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Robert S. Resnick

A Research Study of a Technique for Adjusting Clarinet Reeds

THE MAIN PURPOSE of this project was to find a technique of adjusting clarinet reeds that would not disturb the basic structural balance of the reed. In carrying out the project the techniques of preparation and adjusting of single reeds which are described by leading clarinet and saxophone artists were investigated. Related to this was the examination of a quantity of commercial clarinet reeds.

Since the procedures involved were those available to the performer-teacher at home or in the studio, the project should be regarded only as a preliminary investigation into a rather complex problem. It was undertaken with the hope of bringing to light some possibilities which might serve as a basis for further and more scientific investigation.

COMMERCIAL REEDS

As every single- and double-reed player knows, the relative success attained in performance is dependent upon the behavior of a piece of fickle organic material known as *Arundo donax* (a species of grasscane from which reeds are made). Most of the dilemma may be attributed to the fact that this grasscane, as a product of nature, is in a constant state of change. Except for normal procedures followed in growing, curing, and processing, the cane varies according to such factors as climate, temperature, humidity, and soil.¹ The reed manufacturer, and the per-

¹ As a part of this research project, Mr. Resnick, with the express purpose of noting growing, curing, and processing methods, visited plantations in southern France on which *Arundo donax* (reedcane) is grown.

The Van Doren plantation is in the Var region, in Le Lavendou near Toulon, close to the Mediterranean Sea. The soil is quite sandy and very moist. There is a great amount of sunshine throughout the year and very little frost. When the weather is warm over an extended period of time, the soil may require irrigation.

The cane grows rather wild. In fact, it grows in the same fields as Van Doren's grape plants from which he produces wines. In the Var region, the roots of the cane grow close to the top of the soil. Quite often there is a heavy, steady wind. Because

Keith S. Tracy
5345 Brann St.
Oakland, California 94619

PERFECT A REED

*A Scientific Method for
Reed Adjusting*

Ben Armato
Metropolitan Opera Orchestra

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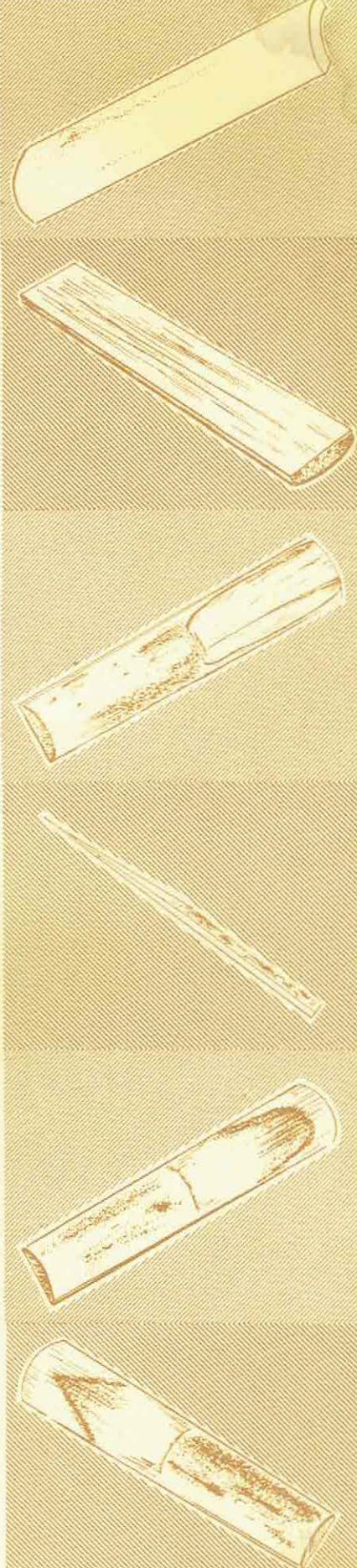
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The Concertos for Clarinet

BURNET C. TUTHILL

SEVERAL YEARS AGO the project of listing all the known concertos for clarinet was undertaken with the idea of calling them to the attention of my colleagues in the hope that this information would widen their concept of the music available to the clarinet soloist. For their guidance a brief description of the music, its style, difficulty and worth would accompany each listing.

This appeared to be a simple task, covering 30 or 40 items. Research was begun and to my amazement their number turned out to be legion. A new dealer's list would add a few; visits to dealers in Europe turned up more. There is no point in delaying the publication of the list as it stands for it will never be final or complete. Many works included have not been available for purchase and many are in libraries which could not be visited. The list as now issued includes many works of which copies have not been seen. If any reader possesses a copy he is willing to lend me for prompt inspection, he is begged to send it on to me.¹

The sources of information have been various, including Geoffrey Rendall's valuable book, *The Clarinet* (Philosophical Library, N.Y. 1954) and of course Eitner's *Quellen Lexicon* in 10 volumes, to say nothing of catalogs of libraries and publishers. Everything in the Library of Congress and the Fleischer Library in Philadelphia has been examined. Other collectors have been of much help, notably Himie Voxman of the State University of Iowa and Wallace Tenney of Oakland, California, to both of whom I render thanks.

The use of the clarinet and other wind instruments in solo capacity was quite the vogue in the eighteenth century even when the instruments themselves were in an elementary state of mechanical development. After about 1825 their use in concertos lapsed for about a century and was resumed only after the recent development of a multitude of highly competent wind players at least partly stimulated by the growth of high school and college bands in the United States. A literature for their use with the modern instruments was in demand.

