A Legacy Preserved: A Comparison of the Careers and Recordings of Stanley Drucker and Karl Leister

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A LEGACY PRESERVED: A COMPARISON OF THE CAREERS AND
RECORDINGS OF STANLEY DRUCKER AND KARL LEISTER

by

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Dedication

To my father, Peter James Geldrich, who placed me on my musical path…and to my wife, Shannon Lowe, who has held my hand on the journey.
Acknowledgements

This document is a result of the inspiration and guidance that many people have provided me, and to whom I owe an enormous debt of gratitude. First and foremost is my father, Peter James Geldrich, who introduced me to the clarinet, gave me my first lessons, and cultivated a love of music that has been a defining characteristic of my life. The trajectory of my life is a result of your example and my desire to make you proud. It is my fondest hope that this document would have done so. To my wife, Dr. Shannon Lowe, this document would not have been possible without your tireless assistance and advocacy. You served as my editor, coach, cheerleader, champion, and so much more: there are no words for the gratitude that I have for your love, encouragement, patience and guidance. My early clarinet teachers, Robert Renino and Loren Kitt, introduced me to the amazing repertoire with which the clarinet is blessed, and instilled in my ear the beautiful sounds of which it is capable. I thank them for providing this endless font of inspiration. In a way, this document began more than ten years prior to its completion, when I first heard Karl Leister perform live at the University of Florida. Mitchell Estrin is responsible for introducing me to both instrumental titans that this document chronicles. He brought Karl Leister to the University of Florida while I was a graduate student there, and regaled me with stories of studying with, and performing beside, Stanley Drucker. He taught me much more than the clarinet; he demonstrated how to be a professional, in music and in life. I thank Professor Estrin for being a constant mentor and a good friend.
When I began my doctoral degree, at the age of thirty-two, I had no expectations that I would discover potential in myself that had laid untapped. For that I will always be grateful to Joseph Eller, who taught me how to bring out the best in both my students and in my myself. I thank my other committee members, Dr. Leaman, Dr. Nagel, and Dr. Williams for their patience and expertise. I also would like to acknowledge the rest of the University of South Carolina School of Music faculty who have taught and guided me along the way: Dr. Hubbert, Dr. Rogers, Dr. Exner, Dr. Bush, Dr. Curry, Dr. Harley, Dr. Parker-Harley, Dr. Jenkins, and Dr. Weiss. I am in awe of the wealth of knowledge that subsist in the School of Music offices and classrooms. I will strive to live up to the fine example you each set forth. I offer a heartfelt “thank you” to all the clarinetists who responded to requests to be interviewed, or answered questions pertinent to this document: Mitchell Estrin, Karl Leister, Steven Cohen, Larry Guy, Michele Zukovsky, Brad Behn, and Bruce Marking. I want to extend my gratitude as well to all the anonymous clarinetists who took the time to respond to my “Definitive Clarinet Recordings Survey.” Finally, to Stanley Drucker and Karl Leister: you are both heroes in the world of music. I thank you for the enduring legacy of recordings that you both have left to the world, and for the inspiration your performances will provide for generations of musicians to come.
Abstract

Today’s musician has an unprecedented amount of recordings through which they can influence their tonal concept, guide their phasing, and instill appropriate musical style. However, this abundance of recordings is both a treasure trove and a labyrinth in which one can lose their way without proper background on the recording artist. This context is necessary to determine the recordings in which a particular artist is most adept, and what stylistic lessons the artist best imparts. This document provides a comprehensive study of the careers and recordings of two of the most important clarinetists of the twentieth-century; Stanley Drucker and Karl Leister. The author’s intent is to inform the modern clarinetist of the relative strength of each of artist’s unique stylistic approach so that the immense legacy of recordings they have bestowed upon the musical world is granted this context. As such, this document provides a biography of each artist, a description of their particular instrumental setup, and an analysis of their most important recordings, alongside other noteworthy interpretations. The author’s close examination of these distinctive artists’ performance styles will hopefully provide student and professional musicians alike assistance in finding and expressing their unique musical voice.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

By any measure, Stanley Drucker and Karl Leister are two of the greatest and most influential clarinetists of the twentieth century. Both played principal clarinet in orchestras that are considered among the most prestigious in the world. Both played under conductors that are revered as masters of the classical music canon. Both have performed and recorded most of the standard repertoire written for the clarinet. And both have taught many clarinetists of the subsequent generation at esteemed musical conservatories.

Despite their extensive careers as performers and teachers, I believe that these two master musicians have made the largest impact on the clarinet community through their remarkable legacy of recorded music. A sizable part of Stanley Drucker and Karl Leister’s orchestral careers coincided with a period of extremely prolific orchestral recordings. Leonard Bernstein made over two hundred recordings with the New York Philharmonic, most of them with Stanley Drucker as principal clarinet.1 Herbert Von Karajan’s career with the Berlin Philharmonic is similarly preserved through an astounding number of recordings, mostly of the traditional classical repertoire, with Karl

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Leister as principal clarinet on many of the recordings. Because of this vast wealth of recordings, today’s clarinet players can learn much about the orchestral repertoire from these legendary conductors and clarinetists without ever taking a private lesson from them. However, these remarkable orchestral recordings are just one portion of a larger legacy of recorded music. When combining their individual efforts, Stanley Drucker and Karl Leister have recorded practically the entire standard repertoire for the clarinet.

While listening to these great recordings, one is struck by the differences between these two musicians. Their approaches to sound, interpretation, and even choice of repertoire in some cases, vary greatly. These distinctions between the two clarinetists cannot be attributed simply to nationality or instrumental setup, as they differ considerably not just with each other, but even amongst their own countrymen. It is this aspect of these renowned clarinetists’ careers that makes their performances so interesting and their careers so fascinating to study; both are unique as musicians and as clarinetists.

**PURPOSE OF STUDY**

Music is one of the few crafts that is still largely taught from the model of an individual teacher to an individual student. Because of this, many musicians can trace their lineage of musical training back for generations. In this way, knowledge and

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The Berlin Philharmonic employs a “co-principal” system. During Karl Leister’s time with the Berlin Philharmonic he shared the principal clarinet role with other clarinetists. Therefore not all recordings made during his tenure with the orchestra feature him as principal clarinet.
tradition relating to all aspects of musical performance is preserved and passed on to future musicians. Due to this master/apprentice tradition, regional and national styles of playing musical instruments have been able to remain distinct for centuries.

Over the past several decades, it has been observed in the international community that distinct regional styles of instrumental performance have been eroding in favor of a more homogenous, uniform style. This can be attributed to several factors. Many musicians are obtaining advanced degrees, therefore studying with more teachers across a wider range of regions. This fosters a broadening palate of musical styles and characteristics from which they can draw upon in their performance and pedagogical practices. Similarly, musicians are obtaining professional engagements in regions and countries separate from where they were trained far more often than what was historically traditional. Also, the addition of mass media to the musical market in the twentieth century granted musicians access to a wide variety of regional and national styles through technologies such as radio broadcasts, television broadcasts, commercial recordings, and internet streaming and sharing. It is the dissemination of Stanley Drucker and Karl Leister’s performances through many of these mediums that will be explored in this document. After all, they are two of the most heard clarinetists in history due to their

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4 An interesting example of this is Chen Halevi, an Israeli clarinetist who plays on a Boehm system clarinet but was appointed as clarinet instructor at Musik Hochschule of Trossingen in Germany. As a result of his hire, a number of German clarinetists, including Sabine Meyer, former principal clarinet of the Berlin Philharmonic, started a petition in an effort to reverse the hire. It was their wish that an Oehler system clarinetist be hired instead so that the German clarinet tradition would be preserved. Hoeprich, *The Clarinet*, 232.
extensive careers in prominent orchestras and the significant number of commercial recordings on which they are featured.

This document will compare the careers and recordings of these two eminent clarinetists with the intent of providing insight as to what can be gained by listening to their vast trove of recorded musical works. To put their recordings into perspective, I will present a biography of each clarinetist focusing on their musical careers and training as well as putting noteworthy recordings into their proper chronological place. I will then discuss the differences in their instrumental setup, as this can account for a large part of the differences in their sound. The next two parts of the document will focus on specific recordings of solo and chamber music repertoire made by each clarinetist that are particularly worthy of attention and study, followed by a comparison to the recordings of these same works by other prominent clarinetists. The final section of the document will discuss the legacy that these two clarinetists and their recordings impart to clarinetists today.

It is my belief that by studying the training and careers of Stanley Drucker and Karl Leister, student and professional clarinetists alike will benefit from learning how these master musicians achieved greatness in their field. Furthermore, I feel that certain recordings from each clarinetist stand out above all others, and much can be learned through close examination. Finally, it is my assertion that when the body of recorded works by these two musicians is viewed in its entirety, broad musical conclusions can be drawn that, while opposing, support the development of any musician as an effective performer: namely, the energy and joy that infect Stanley Drucker’s performance style, and the beauty and clarity of Karl Leister’s musical approach.
NEED FOR STUDY

Despite the high regard for which both Stanley Drucker and Karl Leister are held in the clarinet community, at the time this document was written, only a small amount of extensive research of their careers existed; mostly through documentation of numerous interviews featured in *The Clarinet* periodical. While one can certainly piece together a somewhat complete picture of their individual careers by reading these interviews, a comprehensive biography in one written document would seem to be an invaluable asset to the clarinet community, or indeed anyone with an appreciation for these fine artists.⁵

Of even further interest, and an important component of this document, is the comparison of playing styles between these two musicians. The fact that the clarinet playing of Stanley Drucker and Karl Leister is so different in such a variety of ways makes their comparison interesting and informative. It can also perhaps explain why such a comparison has never been attempted. In a musical world of increased homogeneity, it appears to the author that a close look at the performance styles of these distinctive artists may aid students and professionals alike in finding and expressing their own unique voice on the clarinet.

Part II of this study will delve into specific recordings. Although some of these recordings have been the topic of study by some dissertations, many of which are sources for this document and can be found in citations, those authors took the perspective of

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⁵ Since the undertaking of this document, Mitchell Estrin, clarinet professor at the University of Florida, has released a biography of Stanley Drucker. Professor Estrin has been a valuable asset in the research and writing of this document. However, a biography of both Stanley Drucker and Karl Leister in one document remains unique to this project. Also, the focus of the biographical section on the artist’s recordings makes it distinct to other endeavors.
analyzing a particular piece of music and as part of that study, compared multiple recordings of that work by various clarinetists. This document adopts the reverse perspective; it is a study of the performing style of two artists through analysis of recordings that they have made of various pieces. While part of that study is comparing their recordings to other prominent artists, as of yet, no study has specifically investigated the significant recordings by these two artists in order to draw conclusions about their individual playing styles. Further, for each of the documents that include analyses of recordings that this document examines as well, the author has expanded upon the existing research by analyzing additional recordings. This includes recordings that were made after the initial study was released, recordings that have only recently come to light or where copyright licensing changes have allowed for a recording’s rerelease, and recordings that are pertinent to this particular study but not for the purposes of a previous document.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

As a comparison study, the author will not examine each individual clarinetist as fully as a study of one or the other would. Even though a biographical component for each clarinetist exists in this document, it centers on their clarinet training and careers with a specific emphasis on the recordings that they released. Other aspects of their biographies, such as family life and origins, while interesting and sometimes addressed in a limited capacity, are not a main focus of this study.

Additionally, this study concentrates on certain recordings that are deemed of especial interest by the author, Stanley Drucker and Karl Leister, as well as various professional clarinetists who were consulted during the writing of this document. As
such, other recordings made by these two artists will not be discussed in the body of the document, while others that are mentioned do not receive the same level of analysis. Similarly, the author uses recordings by other noteworthy clarinetists as a means of comparison to the two artists that are the subject of this study. These recordings were selected due to their historical importance, relative relation to recordings by Stanley Drucker or Karl Leister (i.e. other recordings of the Mozart Clarinet Concerto conducted by Herbert von Karajan or Neville Marriner, both of whom conducted on recordings of the work with Leister as soloist), or significance to the clarinet community as ascertained through the author’s “Definitive Clarinet Recordings Survey.” For each of the pieces where recordings were analyzed for this document, there are numerous others that were not selected for this particular study. This list will naturally increase as time passes and other clarinetists add their names to the list of interpreters of the clarinet repertoire.

One of the main assertions that this document makes is the near universal influence of Stanley Drucker and Karl Leister on the clarinet community due to the prevalence of their recordings. Because of this, interviews of fellow professional clarinetists who have been particularly influenced by either Stanley Drucker or Karl Leister serve as a main source for this document. The author has specifically sought out clarinetists who have studied with either musician as these individuals can offer keen insight into the legacy and influence of Drucker and Leister. While the list of clarinetists who fit this criterion is quite long, the author has limited it to the several individuals who accepted the offer to be interviewed. Undoubtedly, many other individuals who were not questioned could have contributed interesting insight as well.

RELATED LITERATURE

No other dissertation or document of any kind has adopted the specific focus of comparing Stanley Drucker and Karl Leister. However, there are certain documents that employ similar comparison studies of these artists’ interpretations against the renditions of others. One such document is, “A study of comparative interpretations by Stanley Drucker, Elsa Ludewig-Verdehr, Hakan Rosengren, and John Bruce Yeh of the clarinet concerto by Carl Nielsen,” by Christina Giacona. As the title implies, this dissertation studies various recorded interpretations and first-hand accounts of performances of the Nielsen concerto by prominent clarinetists, including Stanley Drucker. Drucker’s recording of this work is also featured prominently in the author’s document, as it is one of the most significant recordings of the work.

A similar study is presented in the dissertation, “Copland’s Clarinet Concerto: A Performance Perspective,” by Lisa Lorraine Gartrell Yeo. While Dr. Yeo’s document is not specifically about recordings of the Copland Concerto, a comparison of prominent recordings of the work is featured in the “Performance Practice” chapter. Interestingly, Stanley Drucker’s recording with Leonard Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic is not discussed in that section. As such, the author’s analysis of that recording will expand upon Dr. Yeo’s research.

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An important document that served as a model for the author’s analysis of particular recordings of repertoire is David Etheridge’s “Mozart Clarinet Concerto: The Clarinetist’s View.” In this book, Dr. Etheridge interviewed various influential clarinetists in order to draw conclusions as to how they interpret the Mozart Clarinet Concerto. The parameters for interpretive analysis in Etheridge’s book functions as a model for how the author of this document analyzed recordings of certain works, including: the Mozart Clarinet Concerto, the Mozart Clarinet Quintet, and the Weber Concerto. Furthermore, Etheridge interviewed clarinetists whose recordings the author also analyzes, and as such, his interviews provided valuable insight for the author’s document as well. However, Karl Leister, who has four recordings of the Mozart concerto, was not included in Etheridge’s book. The author’s document expands on Etheridge’s research by utilizing his interpretive parameters to analyze additional interpretations of the work, including those by Karl Leister.

Another author who takes a perspective similar to Dr. Etheridge is David R. Carter in his dissertation, “Corigliano’s Clarinet Concerto: The Clarinetist’s View.” This document analyzes four clarinetists’ approaches to Corigliano’s Clarinet Concerto, including Stanley Drucker’s, for whom the work was written. Likewise, the author’s document presents Drucker’s recording and performance of the Corigliano concerto, both as a milestone in his career and as a standard interpretation that all others should look to when learning the work.

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Similarly important to the author’s document is Dennis Gordon Prime’s dissertation “The Clarinet in selected Works of Bela Bartok and Igor Stravinsky.” Dr. Prime employs a unique system of analysis in his study of Bartok’s *Contrasts*. Because Bartok himself provided specific timings, down to the second, for each section of his work, Prime was able to compare recordings of the piece according to how much they aligned with, or deviated from, Bartok’s specifications. Stanley Drucker’s commercial recording of the work was included in Prime’s analysis. In Chapter 5 of the author’s document, which discusses recordings of Bartok’s *Contrasts*, Prime’s analysis was an essential starting point. However, like each of the other chapters on recordings of a particular work, the author included additional recordings for analysis that were not previously studied. For the chapter on Bartok’s *Contrasts* this includes an additional live performance recording of Stanley Drucker’s that was not previously available, and therefore was not analyzed in the earlier study.

One document that is different in subject matter yet similar in spirit is Amy Alizabeth Turnbull’s dissertation, “Richard Stoltzman: Defying Categorization.” In the introduction she states that, “Richard Stoltzman defies categorization with variety and spontaneity through the way he manipulates his sound, executes articulations, interprets music, chooses repertoire, and presents performances.” While the author does not go so far as to say that Stanley Drucker and Karl Leister “defy categorization,” it is the unique

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and inimitable quality of their playing that makes their recordings intriguing to study.
Likewise, it is those very qualities that Dr. Turnbull points to in Richard Stoltzman’s
playing style that are studied in the author’s document regarding the recordings of
Drucker and Leister.

**DESIGN AND PROCEDURES**

This study is in three parts. The first part consists of an overview of Stanley
Drucker and Karl Leister’s careers, with a chapter on the biography of each musician that
chronicles their training and career highlights, as well as places each of their major
recording milestones into their proper chronological context. The first part also contains a
chapter detailing the instrumental setup (i.e. design of their reeds, mouthpieces, and
clarinets) of each musician and the evolution of that setup, with the purpose of
documenting how the musician’s tonal characteristics are influenced by instrumental
setup and how any changes in tonal concept throughout their careers may be at least
partially impacted by a change to the design of their instrument, mouthpiece, and reeds.
Most of the sources for this information are from various interviews of the subjects
themselves, students of the subjects, and experts in the field (clarinet pedagogues,
mouthpiece craftsmen, instrument technicians, etc.). The author performed several of
these interviews personally, including an interview of Karl Leister and Mitchell Estrin
who has a long personal relationship with Stanley Drucker as his former student,
colleague, and friend. The author also utilizes various interviews of Drucker and Leister
found in the periodical *The Clarinet*, and others that are available to the public on
websites such as *YouTube*. As both musicians have had long histories with a particular
orchestra (the New York Philharmonic and the Berlin Philharmonic respectively), the
author consulted histories of these two orchestras as references for biographical information. Of particular value were John Canarina’s book *The New York Philharmonic: From Bernstein to Maazel*, and Richard Osborne’s biography, *Herbert Von Karajan: A Life in Music*, which charts Karajan’s long career with the Berlin Philharmonic.\(^{14}\) Also, one dissertation that provides a thorough accounting of Stanley Drucker’s career with the New York Philharmonic, and as such was most useful in the research for the author’s document, is Amy Shapiro’s dissertation, “Sixty Years at the New York Philharmonic Through the Eyes of Clarinetist Stanley Drucker: An Oral History of the Philharmonic Community, 1948 – 2008.”\(^{15}\)

The next two sections of this document present an analysis of Stanley Drucker and Karl Leister’s significant recordings, with Drucker’s recordings comprising Part Two and Karl Leister’s recordings comprising Part Three. The recordings analyzed are ones that are agreed upon to be the most important by the author, the musicians who made them, other professional clarinetists interviewed for this document, and the clarinet community as a whole.\(^{16}\) The recordings discussed feature a combination of solo (concertos, sonatas, etc.), and chamber music repertoire. In order to establish the

\(^{16}\) In order to obtain the opinion of the clarinet community regarding the recordings of Stanley Drucker and Karl Leister, the author designed a survey that posed questions relating to clarinetists’ preferred recordings of specific repertoire discussed in this document. This is an attempt by the author to see if some or all of the artists’ recordings can be considered “definitive.”
significance and pedagogical benefit of these two musicians’ recordings, the chapters in these two parts compare the recordings of Drucker and Leister to other prominent clarinetists’ recordings of the same works, including comparisons to each other when possible. While the author has provided analysis for many of the recordings studied in this document, he also draws upon the analysis of previous authors.\textsuperscript{17}

With each chapter that examines recordings of a select work, the author provides historical background regarding the piece’s origins and a description of each piece’s overall form and compositional structure when pertinent. For these sections many of the documents listed in the “related literature” section proved valuable. Nonetheless, additional resources were used for historical background and structural analysis as well. These include Ann Marie Bingham’s dissertation, "Carl Nielsen’s Koncert for Klarnet Og Orkester, Opus 57 (1928): A Performance Guide,” Kimberly Miller’s dissertation, “Carl Baermann: His Influence on the Clarinet in the Nineteenth Century as Pedagogue, Composer, and Instrument Technician,” for its discussion of Weber’s Clarinet Concerto No. 1 in F Minor, Lisa Johnson’s dissertation, “Mozart’s Quintet for Clarinet and Strings: An Analytic Study,” Sarah Jane Adams’ dissertation, “Quartets and quintets for mixed groups of winds and strings: Mozart and his contemporaries in Vienna, C.1780-C.1800,” and Colin Lawson’s book Brahms: Clarinet Quintet.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{17} The existing analyses used in this study were those provided in the documents listed in the “related literature” section. In each instance, the author has expanded upon the existing analyses of recordings for each composition by providing additional analyses of recordings not examined in previous documents.

\textsuperscript{18} Kimberly Miller, “Carl Baermann: His Influence on the Clarinet in the Nineteenth Century as Pedagogue, Composer, and Instrument Technician” (DMA diss., Ann Arbor: University of Cincinnati, March 2010), ProQuest (AAT 3432275);
Also pertinent to the author’s description of the numerous recordings made by Stanley Drucker and Karl Leister are certain resources that helped uncover these recordings and placed them in their proper chronological position. One such source was James H. North’s book, *New York Philharmonic: The Authorized Recordings, 1917-2005.*\(^{19}\) This book provided the information for many of Stanley Drucker’s orchestral recordings. Similarly important was Robert Taylor’s two-part article in the periodical *The Clarinet* “Playing in the Sunshine: An Interview with Karl Leister,” and “Playing in the Sunshine Part II: A Karl Leister Discography.”\(^{20}\) As evidenced by the article titles, part one was an interview with Karl Leister where many of his important recordings were discussed and part two was a complete discography of all of Leister’s recordings up until the date of the article, in 1995.

The last section of this document presents the author’s conclusions. This section clarifies the relevance of all previous chapters, demonstrating how the unique circumstances of each clarinetist’s career shaped their musical style and how the clarinet

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community, and larger musical world, benefits from close examination of these disparate yet equally captivating musical approaches. In the conclusion the author mostly draws inference from material previously discussed throughout the document. However, one additional noteworthy source in this section is Robert Philip’s book *Early Recordings and Music Style.* In his book, Philip addresses the evolution of musical style as demonstrated in recorded performance. The author’s study is, at its heart, similar to Philip’s in that both authors look to the recordings of earlier musicians as a link to the past, as well as a compass pointing to the direction of our current musical trends. In this light, the study of Drucker and Leister’s recordings makes for an especially interesting case; the wealth of recordings made over their long careers documents their own individual musical evolution, and their contrasting styles allow for the comparison of broad trends in clarinet performance that they helped direct.

As a large portion of the author’s document centers on the legacy that these eminent musicians offer to the clarinet community, many of the assertions made are subjective. First and foremost are the views, reminiscences, and opinions of the artists who are the focus of this study, Stanley Drucker and Karl Leister. Moreover, the author has endeavored to consult professional clarinetists and scholars who possess long lasting connections to the artists and whose insights should be valued by anyone who wishes to learn from Drucker and Leister’s example. Additionally, the author has attempted to gain a consensus from the clarinet community concerning the influence of Drucker and Leister’s recordings through the issuing of a survey posted on various online platforms.

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Lastly, the author himself provides the conclusions to which he has arrived regarding the benefit that can be gained from studying the careers and recordings of these two artists. It is his sincere hope that this comprehensive study will allow others to listen to these two musicians’ outstanding legacy of recorded music with fresh ears and an openness to discover their own unique musical voice.
Part I

Biographies and Instrumental Equipment
Chapter 2

Stanley Drucker Biography

In 1948, nineteen-year-old clarinetist Stanley Drucker auditioned for the position of assistant principal clarinetist of the New York Philharmonic in the green room of Carnegie Hall. After playing for Bruno Walter and a committee of principal players, Drucker distinctly heard Walter say, “He’ll make a very valuable member of the organization.” It is likely that Bruno Walter had no idea how prophetic his words would turn out to be. Sixty years later Drucker would retire as the longest serving member of the New York Philharmonic and was made an honorary member of the Philharmonic-Symphony Society of New York, the first and only instrumental member of the orchestra to receive that honor.

Drucker’s association with the clarinet began when his father gave him one for his tenth birthday. His first teacher was Arthur Small, whom the Musician’s Union recommended at the time. Drucker describes Small as a “doubler” who played saxophone, clarinet, and probably flute. However, soon after Drucker began lessons,

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Small went on an extended world tour with a dance orchestra. It was at that point that Drucker began studying with Leon Russianoff.\(^{25}\)

Leon Russianoff is one of the most storied clarinet pedagogues in recent clarinet history. A short list of his students includes: Peter Simenauer, Michael Burgio, and Steven Freeman (all former section mates of Drucker in the New York Philharmonic); Michele Zukovsky, former principal clarinet of the Los Angeles Philharmonic; Franklin Cohen, former principal clarinet of the Cleveland Symphony; Larry Combs, former principal clarinet of the Chicago Symphony; Stephen Girko, former principal clarinet of the Dallas Symphony; Richard Pickar, former principal clarinet of the Houston Symphony; Alan Balter, former principal clarinet of the Atlanta Symphony; Phil Fath, former principal clarinet of the San Francisco Symphony; Charles Neidich, prominent clarinet soloist and clarinet professor at the Julliard School of Music; and, of course, Drucker and his wife Naomi.\(^{26}\) During an interview on the New York based classical radio station WQXR’s “Great Teachers” segment, Russianoff said of Drucker, “I think he is certainly the greatest clarinet player of our generation and, I think, of all time perhaps.”\(^{27}\) Despite the fact that Drucker was his former student, the long list of Russianoff students who have attained top level positions in their field shows how much Drucker stands out amongst his peers, at least according to Russianoff.


\(^{26}\) Clark, 1.

Russianoff taught Drucker from the age of eleven until he left for the Curtis Institute at the age of fifteen. Even after Drucker won his first orchestral jobs, he would occasionally return to Russianoff for lessons and advice.\textsuperscript{28} Remarkably, Russianoff was quite young himself (his early twenties) when he began teaching Drucker in 1941.\textsuperscript{29} He graduated from City College of New York a year earlier with a degree in English and Sociology, without taking any music classes.\textsuperscript{30} However, starting his senior year of high school and throughout college, Russianoff studied clarinet with Simeon Bellison, principal clarinetist of the New York Philharmonic from 1920 – 1948.\textsuperscript{31} Bellison was a much stricter teacher than Russianoff would ever become. Russianoff, describing Bellison’s teaching, stated that:

\begin{quote}
The emphasis was always on character, style, and phrasing. He left little to your imagination, however. Every nuance, every contrast, ritard, and accent was carefully marked in the part...this approach did not particularly engender individuality and personality.\textsuperscript{32}
\end{quote}

In contrast, the primary teaching philosophy of Russianoff was the cultivation of individuality. In discussing Russianoff’s method, Stephan Clark states that “the fundamental thrust of Russianoff’s philosophy of life is one of respect and encouragement for individuality.”\textsuperscript{33} Russianoff described this philosophy himself in a masterclass at the 1982 International Clarinet Association Conference:

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\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
In 1948, the same year Simeon Bellison retired, Drucker came to the Philharmonic. Clark, 12.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Clark, 13.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Clark, 39.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{28} Clark, 125
\textsuperscript{29} Mitchell Estrin, \textit{Stanley Drucker: Clarinet Master} (Canada: Carl Fischer, LLC, 2018), 19.
\textsuperscript{30} Clark, 14-16.
\textsuperscript{31}In 1948, the same year Simeon Bellison retired, Drucker came to the Philharmonic. Clark, 12.
\textsuperscript{32} Clark, 13.
\textsuperscript{33} Clark, 39.
I try to encourage uniqueness and individuality in the student. I don't feel I'm a good enough model to have everybody play just like me. I don't think that would be a good idea even if I were a good model—a great model . . . there are many different ways to slice the musical pie. . . One of the things that I really try to do is to encourage each person to express himself as a unique individual in his music.34

This teaching style has resulted, not just in great clarinet players, but musical soloists.

In addition to Drucker, who is one of the most individual voices on the clarinet, Russianoff taught Franklin Cohen.35 Cohen was the long-time principal clarinetist of the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra, and, like Drucker, is one of the most distinct clarinetists in the United States. Franklin Cohen competed in the ARD International Music Competition in 1968, which was the first year to feature the clarinet after Leister won the second prize in 1962; Cohen won the elusive first prize.36 In addition to Russianoff, Cohen cites Drucker as one of his major clarinet influences. While discussing his background in an interview for The Clarinet in 1982, Cohen stated “Since I grew up in New York, one of the first well-known players whom I admired a great deal was Stanley Drucker.”37 In a 2015 interview, Cohen discussed Drucker’s influence at greater length:

What I especially loved about Stanley was his unique and unabashed enthusiasm and energy— to say nothing of his amazing playing! This association left a lasting impression on me, and I have always tried to fashion myself as a dynamic, high energy player, trying to give myself over to the music…38

34 Clark, 55.
35 While in high school, Franklin Cohen studied clarinet with Leon Russianoff; though his time under Russianoff’s tutelage was only a few years, Cohen considers him to be the teacher who made the biggest impact. Dennis Nygren, “An Interview with Franklin Cohen on 39 Years with the Cleveland Orchestra and his Retirement,” The Clarinet, Vol. 42, No. 3 (June 2015): 56.
36 Nygren, 55 (For more about Leister’s history with the ARD competition, refer to Chapter 3 Karl Leister Biography).
38 Nygren, 56.
Drucker had been attending the High School of Music and Arts in New York City while taking lessons with Russianoff. Drucker described it as “a great school…it had six orchestras and two bands and there were rehearsals every day.” However, a better opportunity came up while Drucker was still in high school. At the age of fifteen, he left the High School of Music and Arts to attend the Curtis Institute of Music, one of the most prestigious music conservatories in the world. 

Curtis was especially renowned for its training of wind players. At Curtis, Drucker’s clarinet teacher was Bernard Portnoy. Portnoy was very much a part of this Philadelphia lineage and style of playing. In fact, Portnoy had studied with Daniel Bonade at the Curtis Institute of Music from 1933 to 1937. Portnoy assumed the principal clarinet position of the Philadelphia Orchestra following Robert McGinnis, who went on to play in the New York Philharmonic with Drucker in 1948.

Although Drucker studied with Portnoy, he cites Marcel Tabuteau, the oboe professor and director of chamber music at Curtis, as his primary influence at that time.

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39 Drucker, Interview with Mitchell Estrin, VandorenTV.
40 Mitchell Estrin, Stanley Drucker: Clarinet Master, 27; Carol Anne Kycia, Daniel Bonade: A Founder of the American Style of Clarinet Playing (Captiva, Florida: Captiva Publishing, 1999), 16.
41 Drucker attended Curtis during World War II and Portnoy was a member of the Merchant Marines at that time, teaching Drucker in uniform. Stanley Drucker, Interview by Mitchell Estrin, VandorenTV.
42 Kycia, Appendix R.
44 Tabuteau led the Curtis Chamber Orchestra which gave a radio broadcast performance every week. He has been listed as a major influence on wind players of various instruments coming out of the Curtis Institute. Estrin VandorenTV 1/5; David McGill, Sound in Motion: A Performer’s Guide to Greater Musical Expression, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 2.
He described Tabuteau as being “demanding but inspiring.” Perhaps the reason that Portnoy is not mentioned as being a significant influence was that Drucker won his first professional orchestra job after only one year at Curtis. In 1945, at the age of sixteen, he auditioned for the position of principal clarinet of the Indianapolis Symphony. He played for Fabien Sevitzky, the orchestra’s conductor at the time, at the musicians’ union in Philadelphia. Among the excerpts he played were: Dvorak’s *New World Symphony*; Rimsky-Korsakov’s *Capriccio Espagnole* and *Scheherazade*; Glinka’s *Kamarinskaya*; and Liszt’s *Les Preludes* and *Second Hungarian Rhapsody*.

Upon winning the audition, Drucker went to Efrem Zimbalist, director of the Curtis Institute of Music, and asked whether he should take the post. Zimbalist recommended that Drucker take the job, explaining that he could always come back to finish his schooling. Drucker’s successful audition with the Indianapolis Symphony began a stream of winning orchestra auditions that happened in short succession, giving him an amount of musical and professional experience that belied his young age. He never returned to finish his schooling.

Drucker went on to win the job as clarinetist with the Adolf Busch Chamber Players the next year when he was seventeen. He took the audition because the Busch Chamber Players payed twice as much as the Indianapolis Symphony, despite having a

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45 Drucker, Interview by Mitchell Estrin, *VandorenTV* 1/5.
46 Ibid.
48 Drucker, Interview by Mitchell Estrin, *VandorenTV*. 
shorter season. The Busch Chamber Players was a conductor-less touring orchestra led by the eminent violinist, Adolph Busch as Concertmaster. Every concert would feature either Busch performing a violin concerto, or his equally prestigious son-in-law, Rudolph Serkin, performing a piano concerto. Drucker stated that because the Busch Chamber Players performed without a conductor, he “learned to play without watching a conductor’s beat.”

Adolph Busch and Rudolph Serkin were extremely influential musicians at the time. In addition to their prestige as soloists they were the founders of the Marlboro Music Festival, where they helped develop and shape many of the greatest musical leaders of the time. Drucker lists Adolph Busch as one of his major influences as a musician, and credits him with the advice to audition for William Steinberg, who was the director of the Buffalo Philharmonic. Drucker won the position of principal clarinet of the Buffalo Philharmonic in 1947 when he was eighteen years old.

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49 Drucker describes life as professional musician in those days as “a nomad kind of existence,” because no orchestras at that time offered year-round employment. Because of this, musicians had to constantly take auditions in order to make a living. Shapiro, “Sixty Years at the New York Philharmonic Through the Eyes of Clarinetist Stanley Drucker,” 76.

50 Ibid.


54 Estrin, “Honorees for ICA’s Lifetime Achievement Award,” 70.
After playing one season with the Buffalo Philharmonic, Drucker was informed that the New York Philharmonic would be having clarinet auditions. Three members of the clarinet section left at the same time: principal clarinetist, Simeon Bellison; assistant principal clarinetist, Alexander Williams; and second clarinetist, Otto Conrad. Drucker auditioned for conductor Bruno Walter and a committee of New York Philharmonic musicians. For select excerpts, Walter even accompanied Drucker on the piano. Among the excerpts Drucker played for the audition were: Kodaly’s *Dances of Galanta*; Rimsky-Korsakov’s *Scheherazade*; Tchaikovsky’s *Francesca di Rimini*; Weber’s *Der Freischütz Overture* and Wagner’s *Tannhauser Overture*. The audition of 1948 resulted in the following appointments: Drucker as assistant principal and e-flat clarinetist, Robert McGinnis, formerly of the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra, as principal clarinetist, and Napoleon Cerminara as second clarinetist. The bass clarinetist, Leonard Schaller, remained the only veteran from the previous section.

Drucker’s long tenure with the New York Philharmonic corresponded with some of the biggest changes in the orchestra’s history. At the time of his appointment, the New York Philharmonic, like most orchestras, did not offer year-round employment. It also did not possess its own concert venue, sharing Carnegie Hall with other orchestras and touring ensembles. Both of these situations changed early in Drucker’s career. The New York Philharmonic moved to Lincoln Center in 1962 and two years later became the first full-time professional orchestra in the country.

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55 Shapiro, “Sixty Years at the New York Philharmonic Through the Eyes of Stanley Drucker,” 2.
56 Estrin, 70.
57 Drucker, Interview by Mitchell Estrin, “Conversations in New York Chapter 2/5.”
58 Shapiro, 77.
The first rehearsal that Drucker participated in with the New York Philharmonic was Richard Strauss’ *Thus Spake Zarathustra* conducted by Dmitri Mitropoulos. When discussing what he learned as a player in his first season with the New York Philharmonic Drucker states, “I listened to these players, these great soloists, and every rehearsal became a masterclass. So I really learned on the job.”59 Furthermore, Drucker learned a great deal from the conductors under which he played. The conductors that led the New York Philharmonic in his first years included: Charles Munch, George Szell, Leopold Stokowski, Dmitri Mitropoulos, Bruno Walter, and Leonard Bernstein. Drucker describes Bruno Walter as “a symphonic man through and through,” and that his preferred repertoire was “the great masters.” Drucker goes on to say “He was not interested so much in modern music, but the tradition he brought to his Mozart and Brahms (interpretations) was amazing.”60 By contrast, Drucker describes Mitropoulos as someone very interested in new music, allowing the musicians to work on music that “you wouldn’t ordinarily get to play.”61

Another part of this learning experience for Drucker occurred while he played in a chamber series initiated by Mitropoulos in the 1950s. This chamber series included much new music and works that were not usually programmed.62 Drucker, who was among some of the first musicians involved, said that this chamber series “really filled a certain void that had existed with just playing orchestra rehearsals and concerts.”63

60 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
63 Shapiro, 117.
Besides being a musically rewarding experience, the series also served a purpose in helping to train the musicians. Sherry Sylar, Associate Principal Oboe of the New York Philharmonic, says of the chamber music series “It’s a different kind of playing and it also enhances your orchestral playing...playing in the orchestra has become a lot easier because we know the tendencies of one another and how to sort of accommodate and adjust. It just makes orchestra life so much easier.”

