of the wood healthy and stable. Note: this schedule is for those musicians who are using their instruments on a regular daily basis such as professionals and students. Those who only play their instrument a few times a month can oil their instrument's bore with organic oil at least twice a year.

CONCLUSION

If you will provide your clarinet with the care I have outlined, it can provide you with a lifetime of service. This amazing wood is truly a wonderful gift from our Creator and really asks very little from us in return. I truly believe if your instruments could talk, they would say, “Please just give us the care we deserve!” 🙏🙏



CLARINET CHOIR

by Margaret Thornhill



Margaret Thornhill, DMA, is a performer and private teacher in Los Angeles who is the founding conductor of the Los Angeles Clarinet Choir. She has written the Clarinet Choir Column for The Clarinet since 2007. Send clarinet choir news, updates or comments about this article to her at website, MargaretThornhill.com.

A CONVERSATION WITH MATT JOHNSTON

Matt Johnston is a renowned arranger of music for clarinet choir, the owner and proprietor of ALRY Publications, and a multi-instrumentalist. I've been following Matt's work for a long time, but after a short visit to the Clarinet World booth at ClarinetFest® 2025 in Fort Worth, we caught up via phone in a conversation that touched on the art of arranging, Matt's work with ALRY, and his parallel career as a wind doubler.

MARGARET THORNHILL: *Matt, you've become what must be the most prolific arranger of clarinet choir music ever! It looks like you have over 160 clarinet choir arrangements in the ALRY catalogue. I think the last time I mentioned you in print in the Clarinet Choir Column was back in 2015. Please catch me up on what you've been doing all these years.*

MATT JOHNSTON: Margaret, you were there at the launch of my career with a mention in *The Clarinet* years ago—the first time in 2008!

In 2004, I received a BA in Music from Florida State University in Tallahassee with a certificate in bassoon performance. I'd also auditioned on euphonium and qualified to study that as well. However, I never continued on that track. Florida State had only an occasional clarinet choir, but one of my best friends studied at the University of Florida in Gainesville with Mitchell Estrin, who directed a large and excellent clarinet choir there. As you know, they have recorded several CDs that include my arrangements.

MT: *I'm interrupting you, but euphonium is a surprise! How many instruments do you actually play?*

MJ: I took piano lessons as a kid and am extremely grateful to my parents for that. They also put up with my switching around band instruments so many times, even if sometimes they had no idea what I was bringing home. In addition to playing euphonium and bassoon, I also played trumpet in high school marching band (my original first instrument, which my brother also played—hence there was one already in the house),





Matt Johnston (contrabass clarinet) with the Klarinetensemble Lignum on tour in Estonia, June 2024.

and a straight contrabass clarinet for which I was constantly making paper shims to try to fix its leaks. In college, I took lessons on flute, clarinet, piano, and organ, as well as my primary bassoon studies.

MT: *Was there ever pressure to narrow it down to one instrument?*

MJ: Not as much as I would have thought. I was always encouraged by my parents and my band directors. It was too handy to have somebody capable of bouncing around the different sections, and I saw doubling as something positive (and fun!).

Where were we again? Oh! After graduating in 2004, I moved up to Seattle and my arranging took off as a “slow burn.” I had moved there to go to instrument repair school at Renton Technical College and from there a real patchwork career started to form. I worked in a flute repair shop, was organist at a local church, and began a career as a musical theatre woodwind doubler, which lasted 13 years.

I founded my original company, Malejo Publications (the name is based on the letters of my name), as a way

to make a little extra money, initially selling scores and parts through a really basic website I had created. Coincidentally, my sister worked in a print shop in Florida and could provide copies inexpensively, which was super helpful.

Later, in 2011, I took the opportunity to buy ALRY Publications, which was for sale due to the owner retiring. Although a flute-centric catalog, it had stronger name recognition as it had been in existence since 1981. Since taking over ownership, I’ve added approximately 150 new artists, bringing the total number of contributing composers and arrangers to more than 300, while broadening the catalog to include several new instrumentation categories. Clarinet, and specifically clarinet choir, is now the second-most represented category in the catalog. Partnerships with other publishing companies, such as Metropolis Music Publishers and Digital Music Print in Belgium, allowed us to make our music more accessible in Europe and Asia while reciprocally doing the same for their music in the United States.

MT: *How did you get started with arranging?*

MJ: That actually started about 30 years ago. In high school, I was a big “band nerd.” I grew up in Tampa and had marching band practices and played at football games nearly every week in the Fall. Many of my friends and I were in the International Baccalaureate Program (essentially a magnet school), and thus further from our houses and not able to go home after school. There were 2½ hours between school and band practice, so we hung out with our instruments in the band room. This led to my first “official” arrangement written for the instruments we all played. I found the first movement of Antonín Dvořák’s *Serenade*, op. 44, probably just as a MIDI file on the early internet, and arranged it for flute, two clarinets, horn, two bassoons, baritone saxophone, and probably a trombone, too. I did not know that this piece was a big deal at the time; I just liked it and thought it sounded cool.

From that point, I was hooked on creating functional chamber music, capable of bringing people together regardless of the instruments they played. Moving forward to college, I started to hang out with the clarinet studio, and this led me to create my first clarinet choir arrangements. I focused on arranging a lot of band music that I loved. Works like Gustav Holst’s *First and Second Suites* and Percy Grainger’s *Molly on the Shore* were among my first projects.

MT: *I’ve often thought about why your arrangements for clarinet choir sound so good and are so idiomatic to play. You seem to choose music carefully, keeping all the original material but distributing it in different ways. But it is also really obvious that you are a player.*

MJ: Yes, it is rearranged in a different way that still fits. Aside from picking good music, you have to make players happy. It’s my job as the arranger to make it comfortable. A big mistake some arrangers make is writing for a specific group of players. For example, maybe they have a great E♭ clarinetist who can scream up to high G with ease, or perhaps their choir has multiple alto clari-

nets and a three-part *divisi* is possible. In the real world, it won't be that certain and you have to make sure that the music is accessible and playable. Specific familiarity with the clarinet is of course necessary, as well. My arrangement of "Jupiter" (from Holst's *The Planets*) starts with the bass clarinet in the high register to avoid being in the "break" if it was played by a B♭ clarinet.

With every piece, there is also an opportunity for everybody to have the melody or a featured part at some point. Many of the older clarinet choir works gave the melody entirely to clarinet 1, so that clarinet 3, 4, or alto clarinet have nothing. I turn this upon its head and often make sure that clarinet 4 has a really cool part in every arrangement that I do. Also, being a contrabass player myself, I try to be very sympathetic to the low clarinets, keeping them interested and not feeling like an afterthought.

MT: *What advice do you have for other arrangers?*

MJ: In addition to being critical and realistic yourself, my advice to arrangers is to surround yourself with people you can trust, who are honest with you, and who can gracefully say, "this doesn't work—write it a different way." Also, having a living, breathing group to try things out is incredibly helpful.

At ALRY, we require a live recording when people submit a work for publication. That way, we know it is playable, and also that someone (or some ensemble) took the time to learn it. And hopefully, along the way, they interacted with the composer or arranger, with the freedom to offer input and suggestions.

MT: *Are you ever tempted to write original music? Do you do commissions? Any upcoming personal projects?*

MJ: Tempted, yes. But the answer is no—it really scares me. There are ideas swirling around in my head, but to this point I have not composed anything. As for commissions, I really don't have the time or process to formally take those on, but if someone suggests

something that they would like to see arranged, it will generally come to fruition eventually.

Personal projects: well, I have at least 100 "in progress" folders on my computer at any given moment. I love Dvořák and would really like to finish arranging all of his *Slavonic Dances*. And there is still plenty of Grainger out there to do. One large-scale idea I have started toying around with is arranging Ravel's *Daphnis and Chloé*, Suite No. 2, for a very large clarinet choir. We'll see what happens with that.

MT: *A few years ago, you moved to Rotterdam (Netherlands). Do you enjoy living there?*

MJ: Yes, very much. In 2017, a job transfer for my husband gave us the opportunity to move to Stuttgart, Germany, where we lived until the end of 2020. Further changes and restructuring of his company during the pandemic then led us to move to Rotterdam, where we have been ever since.

Of course, I miss working in musical theatre, but my husband and I really like it here, and I am playing more music than ever. People are friendly, it has the same climate as Seattle, and it's a great place for biking. I can run ALRY from any location and enjoy exploring the libraries and archives throughout Europe, finding musical treasures everywhere. I am now playing contrabass clarinet in *Klarinetensemble Lignum* (from the Latin word for "firewood"), a clarinet choir with a 35-year history. I'm also part of a community orchestra, *Het Toonkünstlerorkest Leiden*, which I joined originally as bass clarinetist, but ended up moving over to the bassoon section after my first concert.

MT: *Are you learning Dutch?*

MJ: I've taken many classes, but the best practice is the full immersion of sitting in four hours of rehearsal every week (plus the time at the pub afterwards), where Dutch is primarily spoken. Especially fortuitous, my section partner, aside from being a fabulous bassoon player, is also a Dutch teacher (*hoi*

Paulien!), and she has basically never spoken English to me. It is a journey, but I'm very grateful and advancing because of these opportunities.

MT: *Is there anything else you'd like readers to know?*

MJ: Yes—so many things. What I want to say to kids is, "Don't be afraid to be the weird little kid that's the band nerd!" To the college students, "Play as much chamber music as possible while in school and surrounded by other like-minded students. It gets much harder to organize this when you are out in the real world." And to the adults, "Music is a gift, not only for the people you play for, but also yourself—something you can do for your entire life. Enjoy it!" ♪♪

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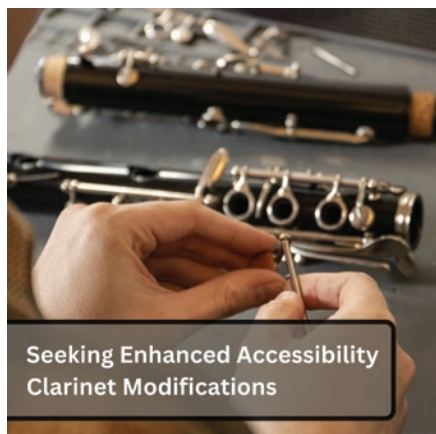
Matt Johnston's music can be found at ummpstore.com.



Spotlight on Accessibility-Focused Repair Technicians

Clarinet repair technicians around the world are developing innovative instrument modifications for enhanced accessibility.

by Stefanie Harger Gardner and the ICA Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access Committee



As educators and performers, it is vital that we ensure music-making is accessible to all—regardless of age, hand size, mobility, or physical ability. In recent years, growing attention to inclusive design in the music world has led to significant developments in instrument modification, particularly for the clarinet. These adaptations make it possible for a wider range of players to participate fully and comfortably in music performance.

Common accessibility-focused modifications include plateau (closed-hole) key systems, custom thumbrests, key extensions, and mechanical alterations tailored to specific mobility needs. Whether supporting a young student with small hands, a professional musician with arthritis, or a player navigating limb difference, these adjustments play a vital role in fostering lifelong engagement with the clarinet.

The ICA Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access Committee is thrilled to feature a number of skilled technicians and workshops around the world that are leading the way in this important work. From custom-fabricated solutions to full instrument redesigns, these specialists bring innovation, care, and deep understanding of the clarinet's mechanics to support players at every level. The following technicians shared their work in response to a call for submissions in the ICA Newsletter.



Technician: Andrew Roberts

ARCS

Technician: Andrew Roberts

Website: theclarinet.co.uk

Email: arclarinets@gmail.com

Location: Liverpool, United Kingdom

ARCS provides services such as custom thumbrests, keywork modifications, and thumb plate additions.

KEYSTONE MUSIC AND REPAIR

Technician: John Kirkner

Website: keystonemusicrepair.com

Email: john@keystonemusicrepair.com

Location: Pottstown, Pennsylvania (USA)

John Kirkner has created several innovative adaptations, including modifications to a bass clarinet for a musician with limited mobility in the left hand (third



Technician: John Kirkner



Technician: Kristin Bertrand



Technician: Wolfgang Lohff



Technician: Martín Ventura

and fourth fingers), allowing certain notes to be played with the right thumb. He has also developed left-hand-only adaptations for saxophones.

KRISTIN BERTRAND'S WOODWIND WORKSHOP

Technician: Kristin Bertrand

Website: woodwindworkshop.com

Email: Kristin@woodwindworkshop.com

Location: Floral Park, New York (USA)

Kristin Bertrand's workshop specializes in full instrument fabrications, modifications, and customizations to meet the unique needs of individual musicians.

LOHFF & PFEIFFER

Technician: Wolfgang Lohff

Website: www.clarinet.dk

Email: Info@clarinet.dk

Locations: Riverdale, Maryland (USA) and Vallensbæk, Denmark

Lohff & Pfeiffer offers a wide range of accessibility-focused modifications, including the conversion of ring key systems

to plateau systems for E $\flat$, D, C, B $\flat$, A, G, and alto clarinets. They also provide key extensions for smaller hands and customized key mechanisms for players with missing fingers or partial finger use.

LUTHIERS MARVENT

Technician: Martín Ventura

Email: martinmarvent@hotmail.com

Location: Valencia, Spain

Luthiers Marvent supports musicians with disabilities by adapting keywork and mechanisms to help them regain their playing ability and continue their musical training.

PEREIRA 3D CLARINET SERVICES

Technician: Ryan Pereira

Website: www.pereira3d.com

Email: info@pereira3d.com

Location: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (USA)

The plateau-key version of the Pereira Custom B $\flat$ clarinet is designed specifically for players who find it difficult to cover open holes with their fingers. It is especially beneficial for those with arthritis or for younger players with smaller hands, thanks to its closed-hole system. Both the upper and lower joints are made from a proprietary hard rubber, featuring a polycylindrical bore and undercut tone holes. This model offers a more affordable option suitable for



Technician: Kristin Bertrand



Technician: Martín Ventura



Technician: Ryan Pereira



Technician: Ryan Pereira

a wide range of performance settings, and its durable material is resistant to cracking and long-term wear. ♪♪

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We deeply appreciate the expertise and dedication of these technicians who make it possible for more people to experience the joy of playing the clarinet. If you are interested in having your business featured in the ICA Newsletter, please contact deia@clarinet.org.



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Counterweight

Deaf composer Ailís Ní Ríain and clarinetist Sarah Watts collaborated on the work *Counterweight* for contrabass clarinet and fixed media, a commissioning project that included disability accommodations and confronted the effects of exclusion.

by Sarah Watts

A counterweight is a weight that balances another weight. Here it serves as a metaphor to recognise the universal need for balance and to acknowledge the challenging impacts of exclusion, inequality, and discrimination on the individual. – Ailís Ní Ríain

DEI (Diversity, Equality, Inclusion) are three letters and words that spark a range of reactions. “Can we discuss DEI?” can be a question that acts as a negative as well as positive trigger. My university’s response to a complaint about my advocating for fair representation was, “How can we help and support you?” Thus, the process for *Counterweight* was born: a piece that reflects on the exclusion of the individual, exploring alienation, the isolation of being excluded, and the self-doubt this can provoke, but also ultimately leading to a place of bruised resolve and firm conviction to, simply, go on.

The commission, funded by Higher Education Innovation Funding from the University of Sheffield, was for a work by the female Irish composer Ailís Ní Ríain for solo contrabass clarinet and fixed media that highlighted the struggle for equality and inclusivity. I have worked with Ailís on a number of occasions and have always been drawn to her thoughtful inventiveness and unique compositional voice and ideas.

Ailís Ní Ríain is also a deaf/hard of hearing composer. We chose contrabass clarinet as Ailís’s deafness mostly affects higher frequencies, so the contrabass clarinet range lies partially within her hearing possibilities.

The word “equity” can be misunderstood, and is a word that is vital to ensuring that this and other similar projects can be successful. Equity is not about giving

advantages to people, but involves removing barriers that create a disadvantage, and allocating resources and support to those who need it to ensure equal access and opportunities for all. It is important to note that this is different from “equality,” which means same treatment to all, with each person given an equal opportunity with the same resources.

Our commission award considered what Ailís needed to ensure that the outcome was as she wanted. This included support for one-on-one sessions with me and Ailís, and an audio assistant to help with

completing and checking over the fixed media backing track. The audio assistant was given funding for a contracted number of hours of work across the project that included being involved with elements of the composition process, to help with recording and final mixing and mastering. For both of us, the funding gave us time together to explore ideas and for Ailís to spend time with me in person discovering the possibilities of the instrument.

My experience of working with Ailís on this really impacted me. While Ailís is deaf, she also has the most incredible ability to search and find detail within my playing. The process allowed me to understand how Ailís is able to understand and process sound and work to weave in intricate details within her writing. For notes I played that were out of her range of hearing, Ailís would transpose my recordings down to lower frequencies within her hearing range. I could not get away with anything, and this in turn gave me a huge amount of satisfaction and pride in this work. As the work developed, the close collaboration every step of the way resulted in a piece that not only perfectly fitted the commission, but that is uniquely personal to me as a performer and to Ailís as a composer. It fully respects how powerful a close collaboration can be and also just how important understanding equity is to disabled musicians.