Musicologists have also been busy, with the result that many early concertos have been found and published, some in score and more in editions with piano accompaniment. We must be grateful to the discoverers and to the publishers who have made them available.

The earliest composer to have used the clarinet is Vivaldi (1675-1743). There are two *concerti grossi* for two oboes and two clarinets as the concertino supported by strings, the scores of which have been published by Ricordi. Attempt was made to secure the parts, but they turned out to be very expensive and would have to be imported from Italy, so the project of a Memphis performance had to be abandoned. The clarinet parts are in the normal Vivaldi style, but at least they do not completely avoid the chalumeau register, which early concertos so often do.

¹To Burnet C. Tuthill, 295 Buena Vista Place, Memphis 12, Tennessee.

The Sonatas for Clarinet and Piano

QUITE a few years ago, during a meeting with the late great English patron of chamber music, Walter Willson Cobbett, in his home in London, he asked me to prepare an article about the clarinet in chamber music for his forthcoming *Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music*. The first volume was published in 1929 and in the article was a list of 33 clarinet sonatas, all that were known to me at the time. My interest in such sonatas began almost as soon as my clarinet playing—about 1904—for my mother was a fine pianist and we liked to play together. This interest has continued ever since and my library of works has grown over the intervening years. Now in 1966 it seems that the original list should be brought up to date. The number of items has grown enormously through the discovery of many older works and the creative activity of the years since 1929. The list is no longer of 33 works but of at least 240.

As a sonata combination, it seems that the joining of the clarinet with the piano is the ideal one. The clarinet is the most flexible of the woodwinds, has the greatest range and dynamic variation, and hence can be made the most expressive. The contemporary composers must realize this and also see that there are many more fine clarinet players today than there were a generation ago, quite a few of whom are finding ready acceptance as recital artists.

In the appended list please accept the remarks and comments as quite personal. Each person has his own viewpoint and taste. Herein my own is expressed. At least it is based on many years of experience as a player of many sonata recitals.

The two Brahms sonatas still seem to stand preeminent in the repertory. The three by Max Reger were not easy to absorb when they initially came out in the first decade of this century, but with the passage of time they now turn out to be late Romantic music of extraordinary beauty and musical interest. The modulations are no longer so startling and their lyricism seems more flowing. There is a nice sense of humor in appropriate places and an intensity of expression in the slow movements that is very appealing. For those who have not tried them, do not be afraid, but get a good pianist; he must look over the

CLARINET IN THE CONCERT BAND
by Russell Langrabe
May 1984 issue of THE INSTRUMENTALIST

These five pages contain some of the best advice I have ever seen regarding making music as a clarinetist in a concert band. I emphasize making music. There are many, many articles available on the technical aspects of playing the instrument, but far too little is said about the often required necessity of adapting transcribed music to the capabilities of the instrument.

One of the most important things any band clarinetist can do is to listen, listen, listen to the original orchestral versions. One of the immediately apparent things is the difference in sound and effect between passages that are written as separate bowings for strings and transcribed for the clarinet as all tongued, or even marked staccato. The hard percussive sound of a clarinet section tonguing every note in a fast moving sixteenth run is not at all similar to the far more legato sound that strings get even when playing all notes separately bowed. Plus the fact that no matter how good each player's staccato may be when a section is playing together it sounds rough and hard. Most of these passages should simply be slurred, and the effect will be not only cleaner, but more similar to the sound achieved by the orchestral strings.

Unfortunately, some clarinetists have easily bruised egos, and consider such moves as challenging their ability to play rapid staccato. I would say to them, "Save your virtuosic display for playing solos. In the band it is the ability of the section to sound well together that is important."

Keith Tracy

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by Robert Schmidt

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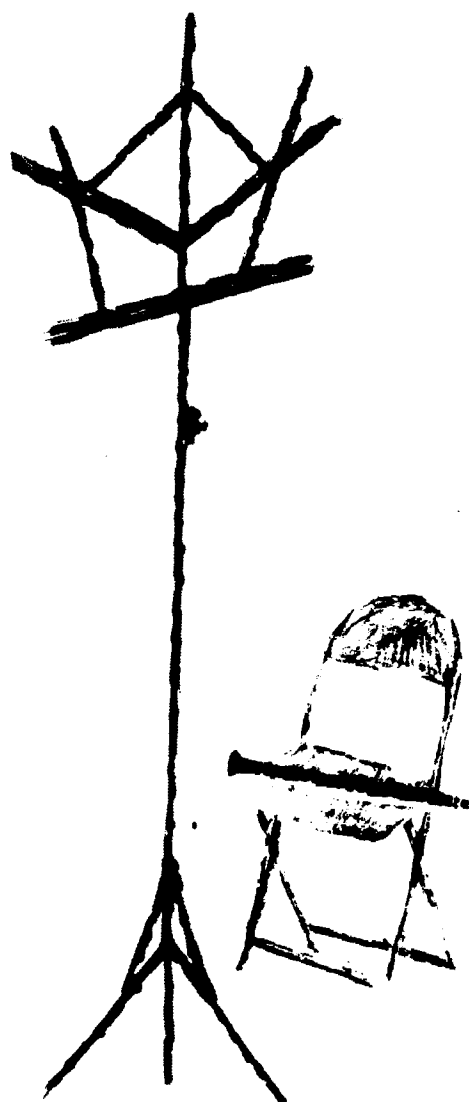
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