After twelve years as the assistant principal and e-flat clarinetist, Drucker was appointed to the position of principal clarinet after Robert McGinnis’ departure in 1960. The promotion to principal was offered by Leonard Bernstein himself, two years after he ascended to the role of music director of the New York Philharmonic. This was the beginning of a wonderful collaboration that resulted in Drucker soloing with the orchestra dozens of times and making four recordings as a soloist, more than any other principal wind under Bernstein’s direction.

Drucker’s first solo experience while principal clarinet with the New York Philharmonic was Debussy’s *Premiere Rhapsody* in 1961. He performed it in Carnegie Hall under Leonard Bernstein and recorded it later that year at the Manhattan Center. This solo experience happened to correspond with the last season the New York Philharmonic would be housed at Carnegie Hall and so, served as a fitting farewell to a

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64 Ibid, 120.
65 Ibid, 3.
67 Drucker previously soloed with the orchestra, while in the position of assistant principal clarinet, on the Mozart Clarinet Concerto in 1954 for a summer concert in Lewisohn Stadium. Estrin, *Stanley Drucker: Clarinet Master*, 42; North, 140.
hall that Drucker describes as “…very welcoming…that same resistance when you blow into that hall, and the quality of sound that hangs, is certainly among the best anywhere.” Shapiro, 85. That his first solo experience took place in Carnegie Hall rather than the new Philharmonic Hall (now named David Geffen Hall) was perhaps fortuitous as well, due to the mixed feelings regarding the new hall’s acoustics. From 1973-2014 the concert venue was named Avery Fisher Hall. It has since been renamed in honor of patron David Geffen. Lincoln Center Website, “David Geffen Hall,” Accessed September 1, 2016, http://www.lincolncenter.org/venue/david-geffen-hall; John Canarina, The New York Philharmonic: From Bernstein to Mazel (New York: Amadeus Press, 2010), 39-40.

The next solo recording experience for Drucker was Nielsen’s Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra. In 1965, Leonard Bernstein had made it a mission to perform and record the works of both Jean Sibelius and Carl Nielsen to mark the centenary of their births. Between 1965 and 1967 Bernstein recorded Sibelius’ Symphony Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 (he had already recorded Symphonies Nos. 5 and 7 in 1961 and 1960 respectively) and both the flute and clarinet concertos of Nielsen with the New York Philharmonic. Bernstein was especially interested in presenting the works of Nielsen to the public, because they were not as well-known as he thought they should be.

Discussing Bernstein’s Sibelius and Nielsen projects Allen Shaw states:

Sibelius was another composer with whom he had an individual connection. His performances showed a deep sympathy for the inner logic of Sibelius’s musical train of thought, a grasp of his vast architecture, and an ability to find the through line and momentum in his strangest passages…But more historically significant, given the composer’s relative


North, 323 & 331.
obscurity, were the presentations of major works by Nielsen, including his Third Symphony and the Concertos for Clarinet and Flute.\textsuperscript{72}

Certainly the obscurity of Nielsen’s works held true for the clarinet concerto. While the piece had been recorded two times previously, neither recording was made by American clarinetists or orchestras. According to Christina Giacona, “Drucker’s recording popularized the Clarinet Concerto to the United States and Western Europe making the recording a milestone in the exposure of Nielsen’s music.”\textsuperscript{73}

The clarinet concerto would be recorded in March 1967 while Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic were holding a “Nielsen Festival.” Prior to the recording, the work was performed many times over a ten-day period. The recording was made on the stage of Avery Fischer Hall, making it the first clarinet concerto recorded in that space. Despite the notorious difficulty of the work, the recording of the clarinet solo was completed in one take; however, there was an orchestral section that later had to be fixed.\textsuperscript{74}

The following year, in 1968, Drucker began his long association with the Juilliard School.\textsuperscript{75} This was a significant year for Juilliard. Besides gaining Drucker as one of its clarinet teachers, a drama department was added in addition to its music division. The new addition necessitated a change of name from the Juilliard School of Music to the

\textsuperscript{72} Shaw, 203.
\textsuperscript{73} Christina Giacona, “A Study of Comparative Interpretations by Stanley Drucker, Elsa Ludwig-Verdehr, Håkan Rosengren, and John Bruce Yeh of the Clarinet Concerto by Carl Nielsen” (DMA dis., The University of Oklahoma, 2009), ProQuest (AAT 3355801), 10.
\textsuperscript{75} Estrin, “Honorees for ICA’s Lifetime Achievement Award: Stanley Drucker,” 70.
more encompassing Juilliard School. Within one year of Drucker’s appointment, the school relocated from Columbia University to Lincoln Center.76

The move to Lincoln Center was advantageous to students like clarinetist Mitchell Estrin and oboist Robert Botti, both of whom went on to perform with the New York Philharmonic.77 Estrin describes being able to hear his teacher, Drucker, perform with the Philharmonic:

Being that Juilliard was in such close proximity to Avery Fisher Hall, basically right across the street, I used to go to concerts all the time. You used to get student rush tickets and… my friend and I, who actually is in the orchestra… Rob Botti… went to a lot of concerts together… we would go in and we would always hear whatever the major work was. And sometimes we would go multiple times. So in addition to just having a weekly lesson I would also hear [Mr. Drucker] play… The orchestral repertory class we played every week would do the work that the Philharmonic had done the previous week. Whatever the big piece was… I would go hear it and I would get to do it in the rep class the week later, which was fantastic!78

For much of his time at Juilliard, Drucker taught alongside his former teacher and lifelong friend, Leon Russianoff.79 Like his teacher, Drucker has a long list of students who have achieved impressive clarinet careers in their own right, including: Franklin Cohen and Mitchell Estrin (both of whom are already mentioned in this document); Laura Ardan, principal clarinetist of the Atlanta Symphony; Ted Lane, principal clarinet of the Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional del Ecuador; William Powell, former clarinet

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77 Robert Botti became second oboe with the New York Philharmonic in 1992. Mitchell Estrin was a regular performer in the clarinet section, where he played over 2000 concerts in over 25 years.
78 Mitchell Estrin, Interview with Peter Geldrich, October 17, 2015, Gainesville, Florida.
79 Ibid.
professor of the California Institute of the Arts; and Esther Lamneck, Professor of Clarinet at New York University and an international clarinet soloist.\textsuperscript{80}

As the New York Philharmonic and Leonard Bernstein are so inseparably linked, it is easy to forget that Bernstein’s tenure as Artistic Director of the orchestra was only eleven years, from 1958 – 1969. The relationship between Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic of course stretches much longer. His famous debut with the orchestra, as a replacement for an ailing Bruno Walter, was in 1943 and his final performances with the orchestra occurred in 1988, just two years before his death. In-between these dates, Bernstein and the New York Philharmonic maintained one of the most fruitful relationships a conductor ever had with an orchestra, making hundreds of recordings.\textsuperscript{81}

Despite his long relationship with the New York Philharmonic, Bernstein resigned from his role as Artistic Director in 1969; although, he was bestowed with the lifetime title of “Laureate Conductor.”\textsuperscript{82} Following Bernstein, George Szell came to lead the Philharmonic as “music advisor and senior guest conductor.”\textsuperscript{83} Unfortunately, Szell’s tenure was shortened to one year due to his death in 1970.\textsuperscript{84} Szell was a conductor in the European tradition, like Bruno Walter; a master of the Classical period and Romantic period literature and a perfectionist on the podium. Of Szell, Drucker says:

He was tough. He was relentless. And his interest, of course, was in the classics, where he stayed for the most part. He had a great integrity for what he did. There’s no question about it. He was a conductor of his time. His performances of the masterpieces of that 19th century, and the early

\textsuperscript{80} Estrin, “Honorees for ICA’s Lifetime Achievement Award: Stanley Drucker,” 70.
\textsuperscript{82} Shapiro, 188.
\textsuperscript{83} Canarina, 68.
\textsuperscript{84} Shapiro, 188.
20th century perhaps, were among the best. He was a true master conductor.\(^{85}\)

Following George Szell’s brief role as leader of the Philharmonic was a man who could not be more different than the European traditionalist, Pierre Boulez. Boulez, like Bernstein, was a composer who had an affinity for contemporary repertoire. However, there were as many differences as similarities. Where Bernstein was known for his warmth and acceptance of repertoire of all genres, styles and time periods, Boulez was known for his “zealous advocacy for rigorous serialism and corresponding disdain for tonality.”\(^{86}\) Despite this perception of Boulez, he went on to make a mark on the Philharmonic that belies this one-sided view. Drucker states that:

I found him to be very, very exciting from a few angles. For one thing, he brought repertoire that we hadn’t played….and the interesting thing is that you learned them fairly fast because…the difficult passages he conducted exactly the same as the easy passages…He had great conducting technique and certainly you needed it for that kind of music….\(^{87}\)

Drucker also says that “If one examined his programming, actually, he did quite a lot of standard works…. Perhaps he didn’t make a fuss over certain standard works, where somebody would come and conduct a Brahms symphony like it was the only thing that existed.”\(^{88}\) Boulez went on to continue Bernstein’s mission as a music educator by initiating two new concert series: “Prospective Encounters” and “Rug Concerts.”\(^{89}\)

\(^{85}\) Shapiro, 189.
\(^{86}\) Shapiro, 190.
\(^{87}\) Ibid 191.
\(^{88}\) Ibid.
\(^{89}\) Prospective Encounters was designed to initiate a dialogue between contemporary composers, the performers of their music and audience members. The Rug Concerts brought the New York Philharmonic closer to the audience by having the orchestra
Pierre Boulez also made some of the most memorable recordings with the New York Philharmonic. His recordings of Bartok and Ravel are especially noteworthy. Larry Guy, freelance clarinetist in the New York metropolitan area and professor of clarinet at NYU, describes the recording of Bartok’s *Miraculous Mandarin Suite* by Boulez and the New York Philharmonic, as a recording that all clarinetists should know. In particular Guy points to Drucker’s playing on the recording as achieving “a sense of menace, abandon, and excitement that is unmatched, in my listening experience.”

Jon Deak, bassist with the New York Philharmonic, thinks that Boulez was very effective as an interpreter of the French Impressionists, stating “He was able to really pull together compelling interpretations of those works and insist on technical cleanliness, accuracy, unanimity, and so forth.”

In 1976, Drucker was approached by Carlos Moseley, president of the New York Philharmonic’s board of directors, who informed Drucker that the Philharmonic would like to commission a clarinet concerto. Moseley also asked him who he would like the composer to be. The clarinet concerto was part of a commissioning project that called for the writing of seven concertos, all written for principal players of the Philharmonic. The project was one financed and instigated by board member and patron, Francis Goelet, who was responsible for much of the music written specifically for, and financed by, the New York Philharmonic. In the words of *The New York Times* writer Joan Thomson in

perform on the floor, rather than on stage, while the audience sat on cushions on the floor, rather than in seats. Canarina, 83.

90 Larry Guy, Email message to Peter Geldrich, October 9, 2016.
91 Shapiro, 193.
92 Shapiro, 129.
93 Shapiro, 128.
her article, “The Philharmonic Reaps a Harvest of New Concertos,” “New concertos are rare, and this series is unprecedented in the 137 year history of the Philharmonic—or in that of any other American orchestra for that matter….Why a sudden concerto crop, vintage 1977, in a world that prefers to ignore new music? Because of the generosity of one man, Francis Goelet.” Other concertos commissioned by the project included a flute concerto by Andrew Imbrie, a concerto for percussion quartet by Michael Colgrass, and a concerto for English horn by Vincent Persichetti.

Drucker’s answer for who should compose the commissioned clarinet concerto was Leonard Bernstein. Bernstein however was too busy to finish a concerto by the next season and recommended the young composer, John Corigliano Jr. Corigliano Jr. was the son of the former concertmaster of the Philharmonic, John Corigliano Sr. Although Corigliano Jr. was a relatively young and unknown composer at the time, his close ties to the Philharmonic made him a natural choice. He had been a part of the Philharmonic community since childhood; he had worked with Bernstein on the Young People’s Concerts; and had even taken clarinet lessons with Drucker.

In a real sense, Corigliano’s clarinet concerto is a piece written not just for Drucker, but for the New York Philharmonic and its principal clarinetist. According to Drucker, “He [Corigliano] wanted to write a work that would include all members of the orchestra, because he’d grown up with that orchestra. And he actually did that….He used every permanent member of the orchestra in different ways in that score.” The result

95 Canarina, 111.
96 Shapiro, 129.
97 Shapiro, 131.
was a piece that is virtuosic not just for the soloist but for the orchestra and conductor as well. Drucker describes the clarinet part as “…relentless in its difficulties and it requires sort of a heroic undertaking by whoever is going to play it.”98 He also remembers Bernstein telling Corigliano, “You’ve written a test piece for conductor.”99 This is because there is so much freedom in the score, between the many written cadenzas and musical “events” from all over the stage and even into the balconies of the concert hall.100

Even though the premiere of Corigliano’s clarinet concerto took place during the tenure of Pierre Boulez, Leonard Bernstein insisted on conducting the concert, which took place on December 6, 1977.101 The concert, and the work, were an astounding success. Drucker describes how there were standing ovations for every one of the five performances of the work. Corigliano says that he was told that the New York Philharmonic “had never seen a new piece receive that kind of reception ever.”102 And according to John Canarina, former assistant conductor of the Philharmonic and author of *The New York Philharmonic: From Bernstein to Maazel*, “Of all the concertos commissioned by Francis Goelet, none attracted more attention than Corigliano’s for clarinet.”103 This tremendous reception helped to secure the work into the repertoire of the New York Philharmonic and orchestras across the world. It also, perhaps, led to the decision to record the piece in 1980, this time with Zubin Mehta conducting.104

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98 Ibid, 139.
99 Ibid, 132.
100 Ibid.
101 Ibid, 137.
102 Ibid, 140.
103 Canarina, 112.
104 Shapiro, 146.
The tenure of Boulez had lasted only six years, from 1971 to 1977. Zubin Mehta, someone that Amy Shapiro refers to as “the complete antithesis of Boulez,” became the replacement.\textsuperscript{105} The idea of Mehta being the “antithesis” of Boulez no doubt lies in his preference of repertoire. Boulez was well known as a composer of atonal, serial music, and his knowledge and authority of twentieth century repertoire was unmatched. Mehta, on the other hand was a conductor known for his fondness of late Romantic era works, such as Mahler, Bruckner, and Strauss.\textsuperscript{106} It is especially telling then, that Mehta took to programming Corigliano’s clarinet concerto so frequently.

Dr. Shapiro, in her dissertation, "Sixty Years at the New York Philharmonic Through the Eyes of Clarinetist Stanley Drucker: An Oral History of the Philharmonic Community, 1948-2008,” points out how unusual it is for new compositions to become regularly performed works so soon after their premiere. As Dr. Shapiro states, Mehta took “the rare step of electing, in his second season as music director, to champion a work only recently premiered by the orchestra.”\textsuperscript{107} Harold Schonberg of The New York Times gave a similar sentiment, stating that the New York Philharmonic was “setting a healthy precedent” by reviving a work that garnered such wide spread praise.\textsuperscript{108} The continued performance and eventual recording of the work paid off for composer, conductor and performer alike. Mehta was given praise in his new post of music director of the New York Philharmonic for championing a new work, Drucker received a Grammy nomination for his role as soloist in the recording of the concerto, and

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid, 196.  
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid, 145.  
\textsuperscript{108} Ibid, 146.
Corigliano’s concerto was performed worldwide, not just by Drucker and the New York Philharmonic, but by other orchestras and clarinetists as well.\textsuperscript{109}

Even though Zubin Mehta’s tenure as conductor of the New York Philharmonic is not as conspicuous to posterity as Leonard Bernstein’s, he left a mark that few other conductors can match. Mehta held his position with the Philharmonic for thirteen seasons, longer than any other music director.\textsuperscript{110} During those thirteen years Mehta helped to transform the orchestra, hiring forty-two musicians, including Glenn Dicterow in 1980, the concertmaster for thirty-four seasons, the longest tenure of any concertmaster in the orchestra’s history.\textsuperscript{111} Dr. Shapiro also points out that eighteen of the forty-two musicians hired by Mehta were female. He helped to change the face of the Philharmonic in a very literal way.\textsuperscript{112}

This new face was also given the chance to be presented to the country in a way not seen since the Bernstein years. In 1976 PBS started airing many New York Philharmonic concerts in their “Live From Lincoln Center” broadcasts. Mehta was the first music director to have this televised series span his conducting career with the Philharmonic.\textsuperscript{113} He took the opportunity to give exposure to many of his musicians by scheduling concerto performances. Drucker was one player who specifically benefitted from this. As stated by the New York Philharmonic symphony Society in their tribute to Zubin Mehta, \textit{New York Philharmonic: The Mehta Years, A Tribute to Zubin Mehta},

\textsuperscript{109} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{110} Canarina, 185.
\textsuperscript{111} Shapiro, 201.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{113} Shapiro, 200.
“Philharmonic audiences have come to anticipate regular solo appearances by artists like Concertmaster Glenn Dicterow and Principal Clarinetist Stanley Drucker. Additionally, thirty musicians made their Philharmonic solo debuts during the past thirteen years. Mehta made it a practice to feature soloists from the orchestra on tour as well as at home.” \(^{114}\)

Leonard Bernstein and Drucker’s final recorded collaboration was yet another live concert that took place in October of 1989. The concert was an all Aaron Copland program that included the clarinet concerto that Drucker had played so many times in the past. Drucker’s first performance of Copland’s clarinet concerto was at a Central Park concert in 1969. Between that first performance and 2009, he has performed the work some fifty-nine times, according to the article “Copland Farewell” in *The Clarinet* by Dr. Shapiro. \(^{115}\) These performances include a Young People’s Concert on December 27, 1970 that was broadcast on television, and a live performance under Raymond Leppard in 1986 that was released as part of a set of recordings featuring New York Philharmonic musicians. \(^{116}\)

The concert in 1989 that featured Drucker performing Copland’s clarinet concerto was part of a two week concert series where Bernstein conducted one set of concerts of an all-Copland program (besides the clarinet concerto the other works were *Music for the Theatre*, *Connotations* and *El Salón México*) and one set of concerts of all-Tchaikovsky works (including *Romeo and Juliet* Fantasy-Overture, *Francesca da Rimini* and

\(^{114}\) Shapiro, 203.


\(^{116}\) Ibid.
Symphony No. 4).\textsuperscript{117} These concerts were recorded live by Deutsche Grammophon and were released in 1991. The concerts were the last recordings of Bernstein conducting the New York Philharmonic. Drucker was nominated for a Grammy for his role in the performance as "Best Instrumental Soloist/Classical with Orchestra."\textsuperscript{118}

Drucker got a chance to play with Leonard Bernstein one more time that same year (1989). When the Berlin Wall started to come down, Bernstein decided to assemble an orchestra consisting of musicians from East and West Germany, Russia, France, Britain and the United States (musicians were from the Bavarian Radio Orchestra, Staatskapelle Dresden, Kirov Theatre Orchestra, The London Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra De Paris and the New York Philharmonic).\textsuperscript{119} Among those invited to play were eight members of the New York Philharmonic, including Drucker, who served as principal clarinetist of the international orchestra. The piece performed at the concert was Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9, which Bernstein altered by changing the word “Freude” (Joy) to “Freiheit” (Freedom), as well as including children’s choirs into the choral parts. There were two performances, one on December 23 in West Berlin and the other on Christmas Day (December 25) in East Berlin.\textsuperscript{120} The concerts were broadcast live in over twenty countries all over the world. Jon Deak, a bass player in the New York Philharmonic who also played in the concerts, described the performances by saying, “There was so much joy, and suffering, and forgiveness in the same performance.”\textsuperscript{121}

\textsuperscript{117} Canarina, 194.
\textsuperscript{118} Shapiro, “Stanley Drucker’s Copland Farwell,” 64.
\textsuperscript{120} Shaw, 271.
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid.

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Christmas concert was the last time that Drucker saw Leonard Bernstein before his death on October 14, 1990.\textsuperscript{122}

In 1991, Kurt Masur began his tenure as conductor of the New York Philharmonic. Maestro Masur held the distinction of being the first music director of the New York Philharmonic to be selected with the input of the musicians, through the Artistic Advisory Committee. John Canarina describes the unprecedented nature of the musician’s role in the selection of musical director:

In earlier times…the selection of a music director was often made by a powerful manager, a major patron, or a committee from the board of directors. Rarely if ever did the musicians have any say in the matter. It is, therefore, striking to read that six orchestra members were on the search committee [for Kurt Masur], and that three of them accompanied the orchestra’s general manager, Nick Webster, and the president, Frederick Krimendahl II, on a trip to Paris, where Masur was offered and accepted the position.\textsuperscript{123}

The selection of Masur was in keeping with the change of direction that had become a trend when appointing conductors for the Philharmonic. Just as the steely reserve of Boulez was a direct change from the flamboyance of Bernstein and the youth and charisma of Mehta was a change from Boulez, Masur, the aged European traditionalist, was a departure from Mehta.\textsuperscript{124}

Masur was in his sixties when he came to the New York Philharmonic, after serving as music director of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra for twenty years. He had a reputation for musical integrity and for having a rapport for Romantic Era German and

\textsuperscript{122} Stanley Drucker, “Stanley Drucker: Off Stage at Barnes and Noble (6 of 8),” Interview with Jeff Spurgen, New York Philharmonic YouTube Channel, Accessed August 21, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=07QZyjKil8A
\textsuperscript{123} Canarina, 199.
\textsuperscript{124} Shapiro, 206.
Russian repertoire. However, he also had a reputation of being authoritative and a disciplinarian.  

Drucker says of the Masur appointment that “He was not one of the most loved…conductors…He came and conducted us and many people liked him and many people didn’t.”

Drucker also said that when the advisory committee was looking at conductors to replace Zubin Mehta, one of the conductors who received consideration was Leonard Slatkin. While Slatkin would not become the music director of the New York Philharmonic at that time, he had been coming as a guest conductor somewhat frequently, especially as a “new-music” expert. It was in this role that Slatkin worked with Drucker and the New York Philharmonic on a second new concerto, commissioned by the Philharmonic, for Drucker to perform.

In 1992, another series of compositions were commissioned for the New York Philharmonic’s 150th anniversary. The commissions were financed, yet again, by Francis Goelet; and yet another clarinet concerto was included among the new works to be composed. This time, the composer of the concerto for Drucker was to be William Bolcom, a Pulitzer Prize winning composer.

Although Bolcom was a well-known composer, more so than John Corigliano, Jr. was when he wrote his clarinet concerto, the New York Philharmonic had never played any of Bolcom’s works up until that point. Regardless, this did not mean that Bolcom

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125 Canarina, 198.
126 Shapiro, 206.
127 Ibid.
128 Canarina, 167.
129 Shapiro, 147-148.
130 Shapiro, 148.
had no ties to the Philharmonic. Nor does it mean that he was ill-equipped to write for Drucker or the Philharmonic. Bolcom had in fact been asked by former principal trumpet Gerard Schwarz to compose a trumpet concerto during his tenure with the orchestra in the 1970’s; however, Schwarz left the orchestra before the piece could come to fruition.

Additionally, before the Philharmonic’s commission of a clarinet concerto, Bolcom had been in the process of writing one for Benny Goodman. He had played early sketches of the composition for Goodman, but Goodman rejected it. These sketches served as the basis for the concerto that Bolcom eventually wrote for Drucker.¹³¹ The composition serves as yet another work that passed from the hands of Goodman and into the capable hands of Drucker.

Among Drucker’s first commercial recordings was his seminal rendering of Bartok’s *Contrasts*, which was written for Goodman and the violinist Joseph Szigetti. Drucker’s first recording as soloist with the New York Philharmonic was Debussy’s *Premiere Rhapsody*, which had only been recorded by the Philharmonic one other time, with Benny Goodman and Sir John Barbirolli conducting (recorded along with the Mozart’s *Concerto for Clarinet*).¹³² The work with which Drucker is most associated, perhaps with the exception of the Corigliano Clarinet Concerto, is the Copland Clarinet Concerto, written for Benny Goodman, but likely performed by Drucker more than any other clarinetist (59 times as of 2009 according to Amy Shapiro).¹³³ The Bolcom Clarinet Concerto served as yet another example of Drucker becoming the voice of a piece originally conceived for Goodman.

¹³¹ Shapiro, 149-150.
¹³² North, 386-387, 390.
¹³³ Shapiro, “Stanley Drucker’s Copland Farewell,” 64.
While the Bolcom concerto did not receive the overwhelmingly positive reception that the Corigliano concerto did, it was nonetheless a success. In his concerto, Bolcom plays to an audience’s sensibilities, producing an effect that is playful and exciting, yet lyrical. In his interview with Dr. Shapiro, Bolcom described the piece by saying, “When it came to the Clarinet Concerto, I really wanted to do something that had lyricism but was also very straightforward and very accessible.” And Drucker stated that “[Bolcom] had a good sense of humor and certainly this Concerto bore it out. It has elements of several styles…It’s completely accessible, rousing.”

The premiere lived up to the description of the work as a pleasurable piece to hear. It was performed on January 3, 1992 with Leonard Slatkin conducting the Philharmonic. Drucker described the performance as receiving “a big reaction,” and one where “Slatkin did it beautifully.” The New York Times critic Bernard Holland wrote that “Drucker was a spotless clarinetist,” that “the Philharmonic played handsomely,” and that “Startlingly, Mr. Bolcom’s concerto was fun.” A live performance of Drucker’s premiere performance of Bolcom’s Clarinet Concerto is available in a box set recording of the New York Philharmonic performing works by American composers.

In the late 1990s Drucker made a series of recordings of standard chamber works for clarinet. Schumann: Complete Works for Winds and Piano was released in 1996,

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134 Shapiro, 152.
135 Ibid.
136 Shapiro, 154.
137 Shapiro, 155.
featuring Drucker on the *Phantasiestücke* for clarinet and piano, and *Märchenerzählungen* for clarinet, viola and piano.\(^{139}\) Drucker performed Mozart’s *Quintet for Clarinet and Strings* with the Elysium String Quartet in the album, *Mozart: the Elysium String Quartet and Friends*, released in 1999.\(^{140}\) Most significantly, in 2002 Drucker released a recording entitled, *Stanley Drucker Plays Brahms*, on which he performs all of the chamber works of Brahms for clarinet (*Sonata No. 1 in F Minor, Sonata No. 2 in E-flat Major, Trio for clarinet, cello and piano in A Minor and the Quintet for clarinet and strings in B Minor*).\(^{141}\) After an entire career of choosing to not record the “standard” works, Drucker started recording some of the most popular war horses of the repertoire.

That Drucker was approaching the end of his storied career as a clarinetist is likely one of the reasons that he finally turned to these masterworks. The Brahms Sonatas make an especially interesting case, as they were written at the very end of Brahms’s life and are often described as “autumnal.” About the *Quintet for clarinet and strings*, Malcolm Macdonald writes that it “…remained one of Brahms’s most popular works in any medium, for its perfect expression of a spirit of mellow reflection, tinged with autumnal melancholy.”\(^{142}\) Jan Swafford, in his biography of Brahms, waxes even more poetic about the quintet: “Its beginning is a gentle, dying-away roulade that raises a veil


of autumnal melancholy over the whole piece: the evanescent sweet-sadness of autumn, beautiful in its dying.” While Drucker was not yet quite at the end of his career when these recordings were made (he continued to play an additional eight seasons with the New York Philharmonic after recording these works), he certainly had a lot of life and music to look back upon reflectively.

Also worth noting was Drucker’s choice of collaborative pianist for the two Brahms sonatas. Leonid Hambro joined Drucker on piano for the first time in almost thirty years, having previously collaborated with him on the album, *Music for Clarinet and Piano* (released in 1971) and on his first commercial recording, *Béla Bartók: Contrasts and Solo Violin Sonata* (released in 1953). Surely there was no better partner for playing these final statements by Brahms than a man with whom Drucker had tread the first steps of his solo recording career.

Drucker’s choice in recording standard Germanic repertoire is also in alignment with the repertoire for which the New York Philharmonic became known during the tenure of Kurt Masur. While Drucker had mentioned that some members of the Philharmonic were skeptical of Masur leading the ensemble, he and other musicians stated that the orchestra grew under Masur’s demanding leadership style. Dr. Shapiro says that “Even though Masur resorted to dictatorial behaviors, Drucker also portrays him as a kind of honorable educator, intent on transplanting the essence of Leipzig into the

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New York Philharmonic community.”\textsuperscript{145} In his interview with Shapiro, Principal cellist Carter Brey stated that “With Kurt Masur, I felt like a middle-aged student of someone who was a living, breathing, walking representative of a certain central European tradition having very much to do with composers like Mendelssohn, Schumann, and Brahms: sort of German core repertoire.”\textsuperscript{146}

Perhaps the greatest compliment to Masur was the choice of music director to replace him. After decades of choosing complete opposite personalities to lead the New York Philharmonic, the choice of Lorin Maazel was essentially a choice to remain on the traditional path on which Masur had set them.\textsuperscript{147} Principal violist Cynthia Phelps says that:

> With Kurt Masur, the orchestra was very strong at that point, and we had a certain style of playing that was honed by this Eastern European, German man. He was very, very certain of what he wanted at all times and, when you have somebody with that over a long enough period, the orchestra is very homogenous, even though we’re very different players. And that was something, certainly, we didn’t want to lose…And so I think the decision to go with another very strong, older presence maybe played a part in that.\textsuperscript{148}

Like Masur before him, the selection of Maazel, who was appointed as music director of the New York Philharmonic in 2002, was due in large part to the voices of the orchestra. Maazel had come to guest conduct the Philharmonic for two weeks while replacements

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\textsuperscript{145} Shapiro, 208 – 209. \\
\textsuperscript{146} Shapiro, 209. \\
\textsuperscript{147} While several of the music directors in the orchestra’s past had been young, innovative conductors (Bernstein and Mehta are examples), it should not be too surprising that the orchestra sought the comfort of older, more traditional conductors. The New York Philharmonic had grown from a part-time orchestra when Drucker first joined in 1948 to a full-time orchestra where the minimum salary was over $100,000. Additionally, orchestra members had gained a much larger voice in operative decisions, as evidenced by their role in the selection of conductors. \\
\textsuperscript{148} Shapiro, 214.
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for Masur were being considered. In those two weeks he proved himself to be the conductor the musicians wanted.\footnote{Shapiro, 215.} Maazel is described by members of the New York Philharmonic as being “efficient,” as having “very clear baton technique,” and having “an unbelievable amount of confidence.”\footnote{Shapiro, 218-219.}

During Maazel’s tenure, many of the orchestra members felt that the New York Philharmonic was at its peak in terms of sound and coherence as an ensemble. Bassist John Deak said that under Maazel “…the orchestra really sounded great. Some fantastic new players came in during his tenure.”\footnote{Shapiro, 220.} Principal Bassoonist Judith LeClair stated that “When Maazel came, I felt like those were the golden years for me in the orchestra, the best years. He trusted the orchestra; we trusted him. I felt that the orchestra sounded fantastic under him.”\footnote{Shapiro, 221.} Drucker describes both Masur and Maazel as “caretakers” who “tried to maintain the status quo of excellence.”\footnote{Shapiro, 217.} The impression one is left with when reading the musicians’ comments about Maazel, is that he was a guardian for the orchestra’s legacy.

Drucker decided to retire from his position with the New York Philharmonic at the end of Lorin Maazel’s final season. Maazel was the ninth musical director that Drucker had played under in his sixty years as a New York Philharmonic musician. Among the many accolades showered upon Drucker leading up to his retirement was a Guinness World Record for the “longest career as a clarinetist,” and his induction as an

\footnote{Shapiro, 215.}
\footnote{Shapiro, 218-219.}
\footnote{Shapiro, 220.}
\footnote{Shapiro, 221.}
\footnote{Shapiro, 217.}
honorary member of the Philharmonic-Society.\textsuperscript{154} Both of these honors were announced at a Philharmonic concert on June 4, 2009, where he performed the Copland Clarinet Concerto as his final solo appearance.

When discussing Lorin Maazel’s decision to step down as music director, Drucker said to Dr. Shapiro, “It was time for the page to be turned on Lorin Maazel’s era, the last man standing from the old days, and to go with a new vision, with a young, vital person, somebody that was courageous, and would bring new works to the stage of the Philharmonic, to be a champion of the new and maintain the standards of the old.”\textsuperscript{155} This statement can likewise reflect Drucker’s decision to retire from the Philharmonic as well. However, it can hardly be said that Drucker ever lacked the courage to “bring new works to the stage,” or to “maintain the standards of the old.” For his sixty years as clarinetist with the New York Philharmonic Drucker was a consistent champion of new works for the clarinet and was constantly breathing new life into the standard repertoire.

In a video tribute to Drucker by the New York Philharmonic, the personnel manager, Carl Schiebler said that “He plays every piece like he was playing it still for the first time.”\textsuperscript{156} Music director Alan Gilbert, who succeeded Lorin Maazel, said of Drucker that “He’s really one of the few orchestral musicians who singlehandedly can change the

\textsuperscript{154} Canarina, 417.
\textsuperscript{155} Shapiro, 222.
course of a concert for the better. He can, with a turn of the phrase, turn what was perfectly adequate, and very fine, into something magical. And that is his unique gift.”

Even though the New York Philharmonic has managed to replace Drucker, his association with the orchestra will likely always remain fresh because of the many recordings they have made. Drucker’s many years with the Philharmonic corresponded with an era of orchestral recordings that is likely to be unmatched. It is for this reason that when clarinetists across the globe, and across generations, listen to recordings of the New York Philharmonic it is the clarinet playing of Stanley Drucker that they will hear.

Chapter 3

Karl Leister Biography

For Karl Leister, music was always a gift. While this may be true for many, in Leister’s case it is quite literal. Leister was given an Oehler clarinet by his father as a Christmas gift in 1949, when he was twelve years old. Because his father was a clarinetist, it seemed only natural that his son should play the instrument too. Little did his father know that his son would take that instrument and not only rise to the most prominent musical post in Germany but inspire the entire clarinet world with his sound.

Leister was born in Wilhelmshaven, Germany in 1937. Wilhelmshaven is a port town in northern Germany off the North Sea. His father, Karl Leister Sr., was a clarinetist in the music corps of the navy and was stationed there. However, just a few years after Leister’s birth, during World War II, the family moved to Berlin. Leister has lived there ever since.

