

MUSICAL JUXTAPOSITION:  
INNOVATION, PARADOX, AND SONG

By

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A PERFORMANCE IN LIEU OF THESIS PRESENTED TO THE COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS  
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Chair: Mitchell Estrin  
Major: Music

On March 14, 2012, a recital was performed featuring standard clarinet solo works that were connected together by use of a unique theme. The works performed were Alban Berg's *Four Pieces for Clarinet and Piano, Op. 5*, Anton Stadler's *Three Caprices for Solo Clarinet*, Othmar Schoeck's *Sonata for Bass Clarinet and Piano, Op. 41*, and Gerald Finzi's *Concerto for Clarinet and String Orchestra, Op. 31*. As it appears, they seem to reflect a variety of genres, periods, and nationalities without a common theme. However after research and analysis, elements of innovation, paradox, and song were found that connect each work.

## PROGRAM

Vier Stücke für Klarinette und Klavier, Op. 5

Alban Berg  
(1885-1935)

- I. Massig*
- II. Sehr Langsam*
- III. Sehr Rasch*
- IV. Langsam*

Trois Caprices pour la Clarinette seul

Anton Stadler  
(1753-1812)

- I. Caprice 1*
- II. Caprice 2*
- III. Caprice 3*

*Performed on a classical period clarinet*

Sonata für Baßklarinette und Klavier, Op. 41

Othmar Schoeck  
(1886-1957)

- I. Gemessen*
- II. Bewegt*
- III. Bewegt*

## INTERMISSION

Concerto for Clarinet and String Orchestra, Op. 31

Gerald Finzi  
(1901-1956)

- I. Allegro vigoroso, L'istesso tempo, ma in modo lirico*
- II. Adagio (ma senza rigore)*
- III. Allegro giocoso*

## PROGRAM NOTES

Austrian composer **Alban Berg**, along with his teacher Arnold Schoenberg, and friend Anton Webern were major proponents of the Second Viennese School of composition. In a time of drastic innovation and change known as the Austrian *fin de siècle* period, Berg combined Mahlerian romanticism, song, and twelve-tone technique to create a unique style.

Before his serialist output, Berg composed the *Four Pieces for Clarinet and Piano, Op. 5* in 1913, which was dedicated to Schoenberg. Unfortunately, it was not premiered until 1919 in Vienna where it was included on one of Schoenberg's Society for Private Musical Performances. Berg's pieces are rather short, very dense, and complex in terms of style, motif, and dynamics. The form resembles a typical sonata with an introductory first movement, followed by an adagio, scherzo, and finishes with a dramatic closing. The work is mainly atonal but is interspersed with hints of tonality.

Both performers have to master changing characters quickly, and employ high sensitivity to dynamics from the softest of softs to the loudest of louds. Berg's compact yet lyrical style of motivic use is exemplified in this work. The melodic lines and motifs are very short and fragmented, yet are also complete, fluid, and developed. What is interesting and often overlooked in Berg's pieces are the innovative aspects of flutter tonguing, sub tones, piano harmonics, and pedal effects. This work is one of the earliest solo works for clarinet utilizing extended techniques.

A famous Viennese clarinetist, **Anton Stadler**, has the distinction of being remembered in music history as Mozart's clarinetist. Mozart composed for Stadler not only the clarinet

concerto and quintet, but also many chamber music works, soloistic orchestral interludes, and operatic aria obligati. Stadler, albeit with help from instrument maker Theodore Lotz, is credited with making improvements to the clarinet, basset horn, and creating the basset clarinet. It is lesser known that Stadler was also a composer, and crafted his own music plan for instruction, several duos, basset horn trios, and unaccompanied solos.

The *Three Caprices for Solo Clarinet* are interesting little pieces that follow the basic caprice or etude model. They are populated with runs, arpeggios, and melodic motivic writing utilizing the entire range of the instrument. Also contained within the caprices are folk songs and melodies from popular culture of the time including, "Ei du lieber Augustin", "God Save the King", "L'amor Marino", and melodies from *Die Zauberflöte*. These caprices were likely composed around 1810, and dedicated to friend and patron Count Jean Charles d'Esterhazy de Galantha.