An awareness of DEI values in an institution can ensure that projects like this get



Ailís Ní Ríain

sufficient funding to remove barriers to access. Funding for access and disability needs can be found within some grants, but awareness about this is still lacking. How many of us realize that a commission fund may need more than just a composer's time? How many composers don't have the opportunity to seek grants that include access funds and end up paying out of their often-scant commission funds in order to get the extra support needed to complete a project? It is important as commissioners that we ask this question when discussing a commission and build in ways to allow barriers to be removed. For example, if it's a crowd-funding or consortium bid, then discuss with the composer what they need, how much that will cost, and how this can be added to the total requested amount.

In the end, the *Counterweight* project turned out to be a successful way to offset the bullying and silencing I experienced after I was targeted for my work advocating for inclusion and representation of women. The project has now been performed and viewed internationally, creating a positive and thoughtful impact and message. DEI initiatives are something we should cherish, support and fight for. Supporting people from all marginalized communities is never something to fear—it's something to have pride in. It can be easier than we think to improve diversity, equity, and access with thought and a little investment, encouraging everyone towards an equal standing in every walk of life.

Thank you, Ailís, for taking on this project. The impact of your work with me is one that I hope will keep people thinking. 🙏🙏



View the *Counterweight* video with program notes on [YouTube](#), and learn more about Ailís Ní Ríain at www.ailis.info.

Photo by Ailís Ní Ríain



Dr. Sarah Watts is a low clarinet specialist based in the UK. She is director of performance and program leader for the MA in music performance studies at the University of Sheffield. As a founder member of *clarEquality*, she is passionate about highlighting the importance of diversity and inclusivity within the international clarinet community. She is the clarinetist in *Hard Rain Soloist Ensemble* (Belfast) and a member of *rarescale*. More at www.sarahkwatts.co.uk.



Still from *Counterweight* video

Photo by Ailís Ní Ríain



FINDING MY VOICE

Navigating Music and Advocacy as an Underrepresented Clarinetist

Florida-based master's student Hali Alex shares her personal experience and advice on inclusion in the field of clarinet playing.

by Hali Alex

As a clarinetist who is a Black woman, I have been on a long journey of finding community and trying to be comfortable in spaces that are not always inclusive. The most profound aspect of the journey was learning to find my voice and use it to help others. Growing up and going to school in the Southeast region of America has exposed me to discrimination in music and society. Whether it is a microaggression from a colleague or professor or being singled out in classes and ensembles, the weight of being different can take a toll, and the exclusion of Black music in history and repertoire is hard not to notice.

Throughout my schooling I realized one way to advocate for myself was through storytelling in projects, papers, and eventually the music I was playing. Being able to implement aspects of my identity and life into something that I am so passionate about helped give me a better sense of advocacy. Not only was I able to find my voice but I also could see that it was being heard.

One of the first times I felt heard was when a research paper of mine, "William Grant Still's *Symphony No. 2 'Song for New Race': A Musical Explanation of Double Consciousness*," was chosen to be pre-

sented at a research symposium and was even awarded a place in the top three undergraduates in my college for the presentation. Through this experience, I found comfort in an educational and professional space that is not always so accepting of me. The freedom I was given to pursue research that was close to not only my identity, but also my heart, is what I am so thankful for. In the past my use of personal experience and life anecdotes in the classroom has been dismissed because of my race.

Another way I was able to feel seen was the help of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs. With these programs I was able to speak on panels and feel safe in spaces with people who also look like me. Currently I am a member of a College of Music Black Alliance (COMBA), which is an organization for Black-identifying students to have a community at school. COMBA also helps with community service as well as being a resource for all in our college. The cutting of DEI programs makes the accessibility into music more difficult, and jeopardizes the freedom of many underrepresented students in the job market, classes, research, and so much more. One important data point that has been documented in the last year or so is

the decline of Black and Hispanic students in college acceptance and enrollments due to the Supreme Court ruling eliminating affirmative action.¹

I am glad to say my studio professors have always been supportive of my music and advocacy work, including research in topics relating to my identity; unfortunately this can not be said for all underrepresented students. Many students that I have as colleagues and friends that identify as minorities have not felt supported by their professors and educational institution. In this political climate in America a lot of funding and programs that are helpful for minorities are being dissolved, so professors and teachers need to increase their knowledge of opportunities and allyship for their students, specifically students that are racially marginalized, LGBTQIA+, and/or disabled. This can include bringing in a more racially and ethnically diverse group of artists for master classes and sharing the knowledge of organizations and opportunities that focus on the music and performance of minority students. Even just having a catalog of music written by composers that are of a wide variety of races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, gender, etc., can be extremely helpful and inclusive.

There are a few organizations that are great resources for underrepresented musicians and students:

- The Sphinx Organization seeks to diversify classical music by providing programs that enhance leadership, artist development, education, and access for a vast range of musicians from students to professionals who identify as Black and/or Latino.
- Caste of Our Skins is a Black arts institution which is dedicated to fostering and celebrating Black music and musicians through performances, administration, and fellowships.
- Organizations like United Sound and RAMPD (Recording Artists and Music Professionals with Disabilities) are great for accessibility into creating, producing, and being immersed in music as well as providing music education for disabled and neurodivergent students.
- The Pride Bands Alliance is an organization dedicated to providing a safe space and network for LGBTQIA+ musicians to participate in community concert bands and marching bands around the world.

These organizations also provide community and networking possibilities that allow for people to feel seen and gain resources. Personally, I have been able to connect with other Black musicians and hear their stories through organizations like the ones listed above. The use of storytelling through these organizations especially helps with relating to the experience of others around us.

Along with these organizations there is a wide array of grants and funding from around the world that provide support, research, and advocacy like the NAAM Foundation (National Association of Music Merchants) and the Sweet Relief Music Foundation. With DEI programs being impacted, a lot of federal funding and grants have been frozen so it is important to look for local or private organizations that provide assistance.

As a teacher and clarinetist, I try to use my knowledge of culturally relevant pedagogy and personal experience to help my colleagues and professors with how to approach me and other students who have

faced similar struggles. Though it might feel as though there is nothing we can do to make a change, this is not the case. We may not be able to write and pass bills or create legislation, but we can always do our part in making sure that our students, colleagues, and friends are cared for, have a safe space, and very importantly feel like their voices are amplified and supported. 🙏🙏



Hali Alex is from Tallahassee, Florida. She is currently working towards a master's degree in clarinet performance at Florida State University. She loves all things clarinet and hopes to be a voice of advocacy within our beautiful clarinet community!

ENDNOTES

- 1 Huacong Liu, "How Do Affirmative Action Bans Affect the Racial Composition of Postsecondary Students in Public Institutions?" *Educational Policy* 36, no. 6 (September 2022): 1348–72.

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A MIRACULOUS RECOVERY: An Interview with Leslie Craven

From postwar London to the stages of South Africa and the Welsh National Opera, clarinetist Leslie Craven recounts a life of challenge, opportunity, and artistry.

by William Lipman

Leslie Craven served as principal clarinetist of the Welsh National Opera for over 26 years, retiring in September 2018. Prior to joining the WNO, Craven was guest principal clarinet with most of London's major orchestras, including the Royal Philharmonic, Philharmonia, London Symphony, and London Chamber Orchestra. He enjoyed a prolific film and television recording career and became one of London's most sought-after studio musicians. He has also performed recitals and concertos worldwide and has released several critically acclaimed recordings—not only of standard repertoire, but also of new works specially

written for and dedicated to him. Due to his work in South Africa during the apartheid era, his early career in the UK was impacted by the social and political dynamics of the period.

WILLIAM LIPMAN: *Leslie, you were born in the East End of London and spent your early years recovering from the devastation of World War II. What was it like during those times?*

LESLIE CRAVEN: Yes, Bill, it was still in rubble and ruins in the 1950s.

WL: *What sort of home background did you have?*

LC: I am from a Cockney working-class family. Many East End families were large in those days, so there was a feeling of belonging to a community. The area where I grew up—just a decade after the war—was gradually being rebuilt, and our family was moved by the authorities to a depressing, hurriedly built council estate.

WL: *Were your parents musical?*

LC: No, but my father had learned to play accordion and piano by ear and used to play our piano at our house parties. Having many uncles and aunts and dozens of cousins, there were many family parties.

WL: *Why did you choose the clarinet?*

LC: Our school class teacher at the time was an amateur clarinetist and he brought a clarinet to our class to try. Two of us, my best friend and I, managed to get a sound, a raucous “honk.”

WL: *How old were you when you started lessons, and what was your first instrument?*



Leslie Craven

LC: I was 7 and my first clarinet was an Albert system Hawkes and Son E $\flat$ ex-military clarinet. Later I moved to a Clinton system E $\flat$ clarinet, then to a C clarinet, then B $\flat$, and eventually to a Boehm system B $\flat$. For what seemed an age, I stubbornly continued to squeak and squawk and my poor brothers and sister had to endure the screeching cacophony.

WL: *Les, these days you have a distinctive, cultured, English School sound, so how did that develop from the early squeaks and squawks?*

LC: I had no idea how a clarinet was meant to sound, so decided to get a recording of a clarinetist. I went to the nearest municipal music library, and found the recording of Jack Brymer playing the Mozart *Concerto* with Sir Thomas Beecham and the Royal Philharmonic. I was transfixed by his sound.

WL: *Where did you study after those lessons at primary school?*

LC: After three years of lessons, I won a scholarship place at the Royal Academy of Music Junior Department. This meant that I had to travel to central London on Saturday mornings, a journey of over an hour involving bus and train at the age of 10. My success of getting a place at the Royal Academy was reported in the local newspaper. Playing a musical instrument in those days was considered by the local schoolboy gangs to be “sissy” or soft. Carrying a clarinet case to begin my journey to the Royal Academy each Saturday morning caused me to have many fights with the local gang who thought it good sport to attack me and try to prevent me from going to the Academy. My dad, a former Royal Marine, had taught me to defend myself, but I often arrived at the Royal Academy with cuts, bruises, and bloodstains. The local press coverage I received fueled the gang’s jealousy and the bullying continued for years, into my teens.

WL: *Wow, Les, a really tough time physically and mentally.*



Craven playing for Sir Colin Davis and Jack McCaw

LC: Yes, it was, but I feel that this violent time helped me become more resilient and tenacious.

WL: *Who was your teacher during your studies as a junior at the Royal Academy?*

LC: It was Christopher Ball, former pupil of Reginald Kell, Jack Brymer, and Gervase de Peyer.

WL: *When did you change from Albert system to Boehm?*

LC: It was during the first year at the Royal Academy, and my parents bought me a Selmer “Centered Tone” clarinet and later a Series 9 A clarinet.

WL: *Les, you are probably the youngest clarinetist to ever play with a famous professional symphony orchestra. How did that come to happen and who were the players you met?*

LC: When I was 7 years old, my teacher told me if I practiced hard I could one day play in the London Philharmonic. It became a burning ambition, and I later mentioned that to a reporter in one of the interviews for the local press.

The editor of the *Evening Standard*, a national newspaper, saw the local article and contacted the LPO public relations manager who invited me and my dad to a rehearsal in Conway Hall, London. I was thrilled to sit next to John (Jack) McCaw and Alan Hacker.

We rehearsed Walton’s first symphony with Colin Davis. I had memorized the first movement of Mozart’s *Clarinet Concerto* and played part of it to Davis and McCaw during the interval of the rehearsal, and now realize how kind they were to listen to me in their break. Little did I know that later in life I would play in the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sir Colin Davis.

WL: *How old were you when you played in the LPO?*

LC: I was 11.

WL: *I understand you had master classes with the renowned teacher Nadia Boulanger?*

LC: Yes, it was in the same year I played with the LPO. This was the first of three classes with her, and I found her teach-



Craven, age 19

ing inspirational. I later realized with awe that she had taught most of the 20th century's most famous composers!

WL: *After studies at the Junior Department of the Royal Academy, where did you study as a full-time student?*

LC: After the Royal Academy "juniors," I won a full-time place at the Royal College of Music.

WL: *Who did you study with?*

LC: Sidney Fell, a pupil of Frederick Thurston and formerly principal clarinetist of the London Symphony Orchestra.

WL: *Did you enjoy your time at the Royal College and were there any successes to note?*

LC: Yes, I had a successful career there winning several prizes, and I auditioned for and won a trial with the BBC Welsh Orchestra. I didn't get the job; it went to Martin Ronchetti, who at the time was co-principal clarinet of the London Symphony.

WL: *What do you mean by a "trial"?*

LC: A trial follows a successful audition in our UK orchestral selection process and consists of several performances which are assessed against other trialists and can take several months or even years.

WL: *Many composers have dedicated works to you; are there any works or composers that stand out in your view?*

LC: Yes, Christopher Ball, my teacher from the junior RAM. He wrote many works dedicated to me, including a very beautiful *Concerto*, a charming *Quintet* with strings, and several other works. Christopher sadly died a few years ago and has left a considerable amount of wind chamber works, many of which I have recorded.

WL: *After you left the Royal College of Music, did you get a job in one of the UK orchestras?*

LC: No, there were no vacant UK jobs for many years.

WL: *So what did you do? You had no income and no prospects of a job?*

LC: At college I did a lot of external engagements, but when I left, that work ceased and I was struggling financially. A friend and mentor advised me to go to South Africa where he knew there was a seasonal job available. I auditioned for and was given the position and went for a four-month season. Later that year, I was offered a permanent post.

During studies at the Royal College, I met Christine ("Chris"), my wife to be, and after I accepted the permanent job in South Africa, we got married and emigrated in 1975. After two years in the Durban Symphony, I successfully auditioned for the principal clarinet position of the Cape Performing Arts Board orchestra.

WL: *How did you cope with living in such a segregated society, hugely biased in terms of white privilege?*

LC: I am fiercely anti-racist and felt totally uncomfortable in this environment. I became involved in many projects to

try to enable Coloured (at the time "Coloured" was a formal race-group definition in the official identification document) and Black people to become more included, and formed the first multi-racial symphonic wind band in South Africa at the South African College of Music.

WL: *Was it easy during apartheid to socialize with black and Coloured friends?*

LC: No, especially as some of my friends' children had been arrested and were in jail for taking part in protests. It was extremely difficult because if a group of people of different races got together, it was deemed an illegal gathering. At that time, I belonged to a gentleman's club that encouraged all races to meet in a secret venue known only to its members to celebrate music and the arts and sciences in general. This club was considered illegal, and on occasions, agents from the secret police (BOSS, or the Bureau for State Security) followed me. I had to walk around in circles to divert them from the venue.

WL: *That sounds frightening. Despite all this you had a successful career in recording for the South African Broadcasting Corporation—were there any highlights you care to recall?*

LC: Yes, during this time, I recorded the world premiere of *Suite for Clarinet and Piano* by South African composer Priaux Rainier (a former student of Nadia Boulanger) and was nominated for a broadcasting award. This was ironic, as she was a political exile at the time. The South African Broadcasting Company had not noticed she was on the banned artists list. The broadcast was transferred to vinyl and is most likely still in their SABC library archive.

WL: *Les, that is remarkable. The civil unrest at that time was often reported as being extremely violent. Did it worry you?*

LC: Yes, we read horror stories of violent personal attacks. Riots on the campus of Cape Town University, near our

home in Wynberg, were rife and my friends advised us to leave for the safety of our family. So, in 1986, we did.

WL: *How did your career get started back in the UK? Was it easy to fit back into UK life?*

LC: No, because we were financially ruined; we lost what little money we had and any small profit from the house sale was completely negated by the collapse of the South African rand and restrictions on how much money could be taken out of South Africa.

Back in the UK, I was invited by my friend and former Royal College of Music recital partner Michael Reed to perform a recital at St. George's Church in Hanover Square, London. Mike had become Andrew Lloyd Webber's executive musical director. He invited several orchestral contractors to the recital including the manager of the BBC Concert Orchestra. The BBC orchestra had a vacant position for principal clarinet. I auditioned, against 100 other players, and won it after a lengthy trial. Unfortunately, I was not allowed to accept the job because some political activists in the orchestra objected to me having worked in South Africa during apartheid.

WL: *Wow, Les, you must have been devastated. I am horrified that this could have happened to someone who actively opposed apartheid and tried to improve the lives of oppressed people.*

LC: Yes, I was distraught, and the implication that I was racist was extremely hurtful. My black and colored friends in South Africa were very upset this had happened to me and sent testimonials to try to reverse the decision, unsuccessfully. The BBC orchestra, for three years, was without a permanent principal clarinet. This caused me to be tacitly barred from orchestras in London and no work was forthcoming. I spent two years with no work, no money, and no prospects.

WL: *What on earth did you do during that*

time? No money, no work? It must have been awful for your family.