When his father gave him his first clarinet Karl Leister Sr. had become the second/bass clarinetist of the Radio Symphony Orchestra Berlin (formerly RIAS Symphony Orchestra). Leister remembers his father as a “wonderful” bass clarinetist.
and the RIAS Symphony as being a “wonderful” orchestra.\textsuperscript{160} Leister’s first experience with Herbert von Karajan, the conductor with whom he would spend most of his orchestral career, was when Karajan came to conduct the Radio Symphony. Karl Leister Sr. invited young Karl to sit beside him to experience maestro Karajan.\textsuperscript{161}

Leister’s father became his first clarinet teacher and made sure to develop both a strong foundation and work ethic in his son. His father told him to sleep with Baermann’s \textit{Complete Method for Clarinet} under his pillow and said “As soon as you wake up…Baermann.”\textsuperscript{162} Leister took his father’s advice to heart and started practicing eight to ten hours a day, despite living in a two bedroom house as part of a family of five.\textsuperscript{163}

When Leister turned fifteen, he went on to study with his father’s section mate, Heinrich Geuser, the principal clarinetist with the RIAS Symphony Orchestra, at the Hochschule für Musik. Karl Leister Sr. trusted Geuser’s opinion on whether or not his son would succeed in music.\textsuperscript{164} Leister recalls his father giving him an ultimatum; that if he was not succeeding after one year he would need to find something else as a career path.\textsuperscript{165} Leister endeavored to meet his father’s condition by continuing his hard work at the Hochschule, where he was often studying, rehearsing, and practicing from seven in the morning until nine at night. His day would start with chorale playing for developing

\textsuperscript{160} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{161} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{162} Karl Leister, Interview with Peter Geldrich, December 18, 2015, Berlin, Germany.
\textsuperscript{163} The amount of practicing was confirmed by Leister’s sister in a conversation with the author.
\textsuperscript{164} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{165} Karl Leister, Interview with Peter Geldrich, December 18, 2015.
\textsuperscript{166} Taylor, “Playing in the Sunshine,” 34.
intonation and then continue with playing in chamber music ensembles. During this time he also participated in the school orchestra and the wind ensemble.\textsuperscript{166}

Despite studying with Geuser, Leister does not credit him with shaping his sound or style of clarinet playing. He feels that Geuser’s sound was “too heavy.”\textsuperscript{167} Leister says that his concept of sound started at an early age, from hearing the sound of his father’s bass clarinet playing and opera singers. Nonetheless, Leister does credit Geuser with facilitating his development as a clarinetist. Leister’s Baermann method training continued with Geuser, who played along with Leister in their lessons.\textsuperscript{168} Geuser also assigned Kroepsch studies. Leister says that the foundation developed during training under his father and Geuser is still living with him today “…it is still in my fingers.”\textsuperscript{169}

On December 16, 1957, his mother’s birthday, Leister’s hard work paid off. Leister told his mother that “he had a gift for her;” he won the audition for principal clarinet of the Orchester der Komische Oper Berlin.\textsuperscript{170} He was nineteen years old. The first opera that Leister was asked to play was Smetana’s \textit{Bartered Bride}, a notoriously difficult wind part; however, the orchestra offered a deferment on the opera, if Leister felt unable to prepare the part in time. Despite the offer, Leister insisted on playing the opera and began rehearsals the day after the audition. After only three rehearsals, he performed the opera and went on to play it nearly forty times.\textsuperscript{171}

\textsuperscript{166} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{167} Fricke, 52.
\textsuperscript{168} In the author’s interview, Leister shared a story about Geuser trying to play with him on the assigned Baermann exercise of B Major scales in sixths. Leister shared that he said to himself “Karl, show him the way,” and proceeded to play the exercise faster than Geuser could keep up. Geuser never played along with Leister in lessons again.
\textsuperscript{169} Karl Leister, Interview with Peter Geldrich.
\textsuperscript{170} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{171} Ibid.
In 1957, the same year that Leister won the position with the Komische Oper, Leister competed in the ARD International Music Competition in Munich. The ARD-Munich competition features the clarinet every several years and is widely considered to be one of the most significant music competitions in the world. In the words of James Gillespie, former clarinet professor at the University of North Texas, “Of all the international music competitions that include the clarinet, none is more prestigious and successful in attracting world-class performers than the International Music Competition of the ARD.”

Leister was awarded second prize at the competition. The reason he did not win the first prize could perhaps be because of his unique clarinet tone. Leister remembers talking with Ulysse Delécluse, one of the judges and a clarinet professor at the Paris Conservatory during this time. Delécluse was impressed with Leister’s playing but was perplexed by his sound. Delécluse told Leister, "Everything you do on the technical side and your staccato is just fine but I must say that you have a curious sound." A student of Delécluse, Edmond Boulanger, won the first prize that year, and Leister decided that he would return to compete again.

The defining moment of Leister’s life arrived in 1958, the year a principal clarinet position of the Berlin Philharmonic opened. Having only two years’ experience of professional playing, Leister felt that he was not ready to take on such an important post. However, his father convinced him to take the audition, saying that “This chance is coming in your life only one time.” Leister took the audition the day after Christmas.

He played the Mozart Clarinet Concerto, Tchaikovsky’s *Symphony No. 5*, works by Beethoven, Brahms, and Liszt’s *Second Hungarian Rhapsody*. Leister won the audition, receiving affirmative votes from all members of the orchestra, except for the clarinet section.\(^{175}\) He was twenty-one years old. Leister was told when he won, “We observed that you are a fine clarinetist and musician; you will learn everything else here.”\(^{176}\) This was more than just speaking metaphorically; in his early years with the Berlin Philharmonic Leister would meet with Karajan privately so that Karajan could personally teach him the music.\(^{177}\) In these one on one sessions, Leister got to know Karajan and his way of making music. He describes Karajan as a musical “genius.” Through their individual lessons Karajan grew to trust Leister to play the music “his (Karajan’s) way.”\(^{178}\)

Leister had musical mentors in the orchestra besides Herbert von Karajan. The former solo clarinetist, Alfred Bürkner, stepped down to second clarinet and played next to Leister for twenty years.\(^{179}\) Leister referred to Bürkner’s clarinet playing as an example of a “fine sound” within the German clarinet system.\(^{180}\) He also greatly admires Lothar Koch, former solo oboist of the Berlin Philharmonic and the former concertmaster of Berlin, Michel Schawlbé.\(^{181}\) Leister was not only able to learn from these great musicians in the orchestral setting, but also through playing chamber music with them. Karajan

\(^{175}\) Karl Leister, Interview with Peter Geldrich.  
\(^{176}\) Fricke, “Happy Birthday Karl Leister,” 57.  
\(^{177}\) Ibid.  
\(^{178}\) Taylor, “Playing in the Sunshine,” 35.  
\(^{181}\) Fricke, 57.
wanted to train the orchestra to be “a wonderfully responsive, infinitely flexible
instrument…” The way Karajan went about achieving this sound ideal was by training
the orchestra to play even major symphonic works like chamber music, or in the words of
Leister, “erziehung zur kamermusik.” This was most easily achieved by members of
the orchestra performing and recording chamber music together.

During Leister’s tenure with the Berlin Philharmonic, and beyond, he was a
member of multiple wind chamber ensembles, all with whom he has recorded a
remarkable amount of music. The first chamber group with which he performed from
within the orchestra was the Berlin Philharmonic Octet. According to the Berlin
Philharmonic website, this ensemble was “the first chamber association of the Berliner
Philharmoniker to appear in all major European cities.” Hindemith dedicated his Octet
to this ensemble and even performed it with them in 1958 on the second viola part.
Leister remained part of this ensemble for eight years.

Additionally, Leister performed and recorded with a chamber ensemble from
within the orchestra called the “Philharmonic Soloists Berlin.” This group included
concertmaster Thomas Brandis, principal cellist Wolfgang Boettcher, principal oboist
Lothar Koch, principal flutist Karlheinz Zöller, among others. It is with this group that
Leister recorded his first chamber recording with members of the orchestra: Mozart’s

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Fricke, 57.

Erziehung zur kamermusik roughly translates to “education through chamber music.”


Ibid.

Taylor, 36-37.
Quintet for clarinet and string quartet in A Major, K. 581.\textsuperscript{187} He would later go on to record this piece three additional times.

With the winds of the Berlin Philharmonic, or Bläser der Berliner Philharmoniker Orchester, Leister recorded an enormous amount of wind chamber music repertoire. This feat is one he would later repeat with various other groups as well. This group recorded the entire wind chamber music by Mozart, including Mozart’s \textit{Six Nocturnes for voices and winds}, which was one of Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau’s last collaborations.\textsuperscript{188} During international flute soloist James Galway’s short tenure with the orchestra, he recorded one of Anton Reicha’s woodwind quintets with Leister and the Bläser der Berliner Philharmoniker Orchester.\textsuperscript{189}

In 1962 the ARD International Music Competition held a clarinet competition again and Leister decided to compete a second time. This was a bold choice, because at that point Leister was a solo clarinetist of one of the greatest orchestras in the world and to participate would mean competing against relatively unknown clarinetists. Expectations on his playing would be very high. Despite this, Leister was the only candidate to make it through to the final round. The committee of judges had Leister play by himself for two hours while they deliberated over which prize to award him. In the end he received the second prize, which happened to be the highest prize awarded that


\textsuperscript{188} Taylor, 37.

\textsuperscript{189} Karl Leister, \textit{Brillante Musik Für Bläser · Music For Winds}, with the Bläser der Berliner Philharmoniker Orchester, released in 1971, Deutsche Grammophon LP 2530 077, Vinyl.
The rules of the ARD competition are interesting in that first prizes are rarely awarded. David Shifrin, one of the most illustrious clarinet soloists in the world and clarinet professor at Yale University, stated “The lofty concept of holding a ‘timeless’ standard against which all contestants are measured, has merit, but in practice, I don’t think a jury can accurately compare performers with the level of a first prize winner that was chosen by a substantially different jury years earlier.” Shifrin competed in the competition in 1977 and was one of two clarinetists awarded a third prize, the highest award that year. Furthermore, Franklin Cohen, former principal clarinetist of the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra and clarinet professor at the Cleveland Institute of Music says that “It is virtually impossible to win a first prize if any of the jury members is not very attracted to your way of making music. One must retain, over four rounds, an average of 23 points per jury member for the first prize. The maximum number of points is 25.” Cohen himself was awarded the first prize (along with singer Jesse Norman) in 1968, the next time that there was a clarinet competition after Leister’s final appearance there in 1962. Interestingly, according to Leister, the jury of judges in 1968 called him to ask his advice on whether or not to award a first prize. Because he had not been awarded one, a very high standard indeed was set. Leister responded by saying “It is enough to make this mistake once. Give all the prizes to the good clarinet players.”

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191 Every competition is judged based on an ideal standard that is supposedly retained each competition, rather than simply awarding first prize to the best performer in any given year. This concept is made all the more difficult as different judges are used each time, while the standard is supposed to remain the same.
192 Gillespie, 68.
193 Ibid, 64.
194 Ibid, 67.
1962, the year Leister competed in the ARD competition a second time, was significant for another reason; it was the same year that Karajan and the Berlin Philharmonic finished their first recording of the complete Beethoven symphonies for Deutsche Grammophon.\textsuperscript{195} While there are certainly many recordings of the Beethoven symphonies, this one stands out for a couple of reasons. For one, it was the first time the entire cycle had been recorded stereophonically and listeners would be able to hear the symphonies in the comfort of their own homes with sound that was similar to the natural sound of a concert hall.\textsuperscript{196} The other reason this recording is still widely considered among the best recordings of the Beethoven symphonies is the outstanding level of performance demonstrated by the Berlin Philharmonic.\textsuperscript{197} While certainly the interpretive mastery of Karajan is a hallmark of these recordings, Karajan had recorded the cycle before, with the Philharmonia Orchestra of London. According to Richard Freed of \textit{The New York Times}, “There can be no denying that, while the Philharmonia responded splendidly to Karajan, the playing of the Berlin Philharmonic is on an altogether higher level.”\textsuperscript{198} Richard Osborne in his biography, \textit{Herbert von Karajan: A Life in Music}, states:

Where Karajan’s 1950s Philharmonia Beethoven cycle still had elements in it that owed a certain amount to the old German school of Beethoven interpretation, the new-found virtuosity of the Berliners allowed him to approach more nearly the fierce beauty and lean-toned fiery manner of

\textsuperscript{195} Osborne, Herbert von Karajan, 490. In 1975, Karajan and the Berlin Philharmonic made yet another recording of the entire Beethoven symphonic cycle, again with Deutsche Grammophon.


\textsuperscript{197} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{198} Ibid.
Toscanini’s Beethoven style as he had first encountered it in its halcyon age in the mid-1930s.199

The “new-found virtuosity of the Berliners” refers to the series of orchestral appointments that Karajan helped make in the late 1950s and early 1960s, including Leister. In addition to Leister, other superlative additions to the Berlin Philharmonic during this time include the solo oboist, Lothar Koch, violinists Thomas Brandis and Michel Schwalbé and Gerd Seifert on horn.200 These virtuoso appointments are as much responsible for the evolution of the Berlin Philharmonic as Karajan’s own indomitable personality was.

Karajan proceeded to make more opportunities for himself and his new orchestra, from the recording studio and beyond. In 1967 Karajan founded the Salzburg Easter Festival, using his own money and accepting no fee.201 Karajan’s idea was to create an environment where he could have total control over all aspects of performance. As Raymond Holden states, “…the Easter Festival was largely a personal vehicle for him (Karajan) to explore works that were central to his repertoire. He established the format, set the tone and quality of the festival from the outset by juxtaposing operatic performances with choral and orchestral concerts and by engaging the Berlin Philharmonic as its resident orchestra.”202 For Leister these opportunities to play operas with Karajan and the Berlin Philharmonic were especially meaningful, as he constantly looked to singers as an inspiration and influence on his playing.203 Leister says “I learned

199 Osborne, 491.
202 Ibid.
203 Fricke, 58.
it all from the singers: Hanns Nocker, Melitta Muszely, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, Hans Beirer, Ludwig Suthaus, Josef Greindl, and Margarete Klose…I understood that I must master my instrument like the singer his voice. It is the human voice that we imitate when we make music. We have to band the notes together like the singers show us.“204

Leister’s first recording as a soloist with the Berlin Philharmonic was Mozart’s Sinfonia Concertante for Winds, recorded in 1966 with Karl Böhm conducting. Two years later, Leister was showcased in a solo recording again. The recording featured two works; Weber’s Concerto for Clarinet No. 1 in F Minor and Mozart’s Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra in A Major conducted by Rafael Kubelík.205 The recording of the Mozart Concerto would turn out to be the first of four recordings Leister would make of the work. However, the recording of the Weber concerto became one of Leister’s most enduring, despite being among his earliest. It remains one of the most popular recordings of this piece.206

In addition to the multitude of recordings that Leister made as a member of the Berlin Philharmonic, as a soloist with the Berlin Philharmonic, and in chamber groups comprised of Berlin Philharmonic members, his prestige as a soloist with one of the greatest orchestras in the world put him in demand to record with many of the greatest artists of that time. Among some of the stand out recordings he made in his first decade as principal clarinetist with the Berlin Philharmonic were Schubert’s Der Hirt auf dem Felsen, Op. 129 with soprano Erika Köth and pianist Günther Weißenborn (recorded in

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204 Ibid.
205 Taylor, “Playing in the Sunshine.”
1962) and Beethoven’s *Trio for clarinet, cello and piano, Op. 11* with Wilhelm Kempff on piano and Pierre Fournier on cello (recorded in 1968).\(^{207}\) However, his most important early recordings were those of Johannes Brahms’ chamber music.

In 1967, Leister recorded Brahms’ Clarinet Quintet with the Amadeus String Quartet, a recording that would prove to be among his most popular and one that many clarinetists consider to be the finest of this pivotal work.\(^{208}\) The Amadeus Quartet was one of the most well-known and respected quartets at the time. Leister referred to them as “the most fantastic in the world.”\(^{209}\) Even though the quartet was based in England, they did much collaboration with the wind players of the Berlin Philharmonic, perhaps due to their recording contract with Deutsche Grammophon (DGG). According to Muriel Nissel, the wife of Amadeus Quartet second violinist Siegmund Nissel,

> The recordings [the Amadeus Quartet] made in conjunction with other artists were of great importance…The Mozart wind quartets brought them together with various members of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra – the flautist Andreas Blau, the oboist Lothar Koch and horn players Gerd Seifert and Manfred Klier. The Brahms clarinet quintet was recorded with Karl Leister, also a member of the Berlin Philharmonic.\(^{210}\)

Leister would follow his Brahms Clarinet Quintet release with two additional recordings that featured works by Brahms; the *Sonata for Clarinet and Piano Nos. 1 and*...
2, Op. 120 with Jorg Demus (piano) in 1968 and the Clarinet Trio, Op. 114 with Christoph Eschenbach (piano) and Georg Donderer (cello) in 1969. With these recordings he completed Brahms’ entire chamber works for clarinet. Even though he would go on to record each of these works again, it is his association with the clarinet quintet that would prove to be Leister’s most enduring. He recorded the work a half dozen times over the course of his career.

In 1971, Leister made his second recording of the Mozart Clarinet Concerto, again with the Berlin Philharmonic, but this time with Herbert von Karajan conducting. Rather than in Berlin, this recording was made in St. Moritz, Switzerland. Starting in 1964, Karajan took the Berlin Philharmonic to St. Moritz in the summer for a weeklong period of relaxation and music making. While in St. Moritz they would spend the days outdoors and the evenings playing music and recording. The Mozart concerto recording took place in a French church. Karajan asked Leister to play the second movement from the altar where the priest would give the sermon, rather than in front of the orchestra. The recording engineers had to scramble to make the sound for this position change work, but Karajan was insistent; he wanted Leister to be “closer to God” for the ethereal movement.

Herbert von Karajan’s experimentation with new recording technology did not stop with the release of his stereophonic Beethoven symphony cycle, in 1962. Karajan

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211 Taylor, “Playing in the Sunshine Part II,” 42.
212 Karl Leister, Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra in A Major by Mozart, K.622, with the Berlin Philharmonic, conducted by Herbert von Karajan, released in 1971, EMI #7690 142, Vinyl.
was also at the forefront of video recording, working closely with Sony and their chairman Akio Morita. Karajan was very quick to implement this technology into his music making, releasing videos of major symphonic works within the next few years. Karajan, with the Berlin Philharmonic, filmed the entire symphonic cycles of Brahms and Beethoven, in addition to Tchaikovsky’s last three symphonies. Made over a six-year period between 1967 and 1973, some of the works were filmed and recorded in a studio, while others were filmed versions of live concerts held at the Philharmonie. For clarinetists, these films provide insight to the playing of Leister and the clarinet section of the Berlin Philharmonic.

The structure of the Berlin Philharmonic is different than that of most American orchestras in that it employs a system of co-principals; two players share the role of principal musician of each instrument. This means that on Berlin Philharmonic recordings it is not always Leister playing principal clarinet. While Leister’s unique sound (heard clearly on his recordings of concertos and chamber works) provides a signature in the recordings he made with the Berlin Philharmonic, these video recordings confirm that the orchestral sound associated with Leister is indeed him. This is especially true in the Brahms video cycle. Here we can clearly see (and hear) Leister on the first two symphonies and a different principal clarinetist on the third and fourth symphonies (most likely Herbert Stähr). In this comparison we can hear what Leister means when he stated in an interview in 1979, “When someone asks me this about the German sound, I say it’s

215 Osborne, 591.
not correct. I had a new idea about the sound, and I don't think you can classify sound. We are all trying to find the very beautiful sound.”

Lee Gibson, who conducted the interview pointed out that Leister’s sound was not a characteristic ‘German sound’:

“When I heard the Munich Philharmonic last…I found that the principal clarinetist was making a sound which I characterize as the older German sound, not your sound…It was harder and heavier.”

In the Brahms video recordings Leister achieved a sound distinct from the characteristic German tone of his Berlin Philharmonic colleague. On the other hand, the Tchaikovsky symphony video recordings provide some insight into Karajan’s perspective on Leister and his co-principal. In these recordings Leister is featured on all three of Tchaikovsky’s last symphonies. These works feature major excerpts for clarinet and call for a broad range of stylistic playing; from fast virtuosic passages in the fourth symphony, to rapid articulated passages in the fifth symphony, to the lyrical pianissimo solos in the sixth symphony. The video recordings were made over a series of concerts during the entire month of December in 1973 and it is notable that Karajan chose not to rotate the principal clarinet position. This is even more interesting when one considers that many of the other principal winds are rotated in this cycle.

In the 1980s Leister helped found two important chamber ensembles apart from the Berlin Philharmonic: Ensemble Wien-Berlin and Berliner Solisten. Ensemble Wien-Berlin came together as part of a chamber music festival in the mid-1970s. Members of the Vienna Symphony and Berlin Philharmonic decided to play some music together for fun. Leister remembers the program including Hindemith’s Woodwind Quintet and a

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218 Ibid, 9.
woodwind quartet by Rossini.\textsuperscript{219} Several years later, in 1983, the bassoonist, Milan Turković, suggested it become a regular group. Because the woodwind quintet literature is limited, they decided to have a broader focus. As Leister describes, the advantage of the ensemble is that they could play more than just the quintet literature by adding or subtracting members of various instruments:

\begin{quote}
We wanted to be five soloists to join the quintet formation and this has a different point of view…we decided we can have different kinds of groups under this name. So this we did later. After some years when we were a little bit tired of this wonderful quintet literature, we decided, oh, we need a piano player, then we will have much better music, and then later we added strings.\textsuperscript{220}
\end{quote}

In addition to Leister and Milan Turković, the members of Ensemble Wien-Berlin included flutist Wolfgang Schulz, oboist Hansjörg Schellenberger, and Günter Högner on horn. Every member of the ensemble was, or had been, a principal player with either the Berlin Philharmonic or Vienna Philharmonic. Additionally, as Leister stated, they collaborated with many other acclaimed performers of various instruments. Notable among them was James Levine, who recorded with Ensemble Wien-Berlin. He played piano on the Mozart and Beethoven quintets for piano and wind instruments and the chamber music of Francis Poulenc. Leister also recorded Schubert’s art song \textit{Der Hirt auf dem Felsen} with Levine and soprano Kathleen Battle.\textsuperscript{221}

\textit{Berliner Solisten} was a similar group to Ensemble Wien-Berlin. However, it was even broader in scope in that it encompassed musicians on various instruments from all over Germany with the common goal of playing and recording many chamber music compositions.

\textsuperscript{219} Ibid, 36.
\textsuperscript{220} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{221} Taylor, Playing in the Sunshine Part II, 42 – 44.
masterpieces. Violinist Bernd Gellermann, cellist Jörg Baumann, and violist Wolfram Christ, like Leister, were members of the Berlin Philharmonic. Others played elsewhere in Berlin, such as Radovan Vlatković who was principal horn of the Radio Symphony Orchestra Berlin.\textsuperscript{222} Because of the varied instrumentation of this ensemble, Leister was able to make recordings of repertoire with clarinet and strings, such as his versions of the Mozart and Brahms quintets (recorded in 1988), as well as repertoire with mixed winds and strings, such as the Hindemith Octet (recorded in 1991), the Schubert Octet (recorded in 1987) and the Prokofiev quintet for clarinet, oboe, violin, viola and double bass (recorded in 1991).\textsuperscript{223}

In addition to recording chamber music with musicians outside of the Berlin Philharmonic, Leister also began recording solo works with other orchestras. In 1980, Leister was invited to record the Mozart Clarinet Concerto with an orchestra in Japan; his third recording of the work. Leister describes how the recording came about in an interview with Robert A. Taylor:

\begin{quote}
The principal conductor of this orchestra in Gumma, North of Tokyo, decided to invite me to play the Mozart Concerto with the orchestra. It was my first recording with Camerata Tokyo, or, let’s say, one of my first recordings. And it was the first record this orchestra did in the life of this orchestra. It was very exciting for the orchestra. We did the Mozart and we also did the Mercadante Concerto…When this record came on the market, in the main train station in this city (Gumma, Japan) they played this concerto for one year, 24 hours a day! They were so happy to produce the first record, and the city was so proud about this!\textsuperscript{224}
\end{quote}

The relationship that Leister developed with the Gumma Orchestra and with the record label that produced the album, Camerata Tokyo, Inc., proved to be fruitful. Leister

\begin{footnotes}
\item[222] Taylor, 36.
\item[223] Taylor, “Playing in the Sunshine Part II,” 42 – 45.
\item[224] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
recorded both Weber clarinet concertos with the Gumma Orchestra and released more than three dozen recordings under the Camerata Record label in their three-decade relationship.  

One of the most ambitious undertakings Leister accomplished during this time was a recording of all four Louis Spohr clarinet concertos. The recordings were made in 1983 with Rafael Fruhbeck-de-Burgos conducting the South German Radio Orchestra. Leister described this project as the “hardest work of my life.”  

Leister worked on the Spohr concertos for three years before entering the recording studio. He also undertook a project of a similar scale in 1986 with Osmo Vänskä and Lahti Symphony Orchestra recording all three Bernhard Crusell concertos for clarinet.  

In 1981, one of the great orchestral scandals in history erupted between Herbert von Karajan and the members of the Berlin Philharmonic. At an audition for a vacant solo clarinet position a young female clarinetist named Sabine Meyer impressed Karajan. He is purported to have whispered to the orchestra’s manager, Peter Girth, “This one or no other,” after hearing her play for just a few moments. The orchestra’s wind section, however, disagreed and Meyer was not hired. This set off a very public dispute between conductor and orchestra that persisted for years and resulted in the

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226 Karl Leister, Interview with Peter Geldrich, December 18, 2015, Berlin, Germany.  
227 Ibid.  
228 Taylor, “Playing in the Sunshine Part II,” 42.  
229 Karl Leister, at this time, held one solo clarinet position, whereas Sabine Meyer was auditioning for the other solo clarinet position.  
230 Osborne, 670.  
231 Ibid.
fracturing of a relationship that never fully recovered. As Karajan himself said in an open letter to the orchestra written while these troubles were transpiring, “It is your right, contractually, to decide upon either a positive or negative recommendation vis-à-vis a candidate. In this instance, however, I find that my judgment and that of the orchestra are diametrically opposed.”232 The orchestra members used their voting power to deny Sabine Meyer a formal appointment with the orchestra.233 However, she was invited by Karajan to be a regular substitute musician and joined the Berlin Philharmonic on tour in Salzburg, Lucerne, and New York.234

Despite the orchestra’s objections Karajan and orchestra manager Peter Girth found a way around the orchestra’s refusal to grant Meyer the probationary position. Ms. Meyer was offered the probationary contract on January 16, 1983.235 While this was feasible from a legal standpoint the tactic further hurt relations between Karajan, the orchestra, and Girth, who was seen as siding with the conductor.236 Karajan was hardly innocent in the deteriorating relations between himself and the orchestra. In what some saw as retaliation for not honoring his counsel in the appointment of Sabine Meyer, he began cancelling engagements with the orchestra, including tours, festivals and recordings, the absence of which would hurt the orchestra musicians financially.237

232 Ibid, 674.
233 The Berlin Philharmonic has an unusual power structure. The orchestra’s constitution places the power to appoint orchestral members within the hands of the musicians themselves. For an applicant to be granted a probationary year with the orchestra, which is the first step to becoming a permanent member, one needs approval from at least fifty percent of the orchestra members. The conductor, though required to attend auditions, has no vote.
234 Ibid, 671.
235 Osborne, 675.
236 Ibid, 676.
237 Ibid, 674.
Although Meyer was appointed to the position of solo clarinet, this was still a probationary appointment, and a vote from the orchestra members was still necessary to make her position permanent. After playing with the orchestra for about a year and a half, Meyer decided not to put her appointment to a vote and resigned from the orchestra on May 12, 1984.²³⁸ This was likely due to the uncomfortable environment that resulted from all the controversy. Peter Girth told Richard Osborne that he found Meyer backstage crying ten minutes before a concert at the 1984 Salzburg Festival.²³⁹ When told of this, Karajan responded stating “This is no longer my orchestra.”²⁴⁰

The controversy over Meyer’s appointment to the Berlin Philharmonic captured the world’s attention, especially the seemingly sexist overtones of the orchestra’s refusal to hire Meyer. An article in The Harvard Crimson from 2013 about the gender gap in symphony orchestras stated that “the orchestra’s own music director, Herbert von Karajan, insisted that her (Sabine Meyer’s) gender was what caused her dismissal.”²⁴¹ The orchestra members disputed this claim, insisting that the reasons for denying her the position were purely musical. R.W. Apple of The New York Times interviewed an unnamed member of the woodwind section, who stated on the record that Ms. Meyer “is a good player, a very good player, but her tone would not blend well with ours.”²⁴² William Drozdiak of The Washington Post, in his article, “Discord in the Orchestra” implied that Karajan himself acknowledged Meyer’s difference of tone, but saw this as a positive

²³⁸ Ibid, 688.
²³⁹ Osborne, 687.
²⁴⁰ Ibid, 688.
attribute: “Von [sic] Karajan decided the delicate, clear tone that she (Ms. Meyer) coaxed from the clarinet would provide a foil to the dynamic thrust of the Philharmonic's style.”

However, later in the article Drozdiak cited a different reason for the orchestra deciding against Meyer, her maturity: “Despite her successful appearances on a triumphant Philharmonic tour of the United States last autumn, the orchestra decided by a majority vote that the twenty-three year old Meyer needed to gain more maturity before becoming a full member.” If this explanation is accurate, it would be somewhat ironic considering Ms. Meyer’s would be co-principal, Karl Leister, was twenty-one years old when hired as principal clarinetist; two years younger than Ms. Meyer was at the time of the controversy. Fortunately, the decision to leave the Berlin Philharmonic did not have a negative impact on Meyer’s career. She has since become one of the most respected clarinetists in the world and rivals Karl Leister today as one of the most prolific and admired clarinetists on the German (Oehler) system.

Karl Leister’s role in the Meyer affair is somewhat opaque. Nevertheless, what is clear is that the woodwind section of the orchestra, as a whole, was the most outspoken against Meyer. Lothar Koch, principal oboist of the orchestra and an admired colleague of Leister’s, was the first to take a stance against Meyer in a meeting with Karajan following her audition. William Drozdiak stated that “…the musicians claim they

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244 Ibid.
245 In the “Definitive Clarinet Recordings Survey” compiled by the author, Sabine Meyer appears as a preferred clarinetist amongst some of the respondents for every solo and chamber work included that she has recorded. Her recordings of two works, Debussy’s *Premiere Rhapsody* and Weber’s *Concerto No. 1,* are the most preferred by respondents of the survey (she is tied with Karl Leister for Weber’s *Concerto No. 1*).
246 Osborne, 670.
voted against her (Meyer) because of the judgment passed by the rest of the woodwind section, which praised her virtuosity (sic) as a soloist but harbored doubts about her ability to adapt to the ensemble's style.”

Mr. Leister was clearly seen standing beside other members of the orchestra as a statement was read denouncing Karajan’s tactic of appointing Meyer against the orchestra’s wishes.  

While the relationship between Karajan and the orchestra never truly healed, some of their greatest music making happened in the last years of Karajan’s directorship of the orchestra. In February of 1985, Karajan conducted the orchestra in a performance of Strauss’ *Ein Heldenleben*. Osborne refers to the performance as “lovingly played and deeply affecting.” Osborne goes on to discuss the filmed version of this work that took place later that year: “What is also interesting about the film is how generous it is to the orchestra, with a more than usually complete array of solo portraits, including several of Karl Leister, whose clarinet playing is beyond compare.”

*Ein Heldenleben* is a work noteworthy for how it features many instruments throughout the orchestra. None are featured as much as the concertmaster though. The first violin part is frequently divided so that the concertmaster plays the role of solo violin as a representation of the “hero’s companion.” In fact, in Osborne’s description of the early Karajan/Berlin Philharmonic recording of the work, one that Osborne calls “a classic,” he specifically calls out the concertmaster, Michel Schwalbé: “The reading, particularly the portrait of Strauss’s wife

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249 Ibid, 699.
250 Ibid.
Pauline, is brilliantly detailed. In 1957, Karajan had won for the orchestra a leader he had long coveted, the Polish-born Michel Schwalbé.”251 Osborne goes on to pay tribute to the rest of the orchestra but in much more general terms.252 For this last performance of Ein Heldenleben though, the concertmaster, Leon Spierer, is not mentioned. Instead, Osborne chooses to focus his attention on a member of the wind section, and specifically, the clarinet section, which was the root cause of strife between conductor and orchestra. In pointing out that Leister’s playing was “beyond compare,” it seems that Osborne may be alluding to the mending of a fractured relationship, not just between conductor and orchestra, but of Leister and his mentor.253

Karajan resigned from his post as conductor of the orchestra in 1989 and died three months later.254 Following Karajan’s death, Claudio Abbado was selected to take over as conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic. A new conductor was much needed to heal a fractured relationship between orchestra and conductor in a city that needed its own healing; the Berlin Wall fell at the end 1989, the year of Karajan’s death. However, Leister did not remain part of this healing process for long. Leister retired from the Berlin Philharmonic in 1993 after playing with the orchestra for thirty-four years.255 In an

251 Ibid, 438.
252 Ibid.
253 Indeed, some of Leister’s greatest orchestral playing came in these last years. In a filmed concert in Japan in 1984, Leister plays principal on Strauss’ Don Juan and Respighi’s Pines of Rome. Both works feature the clarinet prominently and his playing is extraordinary.
255 It is worth noting that Leister would only stay in the Berlin Philharmonic another four years following Karajan’s retirement and subsequent death, even though he continued his playing and teaching career for many more years. Leister even continued his orchestral
interview with the author Leister stated “I’m not sure if Karajan didn’t die, if I wouldn’t have left the orchestra.”\textsuperscript{256}

Following his retirement from the Berlin Philharmonic, teaching took on a larger role in Leister’s life. Leister took a position as clarinet instructor at the Hochschule für Musik Hanns Eisler in Berlin following his departure from the Philharmonic. In his interview with Robert Taylor he described his teaching at the Hochschule as a “new career,” stating: “I start my new career now and I’m happy. I had the chance to leave the orchestra in sunshine and not in shadow. This feeling of happiness and to have fun, now I can bring this to the young musicians.”\textsuperscript{257}

Leister had been teaching while in the Berlin Philharmonic as well, in the orchestral training school that Karajan founded, the Karajan Academy. The Academy, founded in 1972, was an orchestral training school, geared toward “postgraduate” students to prepare them for the professional orchestral world.\textsuperscript{258} Leister also became an honorary member of the Royal Academy of Music in London in 1987.\textsuperscript{259}

Leister was even involved as a teacher before the Karajan Academy was started. Steven Cohen, clarinet professor at Northwestern University, is a product of Leister’s instruction prior to the Karajan Academy. While he was a junior at Oberlin College, Cohen decided to study abroad in Berlin. Through a school called Schiller College, which advertised lessons with Berlin Philharmonic musicians, Cohen was able to spend the playing, with the Saito Kinen Orchestra of Japan, at the personal request of Seiji Ozawa, the orchestra’s founder and conductor.

\textsuperscript{256} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{257} Taylor, 36.
\textsuperscript{258} Osborne, 594.
\textsuperscript{259} Karl Leister, \textit{Les Masterclasses}, Vandoren, Released in 2004, DVD.
1971 – 1972 school year in Berlin studying with Leister. Like Mitchell Estrin’s experience of studying with Drucker at Juilliard (see Chapter 2 Stanley Drucker Biography), one of the truly remarkable aspects of Steven Cohen’s study with Leister was being able to hear him perform frequently with the Berlin Philharmonic. Of his time studying in Berlin, Cohen says: “I was able to listen to him (Leister) repeatedly in the orchestra that year so that was a true inspiration for his unbelievably gorgeous sound and his total command of the instrument as well as his great musicality.”

Like his incredible legacy of recordings, Leister has been able to document his teaching for future generations of clarinets. The Vandoren company produced a DVD in 2004 of clarinet masterclasses taught by Leister. Leister said that this DVD was made over a time span of two and a half years. The musical works he instructs in the DVD are Brahms’ Sonata for clarinet and piano no. 2 in E-flat major, the Mozart Clarinet Concerto, and Schumann’s Fantasiestücke. One of the students that Leister teaches is Olivier Patey who later became a principal clarinetist in the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra of Amsterdam.

In February and March of 2005, Leister toured many prominent music schools in the United States where he performed and instructed students. Schools that he visited included: The Shepard School of Music at Rice University, The University of Florida, The University of Michigan, Michigan State University, and Northern Illinois University, as well as the Atlanta Clarinet Association, which hosted clarinet students and professors.

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260 Steven Cohen, Email message to Peter Geldrich, November 2, 2015.
261 Ibid.
262 Karl Leister, Interview with Peter Geldrich, December 18, 2015, Berlin, Germany.
throughout the Southeast.263 The tour was initiated and organized by Mitchell Estrin, clarinet professor at the University of Florida. At the University of Florida Leister performed the Brahms Clarinet Quintet with the Leipzig String Quartet, the group with which he made his last recording of this work. This performance at the University of Florida was recorded by the author and Leister has since had it professionally remastered, adding to his already unmatched number of recordings of this masterpiece.264

In 2007 Steven Cohen invited Leister to Northwestern University to run his first internet masterclass. In this session, Leister taught for over five consecutive hours. More than two hours of the masterclass is available for public viewing through the Northwestern Beinen School of Music’s website.265 He would go on to conduct similar masterclasses at the Clarinet Soloist Academy in Geneva Switzerland in July of 2016, which is available on the website of the Academy.266

When discussing Herbert von Karajan’s obsession with filming his conducting and music making, Gela Marina Runne, Karajan’s film editor stated that “…we’re building a monument…he wants to put everything he’s done down on film for later generations to see.”267 The same can be said for Leister when looking at the amazing monument of clarinet recordings he has made over the course of his career. There are certain parallels in the legacy that Karajan left the music world and the one that Leister

264 Karl Leister, Interview with Peter Geldrich.
leaves for the clarinet community; they both have recorded masterworks multiple times over the span of decades and both have experimented with the different mediums of records and film.