What is interesting and most notable about the caprices is that they are probably the first solo-unaccompanied works written for the clarinet. Pamela Poulin's finding of several concert programs in Riga in the late 1990's, not only document the first found drawing of the basset clarinet, but also demonstrate that these caprices, Stadler's other solo variations, the Mozart concerto, and the Süßmayr concerto were performed. In these Riga performances, these works were most likely performed and edited to fit Stadler's new clarinets. Following this tradition and philosophy, tonight's performance will be on an early classical clarinet. With limited keywork and requiring a classical approach to playing, the Stadler caprices are a true display of different character and virtuosity.

Swiss composer **Othmar Schoeck** grew to limited fame in Europe during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was overshadowed by the great Parisian *Les Six* composers and the Austrian

2nd Viennese School. Schoeck is known primarily today for his opera *Penthesilea*, several song collections, and various other smaller chamber music for strings and winds. He studied with Reger in Leipzig, and was influenced by Busoni, Wolf (songs), and Hindemith.

In 1927, Schoeck began work on his *Sonata for Bass Clarinet, Op. 41* as a result of the influence and patronage of philanthropist Werner Reinhart. Clarinetists today know Reinhart as an amateur clarinetist who also supported Stravinsky in financing the *Histoire du soldat*, and by having the dedication for Stravinsky's *Three Pieces*. Although Schoeck's sonata was written for and dedicated to Reinhart, its premiere was not until April 1928, where it was performed at the Swiss *Tonkünstlerfest* in Lucerne by clarinetist Wilhelm Arnold of Munich with accompanist Fritz Müller.

Schoeck's bass clarinet sonata explores and experiments with Neoclassicism. One of the first solo works for bass clarinet, the piece is interesting, charming, and explores the bass clarinetist's innate silliness, all the while demonstrating the full range of the instrument. The first movement is in sonata form, the second movement has fugato elements with a quintuplet rhythm paired with a clown-like idea, and the third movement sounds at times like a "wrong note" rag. The influence of Hindemith, including quartal harmony, odd march style rhythms, and heavily chromatic contrapuntal writing is evident. The work also contains motific fragments, jazzy elements, "hunting horn" calls, and rapid tonality shifts. Schoeck considered pairing the bass clarinet with harpsichord to highlight the Neoclassical elements and balance the two instruments better. However as modern instruments are more refined, the two instruments, bass clarinet and piano, can compete adequately with each other. Hopefully this performance lives up to Schoeck saying that this piece "isn't painted, it's drawn... as with a harder pencil!... Play Hard!"

English composer **Gerald Finzi** is best known for his vast song output and clarinet works. He studied composition with Ernest Farrar (a student of Stanford) and R.O. Morris (counterpoint), and later became associated with Howard Ferguson and Ralph Vaughan Williams (lyricism). Finzi lived an interesting and unique life full of death and longing, which are vastly present in his compositions.

The *Concerto for Clarinet and String Orchestra, Op. 31* was first performed by Frederick Thurston with Finzi conducting the London Symphony Orchestra on September 9, 1949 at the Hereford Three Choirs Festival. The concerto is in three movements, each employing a lyric and unique balance between soloist and orchestra. It is one of Finzi's most recorded works and enjoys popularity in England.

As in most of Finzi's works, all three movements contain moments of frustration, sadness, and longing. Each movement also has moments of pure bliss, resolve, and reconciliation between soloist and orchestra. This dichotomy of ideals is what is fascinating about the concerto. Physical responses are enacted when severe dissonances resolve to ecstatic consonance. From a similar life perspective, this is a great concerto as it allows for both triumph and reconciliation, fitting for me as I end my studies at UF. Although often overlooked as one of the more popular English composers, Finzi's compositional style is unique for its lyrical writing, unique counterpoint and harmony.

## ANAYLSIS

Each work contains innovative compositional aspects or premises. Berg's *Four Pieces*, is one of the first solo clarinet works to include innovative extended techniques such as sub-tones and flutter tonguing. Stadler's *Caprices* are one of the first solo-unaccompanied works for clarinet intended for performance. The Schoeck *Bass Clarinet Sonata* is one of the first solo bass clarinet pieces. Although the Finzi *Clarinet Concerto* is not the first concerto written for clarinet, it is one of his most popular pieces, and is his most recorded and performed work in England. It also contains different compositional motivic and harmonic elements unlike many of the contemporary concerti written around the same time.