LC: Yes, we could not even buy simple luxuries for my children. I was so depressed, but family members were very supportive and kind. On occasions I ran my brother's trucking company and I tried to sustain my embouchure muscles by playing every now and again.

WL: *Did you think you would ever play professionally again?*

LC: No, I thought playing professionally was now unattainable. Then came the "miracle": after two years without work, the Royal Philharmonic phoned to ask if I could step in that evening to play a concert at the Royal Festival Hall, as their principal clarinetist had taken ill. All their regular deputies were busy and they were desperate to find a substitute principal clarinet. I must have been their last hope. I accepted the engage-

ment with some trepidation having not played clarinet seriously for two years. The concert was a huge success and much to my delight the manager phoned me again the next day to offer me a position of principal clarinet with the RPO "Pops" orchestra, the newly formed sister orchestra to the RPO.

WL: *That truly was a miracle and a fairy tale ending to traumatic events. Glad the concert was a success for you—what pieces did you perform?*

LC: Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet* fantasy overture, Rachmaninoff's *Second Piano Concerto*, and *Scheherazade* by Rimsky-Korsakov.

WL: *Lovely solos to play in those pieces!*

LC: Yes, and I knew all the solos from memory. My career was suddenly turned around. As principal clarinet

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of the RPO Pops, I became extremely busy as guest principal clarinet with all the best London orchestras and in the recording studios. I was being asked for by name by film and TV composers. I was working nonstop, frequently seven days a week. My friend Mike Reed offered me the lead clarinet chair in a new Andrew Lloyd Webber show and I became one of an elite group of the highest paid musicians in London.

WL: *Amazing, after being penniless, you were in a position of being paid the most money a musician could earn in the UK! Les, can you describe more of the sort of work you were doing after this miracle happened?*

LC: A typical day could be performing a classical concert or an opera or in the studios, backing artists such as Barry Manilow, the Pet Shop Boys, Rod Stewart, and Cilla Black, or recording blockbuster film and TV series soundtracks and “jingles” (TV and radio advertisements).

WL: *You eventually left London to take a position in the Welsh National Opera. Did that give you a sense of going down in status, joining what was deemed as a “provincial” organization?*

LC: Yes, at first, I thought taking a job outside London could be a step down, but I soon learned that the WNO is a respected company the world over. I was offered the job after a trial of over a year against many top players.

WL: *Les, you have many recorded albums out there. How did you manage this given that they are expensive to produce?*

LC: Bill, that is another “miracle.” An amateur clarinetist and opera enthusiast had been following my career in the WNO and offered to sponsor me. He is a millionaire and has sponsored all of my CDs. My last album was recorded just before my 70th birthday.

WL: *How long did you work for the WNO?*

LC: I retired after more than 26 years and in my final opera season performed *Tosca* and *Forza del Destino*, eliciting

wonderful reviews from the press for my solos.

WL: *Why did you retire when you were still able to gain great reviews?*

LC: I was on top of my game and wanted to retire before I started to deteriorate. The WNO management wanted me to stay on and offered me a lighter work schedule, but my health had begun to deteriorate and I felt it was becoming more difficult to maintain the standards I set for myself. I decided to retire and make way for a younger player.

WL: *Now that you are retired, do you still play?*

LC: These days I am director of my own business, The Clarinet Company, Ltd., and play only to test and set up the instruments we sell.

WL: *Yes, I myself own an impressive, inexpensive C clarinet made by your company and I am delighted with it. I’m looking forward to trying more of your clarinets. What will you do with your Leblanc clarinets?*

LC: I am going to sell my beautiful, recently re-furbished Leblanc Opus clarinets on which I recorded all my CDs, including those with cello legend Stjepan Hauser of 2CELLOS fame. I think the Opus clarinets are the best I have ever played. The recordings on them with Stjepan Hauser were nominated for a *BBC Music Magazine* Chamber Award and gained five stars, and my recordings of the Brahms *Sonatas* were described by a

critic in *Clarinet & Saxophone* magazine as benchmark performances.

WL: *Can you sum up by listing some of the famous names with whom you have worked?*

LC: I have worked with many marvelous artists, including Hans Richter-Haaser, Bryn Terfel, Renée Fleming, Victoria de Los Angeles, José Carreras, Alfredo Kraus, Plácido Domingo, Willard White, Henry Mancini, and numerous others.

WL: *Finally, what advice could you offer aspiring musicians in our profession? Do you have any tips or recommendations?*

LC: Yes, I was offered this advice from a mentor as a child: “Les, there will always be players with fabulous technique—it is considered a paramount requirement these days. However, if you develop a beautiful sound with meaningful expression, that will set you apart from the crowd.” I always remembered that, and it has stood me in good stead. Also, always be prepared to perform at a moment’s notice at the highest level and always be kind and generous. Try not to become downhearted if there are career setbacks. Never cease trying to be the best that you can be.

WL: *Les, thanks so much for taking the time to talk to me. This truly is a fascinating insight to your career, and I wish you well in all your future ventures.*

LC: Thanks, Bill. It has been a pleasure to work with you on this and thanks for your kindness and patience. ♪♪



William Lipman served as principal clarinet with the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Lukas Foss. He also served as co-principal clarinet of the Cape Town Symphony under Erik Bergel. Lipman has been featured as a soloist with the Boston Pops in Symphony Hall, the Jerusalem Symphony, and other orchestras, chamber, and wind ensembles, and was a performing artist with the Bacco e Bach Music Festival in Monferrato, Italy. He is a founding member of Academia Musica chamber ensemble (clarinet, violin, and cello) and is a frequent performing artist with the Binyamin String Quartet. As clarinetist and saxophonist, he has performed with orchestras such as the Rochester Philharmonic, the Schubert Theatre in Boston, and the Boston Pops Orchestra under the direction of Arthur Fiedler. Lipman has commissioned works by composers such as Sydney Hodkinson, Warren Benson, Dennis Leclair, Joseph Bardamashvili (Ukraine/Israel), David Krivitsky (Moscow), and W.O. Smith.



CLARINETFEST® 2025 REPORT

by Brianne Finnell and Nathan Curry,
Summer 2025 ICA Interns

This year, the ICA kicked off its annual ClarinetFest® in one of Texas's most inviting cities, Fort Worth. The event was held in the Omni Hotel and Fort Worth Convention Center from July 9-13, and had over 2,100 attendees, marking it as the largest ClarinetFest® in history.

The theme for the conference was *Transcending Traditions*—honoring clarinet tradition while pushing into new, diverse, global, and contemporary expressions. Over 300 concerts, clinics, workshops, and performances were submitted to the Artistic Leadership Team and were performed for hundreds of attendees.

NEW HIGHLIGHTS & FEATURES

The conference featured many new elements such as the LGBTQIA+ choir, Clarinet Enthusiasts Workshop, Showcase

Stage featuring student clarinet ensembles, and a new proposal process for the selection of headlining artists and choir conductors. All of these aspects contributed

to a diverse, vibrant program of performances and represented many clarinetists of the world. The LGBTQIA+ Choir was conducted by Nicholas Councilor and featured premiere performances of *felt wings* by Amy Ian Hardemon and *All Together Now* by Sarah Lucas-Page. The Clarinet Enthusiasts Workshop was designed for clarinetists of all ages to participate in a clarinet choir performance, group warm-ups, specialized workshops, and sessions designed to help participants better navigate the clarinet. This workshop occurred prior to the start of the festival from July 7-8 and was conducted by Marilyn Woodruff, with a total of 30 participants.

EVENING PERFORMANCES

An evening concert featuring solo, chamber, and full ensemble performances followed each full day of activities. The opening evening concert featured the Orchard Ensemble string quartet alongside artists Gloria Umberto, Calvin Falwell, Greg Raden, Lara Díaz, and Jon Manasse. After



Browsing selections of sheet music in the Exhibit Hall



Clarinet enthusiasts workshop

the concert, a welcome reception was held for attendees to talk amongst the clarinet community. The Thursday evening concert closed the second night of ClarinetFest® with the Dallas Asian Winds, under the direction of conductor Jung Moo Lee. Performers included the Fabulous Four Clarinet Quartet, Henri Bok, David Cook, Sunshine Simmons, and Corrado Giuffredi. Giuffredi was joined by surprise guest Michael Lowenstern for a special duet performance of Michele Mangani's *Guisganderie* with the Dallas Asian Winds. The concert was followed by a late-night jazz program featuring John Wasson and the Strata Big Band with artists Mike McGinnis and Matthew Banks. The Friday evening concert featured the ClarinetFest® 2025 Orchestra conducted by David Itkin with soloists Ecesu Serteszen, Charles Neidich and Ayako Oshima, Thomas Piercy, Jonathan Russell, and Wesley Ferreira. This program also included a special performance of Michael Webster's piece *Echoes and Reflections* in recognition of his 2024 appointment as an Honorary Member. The finale evening concert featured solo and chamber performances by Julianne Kirk Doyle,



Sarah Manasreh-Decker, Haven Trio, and Rob Patterson. The concert also featured a surprise performance by Richard Hawkins featuring music by Poulenc and Brahms.

EDUCATIONAL & COMMUNITY ELEMENTS

ClarinetFest® 2025 showcased a robust commitment to education and community engagement through a wide array of masterclasses, youth programming, and hands-on equipment sessions. Together, these elements fostered a dynamic and inclusive environment for learning, connection, and growth among attendees.

ClarinetFest® 2025 included multiple masterclasses targeted to different levels. These sessions were excellent for observing high-impact public coaching and for modeling lesson structure. Listings included Lynn Musco (high-school focus), Rob Patterson (orchestral audition material), Shannon Kiewett (undergrad/pro audition material), Richard Hawkins (all age focus), Eric Mandat (unaccompanied work focus), Cecilia Kang (sonata repertoire), and Kristen Denny Chambers (middle school focus). Clarinet-



A wide variety of products were featured in the Exhibit Hall



Fest® explicitly provided student-focused programming: scavenger hunts and Exhibit Hall Bingo for younger attendees, meet-and-greets with soloists, and opportunities for students to attend recitals and observe pedagogy workshops. Major manufacturers and accessory makers held vendor demos, equipment trials, and “how-to” vendor sessions (e.g., reed and mouthpiece demos, instrument setups, etc.). These events helped teachers evaluate gear and new technologies in person.

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EXHIBITS, VENDORS & EQUIPMENT

The ClarinetFest® exhibit hall featured multiple vendors, demonstrations, trials, discussions, and active features. Attendees also had the opportunity to see and trial a full range of clarinet gear including instruments, mouthpieces, reeds, accessories, bags, and more. This year’s exhibit hall included dozens of vendors that spanned over 28,000 square feet, marking it as one of the largest of its kind in the event’s history.



CLARINETFEST® 2025 COMPETITION REPORTS

ICA YOUNG ARTIST COMPETITION 2025

by Christopher Nichols, coordinator

The 2025 ICA Young Artist Competition received 34 applications from six countries. Preliminary round literature included Krzysztof Penderecki *Prelude for Clarinet Solo*, and a choice of Reynaldo Hahn *Sarabande et thème varié*, Phillipe Gaubert *Fantasie*, or Augusta Holmes *Fantasie*. Semifinal round literature included Johannes Brahms *Sonata in F minor*, op. 120, No. 1 (movements II and IV) and Jenni Brandon “The Starlight Night” from *Starry Night*. Final round literature was Scott McAllister *Black Dog*.

The judges for the preliminary (recorded) round were Mariam Adam (USA),

Barbara Borowicz (Poland), Šarūnas Jankauskas (USA), Danre Strydom (South Africa), and Antonio Tinelli (Italy). The judges invited 12 semifinalists to perform at ClarinetFest® in Fort Worth: Victor Battista (USA), Giancarlos Jose Carvajal Fonseca (Venezuela), Minghan Di (China), Chengkai Hu (China), Kai Kang (China), Xiang Tao Ke (Canada), Joshua Kelley (USA), Hyeokwoo Kweon (USA), Jason Marquez (Philippines), Tomas Milevicius (Lithuania), Ashrey Shah (USA), and Ayuna Sumi (Japan). The semifinal judges were Amy Advocat (USA), Erin Cameron (USA), Asher Carlson (USA), Laura Grantier (USA), and Javier Vinasco (Colombia/USA). The semifinals took place on Thursday, and the judges selected six finalists: Victor Battista, Giancarlos Jose

Carvajal Fonseca, Chengkai Hu, Kai Kang, Hyeokwoo Kweon, Ashrey Shah, and Ayuna Sumi. The finals took place on Saturday morning. The judges for the final round were: Anthony Costa (USA), Wesley Ferreira (Canada), Julia Heinen (USA), Jeffrey O’Flynn (USA), and Jonathan Russell (USA). Gabe Sanchez (USA) served as the collaborative pianist for both the semifinal and final rounds.

The judges selected three prizewinners and an honorable mention. First prize was awarded to Ashrey Shah. Shah is a student at University of Southern California studying with Yehuda Gilad. He received \$5,000 and an appearance at ClarinetFest® 2026 in South Korea. Second prize was awarded to Giancarlos Jose Carvajal Fonseca. Carvajal is a student of Spencer Prewitt at Austin Peay State University. He received \$2,000. Third prize was awarded to Hyeokwoo Kweon. Kweon is studying at Soochow University with Thomas Martin. He received \$1,000. Kai Kang was recognized with an honorable mention. Kang studies at Zhejiang Conservatory of Music with Dejun Dong.

Congratulations to the winners and to all the competitors for their superb musical accomplishments. ICA expresses gratitude to the Walder Foundation for their generous sponsorship, which included competition prizes and \$500 travel grants for all semifinalists.

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ICA ORCHESTRAL AUDITION COMPETITION 2025

by Calvin Fahwell, coordinator

The 2025 ICA Orchestral Audition Competition welcomed 14 applicants from the United States and China. The level of artistry and preparation was exceptional, reflecting the international reach and growing prestige of this event.



Back Row (Left to Right) – Final Round Adjudicators – Anthony Costa, Julia Heinen, Jeffrey O’Flynn, Jonathan Russell, Wesley Ferreira

Front Row (Left to Right) – Winner Ashrey Shah (USA); Honorable Mention, Kai Kang (China); 2nd Place, Giancarlo Jose Carvajal Fonseca (Venezuela); 3rd Place, Hyeokwoo Kweon (USA)

The preliminary round was adjudicated by Bharat Chandra (Sarasota Orchestra), Natalie Hoe (The Florida Orchestra), Rie Suzuki (Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia/University of Central Florida), and Aiden Wong (Vancouver Symphony Orchestra). The panel commented on the overall excellence of the applicants and reached unanimous agreement on the finalists advancing to the next round.

The final round took place during ClarinetFest® 2025, where contestants performed in a randomly selected order behind a screen to ensure fairness. The judges for the final round were Shannon Kiewitt ("The President's Own" U.S. Marine Band), Cesar Palacio (Louisville Orchestra), Danny Goldman (Nashville Symphony Orchestra), and Mackenzie Austin (United States Coast Guard Band). Asher Carlson (Venice (FL) Symphony/University of South Florida) served as the proctor/union steward and ensured that the process was fair.

In addition to monetary awards, both first and second place winners received a custom clarinet mouthpiece generously donated by Gleichweit Mouthpieces & Barrels.

First Place – Kean Xiong

Born in Xi'an, China, Kean Xiong is currently pursuing a doctoral degree at the University of North Texas in the studio of Professor Kimberly Cole-Luevano. He previously earned his master's degree from the Yale School of Music, where he studied with Professor David Shifrin. Kean has performed at numerous international festivals, including the Lucerne Festival, Young Euro Classic Festival, and Aspen Music Festival. He was awarded the Irving Gilmore "George W. Miles" Fellowship and Scholarship at Yale University in both 2021 and 2022. He received a \$1,000 prize and a Gleichweit mouthpiece.



Kean Xiong

Second Place – Andrew Wang

Andrew is currently a first-year master's student at the University of Michigan pur-



2025 ICA Orchestral Audition Competition finalists and judges.

suing clarinet performance. He recently graduated from the University of Houston, where he studied with Chester Rowell. Andrew aspires to become a collegiate clarinet professor and is passionate about contributing to the next generation of clarinetists. He received a \$500 prize and a Gleichweit mouthpiece.



Andrew Wang

Congratulations to the winners and all competitors on their outstanding performances and musical accomplishments. The ICA extends its gratitude to the judges, organizers, and sponsors who make this event possible each year.



ICA COMPOSITION COMPETITION 2025

by Carrie RavenStem, coordinator

The winner of the ICA Solo Composition Competition this year was Cedric James Monroe (Bahamas), for *Antillean Sagas Five Program Pieces for Clarinet and Piano*. The piece was performed at ClarinetFest® 2025 by Alexandra Chea (clarinet) and Gail Novak (piano). An honorable mention was awarded to Alexander Tleuov



Composer Cedric Jame Monroe with soloist Alexandra Chea

(Korolov City, Russian Federation) for *Sonata for clarinet and piano (I, II movements)*. The Chamber Composition winner was Karalyn Schubring (Mesa, Arizona), for *Cats' ConunDrum for Wind Quintet*. The quintet was performed at ClarinetFest® 2025 by Paradise Winds. An honorable mention was awarded to Gerson de Sousa Batista (Aveiro, Portugal) for *Secrets of the Clarin for 5 clarinets*, and to Zhou Yifan (Hubei Province, China) for *Weightlessness for mixed ensemble*.