It is no stretch to think that Leister has looked to Karajan’s legacy as an inspiration for the one he would leave. Karajan inspired Leister when he was a boy, sitting next to his father as Karajan conducted the RIAS orchestra. Karajan trained Leister personally as a budding musician in his early days in the Berlin Philharmonic. And Leister matured as a musician in the Berlin Philharmonic under Karajan’s baton spanning the three decades that they shared the stage of the Philharmonie. Karl Leister’s incomparable clarinet sound is an integral part of Karajan’s recording legacy as surely as Karajan’s musical guidance is an integral part of Leister’s interpretations of the clarinet masterworks. The monument both men have left is both astounding and beautiful.
Chapter 4

Instrumental Equipment of Stanley Drucker and Karl Leister

While one of the primary assertions of this document is that Stanley Drucker and Karl Leister are two of the most distinct clarinetists in recent history, there is no doubt that their sounds can be partially attributed to their instrumental setup (i.e. clarinet make and model, barrel, mouthpiece, and reeds). That Drucker and Leister have played on standard equipment common to their respective native countries only proves how strong their individual sound and style concepts are; after all, they are unique when compared to their fellow countryman. Nonetheless, it can be ascertained that their sound concepts were aided by their particular instrument set-ups.

Any discussion of the differences between the sound of Drucker and Leister should begin with an overview of the Oehler and Boehm clarinet systems. Internationally, these are the two primary systems of manufacturing clarinets. The Oehler system is most commonly utilized in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and parts of the Netherlands and is generally referred to as the “German clarinet.” The Boehm system, or “French clarinet,” is prominent in the rest of Europe, North and South America, and Asia.

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While differences certainly exist between the brands and models within these two systems, these variances are not as vast as those which separate the French from the German clarinets. Though the Oehler and Boehm systems present their own set of advantages and disadvantages, the purpose of this document is not to outline them. Nevertheless, a basic overview of these two systems will help define some of the sound and style characteristics of Drucker and Leister.

Many of the differences between the Boehm and Oehler system clarinets are found in the keywork. However, Drucker and Leister are both virtuosos on their respective instruments, so these differences are somewhat irrelevant to this document. But it should be noted that their recorded repertoire reflects a bias towards composers who wrote for their particular system of clarinet. While there can be many reasons for selecting certain repertoire, works which these two great players chose to record are fundamentally more idiomatic on their chosen instrument’s design.

**STANLEY DRUCKER AND THE BOEHM SYSTEM CLARINET**

Stanley Drucker has played on Boehm system clarinets manufactured by Buffet-Crampon for his entire career. In the 1840s, Louis-August Buffet, for whom the clarinet manufacturer takes its name, helped adapt the Boehm key system, originally for the flute, to the clarinet. This was a radical change from the clarinets of that time. The change was not just in the keys, but in the bore as well. With a bore design that was slightly conical at the lower end of the instrument, rather than simply cylindrical, the instrument’s tonal qualities were affected.²⁷⁰

²⁷⁰ *Hoeprich, 4.*
The Buffet clarinet that Drucker played in his early professional career was the legendary R-13 model. Historically, this is one of the most significant models played by American orchestral clarinetists.\textsuperscript{271} The Buffet R-13 clarinet originated around 1950, when the Buffet Crampon factory manager, Robert Carree (for whom the “R” in “R-13” comes from), designed a new style of clarinet bore; this was soon after Drucker won the assistant principal/e-flat clarinet position with the New York Philharmonic. Hence, Drucker’s long association with both Buffet Crampon instruments and the New York Philharmonic are very much linked.\textsuperscript{272}

The R-13 clarinet introduced a couple of design changes that revolutionized the French Boehm system clarinet. For one, the R-13’s bore was narrowed considerably from the norm of about 14.9mm to 14.56mm. The superiority of this design modification is evidenced by the fact that many other manufacturers soon adopted a similar bore size.\textsuperscript{273} The other major design change, perhaps most responsible for the distinct sound of the Buffet R-13, was the creation of a bell-like cavity in the upper-joint of the instrument. Dr. Lee Gibson, former clarinet professor at the University of North Texas and author of *Clarinet Acoustics*, describes this design:

\textsuperscript{272} There is a strong relationship between Buffet clarinets and the New York Philharmonic. At least since 1959, all the soprano clarinetists in the New York Philharmonic have played on Buffet clarinets. In 1966, bass clarinetist Stephan Freeman joined the orchestra and during Stanley Drucker’s remaining tenure, the entire clarinet section played on Buffet clarinets. John Sichel, “The Clarinetists of the New York Philharmonic,” *The Clarinet*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (July-August 1992): 41-44.
The unique provision of the R 13 to the smaller-bored clarinet is a brilliant yet mellow and flexible sound, the result of a d’amore cavity resonance, in the manner of the cor Anglais bell, but affecting all tones since the cavity is in the upper joint of the instrument.274

Bruce Marking, Head Woodwind Technician for Buffet Crampon USA, describes the R-13 clarinet as “polycylindrical” and states that “the innovation that was brought about by Robert Carree was a slight increase or decrease in the diameter of the bore at specific points, affecting the response, pitch, and sound of the instrument.”275 These changes to the clarinet’s design were so popular that many clarinet manufactures started to emulate them and Buffet became the clarinet of choice for about 85% of professional clarinetists worldwide.276

About halfway through his career, Drucker also acquired a set of Buffet model RC Prestige clarinets. Lee Gibson writes in his “Claranalysis” article in The Clarinet periodical from August 1976, that “according to Buffet Crampon, Stanley Drucker owns a set of the RC's.”277 According to clarinetist Mitchell Estrin, who over twenty years regularly played in the New York Philharmonic, Drucker has several clarinet sets, but his favorite is a set of Buffet RC Prestige.278 The RC model is very similar to the R-13. The initials in the model stand for Robert Carree, who was the designer of the R-13. The RC has a slightly larger bore (14.575 on the RC compared to 14.573 on the R-13) and has less of the “hallmark Carree perturbation.”279 Marking states the wood of the Prestige level instruments is of a higher quality than that of the traditional R-13 model Buffet

275 Bruce Marking, Email message to Peter Geldrich, September 12, 2016.
276 Ibid.
278 Mitchell Estrin, Interview with Peter Geldrich.
clarinets because it is more dense. This has a large effect on the sound quality.\textsuperscript{280} The resulting instrument is different enough to require the player to make adjustments moving from the R-13 to the RC Prestige. The fact that Drucker switched to the RC Prestige shows that the effort of adjusting to this instrument was well worth it. Dr. Gibson concurs: “There are distinct differences in pitch and tone to which the player must become accustomed. The (lower) pitches of the RC at the extremes of the clarion register, particularly on the bell-tone B and the high B, are for me most rewarding…”\textsuperscript{281} He concludes that “the tone (on the Buffet RC) is robust yet mellow, its response is secure and even, and its pitch…sets the finest standard I have heard in a [Boehm-system] clarinet.”\textsuperscript{282}

**KARL LEISTER AND THE GERMAN SYSTEM CLARINET**

Karl Leister, like nearly all of his countrymen and a handful of players elsewhere, including the United States (i.e. Michele Zukovsky, former principal clarinet of the Los Angeles Symphony Orchestra), has played on Oehler-system clarinets, commonly referred to as “German system.” Oehler clarinets are less of a departure from the traditional clarinet design of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries than the Boehm system instruments.\textsuperscript{283} The Oehler clarinets of today are part of a line of improvements that occurred incrementally over the course of a century or so. These changes were brought about by Carl Baermann, Benedikt Pentenrieder, Georg Ottensteiner, and Oskar Oehler. Keywork was added and adapted all the while retaining its cylindrical bore.\textsuperscript{284}

\textsuperscript{280} Bruce Marking, Email.
\textsuperscript{282} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{283} Hoeprich, 4-5.
\textsuperscript{284} Ibid.
Maintaining the traditional bore allowed the instrument to keep a sound closer to that most likely heard by late classical and early romantic era composers of clarinet works.

Leister’s preference for performing and recording select repertoire can possibly be attributed to the German system clarinet’s bond to the sound origins of its past. Eric Hoeprich, in the Yale Music Instrument Series publication, *The Clarinet*, writes “Few doubt that Claude Debussy’s *Première Rhapsodie* or Igor Stravinsky’s *Three Pieces* can be performed most effectively on a French clarinet, and similarly, a sonata of Brahms may benefit from a German, Oehler-system clarinet, with its link to the Ottensteiner clarinet that Brahms’s clarinettist (sic), Richard Mühlfeld, played.”

Hoeprich also states that, “from a practical point of view, the Boehm-system instrument is slightly easier to play, and one might ask why players of Oehler-system clarinet do not simply switch.” While he answers his own question by pointing out the desire to retain continuity of style and sound within the German repertoire, the assumption that the Boehm system clarinet is “easier” is not necessarily accurate. Lee Gibson emphasizes that while the Boehm system clarinet keywork has remained essentially unchanged since its inception, the Oehler-system clarinet has undergone numerous changes all the way to the present day:

> The classical German clarinet, improved constantly by Müller, the Baermanns, the Alberts, Oehler, Uebel, Schmidt, and others, is in no way inferior in our time to the formerly ascendant Klose-Buffet clarinet which retains, with optional, not universally accepted improvements, almost the identical mechanism proposed in 1839.

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286 Ibid, 4
The implication is that, while the Boehm system instrument may have had advantages when it was first adapted to the clarinet from the flute, over the decades the German system (now Oehler system) has caught up with it and is now an equivalent, if different, system. Indeed, in his series of articles “The German Clarinet,” in the periodical *The Clarinet*, Lee Gibson described some of the advantages that the Oehler-system clarinets have over the more popular Boehm system instruments:

> The Wurlitzer clarinets so widely used in Germany and the Netherlands also resolve our constant bell-tone E-B and F-C pitch problems by providing a thumb key which provides a choice of pitches. In all of these intervals the German professional's instrument is consistently better, either by its nature or by virtue of the ingenious and logical mechanisms which have been applied.\(^{288}\)

Furthermore, it is these same Wurlitzer clarinets Dr. Gibson describes above that Leister has played on for a long time. In an interview with Gibson in 1979, Leister describes the Wurlitzer Company as “making the finest German system clarinets.”\(^{289}\) The idea that Oehler system clarinets, and Wurlitzer clarinets in particular, are now equivalent to modern Boehm instruments certainly is supported by the author’s “Definitive Clarinet Recordings Survey,” where Sabine Meyer, also a Wurlitzer artist, was shown as a preferred recording artist of Debussy’s *Premiere Rhapsody*.\(^{290}\) This certainly strengthens the theory that a clarinetist’s personal style can outshine the particular properties of their respective instrument.

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Unlike Drucker, Leister has played numerous brands of clarinets throughout the years. His first clarinet, given to him at the age of twelve by his father, was one made by Oskar Oehler (1858 – 1936), the great German clarinet technician for whom the modern German system clarinet is named.\(^{291}\) By the time Leister joined the Berlin Philharmonic and was making many of his early recordings, including his first Mozart concerto, Mozart quintet, and Brahms quintet recordings, he was playing Uebel clarinets made of Cocobolo wood. According to Leister, these Uebel clarinets produced a “wonderful” sound, but were difficult to tune.\(^{292}\) Leister switched to Wurlitzer clarinets later in the 1960s and has mainly been playing on them ever since.\(^{293}\) Because Wurlitzers were traditionally tuned to A 445 (the tuning of the Berlin Philharmonic), Leister chose to travel in his early touring days with a set of Uebel clarinets that possessed a lower tuning. In an interview with Lee Gibson, James Gillespie, and Noah Knepper at the 1978 International Clarinet Clinic/Congress at the University of Toronto, Leister informed them that he was playing on an Uebel clarinet because of the lower pitched piano.\(^{294}\) In 1994, when he was interviewed by Robert Taylor, Leister said that he had played on low-pitched Wurlitzers, made specifically for him, for his third and fourth recordings of Mozart’s Clarinet Concerto. The implication is that, by the time of his third recording of the Mozart concerto, completed in 1980 with Koji Toyoda and the Gumma Symphony Orchestra, he


\(^{292}\) Ibid, 38.

\(^{293}\) Lee Gibson claims that this change may have been brought about by decree from the Berlin Philharmonic which “owns complete sets for every member of the section.” Gibson, *Clarinet Acoustics*, 9.

had been playing solely on Wurlitzers. The Wurlitzer clarinets that Leister has played since 1980 possess a number of changes from the traditional Oehler-system clarinets, most notably a narrower bore, and superior tuning.\footnote{Lee Gibson, “Claranalysis,” The Clarinet, Vol. 4, No. 4 (September 1977): 38.}

When listening to his recordings, especially of the same piece from these two time periods (before 1970 and after 1980) one can hear a distinct change in Leister’s tone. This transformation is supported by Leister, who stated in an interview in Vandoren Magazine, “When you listen to my CDs of 30 years ago, you can hear how my sound changed: this time, I'm looking for a round, warm, deep sound…”\footnote{Laurent Sultan, “Interview with Karl Leister,” Vandoren Magazine, (October 2000).} This can be attributed, at least in part, to his adoption of a different clarinet model. No doubt that this change is also in alignment with his own idea of what his sound should be. When discussing his tonal concept, Leister stated that “We must ask ourselves what we like and find this way, not stopping until we get it. That's important!”\footnote{Gibson, Gillespie, Knepper, 9.} Presumably, part of this process of “finding the way” includes searching for equipment that allows the clarinetist to most easily achieve the sound they desire.

**MOUTHPIECES**

While Stanley Drucker’s loyalty to Buffet clarinets has lasted over many years, equally impressive is his devotion to his mouthpiece. For most of his professional career Drucker has played a Chedeville/Lelandais mouthpiece maintained and adjusted by Everett Matson, a well-known and respected craftsman from New Jersey who worked with many of the professional clarinetists in the North-East.\footnote{Mitchell Estrin, Interview with Peter Geldrich.}

\footnote{Lee Gibson, “Claranalysis,” The Clarinet, Vol. 4, No. 4 (September 1977): 38.}
\footnote{Laurent Sultan, “Interview with Karl Leister,” Vandoren Magazine, (October 2000).}
\footnote{Gibson, Gillespie, Knepper, 9.}
\footnote{Mitchell Estrin, Interview with Peter Geldrich.}
mouthpiece are unknown. According to Mitchell Estrin, the mouthpiece was bought used from Drucker’s teacher, Leon Russianoff, for six dollars.\textsuperscript{299} Although the history of the mouthpiece remains a mystery, some clues to its background exist. According to Bradford Behn, renowned mouthpiece manufacturer, the French company Lelandais acquired Chedeville in the 1940s, after World War II. This would imply that the mouthpiece is probably from this post World War II era. Although Behn believes the quality of Chedeville rubber from the pre-war period to be superior, Lelandais acquired the remaining Chedeville inventory, so it is possible Drucker’s mouthpiece is made from this material.\textsuperscript{300} Regardless, Chedeville mouthpieces are legendary amongst the clarinet community. Many of the most important twentieth century orchestral clarinetists in America (in addition to Drucker) have used Chedeville mouthpieces including: Ralph McLane, former principal clarinet of the Philadelphia Orchestra; Anthony Gigliotti, former principal clarinet of the Philadelphia Orchestra after McLane; and Harold Wright (who played on McLane’s mouthpiece), former principal clarinet of the Boston Symphony. Behn recognizes many of the tonal characteristics that Chedeville mouthpieces are known for in Drucker’s sound, including ease of projection, resonance, and a full spectrum of overtones. He also acknowledges, however, that Drucker’s unique voice separates him from many of the other Chedeville players of the time. Behn believes that although Drucker played in a more emphatic style than many of his contemporaries, his mouthpiece gave him “a bigger palate of colors to paint his picture.”\textsuperscript{301}

\textsuperscript{299} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{300} Bradford Behn, Telephone conversation with Peter Geldrich, August 8, 2016.
\textsuperscript{301} Ibid.
Regarding his preferred mouthpiece, Leister is often non-specific about make and model. In 1994, he stated that he played on a “wooden mouthpiece” with his Uebel clarinets. This would further link his clarinet setup to the traditions of the past. A wooden mouthpiece for the German system clarinet was traditionally utilized with a cord (string) ligature. Because Leister made a point to say he played on a wooden mouthpiece for his Uebel clarinet, it also implies he was no longer using a wooden mouthpiece by 1994. Leister is equally non-specific regarding precise dimensions for his facing. He describes his mouthpiece as “not very open with a longer lay” in his interview with Lee Gibson, James Gillespie, and Noah Knepper in 1978. Pamela Weston has a similar characterization of Leister’s mouthpiece in her chapter on Karl Leister in *Clarinet Virtuosi of Today*, published in 1989. This description would put Leister’s mouthpiece squarely within the German mouthpiece tradition as described by Lee Gibson in *Clarinet Acoustics*: “Tradition deems that the Boehm clarinetist will use a mouthpiece with a wider window and a shorter, more open facing than that needed for the German mouthpiece...” In his *Vandoren Magazine* interview Leister stated, “I often change my mouthpiece and some are a little closer, some are a little more open...” This seems to emphasize a larger philosophy on tonal concept; that the quest for an ideal sound supersedes any commitment to a particular piece of equipment.

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302 Taylor, 38.
303 Hoeprich, pg. 25.
304 Gibson, Gillespie, Knepper, 6.
305 Pamela Weston, *Clarinet Virtuosi of Today*, 181.
REEDS

The one commonality in set-up between Stanley Drucker and Karl Leister is their use of Vandoren Reeds. While Leister came to Vandoren, a French reed company, later in his career, Drucker, like many American clarinetists, has played Vandoren reeds most of his career. According to Mitchell Estrin, Drucker used Vandoren purple box #5 reeds and then changed to V12 #4. He would also work on almost every reed, typically by clipping the tip and then thinning it back down using reed rush. This would give him greater control over response and more “core” to his sound by moving the tip closer to the heart of the reed.\footnote{Mitchell Estrin, Interview.}

However, it is important to note that the young Leister did not play on Vandoren Reeds. In fact, during his early performing years, he had reeds made for him by a reed maker in Potsdam.\footnote{Karl Leister, Interview with Peter Geldrich, December 2015, Berlin, Germany.} By the time of his 1978 interview in The Clarinet, Leister was playing Steuer Reeds and described Gebherd Steuer as the “greatest reed maker in Germany.”\footnote{Gibson, Gillespie, Knepper, 7.} But, by 1981 he switched to Vandoren Reeds and has remained loyal to the company ever since.\footnote{Weston, 181.} Even within this brand of reeds though, Leister constantly searched for his ideal sound. In an interview with VandorenTV he stated, “I started with White Master, then Black Master, Blue (box), V12 and Rue Lepic.”\footnote{VandorenTV, “Karl Leister and Vandoren,” Accessed August 15, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ULrZfe3sTjf.} He also describes recording the Spohr Concerti and the Brahms Sonatas using “French E-flat reeds.”\footnote{Ibid.}
CONCLUSIONS

Stanley Ducker’s combination of Buffet clarinets, a Chedeville/Lelandais mouthpiece, and Vandoren Reeds, is a standard instrument set-up for an American orchestral clarinet player. Like many of his contemporaries, Drucker must have found that this combination gave him the resonance needed to project over an orchestra while allowing him the flexibility to impart his distinctive voice on the music he was playing, regardless of style and genre.

For Leister, all of the changes to his instrumental setup are indicative of his quest for an ideal sound, and yet, at the same time, there is a continuity of style that stands out when you listen to his recordings. When discussing the reed styles he has played in the past Leister stated, “When you listen to my CD’s you can hear all these different reeds, but with my sound.” Just like with Stanley Drucker, it is Karl Leister’s individual clarinet voice that is heard on his recordings, regardless of what equipment he is using.

\(^{314}\) Ibid.
Part II

Select Recordings of Stanley Drucker
Chapter 5

Bartok Contrasts

Bartok’s *Contrasts*, a trio for clarinet, violin, and piano, was written in 1938 and since has become one of the seminal works for the clarinet. Furthermore, *Contrasts*, a piece written toward the end of Bartok’s life (he died in 1945), should be considered one of the most important twentieth century works of any genre or instrumental configuration. The piece is a textbook example of Bartok’s mature musical style; coupling his intellectual rigor, as evidenced by the piece’s use of mathematical devices such as the Fibonacci sequence, with his devotion to Hungarian folk influence, as seen through his use of modal harmonies and rhythmic drive. In addition to the work being on the forefront of musical trends, it also embraced the technological advancements of the time; it was written specifically with sound recording in mind. *Contrasts* was commissioned by jazz clarinetist Benny Goodman and was dedicated to both Goodman as well as Bartok’s fellow countryman, violinist Joseph Szigeti. Goodman had asked that Bartok compose a work in two movements; each movement of similar length so that the piece could fit onto a single 78 rpm record. However, in the end Bartok deviated from this request, composing a three-movement work instead.

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316 Prime, 7-9.
The first recording of *Contrasts*, produced by Columbia Records in 1940, featured the composer on the piano and the two dedicatees, Joseph Szigeti and Benny Goodman, on violin and clarinet respectively. If one were looking for a “definitive” recording of the work, this first release would certainly fit that description. Most notably, the clarinet community seems to agree with this assertion; the Goodman-Szigeti-Bartok recording received the most votes on the author’s “Definitive Clarinet Recordings Survey” as the preferred recording of *Contrasts*, with nearly one out of three respondents choosing it. However, this does not mean that the recording is without its faults. While it features the composer and the musicians for whom it was dedicated, noticeable problems exist with the realization of the score. Though a renowned solo violinist and tireless advocate of new music, Szigeti was a musician whose “performing technique was not always flawless,” and was known more for “the force of his musical personality.” Likewise, Goodman, although famous as a jazz clarinetist and an enthusiastic promoter of contemporary classical composers, was not necessarily comfortable in this idiom. In Dennis Gordon Prime’s dissertation, “The Clarinet in Selected Works of Bela Bartok and Igor Stravinsky,” he describes some of the issues in this recording. He states “Intonation in both violin and clarinet is not always consistent with the piano and lack of precise

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318 28% of respondents selected this recording over all other choices. Peter Geldrich, “Definitive Clarinet Recordings Survey,” *Survey Monkey*, January 2016.
articulation on Goodman’s part is disappointing.” \footnote{Prime, 167.} Dr. Prime attributes further complaints with the recording to the audio techniques of the time: “The most immediate reaction to the disk is the relatively poor sound quality…The lack of great dynamic contrasts and balance problems are probably more the fault of the recording process than the actual performance.” \footnote{Ibid.}

If there is a recording that should be considered next in line as an important historical documentation of the work, it would be hard to argue against the recording of Stanley Drucker, Robert Mann, and Leonid Hambro. \footnote{Ibid 170.} The recording was initiated by Peter Bartok, Bela Bartok’s son, as part of effort to document and popularize his father’s works. To further that mission, Peter Bartok founded Bartok Records, a small recording company that was used to record and produce the Drucker-Mann-Hambro recording of Contrasts. \footnote{Ibid 170.} The choice of Drucker and Mann specifically was especially astute, as both would have been very familiar with Bartok’s distinct music style; Drucker through performing the orchestral works and Mann through performing the string quartets, an indispensable part of the genre. \footnote{The six string quartets by Bartok are considered to be among his finest works, and among the best in the repertoire. As Homer Ulrich, musicologist and former head of the University of Maryland’s Department of Music, states “In a tonal language that is unique in its flexibility, Bartok created a series of works that are unsurpassed in the variety of their sonorous effects, in the power of their rhythmic appeal, but more especially in the rich expressiveness they achieve in their dissonant, atonal idiom.” Homer Ulrich, \textit{Chamber Music}, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), 355.} As another one of Bartok’s chamber masterpieces, Contrasts is similarly effective in expressing his unique musical language. Therefore,
musicians must be able to navigate that language for a successful performance to take place. Because *Contrasts* is the only chamber work by Bartok to feature a wind instrument, it is perhaps no coincidence that arguably the best interpreters of the work, Drucker among them, are orchestral clarinetists. After all, they would have been familiar with Bartok’s musical style and language through performance of his orchestral works.

In many ways Drucker’s recording of the work is superior to the original Bartok-Goodman-Szigeti version. His legendary virtuosic technique is well-suited for this notoriously difficult work. While the piano is mostly relegated to an accompanying role, the clarinet and violin each are presented with challenging parts. The violin is required to perform an array of techniques including: multiple stops, simultaneous bowed and pizzicato notes, glissandos, and unusual tuning (scordatura). The clarinet is given equally challenging technical hurdles. Halsey Stevens, in his biography *The Life and Music of Béla Bartók*, states that “most of the idiomatic possibilities are explored (in the clarinet part): characteristic melodic passages for each register, rapid arpeggios and scales, trills and tremolos, varieties of articulation, shifts of register, extremes of dynamics.” Drucker is more than equal to this challenge. Prime says of the recording that “Drucker’s playing is extremely precise with a compact, focused sound…Dynamics are well controlled and interpretation consistent throughout the ensemble…Drucker’s interpretation of the cadenza is stunning…” Prime has similar praise for Robert Mann, saying “Drucker’s playing is equaled by the effective violin performance given by Robert

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326 Ibid.
327 Ibid, 220-221.
328 Prime, 171.
Mann, first violinist of the Juilliard Quartet and renowned interpreter of the works of Bartok." He concludes by calling this performance “perhaps still the best of the recordings…”

An aspect of Drucker’s recording that stands out to Dennis Prime is the execution of tempos. Prime completed a tempo analysis of seven prominent recordings of *Contrasts* by calculating timings that performers achieved in finishing specific sections within each movement. While this kind of comparative analysis could provide interesting insight into various performances of any work, for Bartok’s *Contrasts* it is especially pertinent because, in addition to specific metronomic indications, Bartok provides the exact timing (down to the second) for various sections in each of the piece’s three movements. By comparing a recording’s timing in each of these sections to Bartok’s printed specifications, Prime provides an objective measurement in which one can derive how much a particular performance deviates from the composer’s tempo specifications. In addition to Drucker’s recording, Prime analyzes timings on recordings of *Contrasts* by the following clarinetists: Benny Goodman, Jack Brymer, Reginald Kell, Béla Kovács, David Shifrin, and Victor Sawa. According to Prime the choice of recordings was “based on reputation of the clarinetist as well as merit of the overall performance.” Prime’s tempo analysis of select *Contrasts* recordings yields a noteworthy discovery: Drucker’s recording is the only one where the faster outer movements are played quicker than Bartok’s printed tempos. As Prime states: “Drucker and colleagues finish the first movement fourteen seconds before the indicated time and the third movement, an

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329 Ibid.
330 Ibid.
331 Ibid, 159.
amazing twenty-six seconds before (more than one minute faster that [sic] the Goodman recording).”

While performing a piece of music at faster than indicated tempos should not be considered the singular basis for judging a performance as superior to others, it does provide an important consideration. With a composition as technically challenging as *Contrasts*, the fact that all of the other recordings analyzed by Prime feature ensembles that chose slower tempos than printed leaves the listener wondering if that choice was one made out of necessity or for artistic reasons. In the case of Drucker, Mann, and Hambro one is afforded the certainty that, for better or worse, tempos were taken strictly for artistic reasons. Due to the fact that most tempo choices (except in the slower second movement which is performed in exactly the amount of time indicated by Bartok) were faster than Bartok’s specific designations, Drucker, Mann, and Hambro apparently chose to raise the bar for technical hurdles, not lower it.

That level of certainty cannot be applied to other recordings. The technical imperfections in the original recording with Goodman, Szigeti, and Bartok (referenced previously) only add to the suspicion that tempo choices may have been impacted by technical limitations. Similarly, when discussing recordings by the eminent English clarinetist Jack Brymer, Prime states “…tempi tend to be somewhat slow and technique is

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332 The author found a discrepancy in the data that Dr. Prime collected. Due to his methodology of analyzing based on total time elapsed after each section, rather than the actual time elapsed for each individual section, the printed variances can appear deceptive. For example, the second section of the first movement Drucker and his ensemble performed two seconds slower than indicated, so Prime’s statement that the outer movements were performed quicker than Bartok’s indicated timing is slightly misleading. The author has accounted for this in Appendix B by giving the performers’ timing for each individual section. While Prime’s assertion that the outer movements are finished quicker than Bartok’s indicated time, there are individual sections within them that are not faster than Bartok’s exact timing specifications. Ibid, 170-171.
not always consistent. These aspects all hold true with the recording of *Contrasts.*”

While these recordings should not be discounted solely because of these technical criticisms, Prime shares additional critiques. For the original Goodman recording Prime cites both “poor sound quality” and “lack of great dynamic contrast,” attributing both to the “recording process.” Prime finds similar fault with Jack Brymer’s recording, stating “the recording sounds quite ‘close,’ especially violin and clarinet, with the piano sounding distant at times. Brymer’s breath and mechanism noise can be heard at times. Balance suffers because of this process.” On the other hand, Prime praises the audio quality in Drucker’s recording, stating that it is “balanced quite well…”

If there is any fault to be found in Drucker’s recording of *Contrasts* it may well lie in the same technical virtuosity that sets this recording apart. In the same sentence that Prime calls Drucker’s interpretation of the first movement cadenza “stunning” he states that “the occasional virtuoso display sometimes gets in the way of the musical line.”

Furthermore, Prime is not the only one who finds Drucker’s recording of Bartok’s *Contrasts* to be exceptional. Richard Gilbert, author of *The Clarinetists’ Discography,* calls Drucker’s recording “a major tour de force” and states that it “shows Drucker to have supreme technique, virtuosity – complete command of the clarinet.”

Dr. Ed Joffe, a major New York Metropolitan area freelance musician and instructor, in an interview with Drucker for *Joffe Woodwinds* on YouTube, described Drucker’s recording of *Contrasts* as one of

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335 Ibid, 169.
336 Ibid, 171.
337 Ibid.
three “magnificent” Drucker recordings that have “changed…the technical level that’s expected of professional clarinetists.”

In that same interview, Joffe discusses another recording of Drucker in a live performance of *Contrasts* along with Arnold Steinhardt, long time first violinist with the Guarneri String Quartet, and pianist Jens Nygaard. The recording is part of a box-set of twenty-eight live performances of Drucker labeled *Stanley Drucker: Heritage Collection – Live in Concert*, compiled and digitized by clarinetist and music producer Jerome Bunke. Joffe singles out this particular performance from the set, calling it “spectacular.” Indeed, this performance is noteworthy for a number of reasons. Once again, Drucker is paired with one of the twentieth century’s great chamber music violinists, Arnold Steinhardt. As first violinist with the Guarneri String Quartet, he would have been intimately familiar with Bartok’s musical style.

One way that the Heritage Collection recording sets itself apart from Drucker’s earlier rendition is in the performers’ choice of tempos. In the first movement, most of the sections are performed close to the printed tempo or slightly faster (within five seconds of the printed section duration). An exception to this is the second marked section of the movement, which is a slower part, beginning at the *meno mosso* in measure 30 (see Appendix B). The printed tempo at this section is a quarter note equals 75, but Drucker, Steinhardt, and Nygaard take it slower than a quarter note equals 60. While

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341 Drucker, Interview with Ed Joffe.
Bartok indicated the section should be completed in one minute, seventeen seconds, Drucker’s group takes an additional twenty-three seconds, finishing the section in one minute, forty seconds. In the second movement, labeled “Pihenő” (relaxation), an additional thirty-nine seconds is added to the movement, whereas the earlier Drucker recording is completed in the precise amount of indicated time (see Appendix B). Most of the additional time accumulates at the end of the movement, which is taken at an extremely slow pace. The last section of the work, marked movendo with a tempo indication of a quarter note equals 68, starts closer to a quarter note equals 50 and continually slows until it ends at around a quarter note equals 45. This is immediately contrasted by the last movement, “Sebes” (fast dance) which begins at a quarter note equals 150, faster than the indicated tempo of a quarter note equals 140. In fact, the entire movement is performed at slightly quicker than indicated tempos, except for the lyrical middle fourth section which is completed at a full twenty-six seconds slower than indicated (see Appendix B).

The resulting impression of this performance is that it is indicative of Drucker’s style and interpretative tendencies. Like his Copland and Nielsen concertos, the live Contrasts performance is a combination of virtuosic flash and drawn-out lyricism, with lively sections performed faster than indicated, and lyrical sections taken slower than is typical. This is a characteristic that may have been influenced by Leonard Bernstein, and the chronology of the two renditions supports this assessment; Drucker’s first recording of this work was completed before Bernstein’s appointment as director of the New York
Philharmonic, while the second was finished after his appointment. In the second
recording, Drucker’s technique is not quite as clean as in the original version;
nevertheless, this should be expected of a live performance. After all, a studio recording
allows for multiple takes to correct imperfections and in this instance, only one piece was
recorded by Drucker during the session. Additionally, due to audio advantages that come
with recording in a studio setting, the sound quality is clearer on the original recording
compared to the Heritage Collection live performance. Otherwise, Drucker’s two
performances of this work offer many of the same characteristics that make him such a
compelling artist: a rich, resonant, yet flexible tone; rapid, precise articulation; and a
distinctive vibrato used sparingly to highlight select notes in the texture.

At the end of his discussion on the recordings of Bartok’s *Contrasts*, Prime
mentions that a taped recording of Harold Wright, long time principal clarinet with the
Boston Symphony Orchestra, was not available. Since the completion of his dissertation
in 1984, a live performance of Wright became accessible through Boston Records. It is
unknown if this is the particular taped version that Prime spoke of, but it is indeed a
performance worth discussing. In fact, in the author’s “Definitive Clarinet Recordings
Survey,” this particular recording of Wright was listed as the second most preferred, tied

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342 Leonard Bernstein was known for his extreme interpretations of tempo. Many of the
standard orchestral works conducted by him deviated from the traditional tempos taken
https://www.nytimes.com/1979/10/31/archives/music-bernstein-leads-viennese-in-
beethoven-9th.html

343 Harold Wright, *Clarinet Concert No. 5*, released in 2004, Boston Records, Compact
disc.
with Drucker’s.\textsuperscript{344} It is truly an excellent rendition of the work, and especially impressive since it was a live performance. The performance featured Joseph Silverstein, former concertmaster of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Gilbert Kalish, a long-time pianist with the Boston Chamber players, alongside Harold Wright. For a live recording, the sound quality is exceptional, much better than Drucker’s live performance recording. The balance between the musicians is superb, which indicates a mastery and sensitivity of those involved as chamber musicians. Interestingly, Wright’s performance tempos are very closely aligned with the original recording of the work that featured Goodman, Szigeti, and Bartok. Wright’s ensemble performs the first movement just one second quicker than Goodman’s ensemble and twenty-eight seconds slower than the score indicates (see Appendix B). Both the second and third movements are completed in the exact amount of time as Goodman’s recording (see Appendix B). Since the overall timings are so similar, one is inclined to conclude that Wright and his partners used the first recording of \textit{Contrasts} as their guide for tempo rather than the printed indications in the score. If this is the case, they can hardly be faulted since the composer was among the musicians in that first recording. Certainly, it is a possibility that Bartok himself may have reconsidered his own tempo choices while in the process of performing the work and that the tempos we have preserved in a sound file of Bartok performing the work may supersede those documented in the score.

Over three decades have passed since Prime completed his dissertation, and many additional recordings of this work have been released. One such recording features the prodigious American orchestral clarinetist Ricardo Morales with Jasper Wood on violin.

\textsuperscript{344}Peter Geldrich, “Definitive Clarinet Recordings Survey.”
A successor to Drucker as one of the most prominent and virtuosic orchestral clarinetists, Morales’ recording of the work provides an interesting comparison. While the recording is not as quick as Drucker’s original recording, it is one of the fastest that the author or Prime has analyzed. While the first movement is completed eight seconds slower than indicated in the score, this is still a quicker time than all other recordings referenced, including Drucker’s live performance (see Appendix B). The third movement concludes under the allotted time and is the only performance, other than Drucker’s original recording, to do so; although Drucker’s is still faster by twenty-four seconds (see Appendix B). Where Morales’ recording stands out though, for better or worse, is in the second movement. This is the one movement where Morales’ performance is the fastest of all those analyzed; it was completed eleven seconds faster than indicated. For a movement labeled “Pihenő” (relaxation), taking it faster than indicated is an interesting choice, and it has the overall effect of sounding hurried. By comparison, this is the one movement that the young Drucker and ensemble complete exactly in Bartok’s indicated time and that Drucker performs almost forty seconds slower than printed in the later live version. Bartok himself executed the movement slower than indicated, finishing it eighteen seconds under the score’s printed time setting a precedent to deviate from the printed tempo. However, much is to be admired in the Morales

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recording, not the least of which is his full, resonant sound, and flawless technique.

Though Morales’ tone is beautiful throughout, he lacks some of the color changes achieved by Drucker. Also, like some of the other recordings discussed by Prime, there is some fault to be found in the audio engineering, as the acoustics and balance sound slightly artificial. At times this diminishes the breadth of the dynamics called for in this work.