Each work also contains paradoxical or conflicting motifs, harmonies, ideas and resultant emotions. The Berg contains very short albeit seemingly complex undeveloped motifs, yet also infuses developed and simple lines. The tonality and harmony is very atonal, yet contains some remnants of tonality. Even though the form is four separate pieces, it relates to a traditional sonata with traditional outer movements, an adagio second movement, and a scherzo third movement. Albeit each movement contains very few measures, the timing of the work is still about 10 minutes. The whole work is an investigation between two conflicting ideas, short/long, atonal/tonal, and complex/simple.

In the Stadler, an investigation is made between history and modernity. The piece was performed on an early clarinet thus giving insight to how the piece might have been conceptualized and performed when first written. The piece also contains numerous folk or popular song quotations interspersed with elements of free compositional elements, similarly to a free cadenza and akin to jazz. Continuing in the same fashion as Stadler, when performed on

this recital, elements or highlights of the three pieces were condensed and performed as one long cadenza. The whole work is an investigation of the paradoxical old/new, structure/spontaneity, and written material/quotation.

The Schoeck is an interesting work because it tries to combine old and new, but from a more modern sense. As one of the forgotten Neoclassical composers, Schoeck combines formal elements from the past but with a unique spin on harmony. The work contains elements of classicism with a formal sonata form first movement, a Bach-like fugue in the second movement, and a chaotic rondo theme third movement in terms of quotation or structure. The work also contains elements of rag where the third movement is akin to a “wrong note rag”, yet also has elements of Hindemith’s quartal harmony and march rhythms. Also contained in the work are elements of dense serious structures with a sense of lively, silly, and quirky, unlike the other works on the program. The whole work is an investigation of modernity/history, seriousness/silliness, and dense/simple.

The last work on the program is one that greatly highlights this idea of paradox. In the Finzi, elements of country and folk song motifs and rhythms are present throughout yet are not specific to any tune. The clarinetist and orchestra are sometimes diametrically opposed and battling for the solo voice. What is interesting about this work is the undulating paradoxical keys and intervals associated through out the work. Finzi works to create a piece where severe dissonances exist that almost sound wrong, yet end up resolving to create a great peaceful consonance full of resolve. In a way, Finzi is able to take this dissonance to create an emotional or physical response, which is resolved to ecstatic consonance. Unlike the other works on the program, some of what is seemingly simple is truly complex, and in other places is seemingly

complex yet is truly simple. This work is a perfect investigation between paradox/order, darkness/light, and simple/complex.

Finally the last theme that is encountered between each work is due to each composer's affinity to the song genre. Berg is famous for writing lyric and song like lines that are present in the Four Pieces. Stadler quotes many popular songs from the era. Schoeck is only remembered for his song cycles, where elements of song and melody are branched into this sonata. Finzi is one of the great English lyricists for song and incorporates his love of the country and folk melodies into this work.

Overall, this recital has been an excellent exploration of works for clarinet that are often overlooked from both an analytical and performance perspective. The paradoxical, song, and innovative elements are a key symbol of who I have become and thus performing these combinations of pieces created a fantastic conclusion to my UF experience. Hopefully the qualities explained here will bring a new light to the works performed and garner more attention and performances in future recitals.

## **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

Hailing from Maryland, Keith Northover is currently a Teaching Assistant at the University of Florida and is finishing a Master's degree in clarinet performance and music education. He also serves as an Adjunct Instructor of Clarinet, Saxophone, and Music Fundamentals at the College of Central Florida. With years of service and commitment to providing music to the community, Keith is committed to encouraging and promoting music to the next generation. Highlights from the previous year include chamber music tours in Europe and Brazil, an early clarinet and Mozart workshop, a solo performance of Rolla's Bass Horn Concerto with the UF Orchestra, and numerous orchestral, band, and chamber music performances. Future aspirations include continuing to teach and perform professionally. Keith is studying with Professor Mitchell Estrin and his previous teachers include Dr. Kyle Coughlin, a free-lance musician in the Baltimore-Washington Metropolitan Area, and Dr. Jay Niepoetter, principal bass clarinetist of "The President's Own" United States Marine Band.

Upon completion of the Master's degree, Keith will continue his education at the University of Indiana, pursuing a DM in clarinet performance by studying with Howard Klug and Eric Hoeprich.