38 countries were represented this year, including Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahamas, Bahrain, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Columbia, Cyprus, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iran, Israel, Italy, Korea, Madagascar, Malta, Mexico, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Russia, Serbia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Uruguay, USA, and Wales.

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ICA HIGH SCHOOL COMPETITION 2025

by Wonkak Kim, coordinator

The prizewinners of the 2025 ICA High School Competition included:

First Place (\$1,000 and a new Gala clarinet from Buffet-Crampon):

Do-Yeong Lee (South Korea)

Second Place (\$750): Yeong Jae Kim (South Korea)

Third Place (\$500): Owen Burch (USA)

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ICA RESEARCH COMPETITION 2025

by Madelyn Moore, coordinator

The 2025 ICA Research Competition named three finalists:

Sarah Lucas-Page “Reshaping the Stage: Fat Body Politics and the Clarinet Performance World.”

Charlie Zang “A Quantitative Analysis of the Effect of Reed Storage Humidity in Clarinet Timbre”

Bixby Kennedy “Completing Stravinsky’s Arrangement of L’Histoire du Soldat for clarinet, violin, and piano”

Sarah Lucas-Page won first place (\$1,000 and guaranteed publication in *The Clarinet*); Charlie Zang won second place (\$500).

The preliminary round judges were Jeremy Wohletz and Vanessa Davis, and final round judges were Sarah Manasreh-Decker, Thomas Kim, Natalie Szabo, and Nadia Sofokleous.



Paradise Winds performing the winning chamber work *Cats’ ConunDrum for Wind Quintet* by Karalyn Schubring



2025 ICA High School Solo Competition winners, judges, and pianist



2025 ICA Research Competition adjudicators and finalists from left to right: Nadia Sofokleous, Sarah Manasreh-Decker, Sarah Lucas-Page (first place winner), Charlie Zang (second place winner, Bixby Kennedy (finalist), Natalie Szabo, and Thomas Kim.

2025 ICA HONORARY MEMBERS AND LEGENDS

ICA HONORARY MEMBERS

In accordance with ICA bylaws, the ICA has a special category of Honorary Membership for persons of “unusual distinction.” The following clarinetists were approved as Honorary Members by vote at the ICA general business meeting in 2024, and received their awards in 2025:

TAO CHUNXIAO

Tao Chunxiao is regarded as one of the most influential clarinet players in China. She won third place in the Seventh World Youth Festival Wind Music Competition in 1959, making her the first female clarinetist from China to win an award in an international music competition. Tao studied at the Southwest Conservatory of Music (Sichuan Conservatory of Music) in 1953 and moved to the Czech Republic in 1956 to study at the Prague Conservatory of Music where she graduated in 1961. She is a professor at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, and has served in various roles in the past, including Director of Orchestral Instruments (Central Conservatory of Music), President of the

Chinese Clarinet Association, Member of the Committee on Arts Education at the Ministry of Education of China, and Director of the Education and Technology Department at the Ministry of Culture of China. Additionally, she has been invited to many significant international clarinet festivals and competitions as a member of the adjudication panel.

JULIE DEROCHE

Julie DeRoche has had a rich and varied career as an orchestral and chamber music performer, administrator, pedagogue, and corporate consultant. A student of Robert Marcellus and Clark Brody, she received her degree in clarinet performance from Northwestern University in 1981. She has

been a member of the clarinet faculty at DePaul University since 1984, and in 1985 added the duties of Coordinator of the Woodwind Department. In 2006, she was appointed Chair of Performance Studies, a position she held until 2019. Julie also



Tao Chunxiao



Julie DeRoche

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served as Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs and retired from DePaul at the end of the spring 2024 term. Throughout her career, Julie has been highly involved with the International Clarinet Association, serving as Treasurer and as the first female President of the ICA, as well as hosting the 1994 ICA ClarinetFest®. She is often heard in ICA recitals and masterclasses, served as an adjudicator for the Young Artist Competition, and currently serves on the ICA's Advisory Board.

ANTHONY MCGILL

Hailed for his “trademark brilliance, penetrating sound, and rich character,” clarinetist Anthony McGill is one of classical music’s most recognizable, multifaceted figures. In addition to his international solo and chamber music career, McGill is principal clarinet of the New York Philharmonic—the first African-American principal player in the organization’s history. He is the recipient of the 2020 Avery Fisher Prize and performed at the 2009 inauguration of President Barack Obama, premiering a piece written for the occasion by John Williams. In the aftermath of the killing of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, Anthony launched a powerful musical protest video urging people to *#TakeTwoKnees* in demonstration against the death of Floyd and historic racial injustice. His video went viral, and hundreds of artists and citizens amplified the message and

responded to the protest with their own videos using the hashtag *#TakeTwoKnees*. A native of Chicago, Illinois, Anthony is a graduate of the Curtis Institute of Music, and previously served as the principal clarinet of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra and associate principal clarinet of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra.

ANNETTE LUYBEN

Annette Luyben started playing E♭ clarinet at the age of 6, taking lessons from her father, Robert Luyben. She spent four summers at the University of Kansas Midwestern Music and Art Camp and attended KU where she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in Education (Social Studies emphasis) in 1965. Luyben taught American History and Government at Oak Park High School, retiring from teaching in 2003. Her first attendance at an ICA ClarinetFest® was in 1983 and she has attended and exhibited at every ICA ClarinetFest® held in the United States ever since. Luyben Music has advertised in every International Clarinet Association journal since the very beginning. Following the passing of her parents in 1991, Annette assumed the role as President of Luyben Music. Despite closing the storefront in 2020, Annette and her longtime sidekick Rich Coble continue the legacy of being the leader in supplying clarinet music through mail order sales. They also continue the sales of the Luyben ligature that was the invention of her father in 1965.

Annette comes from a family who has a rich heritage of involvement in the ICA, and she is one of the ICA’s most valued supporters of the annual ClarinetFests® and of our organization.

ROBERT WALZEL

A Texas native, clarinetist Robert Walzel received his BM and MM at the University of Houston and a DMA from the University of North Texas. Performing extensively in essentially all mediums featuring clarinet and saxophone, he is hailed by critics as a “remarkable clarinet virtuoso” possessing “great finesse,” a “rich, warm, focused tone,” and “effortless technique.” Featured in performances throughout the United States and around the world, Bob has performed in 30 countries and presented master classes and lectures at several of the world’s leading music schools. Partnering with pianist Steven Glaser as the *Con Fuoco* Duo, a collaboration extending 30 years, Bob toured as an Artistic Ambassador for the United States Information Agency. He most recently served as dean of the University of Kansas School of Music from 2010-2022. Previous administrative leadership roles include Sam Houston State University and the University of Utah. He is a Past President of the International Clarinet Association and served two terms as a commissioner on the Commission on Accreditation for the National Association of Schools of Music.



Photo by Martin Romero



ICA LEGENDS

According to the ICA bylaws, the ICA's highest honor of Legend is reserved for "posthumous awarding to the indisputable leaders and luminaries in the field." The following clarinetists were approved as ICA Legends by vote at the ICA general business meeting in 2025:

PETE FOUNTAIN

Pete Fountain (1930–2016) was a renowned American jazz clarinetist celebrated for his New Orleans playing style and vibrant personality. He was one of the city's most recognizable and commercially successful artists. After achieving local fame with various Dixie swing bands, Fountain gained national notoriety when he became a featured performer on *The Lawrence Welk Show* and *The Tonight Show*. He performed at the White House for four different presidents and played for Pope John Paul II during a papal mass in 1987. Despite his wide commercial success, Fountain remained devoted to his hometown of New Orleans throughout his career, performing at his local jazz clubs for more than 40 years. He is still considered one of New Orleans's most beloved musical ambassadors and was inducted into the Louisiana Music Hall of Fame in 2007.

GUSTAV LANGENUS

Gustav Langenus (1883–1957) was a Belgian clarinetist best known today for his 1913 method book, an important pedagogical method for the Boehm system clarinet. He attended the Royal Brussels Conservatory and graduated in 1900 after five years to win the first prize in clarinet. Upon graduating, the 18-year-old Langenus toured in

Europe with the Sousa Band. In 1902, he emigrated to England, playing in Henry Wood's Queens Hall Orchestra in London and as solo clarinetist with the Duke of Devonshire's Orchestra. He was eventually recruited to the New York Symphony and New York Philharmonic, retiring after 13 years to devote himself to solo performances and his main love, chamber music. During this time, he engaged in his longest lasting musical endeavor and co-founded the New York Chamber Music Society.

A highly regarded teacher, Langenus was a frequent publisher and editor of numerous works for clarinet and was considered the foremost authority on woodwind instruments. He was a prolific writer, and until retirement he produced an unending series of articles, pamphlets, and short magazine contributions. He even published an early woodwind journal almost single-handedly in the 1920s.

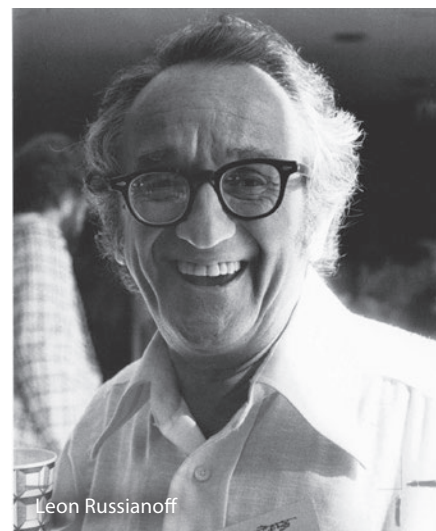
LEON RUSSIANOFF

The renowned pedagogue Leon Russianoff (1916–1990) studied with Simeon Bellison and Daniel Bonade. He served on the faculty of both the Manhattan School of Music and The Juilliard School for many years. His teaching in the mid to latter part of the 20th century produced a virtual "who's who" of clarinetists.

Russianoff was a brilliant and enthusiastic teacher. His instruction was steeped in fundamentals, combined with many of his own hand-written tonal and technical exercises. Lessons could be characterized by a high energy, demanding, and supportive approach. His amazing ability to connect with the inner musician in each student produced multiple generations of top professional clarinetists. He worked to cultivate the individual strengths and personality of each student. Russianoff was a master psychologist who emphasized the fundamentals while developing the unique artistic voice of each student.

CIRO SCARPONI

Ciro Scarponi (1950–2006) was an Italian clarinetist and composer. After graduating at a very young age with honors at the "Francesco Morlacchi" Conservatory in Perugia, he immediately established himself among the most prestigious contemporary interpreters for his instrument. An authentic innovator of clarinet technique, he performed numerous premieres, including works dedicated to him by Bussotti, Donatoni, Gentile, Gentilucci, Morricone, Nono, Panni, Pedini, Renna, Sciarrino, Sulpizi, Ugoletti, Mencherini, and Bоргioni. He was the favorite clarinetist of

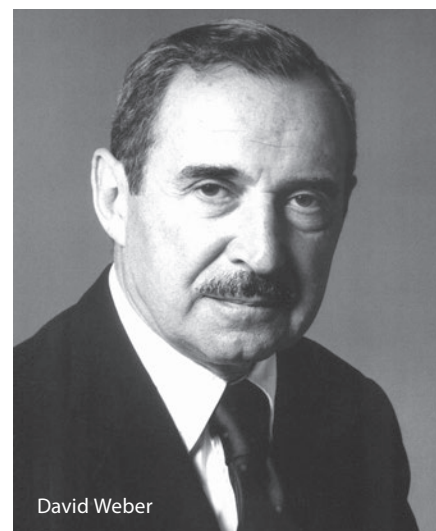




Ciro Scarponi



Harry Sparnaay



David Weber

Luigi Nono and Giuseppe Sinopoli, among others. Of particular note was his long collaboration with Nono at the “Experimentalstudio der Heinrich Strobel-Stiftung des Südwestfunks” in Freiburg. Author of various writings on the clarinet, he published an important teaching method distributed widely by Casa Ricordi.

HARRY SPARNAAY

Harry Sparnaay (1944–2017) was one of the world’s most influential bass clarinet players. For many years Sparnaay was professor of bass clarinet and contemporary music at the conservatories of Amsterdam and Utrecht, where his unique bass clarinet program attracted students from all over the world. His book *The Bass Clarinet: A Personal History* was published in 2011 and has become an invaluable resource to bass clarinetists and composers. In 1972, he became the first bass clarinetist to win the prestigious Gaudeamus International Interpreters Competition. Sparnaay was a driving force in the formation of the bass clarinet repertoire through his work with composers and his advocacy of the bass clarinet as a solo and chamber instrument. More than 650 compositions were written for him by composers such as Berio, Donatoni, Feldman, Xenakis, and Yun. He was a featured performer with many major orchestras and ensembles, including the BBC Symphony Orchestra, the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra, the Royal

Concertgebouw Orchestra, Ensemble Intercontemporain, and the Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra.

DAVID WEBER

David Weber (1913–2006) was a pioneer of American woodwind-playing and a master teacher. A student of both Bellison and Bonade, Weber was firmly planted at the start of modern American clarinet playing. To study with Weber was to become part of the fabric that binds generations of clarinetists together. He sat under conductors such as Toscanini and Stokowski, performing with the New York Philharmonic, Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, NBC Symphony, and was principal of the New York City Ballet Orchestra from 1964 until 1986. He later retired from performing and taught at The Juilliard School, mentoring students who would occupy orchestral seats around the country, spanning Annapolis, Milwaukee, Dallas, New York, and Cleveland.

His teaching was his greatest gift to clarinetists. He made a profound influence on the sound of the clarinet, with his own being full, rich, resonant, and pure. His constant goal for students was beauty of tone. He once spoke of proper tone in an article for *The Clarinet*, saying, “Think of colors: it’s got to be gold, silver, blue velvet. You have to reach out and touch it.” When Weber was asked what he felt his legacy was, he thoughtfully considered the question and replied, “I gave a good lesson.”



Find information about ICA Honorary Member or ICA Legend nominations at clarinet.org. 🗨️



CLARINETFEST® 2026

by Wonkak Kim

ClarinetFest® 2026 will be held July 7–11 in the coastal city of Incheon, South Korea—the first ICA festival in Asia since the 2005 Tokyo ClarinetFest®. Set in Songdo International City, a modern district known for its cultural and architectural innovation, the event will bring together clarinetists from around the world for a week of performances, lectures, and community.

The festival will open on July 7 with a Gala Concert in the spectacular Art Center Incheon Concert Hall, one of Korea's most advanced performance venues. The Hankyung Philharmonic Orchestra will share the stage with an exceptional lineup of headliner soloists, including international star Annelien van Wauwe, Christelle Pochet of l'Orchestre National de France, and Jerry Chae of Korea National University of Arts. The program will also spotlight the remarkable talents of Se-Yeon and Do-Yeong Lee, two sisters who captured first prize in the ICA's Junior Young Artist Competitions in 2024 and 2025, respectively. Their appearance marks a celebration of the next generation of clarinetists.

Throughout the week, attendees will enjoy the newly introduced International Clarinet Choir Series, showcasing the



global community of large clarinet ensembles. The Seoul Clarinet Ensemble, led by Hyungon Kim and Jungmin Song, will headline the series, joined by clarinet choirs from more than a dozen countries across five continents. With hundreds of players expected to participate, ClarinetFest® 2026 aims to set another Guinness World Record for the largest clarinet choir ever assembled. The evening “Clarinet Ensemble Headliner” concert will feature premier groups including the Kaguya Basset Horn Trio (Japan), Bass Clarinet Association of Canada, and Magic Clarinet Quartet (Taiwan), promising an unforgettable celebration of ensemble performance.

The festival's Jazz Night will spotlight Japanese jazz icons Eiji Taniguchi and Ko-Ko-Ya, alongside Spain's Oriol Marès & Talal Fayad Quartet. Afternoon headliner concerts will present the vast spectrum of clarinet artistry, from historically informed performances on period instruments to cutting-edge works for clarinet and electronics. The festival will close with a final concert featuring a Korean premier wind ensemble with soloists Javier Llopis (Tenerife Professional Conservatory of Music), Soo-Young Lee (Estonian National Symphony Orchestra), Hosup Song (Chugye University for the Arts), and Jose Franch-Ballester (University of British Columbia), a fitting culmination to a week of extraordinary artistry and international camaraderie.

Located just 30–60 minutes from Incheon International Airport, the Songdo ConvensiA provides a modern and spacious home for the conference. Within walking distance are numerous hotels at a range of price points, including the Sheraton Grand Hotel, Oakwood Premier, Bridge Hotel, and Orakai Hotel. The ICA is working to secure discounted room blocks, with details expected to be announced in early 2026.