Another notable recent recording of *Contrasts* is by Joaquin Valdepeñas, principal clarinet with the Toronto Symphony and founding member of the Amici Ensemble, alongside violinist Yehonatan Berick, and fellow Amici co-founder, pianist Patricia Parr. In terms of its similarity to other recordings of the work, it is most like Drucker’s live performance recording. In both renditions, tempos are closely aligned with Bartok’s printed tempos and timings, except for the slower, lyrical sections, which are drawn out and performed slower than written. In the first movement, four of the five sections are performed within five seconds of Bartok’s printed timings in these renditions (see Appendix B). However, in both versions the second section is played considerably slower than indicated; twenty-three seconds slower in Drucker’s performance and twenty-two seconds slower in Valdepeñas’. This section, which starts at measure 30, is marked *meno mosso*, and the printed tempo of 75 is the slowest of the movement. The discrepancy in time between Drucker and Valdepeñas’ overall movement time (Valdepeñas and the Amici Ensemble complete the movement in five minutes, twenty-three seconds; thirteen seconds slower than Drucker’s five minutes, ten seconds) is due to the fact that the Amici

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Ensemble takes most of the other sections slightly slower than printed, while Drucker’s group takes them a little quicker. Similarly, both performances execute the second movement slower than the indicated timing (see Appendix B). Here though, Drucker’s live performance is far slower, completing the movement a full twenty-one seconds slower than the Amici Ensemble and thirty-nine seconds slower than Bartok’s indicated timing. Valdepeñas’ interpretation is far closer to Wright’s performance. Both ensembles complete the movement in four minutes, thirty-one seconds; eighteen seconds slower than Bartok’s indicated time.

It is in the third movement that Valdepeñas and the Amici Ensemble separate themselves most from the other recordings of this work. Here, in the quickest of the three movements, they choose to perform it almost a full minute over the indicated time (see Appendix B). Most of this extra time is gained in the fourth section of the work. This section is the most lyrical of the movement and is one that many performers choose to perform slower than indicated.\footnote{Valdepeñas and Amici take an additional forty-three seconds in this section, far more than any of the other recordings. Drucker in his live recording takes an extra twenty-six seconds in this section, Wright takes an extra thirty-four seconds, Morales takes an extra eighteen seconds, and Bartok himself takes an additional twenty-one seconds in the recording with Goodman.} Interestingly, the ensemble chooses to perform the remaining three sections under tempo as well. Most of the other recordings make up some of the lost time by performing the concluding sections, particularly the last section, quicker than indicated.\footnote{It should be noted that the original recording with Bartok, Goodman, and Szigeti also take the remaining three sections slower than indicated.} By contrast, Valdepeñas’ interpretation lacks the excitement achieved by finishing the work at a brisk pace. In this one area, no version analyzed matches Drucker’s original recording, which completes the final movement twenty-six
seconds faster than Bartok’s indicated time, and as Prime notes, more than a minute faster than Goodman’s recording. Nevertheless, there is much to be admired in the Valdepeñas/Amici Ensemble recording. Valdepeñas’ playing is excellent in tone, technique, and style. Like many of the most effective performances, among them, those by Drucker and Wright, Valdepeñas achieves great timbre changes through his use of vibrato. For musicians who may be intimidated by the difficulties of this work, the Amici Ensemble’s recording provides a model of an effective performance with tempos that do not seem daunting.

Of course, at the opposite end of the spectrum is Stanley Drucker’s original recording; which, over sixty years after its release, still remains unmatched in its vigor. In a way, this recording, the first of Drucker’s illustrious career, was a bold statement heralding the arrival of a virtuoso. What is truly remarkable, is that the statement told through that 1953 recording remains as potent today, and the playing it exhibits remains unmatched.

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349 Prime, 170-171.
Chapter 6

Nielsen Clarinet Concerto

Like so many of the concertos written for the clarinet, Carl Nielsen’s *Concerto for Clarinet and orchestra, op. 57* was inspired by and written for a specific clarinetist. In the case of this work, the relationship between the composition and the artist for whom it was written is particularly interesting. It has been theorized that the style of the work itself was influenced, at least in part, by Aage Oxenvad and his personality, making the role of the dedicatee far more important than the typical concerto.\(^{350}\) Oxenvad was the principal clarinet of the Royal Chapel Orchestra in Denmark and a member of the Copenhagen Woodwind Quintet.\(^{351}\) Certainly the level of virtuosity required by the Nielsen Clarinet Concerto is a testament to the technical and music abilities of Oxenvad.\(^{352}\) A large part of the work’s distinct sound could have possibly been inspired by Oxenvad’s disposition. Swedish clarinetist Kjell-Inge Stevensson stated that “The (Nielsen) clarinet concerto represents Oxenvad's potency and forceful character as well as his choleric temperament. One must not forget he is said to have been a temperamental but essentially warm and

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\(^{351}\) Ibid, 1.

\(^{352}\) It should be said that Oxenvad was apparently not very happy with the difficulty of the piece. However, it is still a testament to his abilities that the first performance of the piece took place just one month after it was completed.

Because of the correlation between the work and the personality of the clarinetist for whom it was written, it is especially disappointing that no recording of the work was made by Oxenvad.\textsuperscript{354}

While Oxenvad never recorded the concerto that was written for him, he recorded other works by Nielsen, including \textit{Wind Quintet, Op. 43} and \textit{Serenata in vano}, a chamber work for mixed ensemble (clarinet, bassoon, horn, cello and double bass).\textsuperscript{355} These recordings give us insight about the player who inspired the clarinet concerto as well as the specific sound and playing style that Nielsen would have had in mind when crafting the work. While these recordings likely had little impact on Stanley Drucker’s tone or style, there are similarities between the two that perhaps make Drucker a fitting voice for this Danish masterwork; both clarinetists possess a vibrant, ringing sound across the registers and a light but crisp articulation style. At the time of Drucker’s recording of the Nielsen Clarinet Concerto, only two recordings of this seminal work existed. Both recordings, one by Louis Cahuzac with the Copenhagen Royal Opera (1947) and the second by Ib Erickson with the Danish State Radio Symphony Orchestra (1954), featured non-American clarinetists and orchestras.\textsuperscript{356} Cahuzac’s rendition was especially

\begin{footnotesize}

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  \item Kjell-Inge Stevensson, 28.
  \item Ibid.
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influential on Drucker. Drucker listened to Cahuzac’s recording, which he still has on LP, as a kind of “masterclass,” admiring Cahuzac’s “ease to the approach of the music.”

Louis Cahuzac’s recording is of historical significance as it was the first recording of the Nielsen concerto. However, Cahuzac’s performance of the work does not display the technical virtuosity that Drucker’s does. Cahuzac’s tempos are rather slow, and he employs considerable rubatos in the various cadenzas within the work. Ann Marie Bingham, whose dissertation was “A Performance Guide” to the Nielsen concerto, describes Cahuzac’s interpretation as “tentative.” Dr. Bingham notes that the recording highlights Cahuzac’s “lovely tone quality,” but finds that this attribute is “detrimental to a valid interpretation of Nielsen's concerto because sections of it are intended to be harsh and raw.” Besides Cahuzac’s conservative approach to tempos, Bingham’s statement most directly relates to Cahuzac’s dynamic contrast. In a work that ranges from triple pianissimo to fortissimo forzando, there is rarely a discernable dynamic distinction in Cahuzac’s sound across this spectrum. His playing in soft dynamics rings bright and clear. Yet, in loud dynamics, his sound, while full, does not seem to challenge his tonal limits. Bingham surmises that this had an adverse effect on the interpretation of the work for clarinetists outside of Denmark: “As Cahuzac's recording of the work was the only

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359 Ibid.
one available for a number of years, the rawness inherent in the concerto was generally ignored by those who studied it other than the Danes.”

While Cahuzac’s recording of the Nielsen concerto is historically significant, many consider Drucker’s recording of the work as one of the most influential renditions because it was the first one released by an American clarinetist and orchestra (New York Philharmonic). Furthermore, it was released on a major record label, Columbia Records, which garnered attention to the work. As Christina Giacona in her dissertation *A Study of Comparative Interpretations by Stanley Drucker, Elsa Ludwig-Verdehr, Håkan Rosengren, and John Bruce Yeh of the Clarinet Concerto by Carl Nielsen* states, “Drucker’s recording popularized the Clarinet Concerto to the United States and Western Europe making the recording a milestone in the exposure of Nielsen’s music.” Carey Bell, principal clarinet of the San Francisco Symphony supports this claim, stating “It was kinda famous in the first thirty or forty years for being ‘that horribly difficult Danish concerto.’ In America, it wasn't until Stanley Drucker…made a recording with Bernstein and became the man who conquered it. Now it's pretty standard, and if you're a serious clarinetist in college, you at least study it.”

Because the work was widely viewed as such a fearsome undertaking it also brought much attention to Drucker amongst the clarinet community. Mitchell Estrin,

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360 Ibid, 3-4.
362 Giacona, 10.
who studied with Drucker at Juilliard and later went on to play beside him in the New York Philharmonic, says he first became aware of Drucker because of the Nielsen recording: “When I started playing clarinet [my father] said ‘if you want to play clarinet you need to hear this…this is what you need to know, this is what you need to hear.’ And he gave me a recording of the Nielsen concerto.”

Steven Cohen, clarinet professor at Northwestern University, grew up in New York City and remembers attending a rehearsal of the Nielsen concerto with Drucker and the New York Philharmonic. He refers to the experience as “memorable” and calls Drucker an “inspiration” to him.

Perhaps part of the reason for Drucker’s success with the Nielsen Clarinet Concerto is because of his experience with the composer’s orchestral works. Nielsen was somewhat of an unknown composer with few recordings of his work appearing before the end of World War II. Leonard Bernstein changed all that, championing Nielsen’s works to a degree that no other American conductor before him had. Bernstein recorded Nielsen’s Symphony No. 5 with the New York Philharmonic in 1962, five years before recording the clarinet concerto with Drucker. Robert Layton, in his article Nielsen and the Gramophone, called Bernstein “the most charismatic of Nielsen’s American interpreters,” and described his recording of the fifth symphony “an inspired account,” that “Bernstein conveys with extraordinary intensity.” Layton singled out Drucker in the recording as well, the only orchestral musician that he specifically mentioned, stating

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365 Mitchell Estrin, Interview with Peter Geldrich, October 17, 2015, Gainesville, Florida.
366 Steven Cohen, email to Peter Geldrich, November 2, 2015.
367 Ibid.
368 Layton, 116.
370 Ibid, 126.
that Drucker gave “a particularly poignant account of the clarinet peroration of the first movement.”371 It comes as no surprise that Drucker looked to Nielsen’s fifth symphony as a model to guide his interpretation of the concerto. Like the concerto, this symphony is novel in its approach of integrating snare drum within the orchestral texture.372 Specifically, Drucker considered the solo snare drum parts in the concerto important arrival points and made sure not to overshadow the percussion part.373

Melodically, Drucker gives interpretive import to both small motivic ideas and elongated phrases in the work.374 He recognizes the intervals of the perfect fifth and minor second as containing motivic significance throughout the concerto. These intervals repeatedly appear throughout in many different transpositions and alterations. Drucker accentuates these intervals to draw the listener’s attention to them.375 Because the melodic and motivic ideas in the work are passed between the different voices in the orchestra, Drucker also feels it is important to match the varied articulations of the different orchestral instruments. The soloist frequently plays material that was first presented by either the violins or the bassoon and Drucker believes the clarinetist should try to match the attack and note lengths of instruments preceding clarinet entrances.376

In order to not disrupt Nielsen’s elongated phrases, Drucker does not add much rubato and keeps breaths to a minimum within these sections.377 This includes ignoring written in breaths, treating breaths as “lifts” but not breathing (unless it is necessary), or

371 Ibid.
372 Giacona, 8.
373 Giacona, 21-22.
374 Ibid.
375 Ibid, 22.
376 Ibid, 36-37.
377 Ibid, 25.
to mark the end of a phrase. By employing minimum rubato and stretching the end
notes of shorter phrases, he connects multiple phrases into longer musical lines. While
Drucker does not necessarily use rubato for the effect of broadening a phrase, his
interpretation expresses a great deal of freedom. Phrases move ahead in tempo at times,
especially where the clarinet is alone in the texture, and at others, expand and accentuate
certain motives or notes. This gives Drucker’s interpretation an improvisatory, whimsical
effect. This effect is noticeable from the start of the work. Bernstein begins the concerto
slightly under tempo (around the quarter note equals 65, rather than the printed tempo of
72). In the moving lines, Drucker pushes ahead to the printed tempo which creates an
atmosphere of virtuosity and freedom. This is a style that remains consistent throughout
the piece; the Tempo I (after the first clarinet cadenza) begins even slower than
Bernstein’s original tempo, around a quarter note equals 55, which Drucker soon
accelerates.

To fully appreciate Drucker’s unique perspective and compelling interpretation of
the Nielsen concerto it is helpful to compare it to other clarinetists, both from his time
and of today. A most intriguing comparison arises between Drucker’s 1967 recording and
Philharmonic in 2014, recorded the Nielsen concerto with Alan Gilbert and the New
York Philharmonic during his first year of tenure. Despite McGill’s short time with the

378 Ibid, 34.
380 McGill and the New York Philharmonic recorded the work as part of a larger Nielsen
project which included all of the symphonies and concertos by the composer. Carl Nielsen,
_Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra, Op. 57_, with Anthony McGill and the New York Philharmonic, conducted by Alan Gilbert, recorded in 2015, _Violin Concerto; Flute Concerto; Clarinet Concerto_, Dacapo 6.220556, Compact disc.
orchestra, this recording shows how well suited he is for this new generation of the iconic ensemble. Both McGill and the orchestra sound completely different than their counterparts of 48 years prior; they possess a warmer, richer sound. Arguably, tuning and overall blend are the best of any of the recordings of this work, including the Philharmonic’s earlier rendering. However, while soloist and orchestra both achieve pure tonal beauty, this comes at the expense of some of the vitality that is a hallmark of the earlier Bernstein-Drucker-New York Philharmonic recording.

McGill’s performance shines in the softer sections of the piece. In these sections, McGill’s warm, dark tone allows for great subtlety and seamless blending with the orchestra. This is especially true in the Poco Adagio section at rehearsal number 12, where one must intently listen to hear the ebb and flow of McGill’s nuanced phrasing. On the other end of the spectrum, though, one never feels that McGill pushes the sonic capabilities of the clarinet, despite Nielsen calling for frequent forties, fortissimos, forzandos, and even forzandos within a fortissimo dynamic (fz). Because of this, arguably the recording only successfully captures one of the piece’s moods. McGill wonderfully represents the “warm” aspect of the work’s temperament but is missing a little of its “forceful character” and “choleric temperament.”381 While Drucker’s distinct timbre may not enable his sound to blend into the texture as McGill’s does, it does allow him to rise above the orchestra, piercing through even the loudest orchestral tuttis without causing distortion in his tone.

Another recent noteworthy recording of the Nielsen concerto is Sabine Meyer’s version with Simon Rattle conducting the Berlin Philharmonic. This rendition stands out for its featuring of a German system clarinetist performing this notoriously difficult work. Here Sabine Meyer sets herself apart, not just from other German system players by undertaking this piece, but from most other clarinetists worldwide by her conquering of it. While the smooth and homogenous nature of the German system clarinet radiates in the lyrical sections of the work, she seemingly does not hold back at all in the louder sections of the piece, where she soars above the orchestra with a full, resonant sound, even allowing herself to get a little strident. Meyer’s interpretation is aggressive, both in tempo choices and tonal characteristic. Her tempo at the Più Allegro section between rehearsal numbers 9 and 11 (see Figure 6.1) accelerates to a tempo faster than that of Drucker and McGill. While Meyer’s articulated thirty-second notes are executed around the difficult printed tempo of a quarter note equals 72, both Drucker and McGill perform them slightly slower (around 69). Furthermore, Meyer performs the end Allegro Vivace section (eight measures before rehearsal 35) faster than McGill as well. She executes this section at a quarter note equals 147 compared to McGill’s tempo which is around 140. However, neither one takes the end section as quick as Drucker. He starts the section near 148 to the quarter note and speeds up to faster than 150.


Meyer’s cadenzas in the work are extremely quick and virtuosic, all while honoring Nielsen’s printed musical inflections. Even though she does not take as much liberty as Drucker does, her cadenzas are rife with energy. However, they lack the contrast and freedom achieved by him. The second major cadenza of the work, nine measures after rehearsal number 32, is especially worthy of discussion (see Figure 6.2).\textsuperscript{384}

\textsuperscript{384} Ibid.
Any discussion of the Nielsen Clarinet Concerto should include mention of Danish soloists and orchestras, who have paid tribute to their esteemed countryman by recording his compositions longer than any other nationality. As Robert Layton states in his essay, “Nielsen and the Gramophone,” “The first major Nielsen orchestral work to find its way on to disk…was recorded in 1944 by Thomas Jensen and the Danish State
Radio Symphony Orchestra.”³⁸⁵ This same orchestra produced three different recordings of the clarinet concerto all from different eras and clarinetists. The first of these recordings, and in some ways the most interesting, is from a live performance in 1954 with clarinetist Ib Erikson and conductor Mogens Wöldike.³⁸⁶ While this rendition is not the first recording of the work (that honor, as already mentioned, belongs to Louis Cahuzac) it rivals Cahuzac’s version as the most authentic. While Cahuzac was one of the greatest clarinet soloists of his generation, as a French clarinetist, his knowledge of Nielsen’s music would have been limited. That Erikson was a fellow countryman of both Nielsen and the dedicatee of this work, Oxenvad, and performed in a Danish orchestra that frequently programmed the works of Nielsen, all adds credence to the assertion that Erikson’s recorded performance of the Nielsen Clarinet Concerto should be considered one of the most authoritative renditions of the work.

Erikson’s recording provides a stark contrast to Cahuzac’s. His performance is raw and energetic, at times to the detriment of Erikson’s own control over his tone and technique. Regardless, the imperfections in his performance do not detract from the overall conception of the work. In a Gramophone review, Robert Layton states that Erikson’s “version conveys better than so many modern ones the Concerto’s unearthly quality; its rarefied and bracing air.”³⁸⁷ As principal clarinetist of the Danish Radio Symphony, he also would have possessed a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of Nielsen’s works, which clarinetists of other nationalities would not. Like Drucker,

³⁸⁵ Layton, 117.
³⁸⁶ Carl Nielsen, Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra, Op. 57, with Ib Erickson and the Danish State Radio Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Mogens Wöldike.
³⁸⁷ Ibid.
Erikson could have drawn from his experience with Nielsen’s symphonies, the fifth symphony especially, to aid his interpretation of the concerto. Indeed, when describing early recordings of Nielsen’s *Symphony No.5* with the Danish Radio Symphony, Robert Layton singles Erikson out declaring “What expressive and virtuosic clarinet playing from Ib Eriksen [sic]…”

Another significant recording of the Nielsen concerto performed by the Danish State Radio Symphony features clarinetist Kjell-Inge Stevensson conducted by Herbert Blomstedt. This version is included in one of the first complete recorded Nielsen cycles and was released in 1975. When discussing this cycle Layton singles out the clarinet concerto and Stevensson, stating that it “includes particularly impressive accounts of the Clarinet Concerto by Kjell-Inge Stevensson…and of the Violin Concerto.”

However, when comparing this cycle to another released around the same time, with Ole Schmidt and the London Symphony Orchestra, Layton finds Blomstedt and the Danish State Radio Symphony somewhat lacking. Layton states, “The Ole Schmidt set had the stronger interpretative character. The performances are given at [sic] white heat and although there are moments of expressive distortion…there are impressive insights elsewhere…Blomstedt is never less than a reliable and perceptive guide but Schmidt is often an inspired one.” This account holds true when comparing Stevensson

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390 Layton, 129.
391 Ibid, 130.
392 Ibid, 129.
and Blomstedt’s recording of the clarinet concerto to others. Regardless, Stevensson gives an impressive, controlled performance of the work. His sound is full and rich. His tempo choices are virtuosic. However, he never sounds like he is testing his limits in either tone or technique. In this respect, his performance is closest perhaps to Anthony McGill’s; both performers are remarkable in their abilities but take a more cautious approach to a work that, at its best, is meant to sound a little unruly. This is particularly apparent in the cadenzas where Stevensson is one of the least rhapsodic and free of the recordings studied. That being said, his rendition is one of the clearest and most precise, showing every inflection that Nielsen put on the page. Stevensson’s tone is also a bit more robust than McGill’s, allowing him to cut through the orchestra more effectively during loud dynamics, even if he is not pushing his limits the way Drucker, Meyer, and Erikson do.

The Danish State Radio Symphony’s third recording of the work featuring Danish clarinetist Niels Thomsen, is the one that perhaps best exemplifies the manic style that Nielsen intended, while retaining enough control to provide a product that accurately realizes the score. Of this recording Robert Layton states:

Niels Thomsen gives us one of the very finest readings of the Clarinet Concerto on record. He makes no attempt to beautify the score nor to overstate it: every dynamic nuance and expressive marking is observed by both the soloist and the conductor, and the risks that are taken come off. Thomsen plays as if his very being is at stake and Michael Schønwandt again proves himself so masterly in this idiom that one hopes that we shall get a Nielsen cycle from him in due course.

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394 Layton, 135-136.
Indeed, Thomsen’s playing is second to only Ib Erikson in pushing himself to the limits of control, but he is able to maintain that control better than Erikson did. Thomsen plays with a large, robust tone yet allows the sound to become strident at the upper dynamic levels. This is well contrasted with moments of beautiful, lyrical playing. Additionally, he has some of the most relaxed tempo choices in the slow sections of the work. For instance, at the “Poco Adagio” at rehearsal number 12, his tempo is slower than a quarter note equals 40. Most of the other recordings studied are in the 50s. Where Thomsen’s performance falls a little short is in his facility. The faster tempo sections are slower than many of the other recordings. For instance, the thirty-second note articulated section at rehearsal number 10 is performed around a quarter note equals 63, far slower than the printed tempo of 72 (see Figure 6.1). Even at this tempo, Thomsen’s tonguing sounds labored. Likewise, at the end of the second cadenza, where there are accelerating articulated low E’s, Thomsen sounds as if he is on the verge of losing control. However, it is just this effect that makes his performance so potent and visceral.

This second cadenza provides an interesting comparison to Drucker (see Figure 6.2). Both Drucker and Thomsen take extreme liberties with the rhythm and pacing of this cadenza. Both performers sustain the first few low, articulated thirty-second notes as if there were fermatas over them. This is in direct contrast to performances by Stevensson, McGill, and Meyer whose short, punctuated thirty-second notes are more

395 Bernstein and Drucker’s recording is the second slowest, with Bernstein starting the section at a tempo under a quarter note equals 50 and Drucker moving the tempo ahead with his entrance. This is a hallmark of their collaborative style. Ib Erikson’s recording has the fastest tempo in this section, taken around a quarter note equals 78. However, the next Poco Adagio, at rehearsal 18, is executed much slower around a quarter note equals 40. Perhaps this is what influenced Thomsen’s tempo choice.
aligned with the printed notation. Also, like Drucker, Thomsen’s interpretation of the
cadenza is very rhapsodic; with moments of extremely fast, virtuosic flourishes at some
times, and at other times, moments of rubato and dramatic pauses. Perhaps the most
interesting similarity between Thomsen and Drucker’s style, is the use of vibrato on
certain notes. Rare in the overall clarinet community, vibrato is a technique for which
Drucker has long been associated and is evident in many of his recordings. In the instance
of this cadenza, the use of vibrato on loud, punctuated notes provides an additional means
for highlighting a note in the surrounding texture. Because vibrato is noticeable in many
of Drucker’s recordings (including the Nielsen concerto), and because it is absent in the
recordings of earlier Danish clarinetists, one can reasonably conclude that Drucker was
an influence on Thomsen’s interpretation of this work, if not on his clarinet playing in
general.

Certainly, Thomsen would not be alone in looking to Drucker as an influence on
his interpretation of the Nielsen Clarinet Concerto; several clarinetists were cited earlier
as listing Drucker’s recording as influential, including Carey Bell, Mitchell Estrin, and
Steven Cohen. Adding further authority to Drucker’s recording of the work is the fact
that his rendition of the concerto was selected as the preferred recording by the clarinet
community by a large margin in the author’s “Definitive Clarinet Recordings Survey.”
What is perhaps most remarkable is not how many clarinetists were influenced by the
recording, but that in many ways it remains unrivaled in the over fifty years since it was
recorded. Drucker’s recording is notable not just in how adept he is at capturing Nielsen’s

396 Over 40% of respondents chose Drucker’s Nielsen recording. The next most selected
recording was Louis Cahuzac’s with 14.58% of respondents choosing it.
style but that he never seems overmatched either by its technical demands or by its extreme dynamic contrast. When discussing Drucker’s recordings, Larry Guy stated, “I also recommend his Nielsen Concerto, which is played with great excitement. The tendency these days is to play the Nielsen as if it is the easiest thing in the world — to toss if off. Although this can be impressive, it misses the point, in my opinion.” In fact, because of his legendary technical abilities, it is likely that the Nielsen concerto is easier for Drucker than for many other clarinetists. But it is his unique ability to retain the work’s excitement, despite his adeptness at negotiating its difficulties, that has been an inspiration to so many clarinetists. It is for this reason that Drucker’s recording of the Nielsen Clarinet Concerto has set a standard that, as of yet, has not been surpassed.

397 Larry Guy, email to Peter Geldrich, October 9, 2016.
Chapter 7
Corigliano Clarinet Concerto

Although Stanley Drucker has made many well-known and influential recordings, the ones that could be argued as the most definitive are his two recordings of Corigliano’s *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra*. Indeed, the clarinet community owes a huge debt of gratitude to Drucker, not just for his recordings of this work, but for the existence of the concerto itself. In the Corigliano concerto, Drucker was instrumental in the creation of one of the most significant pieces of clarinet repertoire written in the second half of the twentieth century. Dr. David R. Carter establishes the importance of the work in the opening of his dissertation, “Corigliano’s Clarinet Concerto: The Clarinetist’s View:”

John Corigliano’s Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra is a landmark for solo clarinet literature by one of today’s preeminent composers. The success of the work, written on a commission from the New York Philharmonic, helped advance Corigliano’s reputation as a major composer. Increasingly regular performances have furthered the popularity of the Concerto since its premiere by Stanley Drucker and the New York Philharmonic in 1977. Notable clarinetists such as Richard Stoltzman, Larry Combs, Joaquin Valdepeñas, Michele Zukovsky, Andrew Simon, Charles Neidich, and Christopher Sereque have performed the work, establishing it as a mainstay of solo clarinet repertoire.

Unlike many concertos that are commissioned by instrumentalists, this is a work crafted for a specific soloist and a specific orchestra: Stanley Drucker and the New York

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398 Details on the commissioning, compositional process, and recording of the Corigliano concerto are outlined in Chapter 2 Stanley Drucker Biography.
While the relationship between soloist and orchestra is always important, in this work the role of the orchestra is far more than mere accompaniment. Regarding the scope of the orchestration, as well as the shock value the piece elicits, Drucker describes the piece as “The Rite of Spring of Stravinsky with a solo instrument.”\(^{401}\) In his review of the premiere performance in *Newsday*, Bob Micklin stated that Corigliano “has employed the resources of a full symphony orchestra with ingenuity,” creating “vivid instrumental colors.”\(^{402}\) Corigliano himself emphasized the importance of the role that the New York Philharmonic played in his conception of the piece:

> My associations as a child—attending rehearsals and performances with my father, who was then the concertmaster of the [New York] Philharmonic—gave me the opportunity of getting to know many of the men in the orchestra both as artists and friends. This feeling of intimacy governed my decision to make sure that my first work for the Philharmonic utilized the entire orchestra.\(^{403}\)

And Drucker relates his own discussions with Corigliano regarding the role the New York Philharmonic played in the piece:

> He said at the time...that he wanted to write a work that would include all members of the orchestra, because he’d grown up with that orchestra. And he actually did that...He used every permanent member of the orchestra in different ways in that score.\(^{404}\)


\(^{401}\) Shapiro, 137.

\(^{402}\) Ibid, 138.

\(^{403}\) Carter, 4.

\(^{404}\) Shapiro, 131.
The conductor’s role in the concerto is significant as well. Drucker shared a story about a reading of the concerto in Leonard Bernstein’s apartment, where Bernstein said to Corigliano, “You’ve written a test piece for conductor…” Drucker went on to explain that “…there were so many events that had to be conducted and cued and had to work in a certain way. And there were a lot of free things.” Bernstein was “enthralled by the piece” because of these challenges. Joaquin Valdepeñas, principal clarinetist of the Toronto Symphony, agrees that the piece presents unique challenges for the conductor. In fact, Valdepeñas feels that the role of the conductor is more important in the Corigliano than for any other clarinet concerto except for the Mozart Clarinet Concerto. Like Drucker, Valdepeñas thinks this is due to the many large sections that are played without a strict feeling of time and the soloist and orchestra’s need of the conductor to link the different sections together.

As for the clarinet part to the concerto, the work is almost universally acknowledged as one of the most challenging in the repertoire. Drucker himself describes the piece “as the most difficult he has ever seen.” Michele Zukovsky, former principal clarinet of the Los Angeles Symphony, likewise labeled the concerto, ”…the hardest piece I’ve ever played.” When discussing the piece’s conception, Corigliano admitted

\[\text{\textsuperscript{405}}\text{Ibid, 132.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{406}}\text{Ibid.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{407}}\text{Carter, 10.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{408}}\text{Carter, 114.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{409}}\text{Ibid.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{410}}\text{Jo Ann Marie Polley, “An Analysis of John Corigliano’s ‘Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra’,” (Ph.D. diss., East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University, 1983), ProQuest (AAT 840061), 83.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{411}}\text{David Ng, “L.A. Philharmonic's notable lead clarinetist scales down her career after 54 years,” Los Angeles Times, December 17, 2015, Accessed June 1, 2017.}\]
the work is “music of unprecedented difficulty.” Drucker expanded on the difficulties present in the piece, stating, “I think the piece itself requires a lot of physical strength to carry off. It’s relentless in its difficulties and it requires sort of a heroic undertaking by whoever is going to play it….In a certain sense it’s hysteria, but it’s controlled hysteria.” Carter goes into depth about the piece’s demands on the clarinetist:

Several phrases in the work require the performer to execute lengthy passages that cover the entire range of the instrument and incorporate nontraditional scale forms and awkward leaps. Often these passages are played at extremely fast tempos, sometimes accompanied by rapid articulation. Furthermore, the soloist’s ability to control the altissimo range of the instrument is tested with slow lyrical lines performed at extremely soft dynamics. The solutions they devised for these challenges to ensure reliability in performance include special fingerings, rewriting some passages, certain practice techniques, and the use of note groupings within extended and fast passagework.

It is precisely Drucker’s uncanny technical prowess on the clarinet that enabled Corigliano to compose such a daunting work. The composer knew Drucker’s clarinet playing and unique abilities very well since Drucker played with Corigliano’s father, John Corigliano Sr., long-time concertmaster of the New York Philharmonic. Because of this, Corigliano literally grew up hearing Drucker play with the orchestra: “I always knew Stanley. Ever since I was a kid, Stanley was the first clarinetist.” In describing Drucker’s performance of the work Corigliano stated, “…Stanley was so exuberant and had conquered the difficulties so much. The only problem I had with it is that, because it

412 Carter, 1.
413 Shapiro, 139.
414 Carter, 2-3.
416 Shapiro, 132.
was so extraordinarily difficult, a lot of clarinetists didn’t think that anybody else could play it but Stanley, and it took a couple of years of practicing for them to start to play the piece. “417

That it took “a couple of years of practicing” for other clarinetists to perform the work is even more of a testament to Drucker’s abilities considering he only received the completed concerto less than a month before the first rehearsal. He describes the events leading up to the completion of the work and the first performance in an interview with Shapiro:

…[Corigliano] was, I guess, a slow writer in a certain way, and would disappear so he could work and nobody could get to him. I think I received some kind of a draft of the first movement at one point. It was in very rough handwriting and it looked kind of scary because it had an awful lot of notes for a single-note instrument like clarinet. After a while, another movement arrived, a slow movement…I didn’t get the final movement until, I don’t know, it might have been three or four weeks before the first rehearsal for the piece. 418

Drucker’s authority regarding the work is well-described by Carter in the section of his dissertation that discusses the second movement to the work:

The second movement, “Elegy,” was written for John Corigliano, Sr., and the texture is mainly a dialogue between solo clarinet and concertmaster…Drucker’s relationship to the second movement is therefore unique to each of the other soloists examined in this document. He is the only subject who knew and regularly performed with Corigliano, Sr…419

Remarkably, for such an imposing work, Drucker made two recordings of this concerto: a commercial recording with Zubin Mehta conducting the New York Philharmonic (recorded on May 3, 1980) and a live recording of the premiere

417 Shapiro, 139.
418 Shapiro, 131.
performance with Leonard Bernstein conducting the New York Philharmonic on December 9, 1977. Additionally, he recorded a chamber version of the second movement of the concerto, entitled Soliloquy, on the album Legends of the New York Philharmonic. Despite the fact that Drucker’s 1980 recording with Zubin Mehta-New York Philharmonic was nominated for the “Best Instrumental Soloist/Classical with Orchestra” Grammy Award, his preferred rendition of the work is the world premiere performance with Bernstein. Corigliano, like Drucker, finds the live performance recording to be superior to the Drucker-Mehta recording. The recording of the premiere performance is important for a number of reasons. In addition to being the soloist’s preferred recording of the work, it possesses major historical significance. Similar to the historic Goodman recordings which involved each piece’s instrumental dedicatee and its composer (Bartok’s Contrasts and Copland’s Concerto for Clarinet and String Orchestra with Harp and Piano), the 1977 performance of the Corigliano concerto is the only preserved version that involves all three parties that the composer had in mind when writing the piece; Stanley Drucker, Leonard Bernstein, and the New York Philharmonic. Furthermore, this performance was significant because of its great success.

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421 Stanley Drucker, Stanley Drucker: Principal Clarinet, New York Philharmonic, recorded in 1998, Cala CACD0509, Compact disc.

422 Ibid.

John Corigliano described the reception to Shapiro: “It was, I must say, an extraordinary success. And I’m not saying this self-aggrandizingly but, according to management there, they had never seen a new piece receive that kind of reception ever.” It is also very telling that the performance can be found on the box compact disc set New York Philharmonic: The Historic Broadcasts 1923 to 1987, a collection of recordings that features the most important live performances from over sixty years of concerts. Finally, apart from the historic nature of the recording, it is an extremely faithful performance of the work that any clarinetist studying the piece should look to for its interpretational value.

When comparing the live premiere performance recording to Drucker’s studio recording, what is perhaps most astounding is the consistency in Drucker’s playing throughout both renditions; despite the passing of almost three years and countless performances of the work. The studio recording of Drucker, Mehta, and the New York Philharmonic should certainly not be discounted by anyone interested in studying the piece. In his review of the recording, Richard Freed commented that, “While the unique excitement of the premiere would be impossible to duplicate under any conditions, the full aural impact is most successfully captured by Drucker, Mehta, and the orchestra in the absolutely magnificent recording.” The recording garnered Drucker a Grammy Award nomination for “Best Instrumental Soloist with Orchestra,” and was nominated for

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424 Shapiro, 140.
426 Polley, 26.
“Recording of the Year” by the Koussevitsky Foundation.\textsuperscript{427} Certainly the primary reason for the strength of the premiere recording (that it features the performers for whom the work was written, Stanley Drucker, Leonard Bernstein, and the New York Philharmonic) still holds true for this later rendition – minus Leonard Bernstein. However, Zubin Mehta should not be discounted as an interpreter of the piece. Mehta was one of the earliest champions of the Corigliano concerto, and he conducted the work frequently before recording it with Drucker and the New York Philharmonic. Mehta gave the West Coast premiere of the work, performing it with Michele Zukovsky and the Los Angeles Philharmonic on February 8, 1979.\textsuperscript{428} Mehta also performed the work multiple times with Drucker and the New York Philharmonic prior to their recording.\textsuperscript{429}

Certainly, the playing of both Drucker and the New York Philharmonic is superb in both recordings. One of the key distinctions of Drucker’s playing in this work is his ability to make all of the various technical passages sound effortless and improvised, rather than cautious and metronomic. In his analysis of various performers’ interpretations of the Corigliano concerto, Carter writes that Drucker thought the piece “must not sound ‘studied,’” and that “he avoids playing it in a symmetrically horizontal way.”\textsuperscript{430} Carter points out that this is unique to Drucker when comparing his approach to that of other clarinetists he interviewed (Richard Stoltzman, Larry Combs, and Joaquin Valdepeñas). Carter states that “Drucker is the only one who does not divide the firefly runs of the first movement into smaller groupings. In general his approach is to play the

\textsuperscript{427} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{428} Polley, 27.
\textsuperscript{429} Carter, 11.
\textsuperscript{430} Carter, 14-15.
metered versions of these passages more symmetrically than the un-metered, but unlike the other subjects he does not concern himself with rhythmically dividing the runs.”

Because of the difficulty of the work, rhythmic grouping is one of the ways that other clarinetists manage the technical demands; however, Drucker’s stellar technique does not necessitate this and he is able to maintain a more improvisational character to the fast outer movements. Similarly, Carter emphasizes that Drucker only utilizes a single tongue approach in the piece’s extended, fast articulated passages. Carter further states that performers such as Stoltzman and Valdepeñas incorporate double tonguing in order to assist with the technical demands of the passages. Remarkably, Drucker is often able to exhibit a quicker tempo in these sections than many other performers who have recorded the work.

Despite Drucker’s historical ties to the piece, there is reason to believe that Corigliano prefers the recording made by Richard Stoltzman. Carter states that, according to Stoltzman, “Corigliano was happier with the circumstances of [Stoltzman’s] sessions than those with Drucker and Mehta, since there was substantially more time to devote to recording his piece and he was able to refine the performance to more precisely how he envisioned it. Stoltzman relays that Corigliano stopped frequently and made adjustments for the details in the score that were important to him.”

This could also account for why the Mehta recording is not Drucker’s preferred version. Larry Combs related a story to Carter, saying that “After a prominent clarinetist had recorded it, John came to me and said, ‘You know, you must hear this recording, it’s the best performance I’ve ever heard.’

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431 Carter, 215-216.
432 Carter, 219.
433 Carter, 68.
Well, I listened to the recording, and it was good, but it was very approximate." While Combs does not specify who the clarinetist was, there is reason to believe that it might be Stoltzman. Combs told Carter that Corigliano attended rehearsals of his concerto that Combs performed in 1987. Since the Stoltzman recording was made in 1987, and because it was the second one made of the work after Drucker’s, this could be the recording that Corigliano was so excited about. Furthermore, Combs uses this anecdote to demonstrate that Corigliano was not as interested in a note by note exactitude of the work, but more in the overall impression. Carter states, “Combs concluded that though the difficulties in this concerto might encourage concentration on the technical execution of the score, one should not fail to focus on the larger impressions that Corigliano intends to convey.” In his analysis of different performers, Carter concludes that “Stoltzman has the most ‘philosophical and theatrical’ approach” of those studied and that “the extra-musical imagery included in the score plays heavily into Stoltzman’s interpretation.” By comparison, “Drucker describes the music as ‘fantasy’ and uses other abstract descriptors to explain certain sections, but does not go further toward analyzing extra-musical meaning.” Stoltzman’s willingness to search for meaning in the work and to allow that to color his interpretation may have resulted in a rendering of the piece that Corigliano found more true to his conception.

Apart from his more philosophical approach to the work, other distinct aspects in Stoltzman’s playing of the piece include a more flexible sound, large glissandos, and the

434 Carter, 160.
435 Carter, 68 & 160.
436 Carter, 161.
437 Carter, 69 & 214.
438 Carter, 215.
use of wide vibrato at times.\textsuperscript{439} The flexibility in his tone and phrasing can be attributed, at least in part, to his use of a double lip embouchure. While Stoltzman admits that playing double lip provides more of a challenge for endurance, he feels that it allows him greater sensitivity in his playing.\textsuperscript{440} Part of how Stoltzman approached the problem of endurance, at least in recording the Corigliano concerto, was by changing reeds for various sections of the work. This allowed him to find equipment that would best suit the extreme demands and style changes of the piece. He discussed the challenges that reeds present in this work with Carter:

\begin{quote}
This is one of the first pieces that I realized...that you can’t really be very cavalier about reeds because you have to have something that will play all this really tremendously loud, high stuff. And then at the same time play all this stuff that’s just kind of nothing sound at all...\textsuperscript{441}
\end{quote}

In fact, out of all the subjects that Carter interviewed, Drucker was the only one who did not specifically mention any special equipment changes for performing the piece.\textsuperscript{442}

The use of vibrato is a hallmark to Stoltzman’s playing in general and it is certainly evident in his recording of the Corigliano concerto.\textsuperscript{443} Stoltzman’s use of vibrato is at odds with much of the classical clarinet community, making his musical style distinct for much of what he performs.\textsuperscript{444} In his interpretation of the Corigliano concerto, his employment of vibrato serves a specific musical end. The second movement

\textsuperscript{439} Carter, 214 & 220.  
\textsuperscript{440} Carter, 90.  
\textsuperscript{441} Carter, 69.  
\textsuperscript{442} While Stoltzman prefers to be able to change reeds throughout, both Larry Combs and Joaquin Valdepeñas mentioned changing mouthpieces to suit the demands of the work. Carter, 161-162.  
\textsuperscript{443} Amy Alizabeth Turnbull, “Richard Stoltzman: Defying Categorization,” (DMA essay: University of Iowa, 2011), ProQuest (AAT 3494115), 28.  
\textsuperscript{444} Turnbull, 28.
of the work, titled *Elegy*, was written about John Corigliano Sr., the composer’s father, who had died shortly before the writing of the work. Stoltzman channeled his relationship and feelings regarding his own deceased father into the interpretation of the movement.\footnote{Carter, 89.} He utilizes a “gentle, weeping vibrato” in the movement to convey the appropriate mood.\footnote{Carter, 214.} Also, because the movement features a solo violin along with the clarinet, it is likely that his use of vibrato is meant to match the style of the violinist. Stoltzman has said that he “learned about vibrato from string players.”\footnote{Turnbull, 29.}

An additional Corigliano concerto recording of note is one performed by Michele Zukovsky and the Los Angeles Philharmonic.\footnote{Michele Zukovsky, *Clarinet Concerto by Corigliano*, with Los Angeles Philharmonic, conducted by John Williams, released in 2005, *Concerto for Michele - Williams: Clarinet Concerto - Corigliano: Clarinet Concerto - Bartok: Contrasts for Clarinet, Violin, and Piano, Blumberg Artists*, Digital download (iTunes/cd baby).} As aforementioned, Zukovsky was most likely the next clarinetist to perform the piece, after Drucker. Her first performance of the work was in 1979 with Zubin Mehta conducting the Los Angeles Philharmonic. This performance occurred two years after the premiere of the work and Corigliano specifically mentioned that “It took a couple of years of practicing for [other clarinetists] to start to play the piece.”\footnote{Shapiro, 139.} Another reason why Zukovsky’s performances of the work are noteworthy, is that she plays on a German system clarinet. This design of clarinet has both a different bore design and system of keywork.\footnote{See Chapter 4 Instrumental Equipment of Stanley Drucker and Karl Leister.} Some clarinetists feel that the German system clarinet is more technically challenging and that it does not project as well as the French system clarinet that Drucker (and most of the world) plays.
Considering that the Corigliano concerto is perhaps one of the most technically demanding works written for the instrument, and that one of its challenges is extreme dynamics, Zukovsky had an extra hurdle over which to jump than other performers of the work. Possibly because of her particular instrument, Zukovsky is harder to hear in some of the sections of the piece that are especially loud and within the tutti texture. In these sections, Drucker’s recordings stand out among the others. His unique tone and tendency to occasionally use a fast vibrato allow his sound to carry above even a full orchestra in almost all instances. The tradeoff however, is perhaps in the slow movement where Zukovsky is especially lyrical and smooth across all register changes and intervals, an aspect of the piece that all the soloists whom Carter interviewed agreed was one of the most challenging.\footnote{Carter, 222.}

Although all of the Corigliano Clarinet Concerto recordings mentioned in this document are worthy of listening to for various reasons, there are certain aspects of the Drucker recordings that are remarkable. It is certainly important to note that in the author’s survey of preferred recordings, Drucker’s commercial recording with Zubin Mehta conducting the New York Philharmonic was the overwhelmingly preferred rendition.\footnote{Over half of the respondents chose Drucker’s commercial recording as their preferred rendition of this work. Peter Geldrich, “Definitive Clarinet Recordings Survey,” \textit{Survey Monkey}, January 2016.} At the time this document was written, it was far easier to get access to the Drucker-Mehta recording than of the premiere performance’s live recording.\footnote{This recording is only available in the box set \textit{New York Philharmonic: The Historic Broadcasts 1923 to 1987}.} However, the recording of the concerto’s premiere performance featuring Drucker, the New York

\footnote{Carter, 222.}
\footnote{Over half of the respondents chose Drucker’s commercial recording as their preferred rendition of this work. Peter Geldrich, “Definitive Clarinet Recordings Survey,” \textit{Survey Monkey}, January 2016.}
\footnote{This recording is only available in the box set \textit{New York Philharmonic: The Historic Broadcasts 1923 to 1987}.}
Philharmonic, and Leonard Bernstein stands out for its obvious historical significance. Additionally, this is the recording of choice for both Drucker and the composer, at least among the two that Drucker and the New York Philharmonic have released. The performance went remarkably well, as all involved and all who heard it can attest, making it a valuable realization of a complicated score. While there is little doubt that Corigliano’s Clarinet Concerto will continue to grow in popularity and more recordings will be made, it is the recordings of Stanley Drucker, the clarinetist for whom the work was written, that will be the standard against which all others will be judged.
Chapter 8

Copland Clarinet Concerto

While the commissioning of the Corigliano Clarinet Concerto is certainly Stanley Drucker’s greatest contribution to the clarinet repertoire, it is probably Aaron Copland’s *Concerto for clarinet, strings, harp and piano* with which he is most identified. Drucker first performed the work on August 5, 1969 in Central Park with Efrem Kurtz conducting the New York Philharmonic. Since that time, Drucker has become one of its foremost ambassadors. He has performed the work with the New York Philharmonic over sixty times, and many more than that if you add performances with other orchestras. Fittingly, it was a performance of the Copland concerto that served as Drucker’s final solo appearance with the New York Philharmonic in June of 2009, a work that, in the words of John Canarina, “has become his signature piece.” As of Drucker’s retirement, in 2009, no other clarinetist had played the work with the New York Philharmonic, except for Goodman, who commissioned it in 1947.

The Copland concerto is just one of many major twentieth century works that were commissioned by Goodman. Others include Bartok’s *Contrasts* (which is also

457 Ibid.
discussed in this document because of Drucker’s significant recording of that work) and clarinet concertos by Milhaud and Hindemith.\textsuperscript{458} These commissions came during a time where Goodman became interested in pursuing classical repertoire in the 1930s, at the height of his fame as a jazz musician. He recorded the Mozart Clarinet Quintet with the Budapest String Quartet in 1938 as well as performed the Mozart Clarinet Concerto in 1939 and Debussy’s \textit{Premiere Rhapsody} in 1940 with the New York Philharmonic.\textsuperscript{459} He also started taking clarinet lessons from a series of prominent classical clarinetists, including Simeon Bellison, Gustave Langenus, Eric Simon, and Reginald Kell.\textsuperscript{460}

Goodman commissioned the Copland concerto in 1947. Aaron Copland began working on the piece while on tour in Latin America and it was completed during the summer of 1948.\textsuperscript{461} He endeavored to tailor the work to Goodman’s particular style by listening to his recordings before the trip. Both Goodman’s jazz background and the Latin American trip found their way into the piece. Copland describes the merging of these styles in the autobiography \textit{Copland Since 1943}: “Some of the second movement material represents an unconscious fusion of elements obviously related to North and South American popular music: Charleston rhythms, boogie woogie, and Brazilian folk tunes.”\textsuperscript{462}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{459} Snavely, 18-21.
\item \textsuperscript{460} Ibid, 19-25.
\item \textsuperscript{461} Ibid, 71-72.
\item \textsuperscript{462} Aaron Copland and Vivian Perlis, \textit{Copland Since 1943} (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1989), 93.
\end{itemize}
Goodman and Copland recorded the work twice, once in 1950 and again in 1963. Like Goodman’s recording of *Contrasts* with Bartok and Szigeti, these recordings of the Copland concerto should clearly be considered definitive, as they feature the musician for whom the work was written along with the composer who wrote it. Of the two recordings, both Goodman and Copland prefer the 1963 recording. In *Copland Since 1943*, Copland writes “I was pleased when we had the chance to do a second recording – the first had been one of my earliest as a conductor, and I was concerned that I had conducted the first movement too slowly.” Copland implies that perhaps Goodman felt similarly; that he wanted to improve upon his earlier interpretation. To that end, Goodman sought the guidance of other clarinetists. Copland writes that, “When we were planning the second recording, Benny played the Clarinet Concerto for Yale clarinetist Keith Wilson and asked his advice.”

The idea that the Benny Goodman-Aaron Copland recording of the concerto should be considered the standard recording of the piece is supported by the “Definitive Clarinet Recordings Survey” conducted by the author for this document. In the survey, Goodman’s recording was selected as the preferred rendition of the work more than any other.

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463 Aaron Copland, *Concerto for Clarinet and String Orchestra*, with Benny Goodman and The Columbia String Orchestra, conducted by Aaron Copland, recorded in 1950, *Concerto for Clarinet and String Orchestra, Quartet for Piano and Strings*, Columbia Masterworks ML-442, Vinyl; Aaron Copland, *Concerto for Clarinet and String Orchestra*, with Benny Goodman and The Columbia Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Aaron Copland, recorded in 1963, *Clarinet Concerto - Old American Songs*, Columbia Masterworks MS 6497, Vinyl.


465 Aaron Copland and Vivian Perlis, 96.

466 Copland, 97.
other.\textsuperscript{467} This is also the impression of Dr. Lisa Lorraine Gartrell Yeo, whose dissertation, “Copland's Clarinet Concerto: A Performance Perspective,” contains an invaluable comparison of numerous interpretations of the work.\textsuperscript{468} Yeo uses the Goodman recordings as the standard by which she compares the other recordings discussed in her document.\textsuperscript{469}

When comparing various recordings of the Copland concerto, many of the standard means of performance comparison can be utilized, such as comparing the tempos of distinct sections, style and variety of articulations, phrasing and dynamic choices, etc. However, there is an added element crucial to any interpretive discussion of this particular piece that is absent from many other standard clarinet works: incorporation of jazz style. As Yeo states:

An attempt to demonstrate the “stylistic truth” of Copland’s Clarinet Concerto in performance involves a decision regarding the nature of the piece and how best to reveal it in an interpretation. A fundamental performance issue concerns whether to accentuate the jazz features especially present in the second movement, emphasizing its “American” origins, or instead to reinforce its stylistic connection to the detached, neoclassical aesthetics of the 1920’s and 30’s.\textsuperscript{470}

This duality within the work, and the difficulty that results from it, was confirmed by Copland who stated “I always thought that it would help if a player had some feeling and knowledge of jazz, yet when jazz clarinetist Johnny Dankworth attempted the Clarinet

\textsuperscript{467} Goodman’s recording was voted as the preferred recording by 32.67\% of responders with David Shifrin’s recording coming second in preference with 25.74\% of the vote. Peter Geldrich, “Definitive Clarinet Recordings Survey,” \textit{Survey Monkey}, January 2016.
\textsuperscript{468} Yeo, “Copland's Clarinet Concerto: A performance perspective,” 89.
\textsuperscript{469} Interestingly, Yeo does not discuss Drucker’s recordings of the work.
\textsuperscript{470} Yeo, 76.
Concerto in concert, he ran into difficulty.\textsuperscript{471} He elaborated on this idea in an interview with Dr. Charles Del Rosso:

\begin{quote}
The great problem of the Concerto, I think, is that the fellows who play the first part very well (it's a serious classical style) can't always handle the jazz part, and vice versa. The fellows who are very good at jazz, sometimes the tone is hard and not quite as listless as the first part. That's the main trouble with it. It is rare to find a clarinetist who can equally do both parts equally well.\textsuperscript{472}
\end{quote}

In this sense, Goodman was a perfect muse for Copland: he was a jazz clarinetist who took playing classical music seriously. This is also why his recordings of the work are so effective. As Yeo states, “In these interpretations, Goodman seems to capture the essence of the piece.”\textsuperscript{473}

Because the 1963 recording was preferred by both soloist and composer, it will be the recording specifically addressed in this document, as it was in Yeo’s. One of the first points of interest in this recording is the choice of tempos. Both sections of the work deviate slightly from Copland’s printed tempos: the first section is slower, and the second section is faster than what is printed. This proved to be influential on subsequent recordings, as many other important renditions of the work follow that example, including Drucker’s. Moreover, it makes sense that other recordings of the concerto would follow this example because the composer conducted the work and therefore chose the tempos. Even though the printed tempos in the score differ from the performance tempos on the recording, one can assume that Copland preferred more exaggerated tempo

\textsuperscript{471} Copland, \textit{Copland Since 1943}, 96.
\textsuperscript{473} Yeo, 78.
choices, or at the very least, was open to interpretation of them. In fact, Copland specifically stated that “Composers rarely can be depended upon to know the correct tempi at which their music should proceed,” in his book *Copland on Music*.\footnote{Aaron Copland, *Copland on Music*, 136.}

Regarding Goodman’s clarinet playing on the recording, his jazz style is subtle, rather than overt. Goodman’s articulation throughout the recording is in a light, legato style, typical to jazz.\footnote{Yeo, 80.} This has the beneficial effect of aiding in the linear phrasing style that is a hallmark of the recording in general. It is more common in classical clarinet playing to incorporate shorter, more secco articulation in order to add variety to the phrasing. The downside is that the playing can sound heavy and deliberate. In his interpretation, Goodman’s style is lacking this variety of articulation, but this provides the piece with a forward momentum and a feeling of inevitability from beginning to end. Interestingly, Goodman chooses not to “swing” his eighth note rhythms in the 1963 recording and instead executes them in a straightforward manner. This is an element of the work where there is much incongruence between recordings. It is Yeo’s impression that Goodman did not want to “flaunt the concerto’s jazz aspects” but nonetheless, Goodman’s interpretation “retains the ‘spirit’ of jazz through its rhythmic drive and propulsion.”\footnote{Yeo, 81.}

While it is Goodman who commissioned the Copland concerto, Drucker has a long-standing association with the work. Drucker has recorded the concerto three times, all of which are live performances with the New York Philharmonic. Drucker’s first recorded live performance was featured on one of Leonard Bernstein’s Young People’s
Concerts, *A Copland Celebration*, on December 27, 1970.\(^{477}\) This performance represents a fresh interpretation of the work from a relatively young Drucker. The performance took place just a year and a half after Drucker’s first performance of the work and was about a decade into his role as principal clarinet of the New York Philharmonic.\(^ {478}\) The other two recordings came rather close together about halfway through Drucker’s career. One was a live broadcast of a performance on March 27, 1986 with Raymond Leppard conducting.\(^ {479}\) The other, Drucker’s most well-known rendition of the Copland concerto, was his last recorded performance of the work. This performance, from October 24, 1989, was one of Leonard Bernstein’s last concerts conducting the New York Philharmonic before his death. It was released by Deutsche Grammophon in 1991 and went on to garner a Grammy nomination for “Best Classical Performance Instrumental Solo with Orchestra.”\(^ {480}\)

The 1986 recording with Leppard conducting was out of print at the time this document was written and was not available to the author. The other two versions, both

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\(^{477}\) Aaron Copland, *Concerto for clarinet and string orchestra, with harp and piano*, with Stanley Drucker and the New York Philharmonic, conducted by Leonard Bernstein, release date November 19, 2013, *Young People’s Concerts with the New York Philharmonic*, Kultur, DVD.


with Bernstein conducting, share some remarkable similarities considering that twenty years, along with many performances of the work, had transpired. One of the most interesting commonalities between the two Drucker-Bernstein recordings is the opening tempo. Both renditions of the opening are performed far slower than Copland’s printed tempo of a quarter note equals 69, and significantly slower than most other recordings studied.\footnote{Richard Stoltzman’s version with the London Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Lawrence Leighton Smith is similar in opening tempo. The pacing is about the same as Drucker’s and Bernstein’s first version, but still not as slow as the later Deutsche Grammophon version.} The 1969 performance has an opening tempo of about a quarter note equals 54, but accelerates a little when Drucker enters to just under a quarter note equals 60. The 1989 version starts almost exactly at the same tempo but then slows down to about a quarter note equals 52 when the clarinet enters. When asked how Bernstein’s interpretation changed over the years, Drucker responded that “the first part got slower,” and referred to it as “Mahler-like.”\footnote{Amy Shapiro, “Bernstein and the Clarinet: Stanley Remembers Lenny,” \textit{The Clarinet}, Vol. 33, No. 2 (March 2006): 68.}

In the 1969 version, the tempo is in alignment with Copland’s marking at the “Rather Fast” section that begins the second part of the work. It starts a little under tempo, around a quarter equals 112, but accelerates to the printed tempo, just over 120 before the clarinet enters at measure 145. In the 1989 version however, the pacing is slower throughout this section. It starts around 110 and when the clarinet enters the tempo is around 112, still under the printed tempo. The end section of the 1989 recording is near Copland’s printed tempos. The “Ritmico” section at measure 379, which begins the last section, starts at around a quarter equals 140 and increases to 145 by the clarinet.
entrance at measure 413. The 1969 version, though, takes this whole end section extremely fast. The “Ritmico” section in this recording starts around a quarter equals 160 and remains at this pace after the entrance of the clarinet. It is only in the cut time section, starting at measure 441, that the tempo relaxes a little, to about 150. This is still much quicker than most other recordings, including Goodman’s. Yeo describes David Shifrin and Gerard Schwarz’s recording of the work as “breathless” and “energetic” due to the fast tempos, but even that recording is slow compared to this end section of the early Drucker and Bernstein performance.483

Drucker’s 1969 performance is not particularly well known, largely due to the fact that it has never been released on an album and is only available as part of the video set of Leonard Bernstein’s Young People’s Concerts. It is, nonetheless, one of the most interesting renderings of the work. The video aspect of the performance allows for great insight into Drucker and Bernstein’s interpretation of the work. One of these insights is Drucker’s treatment of accents in the work. The Copland concerto is full of accented notes, often within a forte dynamic, where it may be harder for the clarinetist to bring a particular note out of the texture. One of the ways that Drucker appeared to handle these situations in this early performance was to move his body and instrument when playing an accented note; to literally “lean in” to the note. In addition to altering the way the sound waves travel, therefore changing the sound of the accented note compared to the notes around it, this body motion provides a visual change for the accented note. Another interesting treatment of accented notes in this recording involves Drucker’s articulation choices. The concerto features many extended passages of all articulated notes, some

483 Yeo, 84-85.
with accents. At various times during these passages, especially ones that involve syncopated accented notes, Drucker adds slurs that are not printed (see Figure 8.1). It is possible that by doing so, a method is provided for Drucker to make these notes stand out amongst the other articulated ones. Drucker utilizes this same concept, but to a lesser degree, in the later 1989 performance as well.

Another technical aspect of Drucker’s playing that is illuminated by the video recording (Young Person’s Concerts, 1969), is his choice of fingerings in the altissimo. This should be of interest to clarinetists, as Copland’s extensive use of the altissimo register is one of the distinct challenges of this work. There are multiple fingerings for certain altissimo notes, sometimes over a dozen, each with their own tendencies for tuning, response, and timbre. Because of this, deciding which fingering to use in a

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particular circumstance is a large part of preparing the Copland concerto. Watching this performance gives great insight into which fingerings Drucker utilized.

In general, Drucker uses the following standard altissimo fingerings: F-sharp (left hand: 2/right hand: G#/Eb pinky); G (left hand: 1/right hand: 1, 2, G#/Eb pinky); G-sharp/A-flat (left hand: 2, 3/right hand: 2, G#/Eb pinky); and A (left hand 2,3/right hand: G#/Eb pinky). Some interesting fingering choices include a covered F fingering in measure 101, but a standard F-sharp fingering in measure 109 and 110 (see Figure 8.2). \footnote{Clarinet Fingering Template, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Clarinet-fingering-template.svg, author unknown, January 2013, Public Domain.}

![Figure 8.2 Fingering Correspondence](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Clarinet-fingering-template.svg)

"Concerto for Clarinet & String Orchestra" by Aaron Copland © 1949, 1952 The Aaron Copland Fund For Music, Inc. Copyright Renewed.

Figure 8.2 Fingerings correspond to Drucker’s chosen altissimo fingerings for the above excerpt (measures 101,109, and 110) in his 1969 performance.

\footnote{Copland, Aaron, \textit{Concerto for clarinet and string orchestra, with harp and piano}, Solo clarinet part-new edition, (Milwaukee: Boosey and Hawkes, 1952), 3.}

See Appendix C for permissions to reprint.
The standard F-sharp fingering is often flat and resistant, but Drucker voices and tunes it effortlessly. He also uses the standard F-sharp fingering in measure 120, at the end of the cadenza. Another notable fingering choice employed by Drucker is the E-flat in measures 274 through 287; in most cases, he uses the standard fingering (left hand: 2,3/right hand: 1, sliver key, G#/Eb pinky) but changes to a left hand: 2,3/right hand: 3, G#/Eb pinky fingering when going to and from the E-flat an octave lower (see Figure 8.3). At the end of the work he uses a long fingering for the A-sharp (see Figure 8.4).

"Concerto for Clarinet & String Orchestra" by Aaron Copland

Figure 8.3 Fingerings correspond to Drucker’s chosen altissimo fingerings for the above excerpt (measures 274 through 280) in his 1969 performance

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486 Copland, 8.
487 Ibid., 13.
Figure 8.4 Fingering corresponds to Drucker’s chosen altissimo fingering for the above excerpt (measure 504) in his 1969 performance

Yet another technique that Drucker employs in performances of the Copland concerto is his style of vibrato. Although some classical clarinetists use this technique, most do not. Vibrato on the clarinet is more common in jazz, making Drucker’s use of it particularly interesting in this piece. Because the concerto is in some ways a cross between classical and jazz styles, Drucker’s unique way of employing a fast vibrato on certain notes seems especially fitting. It is perhaps not a coincidence that many of the performers with well-known recordings of the work happen to play with vibrato to one degree or another, such as Richard Stoltzman and David Shifrin. In Drucker’s case, his use of vibrato in the Copland concerto is not constant as it is for some players. Rather, he seems to use vibrato as a way of altering the timbre of specific notes, applying it to longer, accented notes, or emphasizing certain notes in louder sections of the work. This is yet another method he employs to bring select notes out of the texture.
A final point of interest is the end glissando in the 1969 performance. It sounds like Drucker performs a straight scale to the final note, rather than a “smear.” While it is not known whether this was a conscious decision, this was not a choice he made in the later 1989 version. In that performance Drucker executes the smear, as is traditional.\footnote{Copland himself refers to the end glissando as a “smear” in \textit{Copland Since 1943}. Copland, 91.}

One benefit of his non-smear glissando is it allowed for better coordination with the strings at the end of the piece. Because the strings have written out pitches, and the clarinet part is comprised mostly of a glissando to the last note, it is often difficult to align the clarinet and the orchestra. In the 1969 performance the clarinet is closely synchronized with the strings creating an ending very different than most other performances of the work.

An important aspect in Drucker’s recorded renditions of the Copland Clarinet Concerto is the combination of soloist, orchestra, and conductor. The grouping of Stanley Drucker, Leonard Bernstein, and the New York Philharmonic is of course significant for all of the concertos that Drucker has recorded. No other member of the orchestra has been recorded as a soloist under Leonard Bernstein’s baton more than Drucker, which implies a special artistic relationship between the two.\footnote{Other members of the orchestra have recorded more concertos than Drucker, such as concertmasters John Corigliano Sr. and Glenn Dicterow, principal cellist Leonard Rose, and principal trumpet Phillip Smith, but these musicians recorded with multiple conductors. Drucker is significant because almost all of his recordings were conducted specifically by Leonard Bernstein (with the exception of the Bolcom concerto, which was conducted by Leonard Slatkin). James H. North, \textit{New York Philharmonic: The Authorized Recordings 1917 – 2005}, (Toronto, Oxford: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2006), 379-411.} Certainly this partnership proved especially important for the Corigliano Clarinet Concerto, as the work was written...
specifically for this combination of soloist, conductor, and orchestra. With the Copland concerto, this artistic collaboration possesses a similar authority. Bernstein and Copland met back in Bernstein’s college days at Harvard and a close connection remained throughout the rest of their lives. This relationship had a great impact on the musicians of the New York Philharmonic, including Drucker, as Bernstein became one of the greatest champions of Copland’s music. The affinity and experience that Bernstein, Drucker, and the New York Philharmonic all bring to the music of Copland lends a unique authority to their performances of his works.

If one is looking to the Copland concerto as a predominantly classical work that requires the performer to incorporate jazz style, then one of the most natural interpreters of the work would surely be the prominent clarinet soloist Richard Stoltzman. Stoltzman has long been commended, or derided, for his unorthodox style of playing. Critics as well as audiences seem drawn to Stoltzman’s emotive performances. Richard Dyer of The Boston Globe hailed Stoltzman as “The most exciting clarinetist in the world.” However, clarinetists have not embraced Stoltzman as readily. James Gillespie, former clarinet professor at the University of North Texas and former editor of The Clarinet periodical, stated “His bel canto style maybe exceeds the bounds of good taste.” And Leon Russianoff, former clarinet professor at Juilliard and Stanley Drucker’s main teacher, complimented “the smoothness of [Stoltzman’s] legato” and “his dramatic

intensity,” but felt that “he just isn’t one of our very best players.”492 This lack of acceptance by the clarinet community can, in some ways, probably be traced to his duel influence from jazz and classical music. In high school, Stoltzman played in dance bands and jazz groups.493 While pursuing his bachelor’s degree at Ohio State University, he would play Dixieland at local bars.494 And when asked in interviews what musicians he admires, the list included Martha Argerich, Bill Evans, Gary Burton, Chick Corea, Steve Swallow, Pat Metheny, Wayne Shorter, and Keith Jarrett.495 It is very telling in that, among those listed, only Martha Argerich is predominantly a classical musician. Even more telling, and relevant to this discussion, Stoltzman has called Goodman his only real clarinet role model.496 This influence remains in his playing to this day, notably through his use of vibrato and his spontaneous and energetic playing style.

Despite this, Stoltzman has had classical training by some of the best clarinet pedagogues, as well as collaborated with some of the greatest classical musicians of the second half of the twentieth century. He studied with Donald McGinnis at Ohio State University, Keith Wilson at Yale, and Kalmen Opperman while pursuing a doctoral degree at the Teachers College at Columbia University.497 He also attended the Marlboro Music Festival for ten years where he worked with Rudolph and Peter Serkin, Marcel Moyse, and Pablo Casals.498

492 Ibid.
494 Ibid, 7.
495 Ibid, 5-6.
496 Ibid, 15.
497 Ibid, 7-10.
498 Ibid, 10-11.
It is this blend of classical pedigree mixed with jazz influence and personality that perhaps makes Stoltzman a natural interpreter of Copland. While Goodman was predominantly a jazz player who attempted (very successfully) to play classical repertoire, Stoltzman is predominantly a classical player, who plays jazz frequently and infuses his playing with its style and energy. Yeo argues that Stoltzman performs the work with more jazz elements than Goodman. She states, “Stoltzman is representative of clarinetists who, unlike Goodman, treat the concerto as a ‘jazz piece,’ choosing to accentuate the jazz elements of the piece by adopting a jazz style of playing.” Some of these elements she refers to are, utilizing “hot intonation” through throat manipulation and swinging his eighth notes in certain places. As mentioned earlier, Stoltzman also utilizes vibrato, but to a much greater degree than Drucker and even Goodman. Despite Stoltzman’s obvious comfort with jazz style there are some incongruities in his interpretation. One of the main elements common in jazz style playing that Yeo points to in Goodman’s rendition of the work is an underlying sense of “rhythmic propulsion.” Yeo cites Gunther Schuller’s book *Early Jazz* which attributes one of the key differences between classical music and jazz music as the emphasis on forward propulsion in jazz:

In classical music, a performer generally plays the notes exactly in time vertically without paying attention to their horizontal role. This is not the case in jazz, where “‘swing’ is a force in music that maintains the perfect equilibrium between the horizontal and vertical relationships of musical sounds.” I believe that the Copland/Goodman recordings contain the rhythmic spirit of jazz in this aspect of interpretation, in which the music is constantly moving in a linear direction. This forward direction is noticeably absent in most other interpretations which, it should be noted, were made by classical musicians.

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499 Yeo, 82.
500 Ibid.
501 Ibid.
502 Ibid, 81 (in a footnote).
Yeo’s above assertion certainly applies to Stoltzman’s 1988 recording of the work with Lawrence Leighton-Smith conducting the London Symphony Orchestra. This rendition of the concerto is the slowest in general of all the recordings analyzed. While Drucker and Bernstein’s first recorded performance in 1969 possesses the slowest opening tempo, the Stoltzman-Leighton-Smith recording’s opening is almost as slow but takes far more time in various places. For instance, the orchestral interlude starting at measure 60 slows down well beneath a quarter note equals 50, even though that part is still within a larger section that Copland labeled “Somewhat faster” with a printed tempo of 76. The “Rather fast” section at measure 120, with a tempo indication of 120-126, is taken by Stoltzman-Leighton-Smith closer to 112. And the end section starting at measure 379 is performed around a quarter note equals 130, the slowest end tempo of all the recordings analyzed. While these slower tempos certainly allow Stoltzman and Leighton-Smith to explore much nuance in phrasing, it does detract from the rhythmic propulsion that is a hallmark of Goodman’s recording.

It should be noted that Stoltzman recorded the work a second time with Michael Tilson Thomas conducting the London Symphony Orchestra (released in 1993). This recording, while still utilizing far more jazz style than most other interpretations, maintains the forward propulsion of rhythm far more than Stoltzman’s previous rendition.


While the opening tempo is slightly under the printed tempo marking (around a quarter note equals 60), it is still faster than his earlier recording. The “Rather fast” section is played a little quicker than a quarter note equals 120, which is in alignment with Copland’s printed tempo. And the end “Ritmico” section is played a little faster than 140, giving the section more energy. The fact that this recording is the latter of Stoltzman’s two renditions perhaps implies that he reached a similar conclusion to Yeo; an underlying pulse propelling the work is the piece’s most potent jazz element.

A recording that realizes this idea of rhythmic propulsion is David Shifrin’s 1988 rendition with Gerard Schwarz conducting the New York Chamber Symphony. However, almost no overt jazz style is present in the performance. Shifrin and Schwarz take a more classical approach to the work. Shifrin’s unique tone does contain a slight vibrato; it is not a jazz vibrato, but one that adds color and resonance to his sound. He uses the same style of vibrato in many of his recordings, regardless of their genre. Interestingly, Shifrin’s rendition is the second most preferred recording (after Goodman’s) of the Copland concerto in the author’s “Definitive Clarinet Recordings Survey.” This could be due to Shifrin’s ability to play through this challenging work seemingly without effort. His technique never seems challenged by the quick tempos and his tone never sounds forced despite the large intervallic leaps and loud declamatory outbursts present in the clarinet part. However, because the performance is so straightforward, it does not seem to either embrace the beauty of the opening section or

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506 Geldrich, “Definitive Clarinet Recordings Survey.”
the energy and humor of the second section. Yeo appears to agree with this assessment, stating, “This recording is energetic, but because the rhythms are played perfunctorily, it lacks ‘bite.’ The entire performance is most notable for its superb clarinet technique, but the interpretation somehow seems bland.”507

It is in the blending of these different styles, the lyrical and the energetic, the soaring classical and the swinging jazz, that Drucker stands out in his performances of the Copland concerto. Out of the many existing renditions of the work, the opening section in both Drucker recordings is among the slowest; and the end section, especially in the live 1969 version, is among the quickest and most energetic. Drucker’s distinct tonal concept, at once vibrant and clear, yet flexible and with a hint of vibrato, seems perfectly suited to the classical/jazz blend of this work.

As Daniel Wakin of The New York Times stated in his article “Ending a 60-Year Gig at the N.Y. Philharmonic” chronicling Drucker’s retirement from the ensemble, “The Copland is one of Mr. Drucker’s benchmark works, a jazzy and lighthearted piece that fits his loose, jaunty style of playing and sunny personality.”508 While it may not be the preferred recording of this work for many clarinetists, it will surely remain a landmark recording of the piece and a testament to the long collaboration between Leonard Bernstein, Stanley Drucker, and the New York Philharmonic.