Attendees will also have the option to join organized day tours through FNF Korea Travel before and after the main conference. These guided small-group excursions will offer ClarinetFest® guests a chance to experience Korean culture at a discounted rate, adding an extra layer of discovery to their visit. Details and pricing are available at clarinet.org/clarinetfest-2026.

Returning for its second year, the Pre-ClarinetFest® Enthusiast Prelude Workshop will precede the main festival, offering early arrivals a unique opportunity for in-depth study, collaboration, and community building. We look forward to welcoming the global clarinet community to Incheon next July. 🎷🇰🇷



Incheon Arts Center Concert Hall



ICA GENERAL BUSINESS MEETING

by Melissa Morales

The ICA general business meeting took place in Board Room 6 at the Omni Fort Worth Hotel in Fort Worth, Texas, on Friday, July 11, 2025, at 2:30PM Central Standard Time. The following is a summary of the discussed topics.

WELCOME BY PRESIDENT: CATHY WOOD

Cathy welcomed those in attendance and introduced the board of directors (Diane Barger, past president; Christopher Nichols, president elect; Kip Franklin, treasurer; Melissa Morales, secretary), and Jessica Harrie (executive director). In her opening address, she also offered the following land acknowledgment: “We respectfully acknowledge that Fort Worth is located on the traditional lands of the Jumanos, Wichita, Nʉmʉnʉm (Comanche), Kiikaapoi (Kickapoo), and Tawakoni peoples. These lands continue to be a gathering place for people from many backgrounds and from around the world. We honor the history, traditions, and gifts of all Indigenous peoples who were sustained by these lands and give thanks to them. We are grateful that these lands continue to provide enrichment for many people today.”

She followed with an acknowledgement to the ClarinetFest® 2025 artistic director and her artistic leadership team for their incredible work putting together a welcoming and impactful conference for all of us. That team was Mary Alice Druhan, Shawn Copeland, Jody Webb, Andrea Vos-Rochefort, Corey Mackey, Season Cowley, Timothy Bagert, Karen Bronson, Kristen Boulet, and Gary Whitman.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT: JESSICA HARRIE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Jessica reported that last year in Ireland we had 2,800 members with a 40 to 60 split between international and US members. This conference has surged our membership to 3,842. We have also added an additional membership tier for youth under 18 years old. This tier has approximately 300 members that were able to join for free. College students are still able to join for \$10 until December 31.

INTERNATIONAL VICE PRESIDENT REPORT, READ BY DIANE BARGER

Diane Barger read the international vice president report in the absence of Luca Saracca. It was reported that we were able to add two sister organizations this year: Culture Tones Organization (Cyprus) and Japanese Clarinet Association (JPC). These organizations are in addition to our current partner organizations: Accademia Italiana del Clarinetto (AIC), Associação Brasileira de Clarinetistas (ABdC), Spanish Clarinet Association (ADEC), Valencia Clarinet Association (AVC), Austrian Clarinet Society (ACS), CLARIPERU, German Clarinet Association (DKG), and Luxembourg Clarinet Association (LCA). The international council is currently working to bring in the Association Française de la Clarinette and the new European Clarinet Association. There has also been growth in our country chair representatives with the addition of Sayyod Mirzomurodov for Uzbekistan. There are intentions to continue to accelerate our growth of international representation from our current count of 1,328 members at the time of this meeting.

FINANCIAL REPORT: KIP FRANKLIN, TREASURER

Kip Franklin presented his annual report to the board ahead of the Texas conference and reiterated its contents during the general meeting. He reported a bank balance of \$200,655 as of July 11, 2025, nearly double our balance compared to this time last year. Most major expenses are paid in advance and are already off the books. This conference has cost approximately \$211,000, which was a 10% decrease from last year in Dublin. A huge thank you to our sponsors for providing a record-breaking sponsorship amount of \$66,500 to assist with these expenses. Our revenues versus expenses from this conference will be included in the annual financial report in the March issue of *The Clarinet*.

Kip reminded the attendees that the ICA has nine separate funds for tax deductible donations in support of the ICA's continued growth and support of the clarinet community. That includes our General Fund, Centennial Fund, Competition Fund, Travel Grant Fund, Instrument Donation Fund, Loren Kitt Scholarship Fund, Harry Sparnaay Scholarship Fund, Memorial Donations, and the

Adopt-a-Member Program. We will continue our annual donation drive on Giving Tuesday as this drive has aided in financing our operational and conference expenses.

Executive Director Jessica Harrie also added that this year we received a collection of historical recordings on tape of past Denver Clarinet Clinic and ClarinetFest® events. With backing from Keith Koons, Alan Stanek, Gerry Errante, and Jessica Harrie, along with the support of Frank's son Andy Stachow, the first three tapes have been remastered and preserved for our history. We have opened a new fund to help finance the preservation of the remaining tapes. The list of the remaining tapes and recordings of the completed tapes can be found on our website.

STATE CHAIR REPORT: MELISSA MORALES, SECRETARY

Melissa Morales read the state chair report for coordinator Dawn Lindblade-Evans. The state chairs have had a busy year with several new chairs bringing fresh energy as we approach 2026. New chairs include: Taylor Barlow (Alabama), Tony Costa (Pennsylvania), Erin Dowler (Michigan), Vince Dominguez (Rhode Island), Margali Grenier (Virginia and West Virginia), Maryanne Lacaille (Washington), and Cecilia Kang (Indiana) at the time of this meeting.

The annual state chair event, Clareidoscope, was held for its fifth year and was a success with approximately 150 attendees and 46 competition entries. Master classes were led by Mariam Adam and Stephanie Zelnick with prize donations from 12 industry partners. New dates for this event will be announced after ClarinetFest®.

JOURNAL REPORT: RACHEL YODER, EDITOR

New development within the journal team is the addition of a new editor for *The Clarinet [Online]*: Jeremy Ruth took over this position after Sarah Manasreh's departure. The ICA committees are also beginning to take on a larger role by collaboratively writing articles for *The Clarinet*. The DEIA committee held a call for articles, and these have been reviewed by the editorial board and members of the DEIA committee. Selected articles will be published in a series

beginning with the September issue. The Jazz and Global Music Committee has also published a series featuring influential albums and a YouTube playlist in the journal and at *The Clarinet [Online]*. The Pedagogy Committee has also contributed articles featuring perspectives from multiple members of this committee.

The "Master Class" column has been featuring a series on the Béla Kovács *Homages*, at the same time as several feature articles on the origin and analysis of these pieces. Jana Starling has written an article analyzing data from the new ClarinetFest® Program Library and Database.

Rachel has served as editor for the past 10 years and upon stepping down from the position, offered a hearty thanks to several community members and colleagues throughout her years. She gave a huge thank you to Jessica Harrie, the current board, and leaders during her tenure such as: Cathy Wood, Diane Barger, Denise Gainey, Mitch Estrin, and Caroline Hartig. Emily Kerski has been an excellent associate editor, managing the edits for "Clarinetes" and ICA announcements. Rachel expressed that she has enjoyed working with all journal contributors and experiencing their pedagogy, research, and other contributions from across the globe. It has been "one of the highest honors of [her] life."

Moving to the future, a new editor has been named: Michael Thrasher will be assuming the role after an extensive and thoughtful search. He comes from a long history of excellence and academic integrity, having been involved with the ICA for many years already and currently serving as dean of the College of Communication and Fine Arts at Troy University.

COMPETITION REPORTS

Madelyn Moore opened the competition reports by speaking about the Research Competition. We had a small pool of applicants, with only three submissions this year. The preliminary round judges were Jeremy Wohletz and Vanessa Davis, and final round judges were Sarah Manasreh-Decker, Thomas Kim, Natalie Szabo, and Nadia Sofokleous. Second place winner with a prize of \$500 was Charlie Zhang, a rising freshman at Northwestern University with his paper "A Quantitative Analysis of the Effect of Reed Storage Humidity on Clarinet

Timbre." First place and the \$1000 prize along with guaranteed publication in *The Clarinet* went to an incoming graduate student at the University of North Carolina-Greensboro, Sarah Lucas-Page, for her paper "Reshaping the Stage: Fat Body Politics and the Clarinet Performance World."

Christopher Nichols spoke about the Young Artist Competition which was in progress at the time of this meeting. There were 34 applicants from seven countries and four continents. We give a heartfelt thank you to the Walder Foundation for generously sponsoring this competition for several years. Please see the ClarinetFest® report in this journal for full details on all judges, repertoire, and competition winners.

Wonkak Kim reported on the High School Competition, which finished moments before the meeting. The third place winner and recipient of \$500 was Owen Burch (USA), second place and the recipient of \$750 was Yeong Jae Kim (South Korea), and the first place winner and recipient of \$1,000 and a Gala clarinet from Buffet Crampon was Do-Yeong Lee (South Korea).

Diane Barger addressed the Orchestral Audition Competition taking place during the time of the general meeting in place of Coordinator Calvin Falwell. They had 14 applicants from both the US and China. Please see the ClarinetFest® Report for final results of the competition.

Carrie RavenStem provided details on the Composition Competition. The competition this year had an incredibly broad reach with 96 solo entries and 126 chamber music entries from 39 different countries. The competition is generously sponsored by JW Pepper with winners from both categories receiving \$1000. In the solo category, this year's winner was Cedric James Munroe (Bahamas). In the chamber category, the winner was Karalyn Schubring (USA). The winning works will be recorded by members of the new music committee, and will be performed at the New Music Weekend, an online event the New Music Committee hosts.

ICA HONORS

Cathy read the biographies of honorary member nominees James Campbell, Patti Carlson, Naomi Drucker, Lee Livengood,

Gary Whitman, and surprise addition Jessica Harrie. Executive Director Jessica Harrie has served the ICA since 2016 and has selflessly dedicated her time and career to furthering the mission of the ICA. We are all immeasurably grateful for her contributions and commitment to the ICA. Those in attendance voted and all nominees were accepted unanimously.

Pete Fountain, Gustav Langenus, Leon Russianoff, Ciro Scarponi, Harry Sparnaay, and David Weber were nominated for induction as ICA Legends, the organization's highest posthumous honor. Those in attendance voted and all nominees were accepted unanimously. Members are encouraged to review the guidelines for Honorary Membership and ICA Legends (see ICA Announcements in this issue) and submit nomination materials to secretary@clarinet.org.

Lastly, a new and highly regarded award was given to Dean Holden for his outstanding contributions and exceptional

service. He has assisted the ICA with the program book, grant writing, tech support, and championing any task assigned by his wife and partner, Jessica Harrie. He was bestowed the Distinguished Service Award. In recognition of both Jessica and Dean's selfless service, the ICA has also renamed the Instrument Donation Program in Jessica's honor.

CLARINETFEST® 2026 AND 2027

Wonkak Kim (artistic director) spoke about the exciting events and venue for the upcoming ClarinetFest® 2026 to take place in Korea, July 8-12, 2026. ClarinetFest® 2027 was announced to take place in Salt Lake City, Utah, under the guidance of Laura Grantier and Jeffrey O'Flynn (co-artistic directors), July 7-11, 2027.

CLOSING REMARKS:

CATHY WOOD, ICA PRESIDENT

Cathy thanked everyone in the room including the board and executive direc-

tor, committees, artistic leadership team, and attendees for coming to our Annual General Meeting. It takes many hands to make light work and the efforts from every member at every level are felt and make a difference for our community. The meeting adjourned at 3:28PM. 🙏

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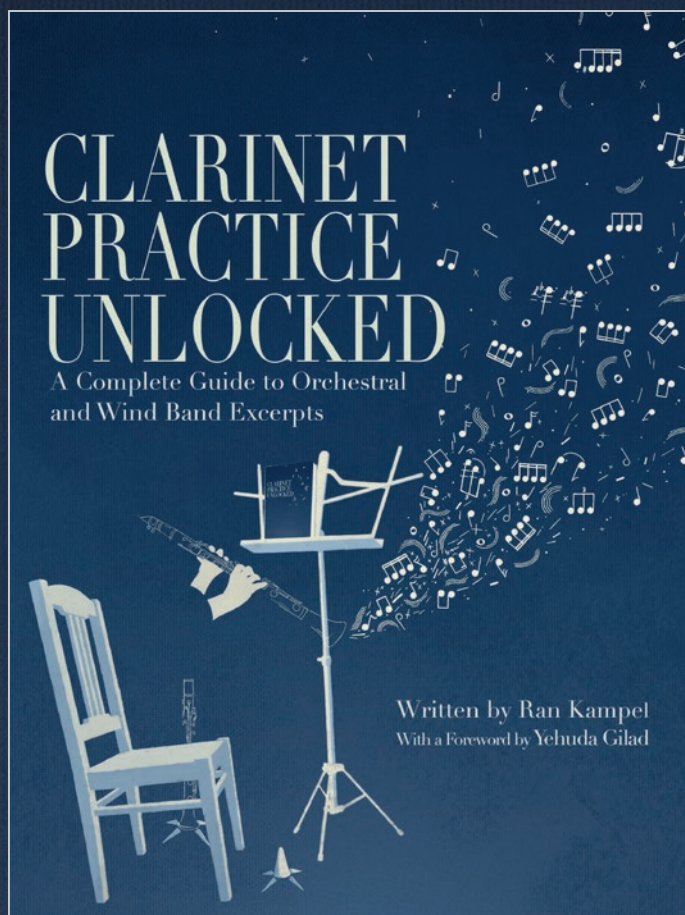
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thoughtful reminders...I will definitely be using these techniques in my own practice and will
encourage my students to do the same."*

**- Benjamin Adler, Associate Principal Clarinet and E-flat clarinet,
New York Philharmonic Orchestra**



REVIEWS

MUSIC



Gustav Mahler. *Symphony No. 4*, Movement 4, “Wir Geniessen die himmlische Freuden” for soprano, B $\flat$ /A clarinet (optional basset clarinet), and piano. Arranged by Arnon Zimra. ArtOnMusic Publishers. \$40 or €40. Arnon.zimra@gmail.com.

Any clarinetist who has played Gustav Mahler’s *Fourth Symphony* knows how much fun it is to play the fourth movement: animal sounds and sleigh bells, a soprano, and it all starts with a clarinet

solo! Luckily enough, there is an excellent new arrangement of the movement to add to the clarinet chamber repertoire, arranged for soprano, clarinet (in B $\flat$ /A with optional basset clarinet), and piano by composer Arnon Zimra.

The arrangement is masterfully done with intriguing lines for the clarinet that are pulled primarily from the orchestral clarinet, flute, and violin lines. Although not a clarinetist himself, Zimra clearly knows how to write idiomatically for the clarinet. The way the clarinet weaves through the piano part and intertwines with the voice, we could almost imagine Mahler composing this trio version himself. We do not hear this arrangement as a weakened version of the original symphonic movement, missing the instruments we are used to hearing. Instead, this trio is successful as a reimagined and new version of this musical material.

As well as being a prolific composer, Zimra is a pianist and recording artist. There are several versions of this trio arrangement available to listen to on streaming services, including one performed by Zimra as pianist. He has also written another Mahler arrangement for the same instrumentation, *Vier Lieder eines Fahrenden Gesellen*. Zimra’s Mahler arrangements are a delightful addition to the chamber repertoire for clarinet and voice.

The soprano line is unaltered from the original, which is convenient for the singer. The clarinet part is to be performed on both A and B $\flat$ clarinets, with an optional several bars for the basset clarinet at the end of the work. The only slight disappointment from this piece is that there are not more opportunities to play the basset notes if the player chooses to use the basset clarinet.

The score is well done by ArtOnMusic Publishing. However, it should be noted that this publishing company does not seem to exist currently. It seems a challenge to obtain a printed copy of this work, although it seems to be available on several websites for free. The most reliable way to purchase a copy is to reach out to the composer at the email address listed above. The poem is printed at the beginning of the edition in both German and English, which is helpful for the musicians. Published in 2007, the arrangement has already become a much-loved recital work for clarinetists and vocalists. I expect it will remain a popular choice as it effectively retains the spirit of Mahler’s symphonic masterpiece.

— Marie Ross



Rachel Yoder. *Paper Woman* for solo instrumentalist. www.ClarinetAllMusic.com, 2025. \$5. RachelYoderClarinet.com.

Paper Woman is more than simply a piece of music. It’s a message, it’s a lesson, it’s inclusive, and it’s educational. In the program notes, Yoder writes, “In jazz slang, a ‘paper man’ was someone who could not improvise. The inversion of language to *Paper Woman* provides us with an intention to contemplate.”

Conceived and created to highlight the historical scarcity of women in the jazz and improvisation scene, this piece provides an

accessible and inclusive entry point for experimenting with improvisation, while also being a valuable addition to the repertoire for experienced improvisers looking to expand their horizons further.

The piece is instructional and composed of five movements: “Jazzwoman,” “Sidewoman,” “Reedwoman,” “Frontwoman,” and “Paperwoman.” There are no given notes—just written instructions that give poetic and reflective instructions to inspire. There is also a blank staff that may be used for outlining pitch decisions.