507 Yeo, 85.
https://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/05/arts/music/05druc.html
Part III

Select Recordings of Karl Leister
Chapter 9

Weber Clarinet Concerto No. 1

Beginning in 1965, Karl Leister would start recording many of the most important works for the clarinet over a span of several years. The pieces recorded between 1965 and 1969 include: Mozart’s Clarinet Quintet in A major, K. 581 (1965), Mozart’s Sinfonia Concertante in E-flat, K. 297b (1966), Brahms’ Clarinet Quintet, Op. 115 (1967), Beethoven’s Trio in B-flat major, Op. 11 (1968), Mozart’s Clarinet Concerto in A Major, K. 622 (1968), Weber’s Clarinet Concerto No. 1 in F minor, Op. 73 (1968), Brahms’ Clarinet Sonata Nos 1 and 2, Op. 120 (1968), and Brahms’ Clarinet Trio, Op. 114 (1969).\(^{509}\) Out of all the remarkable recordings made by Leister during this five year period, two, in particular, stand out for the clarinet community. In the author’s “Definitive Clarinet Recordings Survey,” respondents voted Leister’s recordings of Weber’s Clarinet Concerto No. 1 and the Brahms Clarinet Quintet from this period to be their favorite renditions of these works.\(^{510}\) Well before this survey’s results, Richard Gilbert stated in his The Clarinetists’ Discography series, “Karl Leister, the Berlin

\(^{509}\) Another recording of note, recorded a few years earlier in 1962, was Leister’s first recording of Schubert’s Der Hirt auf dem Felsen with Erika Koth and Gunther Weissenborn.

\(^{510}\) Carl Maria von Weber, Conzerto No.1 in F minor for Clarinet and Orchestra, Op. 73, with Karl Leister and the Berlin Philharmonic, conducted by Rafael Kubelik, Concertos Pour Clarinette, released in 1968, Deutsche Grammophon 636 550, Vinyl;

Philharmonic’s masterful principal clarinet, has come out with several very impressive recordings in the past few years…Two recordings in particular deserve special praise; they are, Brahms’ Quintet and Weber’s Concerto No. 1." Leister’s recordings of these works are all the more impressive because they are well-known, long-established standards in the clarinet repertoire. Furthermore, Weber’s first clarinet concerto has been recorded by dozens of clarinetists, including some of the most renowned solo artists.

International soloists that have recorded the Weber concerto include: Gervase de Peyer, Jon Manasse, Richard Stoltzman, Anthony Pay, Andrew Marriner, Alessandro Carbonare, Paul Meyer, Emma Johnson, Michael Collins, James Campbell, Sharon Kam, Martin Fröst, Charles Neidich, and David Shifrin. That Leister’s interpretation of this work is first amongst these soloists is very telling; it implies that his approach to the instrument, his interpretation of the music, and notably, his authority of the German repertoire, possesses a universal appeal. Furthermore, it could be surmised that the clarinet community prefers a Germanic player for this specific repertoire through the fact that another highly favored recording of Weber’s first clarinet concerto is the one released by Sabine Meyer. Like Leister, she is a German clarinetist who plays on a

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512 Meyer’s recording of the Weber’s first clarinet concerto was tied with Leister’s recording as the most preferred rendition in the author’s survey. Geldrich, “Definitive Clarinet Recordings Survey;” Karl Maria van Weber, Weber: Clarinet Concertos Nos. 1 & 2; Concertino and Clarinet Quintet, with Sabine Meyer and the Staatskapel Dresden, conducted by Herbert Blomstedt, released 1986, EMI, Vinyl.
German system instrument, and is also a former principal clarinet with the Berlin Philharmonic, overlapping, in her brief tenure, with him.513

The link between Leister and Meyer to Germanic clarinet repertoire and playing style is especially fitting for their association with Weber’s first clarinet concerto as it was two German clarinet virtuosi, Heinrich Baermann and his son Carl, who heavily influenced the work. Heinrich Baermann was the inspiration for all of Weber’s clarinet works in the same way that Anton Stadler and Richard Mühlfeld were muses for the late clarinet works of Mozart and Brahms, respectively. Heinrich’s relationship to the first clarinet concerto is unique though, as his preserved interpretation of the work (notated by his son) has long been the accepted version of the piece.514 This can be attributed to the Berlin music publishing house Schlesinger, which included Carl Baermann’s own edition of the Weber clarinet works, as part of the complete works of Weber in 1870.515 In preparing the new edition Carl Baermann stated:

I have now set all of this down with painstaking accuracy exactly as Weber and my father themselves played these works, being, I believe, the only living person capable of doing this. You will probably find several discrepancies in the markings, but Weber himself considered all these discrepancies to be necessary as they resulted from the later development of his taste, the works of course having been printed at an earlier date.516

513 See Chapter 3 Karl Leister Biography for the history of Sabine Meyer’s tenure with the Berlin Philharmonic.
514 Norbert Gertsch, “Preface” to Klarinettenkonzert Nr. 1, (Munich: G. Henle Verlag, 2002), iii-v.
515 Ibid.
516 While Carl Baermann claimed that his edition (printed more than 40 years after Weber’s death) was derived from the performances of Weber and Heinrich Baermann, Carl was a young child when those performances took place. His father’s performance manuscripts most likely contained markings from several performances, as well as additions that Carl made in his own performances of the work. All of this raises seemingly unanswerable questions as to what the most authoritative edition of the concerto is. Ibid.
This assertion, however, is somewhat dubious. Over the past half century, many scholars have attempted to establish Weber’s true intentions regarding the work. However, difficulties in solidifying these intentions arise due to the fact that the first edition of the concerto was published in 1825, more than ten years after the first performance of the work. Moreover, many errors exist in the first print, raising the question as to how involved Weber was in the process and how much the print accurately reflected his artistic vision. Nevertheless, the differences between the Baermann edition of the Weber Clarinet Concerto No. 1 and the first published print are mostly in articulations, dynamics, embellishments, as well as a notated cadenza. The latter is of especial interest. Starting with the anacrusis to measure 144 in the first movement, the Carl Baermann edition contains an addition of fifteen measures plus a notated cadenza, complete with orchestral accompaniment (see Figure 9.1). This is supposedly attributed to Heinrich Baermann and aligns with the performance practice at the time of including a cadenza at the end of the concerto’s exposition. In addition to this extensive insert are other notated embellishments, such as in measure 72 (Figures 9.2a and 9.2b) in the first movement and measures 110-117, where Baermann expanded upon Weber’s straightforward notation (see Figures 9.3a and 9.3b).

518 Ibid, 58.
Figure 9.1 Baermann Cadenza in Movement I of *Clarinet Concerto No. 1*

Figure 9.2a Original Weber notation in measure 72 of Movement I of *Clarinet Concerto No. 1*

Figure 9.2b Baermann embellishment in measure 72 of Movement I of *Clarinet Concerto No. 1*
While it is certainly arguable that Carl Baermann’s edition of the Weber concerto is not the most authoritative, it still presents the performer with a fascinating historic archive; a printed document presenting the evolution of a work through the eyes of two generations of German clarinet soloists. Even more interesting is that contemporary clarinetists, such as Leister and Meyer, chose to use this specific edition in their recorded renditions. This forever anchors them to the history of their German predecessors’ work.

A partial reason for the popularity of Leister’s recording of Weber’s Clarinet Concerto No. 1 could be that it was one of the earliest recordings released of the work. Only a handful of clarinetists had preceded Leister in recording the piece, including Jacques Lancelot, Alois Heine, and Leister’s former teacher Heinrich Geuser. Of these recordings, none had the weight of a major symphony, such as the Berlin Philharmonic, behind them; Lancelot recorded with Ensemble L'Oiseau-Lyre (1955), Heine recorded
with Salzburg Mozarteum Orchestra (1965), and Geuser recorded with the Radio-Symphonie-Orchester Berlin (1963).\textsuperscript{522} Also, it is worth noting that two of these early recordings were released with monophonic sound, which is of inferior quality.

Nonetheless, while Leister’s 1968 recording of the Weber first clarinet concerto is one of the most popular recordings of the piece, what is not as well-known is that he made two other recordings of the work; a version with the Gumma Symphony Orchestra in Japan and conductor Koji Toyoda (with which he recorded both Weber concertos in the early 1980s) and a version that is perhaps Leister’s earliest recording of any kind, a live performance in 1957 with Hans Müller-Kray conducting the Radio-Sinfonieorchester Stuttgart.\textsuperscript{523}

Like so many of Leister’s recordings, these three versions of Weber’s first clarinet concerto provide the listener with an aural evolution of his sound concept. The earliest rendition is particularly interesting, as it provides the listener with a glimpse into

\textsuperscript{522}Carl Maria von Weber, Clarinet Concerto No. 1 in F minor, Op. 73, with Jacques Lancelot and Ensemble L’Oiseau-Lyre, Concerto No. 1 In F Minor For Clarinet And Orchestra, Op. 73 / Concerto In F Major For Bassoon And Orchestra, Op. 75, released in 1955, London Records OL 50105, Vinyl;

\textsuperscript{523} Karl Leister, \textit{Weber Concerto in F minor for Clarinet and Orchestra, Op. 73}, with the Gumma Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Koji Toyoda, \textit{Carl Leister/Koji Toyoda}, recorded in 1982, Camerata Tokyo Inc. – 40CMD-2, Compact disc;
Leister’s playing before it was influenced by Herbert von Karajan and the Berlin Philharmonic. This live performance took place in 1957 but was not released as a recording until recently (2015), and only in online digital format. Remarkably, 1957 happened to be the year that Leister won his first professional music position as principal clarinet of the Komische Oper Orchestra, as well as the year that he first competed in the ARD International Music Competition in Munich, winning second prize. To have a surviving recording during this pivotal year in Leister’s professional life is an invaluable document of the young clarinetist who would soon become Karajan’s voice in the clarinet section of the Berlin Philharmonic. In this performance one hears a confident musician; a musician who plays out, much more than in his mature recordings, but perhaps with less refinement. Additionally, the tempos in this rendition are the slowest in general. This may imply that he did not yet have total control of his technique under the pressure of live performance, which could be evidenced by the fact that he rushes ahead of the orchestra on the last scale at the end of the piece. On the other hand, a surprising amount of nuance permeates this early recording. His pitch, in general, is excellent; in some places better than in the 1968 recording. The tempo fluctuates which allows for effective character changes within the work. And, besides the rushing evident in the last scale, Leister’s live performance is technically flawless, all while retaining an expressive nature.

One disappointing aspect of this recording is the omission of the first movement cadenza. It is unknown as to why the cadenza was left out, but it may have been a time constraint issue, rather than an artistic or technical choice. It is interesting to note that the cadenza in question is the Carl Baermann insert discussed prior, and the first edition

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524 See Chapter 3 Karl Leister Biography.
Weber print contains no written cadenza. However, Leister performs all of the other Baermann embellishments in this recording, so it seems clear he was utilizing the Carl Baermann edition of the work. Other small issues in this recording that were improved in his later versions include: the very first note sounds unnecessarily accented instead of a gentle entrance to better suit the style, and the throat tone A three measures after S in the second movement is noticeably out of tune with the horns. Nonetheless, one aspect of this early recording that is better than his later versions are the diminuendos in the third movement six measures before rehearsal letter I and three measures before rehearsal letter K. These are quite effective and, when combined with his full playing in the louder sections, make this recording the one with the most dynamic contrast.

The 1968 recording with the Berlin Philharmonic and Rafael Kubelik is Leister’s best known rendition of the work, the preferred recording of this piece by the clarinet community surveyed by the author, and the author’s choice as Leister’s best overall recording of the work. As a twenty-nine-year-old, he had been playing with the Berlin Philharmonic for nine years. At this point in his career, it is evident that he achieved an overall refinement in his playing; he is expressive without pushing the boundaries of his sound. Likewise, his technique is virtuosic while sounding effortless. Leister gives a technically superb performance without sacrificing the musical line, as perhaps some of the work’s later interpreters do. The tempos in this recording trend towards the middle; between the slower earlier version and the brisk later one. Indeed, the pacing feels the most appropriate to the work; however, since the recording is well-known, its tempos may have become standardized, which limits a completely objective assessment of this musical element. The clarinet entrance in the first movement is just under a quarter note.
equals 110. This is quicker than the 1957 performance which is closer to a quarter equals 100 (the later version is around 120; more of an allegro than allegro moderato).

The opening tempo is also closest to Carl Baermann’s printed tempo of 108. The Tempo ritenuto section at measure 110 slows to about a quarter note equals 104, which gives an effect of broadening the phrase without distorting the flow of the movement. The earlier recording slows to just below 100, while the 1982 version is played at about a quarter equals 110. Interestingly, it is the earliest recording that is closest to the printed tempo of 92 in this section. Apparently, Baermann interpreted a substantial slowdown of sixteen beats per minute in this section. While the 1957 live recording omits the Baermann cadenza in the first movement, Leister performs it in both of the later recordings, and at a similar tempo of about a quarter note equals 130. Nevertheless, from a technical standpoint, the cadenza is played slightly cleaner in the 1968 version. A printed tempo indication for Baermann’s cadenza insert does not exist, except for the expressive description of scherzando in this section. In all three versions, Leister increases the tempo to around 120 in the con fuoco sixteenth note section at measure 198 and, after slowing the tempo around measure 225, plays the chromatic lines toward the end of the movement, starting at measure 258, up to 120 as well. All of these sections have no specific tempo indication beyond the last marked tempo of a quarter note equals 100 at measure 192.

The second movement tempos of the 1968 version trend towards the middle as well, although the pacing is similar for all three recordings: a quarter equals 50 in the 1957 version, a quarter equals 54 in the 1968 version, and a quarter equals 56 in the 1982 recording. These tempos are all faster than the notated tempo of 46. All three versions
accelerate in the *poco piu animato* section at measure 31 to about a quarter equals 80. Again, this is quicker than the notated tempo of 66. In all versions, Leister’s fluidity across the registers and seamless legato are on full display. Any pitch issues in the second movement that were present in the earlier performance are resolved for the 1968 recording, where he beautifully blends into the texture of the orchestra.

The tempos of the third movement are comparable in all three recordings, with the 1957 performance clocking in at about a quarter equals 118, a quarter equals about 120 in the 1968 version, and the 1982 rendition settling in around 125 to the quarter note. In this instance, Leister’s 1968 Karajan recording is aligned with Carl Baermann’s printed tempo. The tempo decelerates at measure 123 in all three versions, but far more in the earliest performance, where it slows down to about 100 to the quarter note. The other two versions slow down to around 110 to the quarter note. Yet, there is no indication in the score for a tempo change. The end section also accelerates in the first two recordings. By far, the closing section’s acceleration is most pronounced in the earliest recording; it is the fastest tempo of all versions at around a quarter equals 135, and contrasts with the opening tempo the most, as the movement opens at a slower tempo. The 1968 version starts the closing section at measure 257 at around a quarter note equals 125 and by the end increases the tempo to about 130. This creates excitement while still retaining a consistent overall feel to the movement. The 1982 recording essentially sustains the same tempo in the end as in the beginning. While this provides uniformity to the movement, it loses some of the energy that an accelerando delivers. However, it should be mentioned that in the end section the score does not indicate a faster speed.
While perhaps not the preferred recording of the piece, Leister’s 1982 version of Weber’s Clarinet Concerto No. 1 with the Gumma Symphony Orchestra and Koji Toyoda is still an excellent rendering of the work. Gilbert says of the recording, which features both Weber clarinet concerti, “…Leister achieves a transcendent level of artistry in the two Weber Concerti. His technique seems effortless – there is no intervening instrument – he becomes the music. A brilliant recording!” These recordings were made after Leister had switched to Wurlitzer clarinets (from Uebel, on which he performed in the 1957 and 1968 recordings) and his sound concept is noticeably more refined. The recording of Weber’s Concerto No. 1 features the best intonation on Leister’s part as well as a pureness and homogeneity of tone across the registers that is unmatched in any of his earlier recordings. Also distinct to this recording is his consistency of tempo within movements. Rather than execute tempo markings literally and noticeably alter the tempo in different sections, he seems to let the character of the contrasting melodies and phrases speak for themselves. The effect of this is that, on the one hand, the recording comes across as remarkably clean and refined, but on the other hand, it loses some of the nuance, excitement, and intensity of the previous renditions. Likewise, perhaps because Leister seems to have achieved what he views as an ideal clarinet sound, he does not push the boundaries of tone the as in his earlier recordings. While the pureness of his sound is enviable, he also loses some of the character change that comes with more intense wind playing.

525 Gilbert, 244.
526 See Chapter 4 Instrumental Equipment of Stanley Drucker and Karl Leister
Of the recordings that preceded Leister’s, the one that makes for the most obvious comparison is that of Leister’s former teacher, Heinrich Geuser. Despite the fact that Leister does not speak of Geuser as being an especially large influence on his playing, interesting parallels exist between the two artists’ recordings.\textsuperscript{527} For one, Geuser’s recording, released in 1957, is a Deutsche Grammophon record pairing Weber’s first clarinet concerto with the Mozart Clarinet Concerto, the exact same pairing and production company of Leister’s legendary first solo Berlin Philharmonic record from 1968. In that vein, Leister’s record can be seen as a passing of the torch, solidifying him as the most important German clarinetist of his generation. Additionally, Geuser uses the Carl Baermann edition for his recording, retaining the continuity of German clarinet soloists following in Baermann’s footsteps. Another parallel is that Geuser’s record was released the same year as Leister’s earliest recorded version of the Weber concerto (and earliest recording of any kind performed by Leister, of which the author knows). That year, 1957, is also the last year that Leister studied with Geuser at the Hochschule für Musik in Berlin. It is not surprising then, that Leister’s earliest version of Weber’s first clarinet concerto is the one most similar to Geuser’s. The biggest similarity is in the fluctuation of tempos throughout the work. While Geuser’s recording features the clarinet entrance in the first movement closest to Leister’s 1968 recording, at around the quarter equals 112, Geuser slows the \textit{tempo ritenuto} section down to a quarter equals 100. After a brisk Baermann cadenza, taken at around a quarter note equals 135, he decelerates to 100 in the section immediately after the cadenza. He continues to slacken the tempo to about 90 in the section marked \textit{con anima} at measure 184. Then, at the sixteenth note passage

\textsuperscript{527} See Chapter 3 Karl Leister Biography which outlines his relationship with Geuser.
starting in measure 198, Geuser hastens the tempo and executes this section at around a quarter note equals 130. His faster tempo prevails through the end passionato section, until it decelerates again for the final phrase of the movement.

The second movement of Geuser’s recording is also performed at a tempo closest to Leister’s earliest recording of the work: he begins the movement slightly slower than a quarter note equals 50, which places it close to Baermann’s indicated tempo of 46. Interestingly, Geuser speeds up the middle poco piu animato section to around a quarter equals 100, almost double his original tempo and far faster than any of the Leister recordings. The Tempo I section at measure 41 is performed quicker than the original tempo at around a quarter equals 63, but Geuser decreases it to a more similar tempo by the return of the theme at measure 70.

Geuser starts the third movement at a quarter note equals 114, which is more measured than any of the Leister recordings; however, it is once again closest to Leister’s earliest recording (in which he takes the opening at the slowest tempo). He performs the end of the work much faster than the opening, which is similar in execution to Leister’s earlier recording. The return of the melody in measure 201 is taken at a quarter equals 120, and the movement accelerates from there. By measure 295 the tempo is near a quarter equals 135 and by the end Geuser is at a brisk 140.

While Geuser’s interpretation of this work was likely an influence on the young Karl Leister, one can hear some clear differences between these two 1957 performances. For example, Geuser’s tone is fluid and sweet, an archetype of the German sound, but Leister’s tone is more robust with homogeneity across the registers. Also, Geuser’s technique is not as smooth as Leister’s in many of his recordings. This shortcoming was
something that Leister alluded to in an interview with the author regarding his lessons with Geuser.528 Throughout Geuser’s recording, his articulation seems labored; he adds slurs that are not printed in the Baermann edition to several of the sixteenth note passages. In each of the Leister recordings, many of the slurs are discarded and the sixteenth note passages are increasingly articulated. Even in the earliest recording, where Leister chooses to add the most slurs, his articulation is clearer and lighter than Geuser’s.

Of the post-Leister Weber concerto recordings, the clear rival to Leister’s renditions would be Sabine Meyer’s. Her recording of the work with Staatskapelle Dresden and Herbert Blomstedt from 1986 was selected by the clarinet community surveyed by the author as equally preferred to Leister’s 1968 recording with the Berlin Philharmonic.529 Strengthening the comparison is the shared history of the two in the Berlin Philharmonic: two years earlier, in the midst of one of the biggest orchestral controversies ever documented, Meyer resigned her position as co-principal clarinet of the orchestra, where she would have served alongside Leister.530 The early recordings by Meyer following her rejection by the members of the Berlin Philharmonic would serve as a lasting rebuttal to any who doubted her abilities.531

528 See footnote in Chapter 3 Karl Leister Biography regarding Geuser playing along with Leister during Baermann exercises.
529 Both Leister and Meyer’s recordings of the work were selected as the preferred recording by 25.53% of respondents. Geldrich, “Definitive Clarinet Recordings Survey.”
530 See Chapter 3 Karl Leister Biography.
531 While the Berlin Philharmonic members who voted against Meyer’s tenure with the orchestra never decried her abilities as a soloist, it is still telling that she chose to record works for which Leister was so well-known; among them are the Brahms and Mozart clarinet quintets, and the complete clarinet concertos of Weber.
Meyer’s recording of Weber’s first clarinet concerto proves an interesting comparison to Leister’s recordings of it. In many respects, Meyer’s recording is a continuation of the German tradition of which the Weber repertoire is such an integral part. Aside from her use of the German system clarinet, her performance of the Weber concerto utilizes the Carl Baermann edition of the work; the same one used by Geuser and Leister. Meyer’s recording deviates from Leister renditions in certain areas as well. Most notably, Meyer’s tempos in various sections are brisker and more virtuosic. The first movement in Meyer’s recording is executed at around the quarter equals 120, faster than all but Leister’s last recording, but by the triplet section at measure 130, Meyer accelerates to over a quarter equals 130. This is a curious choice as the section is marked *lusingando e con espressivo*, translating to coaxing or flattering and with expression. In Leister’s earlier two recordings, he plays the section in a rather free style, slowing the tempo, which fits Weber’s notated tempo description. Yet, in his last recording with the Gumma Symphony, he played this section straight and kept the tempo the same. Meyer’s choice to quicken the tempo here is altogether different. The Baermann cadenza that follows seems to flow more naturally out of the faster triplet section, even though Meyer increases the tempo to about a quarter equals 140, which is faster than any of the Leister recordings. The effect is that the section does not seem like a cadenza at all, but instead a continuation of Weber’s own writing, until the orchestra finishes the written accompaniment to Baermann’s cadenza. Meyer continues this trend by playing the second triplet section and following sixteenth note section at comparable tempos of 130 and 140 respectively (measures 192 – 218). The ending of the movement retains a brisk feeling with the chromatic passages executed at around the quarter note equals 133.
Meyer’s performs the second movement very close to Leister’s 1957 recording: around the quarter equals 50. However, Meyer, like Geuser, chooses to accelerate the middle \textit{Poco piu animato} section considerably, to about the quarter equals 95. The end then returns to her original tempo at around 50. She begins the last movement at a similar speed to Leister’s final and quickest recording, at around the quarter equals 125, but executes the rest of the movement far faster. Meyer slows down the section starting at measure 124 far less than any of the Leister recordings (she performs the section at around a quarter note equals 118) and her end section is among the fastest analyzed, achieving a speed of a quarter equals 150 by the conclusion of the work.

American soloists who have recorded the Weber concerto make a worthwhile comparison to Leister and his fellow German clarinetists such as Sabine Meyer. Both David Shifrin and Charles Neidich are American clarinet soloists who have recorded the work and exhibit different approaches than their German counterparts. Neidich and Shifrin did not utilize the Carl Baermann edition of the concerto in their recordings, further solidifying the idea that German clarinetists like Geuser, Leister, and Meyer are part of a line of German clarinet soloists that harkens back to the Baermanns. Even though Neidich and Shifrin are soloists and perform the same repertoire, perhaps due to their country of origin and the system of clarinet on which they play (both play on French system clarinets), they approach the work more from Weber’s print, yet, with the addition of their own interpretive ideas.

Shifrin presents an especially noteworthy comparison in that he forms a middle road between the German adherence to the Baermann edition and the original Weber print of the concerto. For the most part, Shifrin eschews Baermann’s embellishments. For
instance, in the opening section of the work, he plays measure 72 as straight sixteenth notes as Weber wrote, rather than Baermann’s rewriting of the measure (see Figures 9.3a and 9.3b). Eight measures later he also plays the printed F-sharp (concert E) in Weber’s registration rather than an octave down as Baermann notated (and as it appears at the end of the movement). However, Shifrin retains Baermann’s notated cadenza while omitting the fifteen measures of additional music Baermann wrote immediately preceding it. This is a particularly adroit choice; it retains the proper style of performing a cadenza at the end of the exposition without significantly altering the form of the movement, as Baermann’s sixteen measure insert is sometimes accused of doing. By performing Baermann’s cadenza, though, Shifrin still provides an homage to the clarinetist for whom the work was written, preserving a historical link. This notion is reinforced by Shifrin’s use of Baermann’s embellishment of measures 117-123 in the third movement (see Figures 9.4a and 9.4b).

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Figure 9.4a Original Weber notation measures 117-123 in Movement III of *Clarinet Concerto No. 1*  

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532 Miller, 22-23.  
These five measures are rewritten in a more virtuosic way but add no additional measures. Shifrin makes selective use of Baermann’s ideas without making it a performance of Baermann’s interpretation of the work. Interestingly, Shifrin’s tempo choices are not Baermann’s either; but rather, are almost in alignment with Leister’s 1982 recording. The first movement for both renditions is around the quarter note equals 120 and both slow the Tempo ritenuto section to around 108. Shifrin separates himself from Leister at the end of the movement by considerably decelerating the chromatic lines starting at measure 258 (approximately the quarter equals 80) before accelerating to 120. Shifrin’s second movement also starts close in tempo to Leister’s last recording of the work, at a quarter equals 55. Furthermore, they both play the Animato section around 80. However, Shifrin makes an interesting choice to play the return of the melody, starting at measure 70, around a quarter equals 45; much slower than he started and almost exactly the printed tempo in Baermann’s edition (quarter equals 46). Shifrin performs the third movement with the same tempos as Leister in his Gumma Symphony recording throughout: both begin the movement at around the quarter equals 125, both slow down to around 110 in the section starting at measure 124, and both return to approximately the original tempo to end the movement without an acceleration. This is not meant to imply
that Shifrin looked to one of Leister’s lesser known recordings for his tempo choices, but rather that these two consummate artists found similar conclusions regarding the most effective tempos for this masterwork.

Charles Neidich’s offering provides a far more contrasting interpretation of the Weber concerto. Like his American counterpart, David Shifrin, Neidich performs from the Weber print. However, unlike Shifrin, Neidich departs from the Baermann edition completely. Not only does Neidich avoid Baermann’s many notated embellishments, he does not utilize Baermann’s first movement insert or cadenza, instead performing a cadenza of his own invention, the only of the recordings analyzed with a unique cadenza. Equally individual are Neidich’s tempo choices. Across the board, these tempos are faster than that of other artists. His first movement tempo starts around the quarter equals 145, a staggering 37 beats per minute faster than Baermann’s printed tempo. He ends the movement even faster at around 150 for the passionato section from measures 258 to 273, before slowing down in the last fourteen measures, which is typical. Likewise, Neidich’s third movement is the most virtuosic of the recordings analyzed, with a tempo around a quarter note equals 140 at the beginning and an acceleration to around 155 by the end of the movement. This is far quicker than Baermann’s tempo indication of 120 and the executed tempos of his peers, the fastest of whom take the movement at around 125. In keeping with his distinct interpretation, Neidich chooses to avoid Baermann’s printed interpretation of measures 117 to 122 (see Figure 9.4b above), but still embellishes the passage rather than performing it as printed in Weber’s edition. Remarkably, Neidich opts to play the second movement opening section faster than other clarinetists analyzed; his tempo fluctuates between the quarter equals 60 and 65.
Furthermore, he does not execute the middle *poco più animato* section faster than some other artists; his tempo of around 80 is similar to all of Leister’s recordings, but is slower than both Geuser and Meyer’s. Neidich’s choice to play the opening section at a moderate pace and to not accelerate the *poco più animato* much beyond the opening tempo has the effect of diminishing the contrast that other performances are able to achieve in this section.

Apart from the second movement, Charles Neidich’s recording is one of the most dynamic of those studied. His unique approach serves as a fresh interpretation of a traditional, well-known work. By adding his own cadenza and embellishments as well as taking tempos that frequently deviate from traditional practice, he comes across as a modern day Heinrich or Carl Baermann: a clarinet virtuoso whose personality and virtuosity make an imprint on the pieces he performs. Yet, Karl Leister, stands apart by presenting the original virtuoso’s (Baermann) interpretation of the work in beautiful clarity. Though it is undeniable that Leister is no less a virtuoso in his own right, he uses his singular abilities to display the beauty of the music he performs rather than using the music as an exhibition of his talent. In this sense, Weber’s *Clarinet Concerto No. 1 in F minor, Op. 73* has no better advocate than Leister, who, by recording it amongst the masterworks of Mozart and Brahms, elevates this youthful undertaking of Weber’s to the realm of a timeless staple in the clarinet repertoire.
Chapter 10

Mozart Clarinet Concerto

It is hard to imagine a piece of music more important to the repertoire of the clarinet than the *Concerto in A Major for Clarinet and Orchestra, K. 622*. Indeed, concerti and other solo works for the clarinet existed before Mozart’s concerto was written. Yet, at the time of Mozart the clarinet was still not a standard instrument of the orchestral wind section. Proof of this can be found by the fact that Mozart himself only included the clarinet in four of his forty-one symphonies: nos. 31, 35, 39, and 40.\(^{534}\) As Janet K. Page wrote in her *New Grove* article on the clarinet, “Mozart did not use the clarinet in the full orchestra until the 1780s and then only sparingly.”\(^{535}\) Nonetheless, it was Mozart himself who helped to solidify the clarinet’s role as a standard wind instrument. Near the time of his death, Mozart had started writing major clarinet parts into his symphonies, piano concertos, and operas. However, the concerto, clarinet quintet, and Kegelstatt Trio (for clarinet, viola, and piano), all written for clarinet virtuoso Anton Stadler, were the works which truly displayed the clarinet’s expressive and soloistic

\(^{534}\) Only two of these symphonies, nos. 31 and 39, were originally scored to include clarinet. In later additions, Mozart added clarinet parts to symphonies 35 and 40. David Ethridge, *Mozart’s Clarinet Concerto: The Clarinetist’s View*, (Gretna: Pelican Publishing Company, 1998), 14.

range. As Dr. Page states, “The pieces by which Mozart changed the course of
the clarinet's history are those composed for Anton Stadler.”

Although each of these Mozart works is an important member of the repertoire in
its own right, the concerto is the one that truly occupies a place of special eminence. It is
a staple of any student clarinetist’s course of study, and practically every professional
clarinet audition includes a performance of the Mozart concerto. Indeed, the concerto is
the means by which every clarinetist demonstrates their mastery of the instrument,
individual concept of tone, and knowledge of the classical style.

It is for this reason perhaps, that so many recordings of the Mozart concerto have
been made over the years. The list of clarinetists who have recorded the concerto includes
many of the most important orchestral players from the second half of the twentieth
century to the present day. These recordings offer not just the interpretations of the
clarinetists themselves, but the interpretations of some of the most important conductors
who collaborated with them. Each recording is important in its own right. All clarinetists,
from the student to the professional, would be well-served by listening to as many of

536 Ibid.
537 Interestingly, Stanley Drucker is not on this list since he never recorded the Mozart
Clarinet Concerto. It should be said, though, that he performed the work with the New
York Philharmonic numerous times. One particularly telling, and humorous, anecdote
told by the New York Philharmonic community, is that Drucker was once asked to
perform the Mozart concerto at the last minute when a soloist cancelled. When the
orchestra’s librarian asked Drucker if he should fetch the clarinet part from the
orchestra’s library, Drucker reportedly said, “The music? What do I need the music for?
I haven’t used music for that since I was 17.”
Philharmonic YouTube Channel, Accessed August 1, 2016.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sZh1k-OaWyg
them as possible to gain an understanding of the variety of interpretations as well as what aspects of performance remain constant.

In this sense, Karl Leister offers himself up as a microcosm of the clarinet community at large. Over the course of twenty years, Leister has recorded the Mozart concerto four times, with four different conductors and three different orchestras from three different countries. By listening to each Leister recording of the Mozart concerto, one is left with a lasting impression of the work’s ability to allow for a diversity of interpretation all while retaining the artist’s aspects of individual playing style. Though it is noteworthy to mention that in the survey conducted for this document, none of Leister’s recordings of the Mozart concerto were selected as the clarinet community’s overall favorite, despite his experience and expertise with the work. By a large margin, the recording of Robert Marcellus and the Cleveland Symphony with George Szell conducting was the preferred rendition.\(^\text{538}\) This speaks very highly of the Marcellus recording, as countless recordings of the Mozart concerto have been made. For this one version to be the overwhelming favorite out of such a large variety is truly remarkable. The only other recording surveyed that has as many clarinetists listing it as their preferred recording of a particular piece is Stanley Drucker’s performance of the Corigliano Clarinet Concerto. The Corigliano concerto, however, was written specifically for Drucker and the New York Philharmonic and has only been recorded by a handful of other clarinetists (as of the writing of this document). As the Mozart concerto is a pillar

\(^{538}\) The Marcellus Mozart concerto recording was listed as the “preferred recording” by 49 respondents out of 102. The next most preferred recording was Leister’s with 11 votes. Peter Geldrich, “Definitive Clarinet Recordings Survey,” Survey Monkey, January 2016.
of the clarinet repertoire and is among the most recorded works for the instrument, the preference of the clarinet community for Marcellus’ recording is even more extraordinary.

Interestingly, Leister’s final recording of the Mozart concerto with Sir Neville Marriner conducting Academy of St. Martin in the Fields is the second most preferred recording.\textsuperscript{539} Furthermore, Leister’s recording received more votes than the recording featuring Harold Wright, who was the most favored clarinetist for the Mozart Clarinet Quintet (another piece where Leister was the second most preferred clarinetist). So, while Leister’s interpretations may not be the most preferred for any one particular Mozart work, his style of playing Mozart is certainly well respected and admired.

When analyzing interpretations of the Mozart Clarinet Concerto, David Ethridge’s book \textit{Mozart’s Clarinet Concerto: The Clarinetist’s View} serves as an invaluable resource. In this book, Dr. Ethridge analyzes the performance approach of eight different clarinetists from various countries through interviews and recordings. Although Leister was not interviewed for the book, Ethridge provides parameters with which one can analyze and compare Leister’s interpretations of the work. Some of the stylistic aspects that Ethridge specifically addresses in this piece such as tempo, use of rubato, articulation, trills and dynamics, will be similarly employed by the author to compare Leister’s recordings amongst themselves, as well as to other clarinetists’ recordings.

Leister’s first recording of the Mozart Clarinet Concerto was released in 1968 with the Berlin Philharmonic, conducted by Rafael Kubelik. This recording’s straightforward manner makes it noteworthy. Tempos are similar to the legendary Marcellus-Szell recording that was made in 1961, seven years prior to this first attempt by Leister. In both recordings the tempi fall on the moderate end for the opening and closing movements. Both artists perform the first movement at about quarter note equals 116 (Marcellus and Szell are slightly quicker and Leister and Kubelik are slightly slower) and both perform the last movement just above the dotted quarter equals 80 (Leister and Kubelik are marginally quicker than Marcellus and Szell). Marcellus and Szell are significantly slower in the second movement of the concerto, stretching the tempo to the quarter note equals 40, whereas Leister and Kubelik are closer to 44. During the orchestral tutti sections Kubelik executes the tempo even faster, approaching 50, only to decrease it for subsequent clarinet entrances. Both artists play the cadenza from Mozart’s Clarinet Quintet, which Leister utilizes for all of his recordings. Leister is rather conservative in his phrasing as well. Articulations in this recording frequently sound as a combination of slurs and detached notes; often a two and two style articulation. When Leister articulates, he consistently does so in a legato fashion. This is also in alignment with the interpretive style of Marcellus. According to Etheridge, “Marcellus avoids a

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541 This is the preferred cadenza for most of the recordings analyzed. Notable exceptions are Wright, who plays a hybrid cadenza, with a pitch sequence taken from the first movement and ending with a final nine pitches from the quintet cadenza, and Brymer, who uses his own composed cadenza for all of his recordings.
secco staccato in all articulated passages of the concerto. In his performance of the work he continually strives for a more melodic style of staccato.\textsuperscript{542} This appears to be Leister’s approach as well, in all of his recordings of the work. Leister’s propensity towards legato playing can be heard specifically in the arpeggiated chords toward the end of the exposition starting in measure 145 (see Figure 10.1).\textsuperscript{543} In a 2005 masterclass that he presented at Michigan State, he encouraged a student who was articulating this same passage to slur it. Because of the staccato notes in the strings, Leister believes it is better for the clarinet to add contrast to the line by slurring.\textsuperscript{544} One interesting difference within Leister’s own recordings of this work appears in this passage. In his first three recordings, he employs a slur two-tongue two style articulation in measures 144 and 145 before switching to all slurred notes in measures 146 and 147. Yet, in his last recording of the work with Sir Neville Mariner and Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, he slurried every note in the passage, which supports his philosophy above. While his interpretation of this section is consistently more legato in style than many others who add articulations

\textsuperscript{542} David Ethridge, \textit{Mozart’s Clarinet Concerto: The Clarinetist’s View}, 67.
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throughout (Harold Wright for example), Leister’s conception of it has clearly evolved to exemplify this style more and more. For Leister this holds true for the similar passage in the recapitulation in measures 334 – 336 (see Figure 10.2), where, in his last recording, he slurs all arpeggios.\(^{545}\) What Leister gains in consistency though, he loses in variety.