For players who are afraid to step on the road to improvisation, this work tackles imposter syndrome head-on in a way that acknowledges the fear of improvising but permits one to gently gain confidence until you realize that, actually, you can do it.

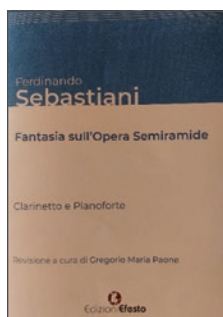
This is a powerful work that provides players, teachers, and educators with a valuable tool that not only highlights the con-

straints of learning in a classical environment dominated by sheet music, but also brings to light historical inequalities and the importance of acknowledging that, as players and listeners, we can and are being more accepting of all. *Paper Woman* is a composition that can be a private improvisation confidence builder in the practice room, or a thought-provoking piece of performance art in

a concert. For players who want to delve into improvisation, there is no better start than this work.

Paper Woman exists only on paper; it must not be reproduced electronically. Paper copies may be reproduced for the audience.

—Sarah Watts



Ferdinando Sebastiani. *Fantasy on Rossini's Semiramide* for B $\flat$ clarinet and piano. Edizioni Efesto. €7.90. www.edizioniefesto.it/?s=sebastiani

Ferdinando Sebastiani. *Un piccolo fiore (A Small Flower)* for B $\flat$ clarinet and piano. Edizioni Efesto. €7.90. Edited by Gregorio Maria Paone. www.edizioniefesto.it/?s=sebastiani



Ferdinando Sebastiani (1803-1860) was a quite significant clarinetist in the context of the Neapolitan School of the 19th century in Italy. He could be considered the real founder of that clarinet school. We can remember that peculiar clarinet school today also because it had as a main principle the technique of playing with the reed on top of the mouthpiece, and Sebastiani was one of the very first clarinetists to adopt this technique.

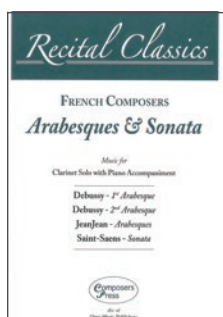
He was principal clarinet at the San Carlo Theatre Orchestra and Cappella Palatina Orchestra also taught at Real Collegio di Musica. He wrote a *Clarinet Method*, quite popular in those times, but it has fallen out of favor. In this *Method*, he explains in detail all the advantages of using the reed above technique, claiming that in this way, all the articulations could be better executed. He studied at Collegio di Musica di San Sebastiano under the guidance of Michele Rupp, a well-known teacher and principal clarinet at various Neapolitan orchestras. Sebastiani, as a

virtuoso player, was so well regarded in the Neapolitan scene that he had a 30-year career in three different orchestras. One says that he was giving the tuning A to the orchestra instead of the oboe!

Verdi knew him and dedicated to him some clarinet solos from his celebrated operas. The critic and composer Lauro Rossi described him in a review entitled “*Prima Donna* of the San Carlo Orchestra.” He composed a good number of clarinet compositions, including three solo compositions with orchestra, some clarinet duets, the aforementioned *Method*, and some opera fantasies employing themes of Verdi, Rossini, Bellini, and Donizetti (also according to a usual practice of those times in Italy). Many other Italian clarinetists had the dual role of performers and composers (see Cavallini, Carulli, Bassi, Mirko, Spadina, Cappelli, Della Giacoma, etc).

Gregorio Maria Paone is a young clarinet player from southern Italy who obtained various degrees from different Italian universities. He is a performer and capable researcher. He also wrote a specific book on Ferdinando Sebastiani, published, like the two pieces presented here, by Efesto. The little and unpretentious fantasy *Un piccolo fiore* (a small flower) has themes taken from the third act of Gaetano Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* and was dedicated to Esimia Signorina Marietta Tortola, probably a friend of the composer. The other *Fantasy* is more elaborate and demanding, having a famous theme from *Semiramide* of Rossini with florid writing, some written-out cadenzas, and a brilliant show-off style final part. We must say thank you to both Gregorio Maria Paone and Efesto Editions for rediscovering these two nice compositions of Sebastiani. Now, we can have more operatic fantasies to consider in addition to the well-known ones of Bassi (*Rigoletto*) and Lovreglio (*Traviata*).

—Luigi Magistrelli



Debussy/Jeanjean/Saint-Saëns. *Recital Classics: French Composers—Arabesques and Sonata for Clarinet Solo with Piano Accompaniment.* Opus Music Publications. \$21.95. Opus Music Publications.

Published by the Composers Press division of Opus Music Publishers, this collection of French music contains two arrangements and two clean editions of standard French works for clarinet and piano. Collections such as this offer a great

opportunity for people who may be on a budget to expand their music libraries and their repertoire. Composers Press produced editions of these works that are both highly practical and pleasing to the eye. The engraving is crystal clear; both the piano score and

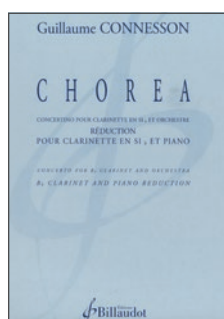
clarinet part are slightly enlarged, making it more accessible to read and perform from. The pages also fold in nicely with no forcing, allowing for the original part to stay in good shape through several rehearsals and performances. Page turns were thought through from the point of view of each musician involved and are not awkward. The clarinet part of each piece is collected into one single booklet and is clearly marked, with ample space beneath each staff for writing instructions and reminders. There are no questionable markings (broken noteheads, incomplete measures, or unclear slurs), making this an excellent choice for students.

Both Debussy *Arabesques* are adapted from the original piano compositions. Originally published in 1910 by Durand, arranger Alfred Piguët preserved as much of the essence of the original work, creating a clarinet line by taking an already composed line from the work and scoring it as a solo. In the *First Arabesque*, the key signature is changed from the original four sharps to two flats,

making it more accessible for younger clarinetists. The clarinet part is taken from the right-hand of the original piano composition, with added articulations to clear up any issues that could arise from the range of the line as it is transposed against the very low range of the piano part. There are moments where the melodic right hand is placed back into the piano part, and the clarinet is scored with longer held textural notes, adding variety to the arrangement and an opportunity for the clarinetist and pianist to trade melodic fragments. Similar compositional devices are employed in the transcription of the *Second Arabesque* as well, to excellent effect. These are wonderful works for younger students to begin to explore the phrasing and style of French clarinet music, without as much of the very intense technical filigree.

This edition of the Jeanjean *Arabesques* and Saint-Saëns *Sonata* is presented in a very clean and visually clear way. Though both works are readily available, this publisher cleaned up and enlarged both the clarinet and piano parts, a pragmatic change that makes it easier to read and work with. Both works remain in their original keys, and traditional standard markings are preserved. The appeal of this collection is that we are presented with four very clear and clean scores: two excellent arrangements of accessible French-style music that students can experiment with and learn from, and two standard pieces of repertoire, one of which is a shorter piece, containing a variety of stylistic attributes consistent with the French compositional style of the time. This collection is highly recommended.

– Vanessa Davis



Guillaume Connesson. *Chorea: Concertino* for B $\flat$ clarinet and orchestra. Editions Billaudot, 2025. €22.11. Reduction for B $\flat$ clarinet and piano. [Billaudot](https://www.billaudot.com).

Born in 1970 in Boulogne-Billancourt, Guillaume Connesson is one of the world's most frequently performed contemporary French composers. He has won numerous prizes, and his music has been performed and/or commissioned by the Orchestre National de France, the

National Symphony, the Cincinnati Symphony, and the BBC Symphony, as well as the Philadelphia and Royal Concertgebouw Orchestras. He received first prizes from the Paris Conservatoire in choral direction, history of music, analysis, electro-acoustics, and orchestration. He has held many prestigious residences and is currently professor of orchestration at the Aubervilliers—La Courneuve Conservatory in France.

Connesson's major compositional influences include Couperin, Wagner, Debussy, Ravel, Richard Strauss, Stravinsky, Messiaen, Dutilleux, Steve Reich, John Adams, John Williams, and James Brown. He has written orchestral compositions, concerti, vocal works, stage and film compositions, operas, and chamber pieces, many of which include the clarinet. The *Chorea: Concertino* for B $\flat$ clarinet and orchestra is his first clarinet concerto, although he did write a saxophone concerto in 2015 (*A Kind of Trane*) that can also be played on the clarinet.

Connesson writes that *Chorea* “is an imaginary ballet in concertino form for clarinet and string orchestra.” *Chorea*, which comes from the Greek word for dance, is a neurological condition characterized by jerky, involuntary motions, and the piece aims to rhythmically reflect this. “Using the term ‘entrée de ballet,’ characteristic of 18th-century opera-ballet, it unfolds in three contrasting movements, with a cadenza linking the slow movement to the finale,” writes Connesson. This 12-minute piece, commissioned by the 7th International Jacques Lancelot Clarinet Competition in 2025, was dedicated to clarinetist and composer Aude Camus. The first movement, “Entrée Funky,” with quarter note equals 126, marked *Molto animato*, is a continuous movement of funk

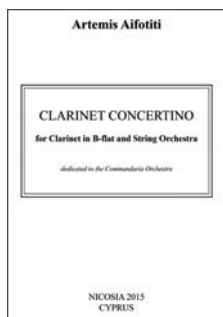
rhythms that develop over an incessant pulse, writes the composer. The second movement, “Entrée Nocturne,” is marked “very slow” and *molto rubato* at a quarter note equals 48. The composer describes this as a “‘pas-de-deux’ in which chromatic lines intertwine in the mystery of night.” This is the opportunity for the clarinetist and pianist to demonstrate lyricism. This movement leads *attacca* into the third movement, which is a cadenza for the clarinetist alone, entitled “Cadenza-Pantomime,” which leads *attacca* into the fourth movement, “Entrée en Rondo.” The composer writes that this movement has “two themes, one of pure exultant vitality, the other a quasi-vocal line. It is in this climate of sunny entertainment that my miniature ballet concertante ends.” The finale is marked “Very lively” at a quarter note equals 126.

For the clarinetist, the piece requires finger dexterity and fast tonguing, ease in the altissimo, and comfort with frequent meter changes. There are also duple against triple patterns between the clarinet and accompaniment part, so ensemble can be challenging. Of course, *Chorea* also requires musical imagination, especially to execute the cadenza successfully. The first and fourth movements are the trickiest for ensemble. The piano reduction is also technically demanding, and precise rhythm is required. The highest note in the clarinet part is an altissimo B $\flat$ at the end of the piece.

No recording of *Chorea*, either with orchestra or with piano, is currently available, but hopefully one will be soon. As indicated above, the individual parts are demanding but could be played by advanced master's or doctoral students, with particular attention to rhythm and ensemble.

Chorea's unique character, programmatic context, and excellent writing for the clarinet make it a wonderful addition to the repertoire. It is a true gift to receive this clarinet concerto by such a pre-eminent composer! We look forward to hearing its first recording.

– Rebecca Rischin



Artemis Aifotiti. *Concertino* for B♭ clarinet and string orchestra. Self-published, 2015. [Artemis Aifotiti](#).

Composed in 2015, the *Clarinet Concertino* by Cypriot composer Artemis Aifotiti (b. 1986) offers 12 minutes of colorful and texturally intriguing soundscapes. Aifotiti's *Clarinet Concertino* was commissioned by and dedicated to the Commandaria Orchestra, who premiered the work in 2016 with clarinet soloist George

Georgiou and conductor Francis Guy. The Cyprus Wine Museum established the Commandaria Orchestra in 2009 to implement its visions and promote Cypriot culture, noting on its website that “the word ‘orchestra’ has its roots in the word *orchos*, which during the Homeric years meant ‘row of vines’ and is related with the cult of Dionysus.” Aifotiti’s work certainly contains its share of Dionysian revelry.

Aifotiti pairs the clarinet with a string orchestra, using extended techniques in the strings to maximize the orchestra’s tonal palette. Each of the *Concertino*’s three movements employs contrasting lyrical and rhythmic elements, though each manifests uniquely.

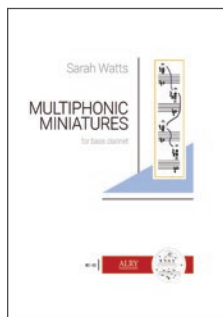
The first and longest of the movements opens with an introspective *Andante espressivo*, its warm imitative figures incorporating each string part before the clarinet enters with its expressive commentary. The long sensitive lines eventually give way to a “playful” 6/8, in which the clarinet executes multi-octave leaps, and the strings play *pizzicato* as the harmony becomes more dissonant and the overall texture fragments. The clarinet part here includes some difficult technical passages that require a range to altissimo B, as well

as quick articulation. Aifotiti reins in the jubilation as quickly as it began, setting an effective but complicated syncopated pulsation in the strings (clashing triplet and duple syncopations between parts) against the clarinet’s *molto legato* lines. Her clarinetist becomes a musical dancer in the wild cadenza, where she specifically allows the performer to choose dynamics, articulation, and phrasing, though suggestions are included. The playful 6/8 returns at the conclusion of the cadenza, but with a breathlessness that is compounded by the abruptness of the movement’s ending.

The second movement, like the first, begins with layered entrances in the string parts, though the long note values here create a sense of stasis. Aifotiti colors this stillness with mutes, and pitches move from one to the other via glissando, as though there is great resistance between them. These string colors progress with spectral harmonics and tremolos while the clarinet probes the space produced within these sounds. A *leggierollegato* section, in which the clarinet’s 32nd notes murmur quietly through held sonorities in the strings, gives way to longer values infused with tremendous energy and motion from rapid grace note figures, eventually reaching a dynamic climax on altissimo A before retreating to stillness and, ultimately, silence.

The final movement, a rousing *Vivace*, begins in a disorienting 10/8 meter, its first eight measures divided 2+2+3+3 and the following twelve measures 3+3+2+2. It then settles into a more familiar 4/4, where the clarinet executes virtuosic and even manic outbursts above harmonies sustained in the strings. By way of contrast, Aifotiti defines the final minute of this movement with cascades of 16th note septuplets and quintuplets throughout the orchestra, creating a dazzlingly fluid texture.

— Matthew Nelson



Sarah Watts. *Multiphonic Miniatures* for bass clarinet. Alry Publications, 2023. 64 pages. \$24. [Alry Publications](#). Partial Performance & Lecture: [YouTube Link](#).

Low-clarinet specialist, multiphonics scholar, award-winning performer, and composer Sarah Watts wrote *Multiphonic Miniatures*, a set of 24 enjoyable and accessible studies for learning and performing multiphonics, funded through Arts Council England. The author suggests

that the ideal way to approach performing these miniatures is by studying her earlier research, *Spectral Immersions: A Comprehensive Guide to the Theory and Practice of Bass Clarinet Multiphonics*, which she references throughout. Divided into four parts, each short composition is written in either a graphic or free-form notational style, allowing flexibility with time so that multiphonics can speak without the added pressure of rigid timing.

Multiphonic Miniatures explores extended techniques beyond multiphonics, and Watts provides clear instructions along with fingering guides specific to each work. She gives detailed approaches for preparation, with a clear emphasis on the performer’s decision-making skills. Descriptions of the inspiration behind in-

dividual miniatures include vivid imagery, some with color photographs and illustrations.

Part one employs free-form notation, with instructions to play with ample fluidity in terms of time and space. There is a focus on an expanded range from written low C to altissimo C and on timbral trills, as well as microtones. The set includes Type 1 multiphonics, achieved by manipulating the harmonic series through changes in embouchure, voicing, and air pressure, as well as Type 2, using specified fingerings. This section concludes with *Choice and Chance*, which incorporates all the techniques presented in the first five works, and it pays homage to *Domaines* by Pierre Boulez.

The miniatures progress in part two to include sound effects and increasing complexity. However, the instructions are so clear that these clever visual scores do not seem daunting to attempt. *Shhh Shh Ssss* includes written vocalizations and symbols, which can vary depending on the performer’s interpretation. In *Throw the Dice*, the player uses chance operations, with the performance of the work dictated by the number showing face up when the die lands. Two musicians can perform this and the following étude, *Snakes and Ladders*, allowing for playful collaboration.

Watts draws inspiration from the Scottish Isle of Raasay in part three, and the studies beautifully incorporate elements of the local culture, music, artists, and geography. *Reflections* introduces

under-blown multiphonics, which produce undertones, rather than overtones. *Haar* includes the use of Dyad multiphonics to emulate distant ships' horns, which are tricky to achieve, requiring very soft dynamics. Both *Cuillin View* and *Dun Caan* employ bagpipe drones. Finally, *Screapadal Imagined* is related to an earlier composition, *Screapadal*, using some of the same multiphonics.

Comprised entirely of graphic scores, the fourth and final section of *Multiphonic Miniatures* requires performers to make several artistic choices. *Elephant* enables the performer to develop spectral glissando skills based on the harmonic series of the three lowest notes on the low C instrument using Type 1 multiphonics. *Eric Dolphy* is derived from the vibraphone part of the legendary jazz musi-

cian's *Out to Lunch*, and like the legend himself, performers must improvise. Eric Dolphy is also the name of Sarah's cat, and delightful photographs pepper the score for inspiration. The set concludes with *clarEquality*, written in deference to the ideals of inclusivity espoused by the Facebook group and website created in 2023. Performers are encouraged to pick fourteen multiphonics from the four types introduced throughout each section of miniatures.

Multiphonic Miniatures is an ingenious method for learning multiphonics, and we are fortunate to have this addition by Sarah Watts in the bass clarinet repertoire.

— Meghan Merciers



Stephanie Berg. *Divertimento* for solo bassett horn or bass clarinet. Self-published, 2024. [Performance Link](#).

Stephanie Berg is a St. Louis-based composer and clarinetist who has had performances with the St. Louis Symphony, the Rochester Philharmonic, Alarm Will Sound, and many other ensembles across the US. She has written over 40 works in the last 15 years. Several of those feature her own instrumental family. These include a solo E $\flat$ clarinet piece; a duet for clarinet and bass clarinet; a work for soprano, clarinet, and piano; two pieces for clarinet and piano; and another for clarinet and harpsichord.

Her most recent work for clarinet is *Divertimento* for solo bassett horn (or bass clarinet). As the title implies, this is a suite of short movements, each with a distinctive character. Its five movements are titled "Vigorously," "Tenderly," "Aggressively," "Pensive," and "Brightly."

The composer describes this work as "mostly atonal," but my own take on the work is that it is somewhat pan-tonal. Each movement centers on a particular pitch and treats it as a "tonic" of sorts, deviating from it frequently but always returning "home." For example, the first movement centers around the written pitch E $\flat$, demonstrating what composer Virko Baley would say is "on" E $\flat$ rather than "in" E $\flat$.

One of the key characteristics of this work is its use of the wide leaps of which the clarinet is so capable. These leaps are used in different ways, depending on the context of the work. In the first movement, for example, the leaps are quite bold and daring, moving quickly from one register to the next. In the second movement, however, these leaps are used in a much more lyrical sense. In any case, it is obvious that the composer knows the instrument very well and exploits the ability of the bassett horn (or any other clarinet) to negotiate these large leaps.

While the piece is challenging in many respects, it uses no extended techniques such as multiphonics, microtones, flutter-tonguing, pitch bends, or any other techniques that would not be requested by a composer such as Mozart. It's just that the harmonic language is significantly different.

The overall range is quite wide, covering three octaves and a perfect fifth, from the lowest C (bass clarinetists will need a low C instrument) to an altissimo G. This is truly a piece written for a low clarinet. It spends quite a bit of its time in the lowest stock and a half, and as a result of that, the composer probably does not intend this piece to be played on a standard B $\flat$ clarinet, nor would this reviewer recommend that.

This is a wonderful set of short pieces that I would highly recommend for someone looking to explore low clarinet repertoire further.

— Timothy Bonefant

RECORDINGS



21st Century Works for Clarinet and Guitar. Andreas Hermanski, clarinet; Émilie Fend, guitar. G. Susani: *Sonata for Clarinet and Guitar*; A. Giacometti: *The Prideful Cry of Amazonian Forest* op. 191, op. Br. 31; J. Freidlin: *Kafka Sonata*; *Mist Over the Lake*; R. Sierra: *Duo-Sonata for Clarinet and Guitar*. Naxos, 8.579168. Total Time: 66:10.

Clarinetist Andreas Hermanski is a highly acclaimed soloist and chamber musician performing throughout Europe and the US. He currently teaches at the conservatory in the Hanseatic

City of Rostock. Émilie Fend is a renowned guitarist who has won numerous competitions and performs as a soloist internationally.

The album opens with Giacomo Susani's *Sonata for Clarinet and Guitar* which the composer says is written modally and suggestive of the early 20th century neo-classical style. The energetic first movement displays excellent interplay between players with clear delineation of melody and accompaniment. There are a couple of instances of intonation disagreement, however the technique and ensemble tightness are very well demonstrated. The second movement highlights the color pallet of Fend's expressive playing. Very sensitive playing is exhibited by both performers; Hermanski's legato ability and singing style are most notable here. The work concludes with

a lively, spirited bookend recalling the first movement motives and characters, performed with excellent precision.

The second work, Antonio Giacometti's *The Proudful Cry of Amazonian Forest*, op. 191, op. Br. 31, written in 2022, highlights Hermanski's fluency in extended techniques. His beautifully executed multiphonics and sensitive pitch bends are very commendable. Particularly notable are Hermanski's very carefully controlled *portamenti* delicately handed off to the guitarist.

Jan Friedlin's *Kafka Sonata* opens with a prologue performed beautifully by Hermanski and Fend. Inner movements feature very precise ensemble playing and playful characterizations. The final movement exhibits the most *Kafkaesque* elements of unease and complexity especially in a harmonic sense. Overall, the duo's unity of interpretation and technique are excellent.

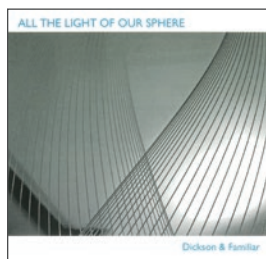
Roberto Sierra is probably the most well-known composer featured on this album. His work, *Duo-Sonata for Clarinet and*

Guitar, was commissioned by Hermanski and Fend and written in 2021. This work is the most impressive offering on this album in terms of technical and rhythmical precision by both performers as well as the impeccable blend and lyricism created by Hermanski and Fend. The dramatic elements of this work are amply conveyed through their dynamic and highly refined playing. Hermanski's beauty of tone is particularly remarkable in this work.

The album concludes with a soliloquy by Jan Freidlin, *Mist Over the Lake*, written in 1999. This somewhat melancholic work evokes a feeling of hopefulness and optimism. This performance is very heartfelt and expressive. There's a very palpable sense of lyricism and unified interpretation in Hermanski's and Fend's playing.

This album is an invaluable contribution to the recorded collaborative clarinet canon and is a brilliant display of musical excellence by both performers.

— Kenneth Long



All the Light of Our Sphere. Glenn Dickson, clarinet, Boss DD20, Zoom G1X; Bob Familiar, Rhodes MK8-FX, Expressive-E Osmose, Singular Sound Aeros Loop Studio, Soma Laboratories Cosmos Drifting Memory Station, Chase Bliss CXM 1978. G. Dickson and B. Familiar: *When fortune laid the Trojans low; Words set free*

from doubt; Just one inch in a hundred years; It haunts me still; Sweet seed from bitter fruit; Pretending she was someone else; All the light of our sphere; When the mist thins; And even yours is mine. Sounds Familiar. Total Time: 54:09.

Clarinetist and composer Glenn Dickson joins electronic and ambient composer Bob Familiar as Dickson & Familiar in their first album together, *All the Light of Our Sphere*, released in May 2025 on Sounds Familiar. The album features original compositions written and performed by the duo, blending genres from ambient electronic and minimalist music to klezmer, classical, and rock. These influences come together in lush, immersive soundscapes that feel both intricate and expansive.

Dickson is a versatile musician with a background in klezmer, jazz, rock, Balkan, and ambient styles, known for his work with Naftule's Dream and the Shirim Klezmer Orchestra. Familiar brings his expertise in electronic sound design and improvisation, coupled with deep experience in sound recording, mixing, and mastering.

This album showcases their DIY sensibility and creative synergy. Each track is performed live by the two musicians without overdubs, using a combination of analog and digital pedals, loopers, and synthesizers. Glenn Dickson plays the clarinet through a Boss DD-20 Giga Delay and a Zoom G1X pedal board, creating long, fluid melodies that loop into clarinet choirs stretching across the stereo field. Bob Familiar uses a Rhodes MK8-FX keyboard with effects, the Expressive-E Osmose (a polyphonic synthesizer), the Singular Sound Aeros Loop Studio, Soma Laboratories' Cosmos Drifting Memory Station, and the Chase Bliss CXM 1978

reverb pedal to craft Brian Eno-esque textures—at times delicate and present, at others, thick and enveloping. The technology itself becomes an extension of the instruments, expanding the sonic palette and blending seamlessly with the clarinet's tone.

The opening track, *When fortune laid the Trojans low*, begins with Dickson's distinctive clarinet sound drenched in reverb and long delay, layered over bubbling electronic textures and ambient creaks. The sixth track, *Pretending she was someone else*, highlights Dickson's tonal range—from dark and haunting to powerful, strident solos that cut through a rich, almost orchestral backdrop. My favorite track on the album is *And even yours is mine*. The synth keyboard melody, combined with ambient chords and subtle tremolos, feels deeply earnest.

All the Light of Our Sphere is a beautiful addition to any ambient or experimental playlist. Its pacing is deliberate, inviting the listener to slow down in a frenetic world. The album deserves to be experienced in full, allowing the listener to appreciate the care in its recording and mixing. There are profoundly human touches—like the sound of Dickson's breath, bending tones, and wisps of air at the edges of notes—that add emotional depth and authenticity. The synths' movement across the stereo field further enriches the listening experience, adding a spatial, dimensional quality that makes the album truly come alive.

— Ford Fourquarean



Mentors. Gaia Gaibazzi, clarinet; Clarissa Carafa, piano. M. Reger: *Albumblatt in E♭ Major*; *Tarantella in G Minor*; *Sonata in A♭ Major*, op. 49, no. 1 for clarinet and piano; R. Schumann: *Fantasy Pieces*, op. 73 for clarinet and piano; J. Brahms: *Sonata in F Minor*, op. 120, no. 1 for clarinet and piano. Da Vinci Classics,

C00963. Total Time: 60:40.

Gaia Gaibazzi is an award-winning Italian clarinetist and bass clarinetist who has performed at major concert halls across Europe. Her breathtaking sound and musicianship take center stage in the album *Mentors: Max Reger, Robert Schumann, and Johannes Brahms*.

The recording begins with Max Reger's *Albumblatt in E♭ Major* (1902). Gaibazzi's musical sensitivity is immediately present. Her tone is incredibly warm, centered, and vibrant. Carafa's gentle piano support emerges from the texture, expertly complementing Gaibazzi. A single movement work, *Albumblatt in E♭ Major* offers the opportunity for the clarinetist to showcase their mastery of the musical line through a beautiful twisting melody that flowers and wilts throughout. Gaibazzi's use of tone color deepens the rubato and dynamic contrast, creating a rich, warm tapestry with the piano.

Schumann's *Fantasy Pieces*, op. 73 for clarinet and piano (1849) follow. Often, performers will push and pull the tempi throughout. In such interpretations, the eighth notes and eighth note triplets can lose rhythmic integrity, creating a wash of sound. Gaibazzi and Carafa choose another interpretation, rhythmically interlocking the figures as written. In the first movement, Gaibazzi performs the melodic line as though it is endless. They choose to end the movement in time, with no *ritard*. The second movement's tempo allows the duo space to provide musical nuance and for both parts to be heard clearly. Moving to the B section of the movement, Gaibazzi and Carafa pull out the stops, allowing for intense *rubato*, timbral changes to increase intensity, and pinpoint accuracy. Gaibazzi's command of her color and volume are astounding. The collaboration between the duo is incredible. They move into the final movement *attacca*. At the beginning of the third movement Gaibazzi's color blossoms in intensity, and we hear the full expression of her tone, rich, full, and beautifully balanced with lots of power. Choices were made in this performance that were at times unexpected, but not outside of what works within the musical context Schumann established.

Gaibazzi and Carafa's performance of Reger's *Tarantella in G Minor* (1902) is a fun and interesting interpretation of the work. Gaibazzi pries every bit of tension out of the melodic line that she can, supported so thoughtfully by Carafa while maintaining the dance-like feeling expected in a *tarantella*. Reger's tonal language is complex, but with the clear phrasing and light articulation, Gaibazzi's performance elucidates it. She peels back the layers of the music to show us exactly what she wants us to hear, with stunning accuracy.

In their performance of the Brahms *Sonata in F Minor*, op. 120, no. 1 (1894) Gaibazzi and Carafa show us a completely different side of a very standard clarinet work. Gaibazzi's interpretation

of the very first theme is thoughtful and technically well-executed, conveying both the intensity of the music while being careful that each line has clear direction and is crafted to crest at exactly the right moment. There is as much dynamic contrast and intensity as anyone would expect from a clarinetist of this caliber, and the collaboration between the two musicians is world-class. What is truly outstanding is how Gaibazzi effortlessly uses every extreme of her tone, dynamic palette, and articulation. The return of the first theme is like a glorious sunrise after a night of rain, refreshing and enveloping. The second movement is beautifully simple in its clean interpretation of the melody, with the collaboration between Gaibazzi and Carafa perfect in its simplicity, allowing the clarinet tone to take center stage. Their performance sounds as if they have magically lightened the texture, making every note crystal clear. Somehow, the lander-like third movement sounds much more heavily scored than it is, simply by the fullness the duo creates together through tone quality and note length. We can hear the full, warm, and balanced color of Gaibazzi's sound even more clearly as she plays *forte*. Her tone quality is balanced and ringing. The fourth movement opening in the piano gives Carafa an opportunity to show off her magnificent articulation; each note and rhythm played with precision. We hear the playfulness of this duo clearly. Gaibazzi and Carafa perform as an extension of each other throughout this sonata, and the result is breathtaking.

Gaibazzi uses the slightly darker side of her tone quality in the first movement of Reger's *Sonata in A♭ Major*, op. 49, no. 1 (1900). The duo uses similar performance techniques in this sonata as they did in the Brahms, to excellent effect because of the even thicker and more complex harmonic language. Gaibazzi and Carafa craft clear phrases throughout. The juxtaposition of extreme dynamics, articulation, and character changes happens much more quickly here than in the Brahms, and the duo revel in it. It is clear in the writing of Reger's *Sonata* how much the Brahms *Sonatas* inspired him, as they follow a similar roadmap, but in his own ultra-romantic style. The second movement is a lovely moment of semi-simplicity between two very emotionally intense movements. Gaibazzi's playful interpretation is complemented by Carafa throughout.

The cover art of three simple, elegant, and nuanced gold leaves reflects well what we hear throughout this album: thoughtful and fresh interpretations of standard clarinet repertoire by two world-class musicians that are well-crafted and expertly executed.

— Vanessa Davis

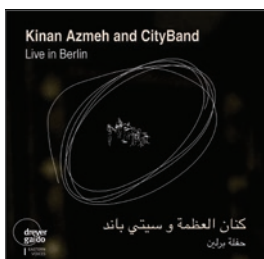


Modern Reflections. Kristine Dizon, clarinet; Radovan Cavallin, clarinet; Laura Sánchez, E♭ clarinet, clarinet; Samuel Hernández, bass clarinet. F.J. de Alba: *Spring; Unstoppable Machines; Reverberations; The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters; Loop 101 South*; P. Grainger/arr. F.J. de Alba: *Mock Morris; Eastern Intermezzo; Country Gardens; Handel in the Strand; Spoon River*;

M. De Falla/arr. F.J. de Alba: *La Vida Breve*. Modern Artist Project. Total Time: 49:48.

Modern Reflections is a captivating recording showcasing original compositions and arrangements for clarinet quartet by clarinetist-composer-arranger Francisco Javier de Alba. The performers—Kristine Dizon (soprano clarinet), Radovan Cavallin (soprano clarinet), Laura Sánchez (soprano and E♭ clarinet), and Samuel Hernández (bass clarinet)—bring his music to life with a shared artistry and precision.

Several aspects of this project make it particularly compelling. First, it offers a blend of newly composed works and finely crafted arrangements for clarinet quartet. Second, the ensemble members share a professional connection to Spain through their association with the Gran Canaria Philharmonic Orchestra. Having witnessed the fluctuating presence of clarinet ensemble recordings throughout my career, I find it encouraging—and refreshing—to encounter a release like this. It also provides a fascinating window into the vibrant clarinet scene in the Canary Islands.



Kinan Azmeh and CityBand: Live in Berlin. Kinan Azmeh, clarinet; Kyle Sanna, guitar; Josh Myers, bass; John Hadfield, drums. K. Azmeh: *The Queen Commanded; The Translator; Daraa; Jisreen*; “Dance” from *The Fence, The Rooftop, and The Distant Sea; Wedding*; K. Sanna: *Galileo Galilei*. Dreyer Gaido, 21163. Total Time: 64:13.

The album *Live in Berlin* was released in February 2025 by Kinan Azmeh and CityBand, a self-deemed Arab-Jazz Quartet. The album is the result of the live recording from a 2021 performance at the Pierre Boulez Saal in Berlin. The album is available in audiophile HD format as well as physical CD. Its release was celebrated with performances in New York, North Carolina, the Netherlands, and Germany. The quartet is led by Syrian-born, Brooklyn-based composer and clarinetist Kinan Azmeh, and comprised of guitarist Kyle Sanna, drummer John Hadfield, and double bassist Josh Myers.

In the liner notes, Azmeh offers insight into how meaningful and personal this project was:

Most of this music was composed and performed during a difficult time of my life that began with the Syrian uprising in 2011,

Artistically, the album is remarkably well-rounded. While the prevailing aesthetic leans toward a Central European sensibility—reflecting the musical heritage of composers from that region—the program spans a striking range of styles: Spanish dance, American folk song, minimalism, and the timeless British folk melodies, among others. Whether original or arranged, each work bears the imprint of de Alba’s deep understanding of the instrument, rooted in his training within one of the finest traditions of clarinet playing.

Dizon’s decision to entrust the entire musical content—both compositions and arrangements—to de Alba is worthy of praise. The repertoire highlights the clarinet quartet’s full expressive range, and the ensemble’s performances illuminate every facet. The *Spring* series radiates optimism, Grainger’s folk song settings function almost as a cohesive suite, and the two Spanish dances add exuberance and intricate rhythmic vitality. I did note that the closing work bore an unnecessary resemblance to an existing piece and that the album might have benefited from a more substantial final statement.

As an ensemble, the quartet captures each mood, character, and texture with remarkable balance, intonation, and unity of tone. Individually and collectively, the musicians demonstrate a consistently high level of artistry, meeting every technical and interpretive demand. After a slightly airy, diffuse sonority in the opening track, the group quickly settles into a focused, resonant sound that carries through the remainder of the album.

In sum, *Modern Reflections* is a worthy addition to the clarinet quartet discography—expertly written, expertly played, and full of character. I recommend it enthusiastically.

—Jorge Montilla Moreno

music that is inspired by anger, sadness, frustration, and above all the need to hold on to one’s optimism, hope and creative tools in the face of atrocities. It moves me profoundly to be sharing this album with the world as my Syrian people are able to sing again after their long and costly struggle against tyranny and dictatorship. This album is dedicated to all who believe that making music is also an act of freedom.

The album is dedicated to Kinan’s father, Bachar Azmeh.

The style of the performance can best be described as a fusion of classical and jazz with flavors of Eastern European and Middle Eastern traditions. These styles can be heard in the modal melodic language that alternates between meditative harmonic stasis and a highly energetic and intricate rhythmic drive that is ornamented by virtuosic, highly expressive soloist improvisation.

Each of the seven tracks offers new and creative melodies that move seamlessly from section to section. The faster tunes often create a texturally-interesting groove, which provides the underpinning to highlight a soloist. The themes are interesting and creative, often taking surprising melodic turns that keeps the listener on their toes.

The ensemble playing is incredible. The quartet is rhythmically tight and produces a vast array of musical textures while also featuring and celebrating each musician’s admirable individual craft. It is clear that the ensemble has a unified artistic vision for their music.

The influence of Eastern European traditions is apparent in the wide vibrato, growling, and pitch-bending of the clarinet, akin to

the klezmer performance style. Azmeh's playing is supremely expressive; his soft and subdued singing in the lower register is heart-felt and seductive, truly mimicking the nuances of the emotive human voice. His more virtuosic improvisations are confident, energetic, and full of conviction. He has incredible malleability of sound and style that mesmerizes the listener through all 60-plus minutes of the album.

I give this album my highest recommendation. It is well-suited for anyone interested in jazz, Eastern European inspired music, looking to broaden their musical horizons, or just enjoy highly expressive music played at the highest level.

— Kelsey Paquin



Excursions. The Vuorovesi Trio: Diane Boyd Schultz, flute; Mary Lindsey Bailey, oboe; Osiris J. Molina, clarinet. M. Quayle: *Petite Suite*; J. Landers: *Six Pieces*; C. Kingsland: *Soap Bubbles*; J. Burel: *Defensive Masquerade*; G. Cohen: *Trio No. 2*; M. Kibbe: *Trio*, op. 46; S. Lias: *Particle Accelerator*. Blue Griffin Recording, BGR681. Total Time: 62:00.

In 2025 The Vuorovesi Trio, made up of University of Alabama School of Music faculty Osiris J. Molina, clarinet, Diane Boyd Schultz, flute, and Mary Lindsey Bailey, oboe, released their album *Excursions* on Blue Griffin Records. The album is made up of works by living American composers. The trio states in the liner notes that in choosing these composers they, “... aim to promote the voices shaping the future of classical music and engage the vibrant cultural landscape of America today.” These goals are evident in the contrasting styles of the works included on the album.

Excursions begins with Matthew Quayle's *Petite Suite*, a three-movement work that blends traditional forms with contemporary harmonies and style. The driving scherzo movement showcases the trio's admirable technique and unity of articulation. Next on the album is *Six Pieces* by Joseph Landers. Molina's clear, rich chalumeau tone is of particular note in the fifth movement of this work. Chappell Kingsland's *Soap Bubbles* is the next work on the album and is the only single-movement piece. It opens with quick arpeggiated runs in all instruments, reminiscent of the title. These quick, techni-

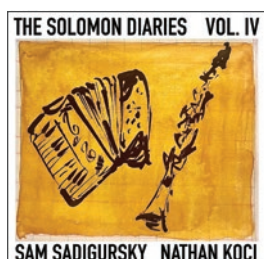
cal figures are interspersed with languid melodies and jaunty staccato sections that display the wonderful sense of blend and stylistic flexibility that the trio employs. Next is Joshua Burel's *Defensive Masquerade*. In the performance of this work, the trio expertly executes the fun syncopation of the first movement juxtaposed with the peaceful minimalism of the second movement and the dance-like intensity of the third, making this piece a highpoint of the album.

Graham Cohen's *Trio No. 2* begins quietly with lush harmonies, reminiscent of Copland. This five-movement piece runs the gamut of luxurious slow lines, to light, quick figures in the final presto movement. It leads beautifully into the *Trio*, op. 46 by Michael Kibbe. This work, written in 1979, is the oldest on the album, but sounds fresh and complements the other works, which were all composed between 2002 and 2020. In particular, the second and third movements of Kibbe's trio contain some nice clarinet lines, which truly sing with Molina's clear, fluid playing.

Particle Accelerator by Stephen Lias concludes the album. The first movement of this piece is at the same time exciting and adorable. The trio handles the quick changes in articulation and the perpetual motion from bouncy to heavy and back with grace and skill. The haunting second movement features a piercing oboe line, glittering flute runs, and smooth, comforting support from the clarinet. The final movement of the work and the album features blazing technique and articulation in all three instruments which intertwine flawlessly. This concludes the album with energy and excitement.

If this album, as The Vuorovesi Trio hopes, represents the future of American chamber music, there is cause for optimism indeed.

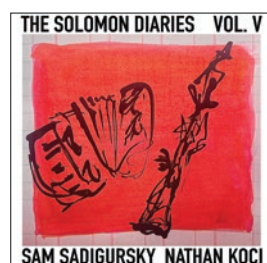
— Madelyn Moore



The Solomon Diaries, Volumes IV and V. Sam Sadigursky, clarinet; Nathan Koci, accordion; with guest artists: Matt Darriau, kaval, alto saxophone; Meg Okura, violin; Joe Brent, mandolin; Timo Andres, piano; Danny Fox, piano. S. Sadigursky and N. Koci: *Lev's Loops* (for Ljova); *Pearl's Lullaby*; *Second Hand* (for Guy Klucsevsek); *Refugee 3/8*; *Mirrors*; *One for Kathleen* (for Kathleen Sullivan); *Slow Motions* (for Andy Statman); *Swell*; *Janie Claire*; *Fire at 168 Gibber*; *River*; *Favorites*; *Lucky* (for Sara); *Migrations*; *Home Theme*; *Strut*; *Supreme*; *What You Sow*; *Knots*; *VNP Hora* (for Isaac Sadigursky); *Six Miles at Midnight*.

Adhyaropa Records. Total Time: 41:18 [Vol. IV]; 37:22 [Vol. V].

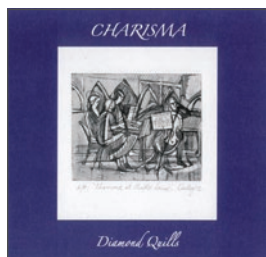
The Solomon Diaries (Volumes IV and V) is a new two-disc set released by Sam Sadigursky (clarinet, Philip Glass Ensemble) and Nathan Koci (accordion, Broadway productions including *Illinoise*). The music is inspired by the Borscht Belt region in New York, a Jewish cultural area which rose to prominence in the 1950s and 1960s. Each track is a unique gem, playing with influences from klezmer, minimalism, and even Irish jig. The material is so varied that the album never feels stagnant. Sadigursky and Koci both play superbly well, and quality audio production gives each performer—and their well-recognized guest artists—the chance to showcase their musicianship and style. Many of the album's tracks are dedicated to other musicians. Of particular interest to clarinetists is *Slow Motions*, dedicated to klezmer clarinetist Andy Statman. Sadigursky pays homage to Statman's signature playing style with sensitive vibrato and a memorable, yearning melody. Throughout both volumes, Sadigursky is a shape-shifter of tim-



bre, molding his playing perfectly to the style of each tune—while maintaining a classically appealing tone. Together, Sadigursky and Koci's playing blend exceptionally well and create a colorful tim-

bral blend. This is an album worth enjoying to in its entirety!

— Erin Cameron



Diamond Quills. Charisma: Roslyn Dunlop, clarinet; Julia Ryder, cello; David Miller, piano. K. Beilharz: *Diamond Quills*; D. Blom: *Fearless Dreams*; F. Wilcox: *Snow*; M. Smith: *Poppy Re-Imagined*; A. Ghandar: *Flowing Water and Birds*; R.L. Page: *Being and Time*; C. Bonshek: *Out on the Wind*; K. Abbott: *Music for Demons*; W. Suiter:

Clarinet Calling; K. Beaugeais: *The Last Flight of Saint-Ex*. Independent Release. Total Time: 51:10 [disc 1]; 43:09 [disc 2].

The Australian ensemble Charisma shares a delightful collection of works written by Australian women composers in their two-disc album entitled *Diamond Quills*. Clarinetist Roslyn Dunlop, cellist Julia Ryder and pianist David Miller present compelling performances of these 10 works, some of which were written for the ensemble over the past 20 years. Listeners will appreciate their virtuosity, fine musicianship and sensitivity. Highlights of the compilation are discussed below.

The collection opens with the piece that inspired the album title: Kristy Beilharz's work for bass clarinet, cello and piano, *Diamond Quills (A study of time, death, and the harbour)*. In the program notes, Beilharz reveals that the piece depicts nighttime scenes at the Sydney Harbor. The opening draws listeners into an unexpected sound world with interesting effects and timbres including string plucking, flutter tonguing and other extended techniques. The brief second movement features a metronomic-like tapping that underlies an intricate dialogue between bass clarinet and piano. Concluding the piece is an intense third movement with five bell-like figures that reference Kenneth Slessor's poem, *Five Bells*. The ensemble adeptly plays the fast passagework and wide-ranging intervals—especially the alternating figures in the high register. Dunlop shows impressive control in the upper range.

Felicity Wilcox's *Snow*, written in three movements, evokes images of a snowstorm and its many characters. The attractive swirling melody in the clarinet and bouncy piano accompaniment in the first movement perfectly capture the essence of flurries. Wilcox calls for neat sonic effects that involve trills, harmonics, and also recurring articulated patterns in varied registers that occasionally prove challenging for consistency of response. The substantive soft dynamics the ensemble achieves are magical. The louder moments are powerful but can use more tonal focus. Wilcox's eloquent melodic writing is showcased in the striking second movement with lyrical lines that ebb and flow above minimal accompaniment.

Corrina Bonshek's delightful *Out on the Wind* is a real treat. She writes that the piece is a "musical meditation on wind, bird-song, and flight in different guises." Bonshek's music is bright, joyous, and accessible. After a short introduction, the clarinet and cello trade bird calls and other figures. The ensemble gives the lines a lovely vocal quality and seems to relish the diversity of characters in this playful piece.

Another standout is Katy Abbott's *Music for Demons* for bass clarinet, cello and piano. The dramatic opening brings Messiaen's *Quatuor pour la fin du temps* to mind with its jarring chords in a unified rhythm as does a later cello melody with piano accompaniment. Abbott reveals that the work is inspired by Matthew Quick's painting *Pure Obsession* which depicts space invaders. Portions of the piece are rhythmically complex with articulated passages that bounce around in various registers. The ensemble expertly navigates these technical challenges.

Katia Beaugeais's evocative *Last Flight of Saint-Ex* rounds out the album. The plane crash of the French writer and pilot, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry in 1944 is the inspiration for this piece. Crisp articulations in the clarinet set the work into motion. Dunlop gives great clarity to these articulations, although some in the upper register seem forced and inconsistent in terms of response. A mournful cello solo provides a moment of contrast before the intensity returns with descending figures and fast passagework that could depict the plane spiraling out of control.

Listeners will enjoy this varied collection of works that the Charisma ensemble presents. They play with great artistry and conviction, and it is a pleasure to hear such excellent performances.

— Justin Stanley

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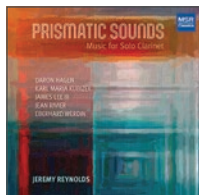
NEW RELEASES



BitterSweet. Mark Wolbers, clarinet; Timothy Smith, piano. Independent Release.



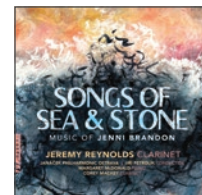
Estuarium. Oriol Marès, clarinet, bass clarinet; Talal Fayad, oud, electric oud; Lucas Zegrí, percussion, drums; Thodoris Ziarkas, double bass. AudioMaze, OTQ001.



Prismatic Sounds. Jeremy Reynolds, clarinet. MSR Classics, MS 1781.



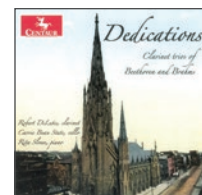
EFX: The Live Concerto Recordings. Christopher Mothersole, clarinet; University of West Georgia Wind Ensemble, Josh Byrd conductor. Independent Release.



Songs of Sea and Stone. Jeremy Reynolds, clarinet; Corey Mackey, clarinet; Margaret McDonald, piano; Janáček Philharmonic Ostrava, Jiří Petrdlík, conductor. Navona Records, NV6757.



The Song Also Rises. Sarah Watts, bass clarinet; Kim Davenport, piano. Alea Recording, AR010.



Dedications. Robert DiLutis, clarinet; Carrie Bean Stute, cello; Rita Sloan, piano. Centaur Records, CRC 4150.



The Han (한/恨) and Heung (흥/興) Odyssey: Global Sounds of Resilience and Joy. Cecilia Kang, clarinet; Angela Park, piano; WanYun (WYHD) ensemble. Albany Records, TROY2005.



American Landscape. Chad Burrow, clarinet; Amy I-Lin Cheng, piano. Centaur Records, CRC 4160. 999

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CLARINET CHRONICLES

by Jeremy Ruth



Jeremy Ruth is assistant professor of music at Lander University, where he teaches music history and applied clarinet lessons in addition to coaching the Lander Woodwind Ensemble. His performance interests are wide-ranging, but he has a particular interest in contemporary music, performance art, and exploring new extended techniques for the clarinet. He is a founding member of the Ambassador Trio, past winner of the ICA Research Competition, and current editor of The Clarinet [Online].

CLARINET WEBSITES: A VALUABLE RESOURCE

Greetings, clarinetists! As the world has become increasingly linked through social media over the past two decades, it is likely that you have found yourself connecting with other clarinetists from around the world through platforms like Instagram and Facebook, perhaps even through the ICA social media accounts (@icacclarinet on Instagram and Threads; International Clarinet Association on Facebook). In fact, this column has even covered several ways that social media can be used to help further your musicianship.¹

Social media has indeed become a powerful tool for networking, spreading recordings, and inspiring fellow clarinetists, but I would like to briefly highlight the continuing usefulness of personal professional websites for many clarinetists. While social media can provide an astonishingly wide reach, often beyond that of a personal website, many musicians still create their own websites for several reasons.

First and foremost, for both the established and early career clarinetist, a website can provide a level of professionalism that is often appealing to potential students (or their parents) and employers. Not only can they be used to give de-

tails about any services you might provide, but they are a great place to post documents or information such as exercises, sheet music, scholarly writing, or other resources that you wish to make available to other clarinetists. Websites also typically allow you to embed audio and video recordings of performances, but often with greater flexibility than on social media posts.

While I've focused on the benefits of creating your own website for professional or aspiring professional clarinetists, amateur players (as well as other professionals) can also benefit greatly from utilizing the resources posted on such websites. Everybody has their own favorite warm-up, for instance, so exploring what resources different clarinetists make available can be very useful. Social media has revolutionized communication in many ways and is often a great place to look for inspiration and ideas, but a professional website is still a valuable resource for the amateur and professional alike. ♪♪♪

ENDNOTES

- 1 Jenny Maclay, "Clarinet Chronicles: How to Use Instagram to Become a Better Musician," *The Clarinet* 49, no. 1 (December 2021): 80.

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