![Figure 10.2 Measures 334 to 336 in Movement I of the Mozart Clarinet Concerto](image)

In his three earlier recordings, he chose to adopt a tongue two-slur two articulation style for the first two measures and a slur two-tongue two for the last measure of the sequence, making the interpretation of this passage distinct from the exposition. This is something that Robert Marcellus did as well, adding more articulations to his interpretation of this passage in the recapitulation than in the exposition.

Regarding articulation choice in the Mozart concerto, Leister’s interpretation is most similar to the recording made by his teacher, Heinrich Geuser with Ferenc Fricsay conducting the Radio Symphonie Orchester Berlin.\(^{546}\) Comparing recordings between a teacher and their student is an unusual opportunity, and in this case, demonstrates striking


similarities. This is somewhat surprising because Leister does not credit Geuser with influencing his style of playing. In an interview with Heike Fricke published in The Clarinet Leister stated, “I do not want to play and sound like Geuser!” Indeed, Leister does not sound like Geuser. He produces a far darker and more mellow tone than Geuser even in his first recording of the Mozart concerto. Furthermore, throughout all of his recordings of the concerto, Leister’s pitch is far superior to Geuser’s. Remarkably, Leister’s already high standard of intonation improves with each subsequent recording of this work. Nonetheless, there are stylistic similarities to their interpretations. Articulation choices are nearly identical between the two clarinetists for all but Leister’s last recording, where he alters his articulations considerably. Also, Geuser demonstrates an interesting phrasing trait of frequently emphasizing certain notes with tenutos, essentially sustaining a select note longer than others of equal rhythmic value. Leister does this as well, particularly in his first recording of the Mozart concerto. Geuser, however, sustains his tenutos to such a degree that the rhythm itself becomes distorted. An example of this can be found in measure 79 of the first movement (see Figure 10.3).

Figure 10.3 Measure 78 through 80 in Movement I of the Mozart Clarinet Concerto

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Geuser sustains the first eighth note (of the two eighth note figure) that begins the measure long enough that the underlying subdivision sounds like that of a triplet rather than an eighth note. In Leister’s recordings this stylistic trait is present as well, but with subtler execution.

Another commonality between all of the Leister recordings is his choice to trill starting on the principal note. This is at odds with various artists who have recorded the work, including Marcellus who often starts the trills from the note above. Etheridge points out that trills starting on the written note are a “departure both from the standard approach to ornamentation in the classical era and from the practice of most American clarinetists.” He wrote this regarding the Viennese clarinetist Rudolf Jettel’s choice to utilize this trill style. This supports a hypothesis that choosing to trill from the principal note for the Mozart concerto might be part of a stylistic trend of the Germanic school of clarinet playing, considering both Leister and Jettel adopted this approach. This idea is validated by Etheridge who states that Jettel’s interpretation “is the combined result of both a lifetime spent in a city rich in the tradition of Mozart’s performance and information about the concerto that was given to him by his teacher.” Jettel also told Etheridge that his teacher, Victor Polatschek, “possessed a hand-written copy of the concerto that possibly originally belonged to one of Anton Stadler’s students.” It is

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549 Some notable exceptions to this are found in the second movement, where Marcellus starts the trill on the principal note in measure 92, and the last trill of the piece on the clarinet’s penultimate note.
550 Etheridge, 130.
551 Ibid, 129.
552 Ibid.
interesting to note that the playing style of these important Austrian and German clarinetists would be at odds with modern understanding of “classical style.”

The biggest difference between Leister’s first recording of the Mozart concerto and his later recordings of the work is his robust, yet somewhat bright tone. This recording, like many of his earlier ones discussed throughout the document, serves as a fitting example of the youthful Leister before his concept of clarinet sound changed. Certainly, one of the key differences between Leister’s various recordings of this work is how his own sound evolved. In some respects, this evolution can be heard as an improvement; both in overall pitch consistency and homogeneity of tone across the registers of the clarinet. However, in other areas such as timbral changes and energetic playing style, this recording of the Mozart concerto and other recordings from this era sound refreshing compared to some of the later recordings. A distinct vitality exists in Leister’s playing from this time.\(^{553}\)

Leister’s second recording of the Mozart Clarinet Concerto (from 1971) was also recorded with the Berlin Philharmonic but with Herbert von Karajan conducting.\(^{554}\) The primary significance of this particular recording is the collaboration between Leister and the conductor with whom he is most associated. That both musicians released recordings of the work prior to their collaboration is also noteworthy; this shows the significance of recording the concerto together in addition to an implication that there was more to be

\(^{553}\) Among these early recordings are his Weber Concerto No. 1 released on the same album as the Mozart concerto, the Brahms Quintet with the Amadeus Quartet, the Brahms Sonatas with Jörg Demus, and the Brahms Trio with Georg Donderer and Christoph Eschenbach.

said regarding the interpretation of the work. One unique aspect of this rendition is the location where it was recorded. In a 1994 interview printed in *The Clarinet*, Leister described the recording taking place in a French church in St. Moritz, Switzerland. While a more reverberating sound can be heard throughout, as compared to his earlier recording, the venue consideration takes on a special importance in the second movement. Leister explains this in the interview:

> During the session Karajan had an idea. He said to me, "I want you to play the second movement from the place where the priest is talking to the audience." It was quite high. It was built out of wood and I felt not very stable. You know I got the feeling I am on a boat! The engineer from the record company was so confused. He said, "I cannot get your sound because you are so far away." I was standing behind and over the orchestra, and Karajan looked to me. Later I thought, perhaps he wanted me to be closer to heaven, because I think when we listen or when we play the slow movement, we get the feeling it was written in heaven. I mean St. Moritz is already 2,000 meters high, but he wanted me to be higher! Only the second movement is done this way.

When one listens to the movement and compares it to the outer movements, this is immediately audible. The clarinet is heard clearly, but not with the same acoustic as the first two movements. This has the effect of making the clarinet sound slightly at a distance, aiding the hushed, transcendent quality of the movement. As far as interpretation is concerned, this recording stands out as well. Of all Leister’s recordings of the Mozart concerto, this one possesses the slowest first movement, with a tempo of

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555 It is worth mentioning that Leister’s first recording of the Mozart concerto with Rafael Kubelik was on the Deutsche Grammophon label while his second recording was with EMI, with which Herbert von Karajan had an exclusive contract at the time. This could have presented a marketing incentive to record the work that was apart from an artistic incentive.


557 Ibid.
around a quarter note equals 114. This is on the slower side not just for Leister, but for most of the other recordings analyzed for this document.\textsuperscript{558} The tempo choice was likely made by Karajan who was known for his legato interpretative style and his authoritative control over all aspects of a performance.\textsuperscript{559} James McCarthy, in a \textit{Gramophone} article entitled “The Best Recordings of Mozart’s Clarinet Concerto,” surmises that this interpretation of the Mozart concerto embodies Karajan’s trademark style. In it he states, “Readers used to the sleekly disciplined Karajan of maturity – as demonstrated on his 1971 recording with Karl Leister, the BPO’s then principal clarinet – might be taken aback by his 1949 persona that offers Leopold Wlach an animatedly thrusting but accommodating partnership to which he responds with alacrity.”\textsuperscript{560}

The second recording mentioned in the above quote is Herbert von Karajan’s only other recording of the Mozart concerto. It was made with the Vienna Philharmonic and their principal clarinetist at the time, Leopold Wlach.\textsuperscript{561} This recording, released towards the beginning of Karajan’s career and seven years before Wlach’s death, is certainly quite different than the 1971 rendition with Leister and the Berlin Philharmonic. The opening

\textsuperscript{558} The slowest opening tempo is Jack Brymer’s first recording of the Mozart concerto with the Royal Philharmonic and Sir Thomas Beecham from 1956. The clarinet entrance tempo is slightly slower than 110. Interestingly, Brymer also has one of the fastest first movement tempos in his second recording of the work with Sir Colin Davis and the London Symphony Orchestra. The clarinet entrance for this recording is around 125.
\textsuperscript{561} Ibid.
tempo of the first movement is faster than a quarter note equals 120, giving the movement the “animatedly thrusting” quality described above. The last movement in these two recordings is performed at approximately the same speed (84 to the dotted quarter in the Leister rendition and 86 to the dotted quarter in the Wlach rendition). In Karajan’s recording with Leister, this creates a greater sense of energy and finality during the last movement when compared to the more lyrical interpretation of the first movement, even though both are marked as “Allegro.” Furthermore, far more nuance is present in the Karajan-Leister recording than in the Karajan-Wlach recording, both in terms of dynamic contrast and articulation. Where Wlach’s playing lacks variety, Leister’s does not. He is able to vary from a more intimate playing style to one that is more robust. An example of this is the hushed sound that Leister achieves in the recapitulation of the second movement theme compared to the opening, which, while still subdued in style is more present than its return. Wlach, on the other hand, plays at the same dynamic level in both sections. On a larger scale this is seen as a clear distinction between Leister’s first recording of the Mozart concerto and his second version with Karajan: Leister plays with a full, robust tone throughout the earlier recording but saves that timbre for only particular moments in the version with Karajan which is in general smoother and more lyrical in style. In contrast, Wlach is softer and more delicate in tone throughout.\textsuperscript{562} Regarding articulation, Wlach chooses to slur almost all sixteenth note passages in the first movement and the articulation style he uses within phrases is exceedingly connected. For the last movement however, he chooses to articulate many of

\textsuperscript{562} It is possible that Wlach’s dynamic and tone characteristics are due to the recording process that would have been more primitive in 1949 than for any of Leister’s recordings of the Mozart concerto.
the sixteenth note passages and almost always does so with a tongue two-slur four style of articulation. The quality of articulation is *secco* throughout. While he exhibits good breadth of articulation styles between the two movements, within each movement the resulting effect is one dimensional. On the other hand, Leister demonstrates more diversity within each of the movements, both in articulation groupings and style. In the author’s opinion, it is this variety of expression, achieved by both Karajan and Leister in their collaborative effort on the Mozart concerto, which is its greatest strength.

One of the most notable performers of the Mozart concerto to use variety of articulation as a cornerstone of his interpretation is Harold Wright, former principal clarinet of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Wright does not credit any particular conductor he performed the work with in guiding his interpretative style, but rather the flutist, Marcel Moyse who was his colleague at the Marlboro Music Festival. Etheridge expands upon this in his chapter on Wright’s interpretation of the Mozart concerto:

> According to Wright, Marcel Moyse, a world-renowned flutist as well as an accomplished conductor, influenced many of the musicians that he worked with in the development of more meaningful performances of all kinds of music. Wright comments that Moyse constantly strove to instill life and vitality in the music that he performed. A specific example of a concept advanced by Moyse is the use of articulation to illuminate the features of music rather than as a crutch employed indiscriminately by the instrumentalist to render passages less difficult.

To this end, Wright believed in varying the length of his articulation, not just between the contrasting movements, but within each individual movement in order to bring out distinct moods and characters. As an example of this, Etheridge highlights measures

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563 Etheridge, 105.
564 Ibid.
82-89 in the first movement, where Wright uses a “sharp, percussive style of tonguing” when playing the triplets notated in measure 82, and a “softer, melodically oriented” style on the eight notes in measure 89. This variety of articulation length is utilized by Wright far more than the other clarinetists studied for this document, Leister included. Another aspect of Wright’s interpretation that Etheridge emphasizes is his philosophy of playing Mozart in a “romantic manner.” Etheridge describes this as taking liberties with the tempo in order to “enhance the expressiveness.” Some examples mentioned by Ethridge are subtle broadening of the tempo in places such as measures 84, 112 and 194 to 198 in the first movement (see Figure 10.4), and slight increases in tempo in the second movement in places such as measures 5 and 6 and in the section from 33 to 59 (see Figure 10.5).

![Figure 10.4 Measures 84, 112, and 194-198 in Movement I of the Mozart Clarinet Concerto](image)

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567 Ibid, 106.
568 Ibid.
569 Ibid, 111; 118-119; Mozart, Concerto in A Major, KV 622, 3, 4, 6, & 8-9.
Figure 10.5 Measures 5-6 and 33-59 in Movement II of the Mozart Clarinet Concerto

However, in Wright’s recording of the concerto, the last movement demonstrates one of the most interesting interpretive choices regarding tempo fluctuation. Wright chooses to play the last iteration of the Rondo theme, appearing in measure 334, at a slower tempo. He achieves this effect by beginning a ritenuto in measure 333. For added effect, he employs a stringendo starting in measure 340 and regains the original tempo by measure 344.\textsuperscript{570} This approach to tempo is employed very effectively by Marcellus as well. Nonetheless, Wright’s recording is distinct because he performs the section starting at measure 301 at a piu mosso tempo, increasing the speed by almost 10 beats per minute.

\textsuperscript{570} Etheridge, 122.
An atmosphere of added energy and excitement is created in this closing section; the *piu mosso* change allows the aforementioned *ritenuto* (thirty-two measures later) to stand out even more than it otherwise would have (see Figure 10.6).\(^{571}\)

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\(^{571}\) *Mozart, 15.*
This tempo fluctuation in the third movement of the Mozart concerto is absent from most of Leister’s recordings. But, as a disciple of Karajan, this is not to say that tempo fluctuations are not incorporated into Leister’s interpretations. Karajan was known for his Romantic manner of interpreting Mozart. The Washington Post music critic Joseph McLellan wrote in an article “The Cool Control of von Karajan,” published the day after the conductor’s death, that “[v]on Karajan always sounded most comfortable in music of the Romantic era, particularly with the works of Schumann and late romantics such as Bruckner and Brahms…” and that “…like his Bach, von Karajan's Mozart was often forced into a basically Romantic style of interpretation.” Like Wright, this romantic style of interpreting Mozart found its way into both of Karajan’s recordings of the Mozart Clarinet Concerto, and into Leister’s performances. One section of the work that stands out in this way is in the development section of the first movement, between measures 194 and 200 (see Figure 10.7).

In several recordings of the work, it is common to broaden the tempo in the alternating quarter notes between the solo clarinet and the strings; but Karajan’s recordings with both Leopold Wlach and Leister take far more time than the other recordings analyzed, decreasing the tempo by about 20 beats per minute.

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572 Interestingly, it is his last recording with Sir Neville Marriner where this interpretive feature appears, in a subtle manner. Leister’s decrease in tempo is less than Marcellus’ or Wright’s, whose is the most overt.
575 The Wlach recording, because it is taken at a faster tempo in general, has a greater broadening of tempo relative to the material before it, slowing down to a tempo of about 95 beats per minute from a prior tempo of about 120 beats per minute in measure 192. The recording with Leister possesses the slowest overall tempo of this section, slowing
Leister continues the *ritenuto* into the clarinet triplets and sixteenth notes in measures 198 and 199 as well, something that Wlach and other interpreters analyzed do not do. This tempo fluctuation is mirrored in the Karajan-Leister recording from measures 216 to 219, where the orchestra line has a similar sequence while the clarinet sustains whole notes (see Figure 10.8). Karajan’s recording with Wlach executes this section slightly slower, but not nearly as drastic as his recording with Leister.

down to about 90 beats per minute from a tempo of about 114 beats per minute in measure 192.

Figure 10.8 Measures 216 to 219 in Movement I of the Mozart Clarinet Concerto. Brackets denote solo clarinet part.

Other clarinetists/conductors analyzed do not perform this section with any meaningful *ritenuto*. Since this interpretive choice is apparent in both recordings by Karajan, but not Leister’s earlier recording with Kubelik, it is likely that this was Karajan’s decision. However, Leister performs the section from 194 to 200 in a similar way in his subsequent recording of the concerto with Koji Toyoda and Gumma Symphony Orchestra, showing Karajan’s influence on Leister’s interpretation.

Leister’s last two recordings of the Mozart Clarinet Concerto demonstrate a turning point for him: both in tonal concept and interpretative style. As far as tonal concept is concerned, it is immediately noticeable that Leister’s sound is rounder and more homogenous across the registers when compared to his earlier recordings. This was
achieved partially through a change in instrumental equipment.\textsuperscript{577} By the time of his third recording, made with the Gumma Symphony Orchestra, Leister was playing on Wurlitzer clarinets crafted specifically for him. Leister states in his interview with Robert Taylor:

I was playing on a low-pitch instrument made by Wurlitzer on the third and fourth versions [of the Mozart Concerto]. He made a very special instrument for me where you can play in 440, 442. For the other versions with members of the Berlin Philharmonic we are playing 445. I have different pitch instruments. It's not enough to build those instruments longer; you have to also move the holes and Wurlitzer did it wonderfully. And it was done also because the orchestras in Great Britain play like in the United States, at a lower pitch. You cannot tune a clarinet from 445 to 440; it's impossible. That means you need a lower pitch instrument. And I think it sounds more like an "A" clarinet because the pitch is not so high. If the pitch is going up and up, it's not an "A" clarinet anymore. The sound is close to the Bb clarinet.

While the instruments he played for these recordings clearly had a large effect on his tone, it was a concept of sound that Leister sought, and remarkably achieved, not just on his Mozart recordings but on all the recordings he made from the 1980s onward.

Regarding interpretative style, the most noticeable change is in tempo. Leister’s last two recordings of the Mozart concerto are both faster in the outer two Allegro movements and slower in the second movement Adagio. Apart from these major considerations, Leister’s interpretation in his recording with the Gumma Symphony is very similar to his earlier recordings with the Berlin Philharmonic. But it is in his final recording of the work, made in 1988 with Sir Neville Marriner and the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, that the biggest interpretative changes were made. Leister says of this recording:

\textsuperscript{577} For a detailed discussion of Leister’s equipment and sound evolution see Chapter 4 Instrumental Equipment of Stanley Drucker and Karl Leister of this document.
Then came the request from Philips to produce this piece with the Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields and Neville Marriner. I was happy to do it. This was done in 1988 in a church in London where this orchestra does very many records. It is a wonderful orchestra. I changed many things by using the new Barenreiter edition and I also changed the articulation. You know I started to work with this piece like I am seeing it for the first time. I wanted to do it really in a very new way, and I think it’s the best version from all the four. I mean the Karajan is very wonderful and very special, but I agree very much with this last version.\textsuperscript{578}

In addition to the more exaggerated tempos, Leister’s articulation choices are the most changed in this recording. Also, he alters the register in certain passages to bring the clarinet part more in-line with the original basset clarinet version and changes particular notes that research recent to his last recording deemed more accurate to Mozart’s original manuscript.\textsuperscript{579}

Regarding articulation, Leister’s interpretive choices are more similar to the Marcellus recording than to his previous renditions. In addition to the sections discussed previously that are slurred, Leister plays with a more continuously articulated style, rather than the two and two style demonstrated his earlier recordings. Examples of this can be found in measures 69 and 103 of the first movement; passages are articulated in a slur two-tongue six style rather than the slur two-tongue two style articulation of his previous renditions (see Figure 10.9).\textsuperscript{580} This is in agreement with Marcellus’ recording, as well as many others that adopted this style of articulation (Harold Wright for example). Furthermore, Leister employs additional articulations (missing from his earlier interpretations as well as from Marcellus’ recording).

\textsuperscript{578} Robert Taylor, “Playing in the Sunshine: An Interview with Karl Leister,” 37.
See Appendix C for permissions to reprint.
\textsuperscript{580} Mozart, 3-4.
For instance, in the third movement at measure 22, the passage is articulated with a slur two-tongue ten style instead of the slur two-tongue four sequence displayed in his earlier recordings. In measures 43 and 47, all eleven sixteenth notes are articulated instead of all slurred like his previous interpretations. Lastly, in measure 160, all eleven sixteenth notes are tongued instead of five tongued, two slurred, and four tongued; the style he formerly adopted (see Figure 10.10). \(^{581}\)
Passages where the registration is altered in this recording include measures 62, 69, and 193 of the third movement; every sixteenth note in beat one, save the very first note, is played an octave lower (see Figure 10.11).

Figure 10.11 Measures 62, 69, and 193 in Movement III of the Mozart Clarinet Concerto

Leister expands upon this practice even more in his own edition of the sheet music. In his printed edition, further register adjustments exist in measures 198, 326 and 337 of the first movement, measures 55 and 57 of the second movement, and measures 311 through 314 of the third movement (see Figures 10.12a through 10.12f).

Figure 10.12a Measure 198 in Movement I of the Mozart Clarinet Concerto
[First example is the Barenreiter edition and second example is the Karl Leister Edition]

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582 Ibid., 11 & 13.
Figure 10.12b Measure 326 in Movement I of the Mozart Clarinet Concerto
[First example is the Barenreiter edition and second example is the Karl Leister Edition]

Figure 10.12c Measure 337 in Movement I of the Mozart Clarinet Concerto
[First example is the Barenreiter edition and second example is the Karl Leister Edition]

Figure 10.12d Measure 55 in Movement II of the Mozart Clarinet Concerto
[First example is the Barenreiter edition and second example is the Karl Leister Edition]

Figure 10.12e Measure 57 in Movement II of the Mozart Clarinet Concerto
[First example is the Barenreiter edition and second example is the Karl Leister Edition]
Pitches that are altered in this recording from Leister’s previous versions include an F natural on the sixth sixteenth note in measure 109 of the first movement, a B-flat on the sixth sixteenth note in measure 297 of the first movement, and a B-flat on the fourth printed eighth note in measure 169 of the third movement (see Figures 10.13a through 10.13c).  

In measure 169 of the third movement, Leister also performs this entire measure an octave higher than in his previous recordings.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Concerto K. 622*, creative commons, 3, 6, & 12; Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Concerto K. 622*, Karl Leister, ed. (Edizioni Musicali Eufonia Via Trento, 2003), 6, 8, & 13
Figure 10.13b Measure 297 in Movement I of the Mozart Clarinet Concerto [First example as notated in early published editions and second example is the Leister Edition]

Figure 10.13c Measure 169 in Movement III of the Mozart Clarinet Concerto [First example as notated in early published editions and second example is the Leister Edition]

If there is a musician who challenges Karl Leister’s mantel as the clarinetist with the greatest wealth of Mozart Clarinet Concerto recordings, it is the English clarinet virtuoso Jack Brymer. Yet, Brymer fell short of Leister with three recordings of the work to Leister’s four. Furthermore, all of Brymer’s recordings were made with British orchestras and conductors: the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra with Sir Thomas Beecham conducting (1960), the London Symphony Orchestra with Sir Colin Davis conducting (1964), and the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields with Sir Neville Marriner conducting (1972).⁵⁸⁵ Leister’s list of diverse collaborations on the work (four recordings with three

⁵⁸⁵ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Concerto in A Major for Clarinet and Orchestra, Jack Brymer and Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham, recorded in 1960, Mozart Concerto in B-flat Major for Bassoon and Orchestra/Mozart Concerto in A Major for Clarinet and Orchestra, EMI ALP 1768, Vinyl; Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Concerto in A Major for Clarinet and Orchestra, Jack Brymer and the London Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Sir Colin Davis, released in 1964, Concertos For Clarinet / For Flute And Harp, Philips – SAL 3535, Vinyl; Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Concerto in A Major for Clarinet and Orchestra, Jack Brymer and Academy of St. Martin in the Fields, conducted by Neville Marriner,
different orchestras in three different countries and four different conductors) perhaps shows he possesses a more universal appeal than Brymer. Despite not releasing as many recordings of the work as Leister, Brymer presents some of the most varied interpretations and a unique approach to the work. Brymer executes some of the slowest and some of the fastest tempo choices among all of the recordings analyzed. His first recording, with Sir Thomas Beecham, begins slightly quicker than the quarter note equals 110, but slows down from there. At the clarinet entrance the tempo is closer to 108; by far the slowest tempo choice for this movement. The third movement is likewise amongst the slowest interpretations. Although it begins around the dotted quarter equals 84, similar to Leister’s recording with Karajan and around the average speed for this movement, immediately the tempo slackens considerably to about 76, which is the slowest of the recordings analyzed. This trend holds true for the second movement as well. Even though this movement is often performed quite slowly, with the quarter note between 40 to 44 beats per minute, Brymer and Beecham take their pacing to the extreme with a tempo at about a quarter equals 36. In the author’s opinion, Brymer and Beecham’s performance tempo loses its direction of phrase as well as the feeling of a quarter note pulse; the subdivision is given too much weight.\textsuperscript{586}

\textsuperscript{586} The only other recording that matches Brymer and Beecham’s slow tempo in the second movement is one released by clarinetist Andrew Marriner with his father Sir Neville Marriner. This makes for an interesting comparison as Andrew Marriner is a British clarinetist and likely influenced by Brymer. However, Brymer made a recording of the Mozart concerto with Sir Neville Marriner, discussed as well, before Andrew did. The slow movement tempo of the Brymer/Marriner recording is just above a quarter note equals 40, a more traditional tempo for this movement.
However, these extreme tempos contrast with Brymer’s second recording of the Mozart concerto, made with Sir Colin Davis. Some of the quickest tempos out of all renditions can found in this recording. The first movement is performed around the quarter note equals 124. This is among the fastest tempos observed by the author, along with Leister’s final recording with Sir Neville Marriner and Leopold Wlach’s recording with von Karajan. Moreover, at the recapitulation of the first movement, occurring in measure 251, Brymer and Davis are at an even swifter tempo of a quarter note equals 130; the fastest of any of the recordings analyzed. This interpretive style holds true in the third movement, too. Brymer and Davis execute the movement at around the dotted quarter note equals 88 and approach 90 at times. Likewise, this is the fastest pacing of those analyzed with the exception of Wright’s recording (the end section of the movement is performed near this speed). Brymer’s third recording, with Sir Neville Marriner, exhibits more standard tempos. The tempo of the first movement falls between the quarter note equals 118 and 120, the second movement between 41 and 42, and the third movement between 82 and 84 to the dotted quarter note. These are all average tempos for the various movements.

Interestingly, within the scope of Brymer’s recordings, the greatest diversity of tempos exists. Furthermore, with Brymer, a linear evolution of tempo philosophy does not present itself, as it does with Leister. As he ages, Leister’s recordings display more extreme tempo choices at both ends of the spectrum. The slowest first movement tempo is heard in his second recording (with Karajan), but only slightly slower than his first recording (with Kubelik). Leister’s fastest performance of the movement occurs in his

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587 This is out of all the work’s many recordings analyzed by the author.
last recording (with Sir Neville Marriner), where the tempo settles near the quarter note equals 124. The third movement of this same recording is also quite swift, at the dotted quarter equals 86, though not quite as fast as his third recording, performed around 88. Leister’s slowest tempo of the third movement can be heard in his first recording, performed around 83. At the other end of the tempo spectrum, Leister’s second movement is at its slowest in both his third and fourth recordings; taken around the quarter equals 39. The quickest of his second movements is the first recording, performed around 45. Thus, we can see as Leister matures he prefers to interpret the outer movements at quicker tempos and the Adagio at a slower tempo overall.

What this interpretational difference may imply is that Brymer could have been interested in the various characters that emerge from the music with different tempo styles without an individual preference; while Leister perhaps could have been searching for the character that most accurately and truthfully brings Mozart’s conception to life. This idea of Brymer not feeling as beholden to Mozart’s vision is reinforced by a couple of other interesting interpretive choices. One perhaps controversial choice is to omit some of Mozart’s music from the work; a choice that can be found in two of Brymer’s recordings. In his first recording, with Sir Thomas Beecham, measures 254 to 262 and measures 277 to 296 are removed. These are both orchestral sections and it is unknown if these relatively small cuts were made out of necessity for recording production reasons or for artistic reasons. Brymer made cuts to the clarinet part in his last recording with Sir Neville Marriner. In this recording Brymer omits measure 333 in the first movement. This measure contains a sequence of sixteenth notes that is a continuation from measures 331 and 332. In Mozart’s original notation for basset clarinet, measure 333 would be
played down to a printed low C, which is a note the standard A clarinet cannot play. Because this passage is traditionally performed one or two octaves higher in order to compensate for the lack of lower range (thus repeating measures 331 or 332 exactly as written) Brymer instead chooses to leave this measure out entirely.\textsuperscript{588} Irrespective of the soundness of Brymer’s logic, this is a choice few clarinetists make. Instead, they choose to vary the dynamics, articulation, or both (Leister, for his part, plays the measure as a duplicate of measure 332 but changes the articulation; this is executed in all four recordings). Another striking interpretive decision by Brymer is not to utilize the cadenza Mozart wrote for his clarinet quintet as a cadenza in the second movement of the concerto (both works are in the same key). This is at odds with practically every recording analyzed for this document, with the exception of Wright. But, while Wright still performs the final nine pitches of the quintet cadenza, following pitches he borrowed from the first movement, Brymer’s cadenza is entirely composed by him.

Yet another unique aspect to Brymer’s interpretation is his sound concept. One difference in concept is his choice to use vibrato. No other clarinetist whose recording was analyzed by the author used vibrato, with the exception of Wright, who used it sparingly. While outside of the norm for artists examined for this document, Brymer’s usage is not unusual considering his nationality. In fact, it is somewhat common among prominent British clarinetists, such as Reginald Kell and Gervase de Peyer, both of whom recorded the Mozart concerto and employed vibrato in their interpretations. What is perhaps unique to Brymer is his concept of varying the amount of tonal focus depending on the register of the instrument that is being played. David Ethridge states:

\textsuperscript{588} Ethridge, 158.
One of the most interesting features of Brymer’s approach to the concerto is his variation in certain passages of tonal focus in conjunction with contrasting *tessituras* in the melodic line, as well as contrasted dynamic levels. Brymer frequently alters the breadth of his tone according to the register of pitches and the prescribed volume level of a passage. Brymer often performs mezzo forte or forte passages in the *chalumeau* register with a broad tone, in the manner of a baritone voice. In contrast, he executes subsequent piano level, high *tessitura* phrases with a thinner tone, with the quality of a high female voice.\(^589\)

This choice to purposely alter one’s tonal focus is a major departure from the style of interpreters like Marcellus and Leister. While the tonal concepts of Marcellus and Leister are different from each other, the listener is left with the impression that each is always attempting to achieve a particular concept, regardless of range or dynamic. It is this striving for beauty of tone that perhaps makes them the two favorite interpreters of this work among the clarinet community.\(^590\) In his recordings of the Mozart Clarinet Concerto, which Leister made over the span of twenty years, we hear not just the beauty of tone that has long been admired by the clarinet community, but the evolution of that concept being realized with each rendition. While this is true for several of the works that Leister has recorded multiple times throughout his career, the transparency and subtle artistry required in the Mozart Clarinet Concerto makes it ideal for displaying this achievement.

\(^{589}\) Ethridge, 152.

\(^{590}\) Geldrich, “Definitive Clarinet Recordings Survey.”
Chapter 11

Mozart Clarinet Quintet

Like the clarinet concerto, Mozart’s *Quintet for clarinet and string quartet in A Major, KV 581* is one of the most important compositions for the clarinet and a masterpiece of its genre. Befitting a piece of this import and quality, many of the greatest clarinetists, collaborating with some of the most esteemed string quartets, have made countless recordings of it. Besides its own merit as a seminal work for the instrument, Mozart’s Clarinet Quintet is perhaps equally significant for pioneering a genre that would later be explored by future composers such as Carl Maria von Weber, Max Reger, and, most notably, Johannes Brahms, whose clarinet quintet alone rivals Mozart’s as the preeminent work of the genre.

While Mozart certainly followed the trends of his time in writing a work for a wind instrument with strings, surprisingly, his combination of the clarinet with a string quartet was unique. In her dissertation, “Quartets and quintets for mixed groups of winds and strings: Mozart and his contemporaries in Vienna, C.1780-C.1800,” Dr. Sarah Jane Adams states about the mixed wind chamber music repertoire of the late eighteenth century, “The most popular quintet setting is not, as one might have supposed, for wind, two violins, viola, and cello (i.e., wind, plus string quartet), as in Mozart's Clarinet Quintet K.581, but rather for wind, violin, two violas, and cello, as in his Horn Quintet..."
K.407, a work often cited, incorrectly, for its unusual instrumentation.\(^{591}\) In fact, in her table outlining the different instrumental combinations of the “mixed repertoire” of this time, amazingly, Mozart’s Clarinet Quintet is the sole example of its particular instrumentation out of 1229 total works.\(^{592}\) What may seem in retrospect like an obvious pairing due to the existence of multiple clarinet quintet masterworks was actually an inspired feat of ingenuity on Mozart’s part. Indeed, Mozart’s Clarinet Quintet not only helped to cultivate a significant new genre for the instrument but ushered in a new level of sophistication for clarinet compositions.\(^{593}\) Prior to the quintet, his compositions that included the clarinet were sparse. Examples of his chamber works that prominently featured the clarinet were \textit{Quintet for Piano and Winds, KV 452} and the \textit{Trio for clarinet, viola, and piano, KV 498}. Additionally, he included the clarinet in only four of his forty-one symphonies, three of his twenty-seven piano concertos, and a few operas (later ones, such as \textit{La Clemenza di Tito} and \textit{Die Zauberflote}, contain extensive writing for the instrument).\(^{594}\) Furthermore, prior to the quintet, most of the works for which Mozart wrote clarinet parts contain relatively undemanding writing. Dr. Lisa Johnson, in her dissertation, “Mozart’s Quintet for clarinet and strings: An analytic study,” states “Considering the rather primitive state of the clarinet at the time, it is all the more striking that Mozart should write for the instrument in such a sophisticated manner as in his \textit{Quintet for Clarinet and Strings in A major, K.581}, of 1789. Earlier works by the


\(^{592}\) Adams, 25.


\(^{594}\) Johnson, 4-7.
composer do not demand nearly so much from the player’s technique.” She further explains that in Mozart’s *Quintet for piano and winds, KV 452*, “The clarinet part…is really subordinate to the oboe, and more like a second oboe than a distinctive clarinet part.” And about the *Trio for clarinet, viola, and piano, KV 498*, Dr. Johnson states that “…the composer here conceives of the clarinet in relatively simple terms. The writing is restricted almost entirely to the middle and upper range of the instrument, the so-called clarino register, and neglects the lower, or chalumeau register, except for accompanying arpeggiated figures in the third movement.” In his quintet, Mozart explores the entire range of the clarinet, as he could rely upon the virtuosic abilities of his friend Anton Stadler, for whom the work is written. In fact, Mozart referred to the piece as “Stadler’s Quintet” and he wrote for the clarinet in such a novel way that Alfred Einstein states the instrument “…is treated as if Mozart were the first to discover its charms, its ‘soft, sweet breath,’ its clear depth, its agility.”

Indeed, the brilliancy of the clarinet quintet is found in its ingenuity, not just in Mozart’s clarinet writing, but in its textural balance between all parts. Homer Ulrich describes Mozart’s feat in his book *Chamber Music*:

> What is new in the K. 581 Quintet is the way in which the five instruments are combined. Mozart was faced with the possibilities of treating the clarinet as a solo instrument, thus writing nonchamber music, or of ignoring its special characteristics and treating it as just another voice in a five-voice texture, thus writing dull chamber music. He made neither mistake, but evolved a texture in which the beauties of the wind

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595 Ibid, 4.
596 Ibid.
597 Ibid, 5.
598 Ibid, 6.
instrument shine through, in which no instrument is slighted, and in which
tonal balance is achieved perfectly.\textsuperscript{600}

This portrayal of perfect “tonal balance” is described by Adams as a “synthesis of
concertante and chamber music styles.”\textsuperscript{601} She provides a historical analysis of the term
“concertante style” stating that it is used to imply several different, yet overlapping
concepts: “a textural opposition between one predominant part and the accompaniment;
virtuosity; and ‘lightness’ of style.”\textsuperscript{602} The opposing “chamber music” style almost
certainly does not refer to the literal and overly broad definition of the term, originating
as music meant for performance in the home rather than larger venue such as a church or
concert hall, or the more specific definition of music for two to eight players where there
is one player per part.\textsuperscript{603} Rather, the term is used by Adams, and other musicologists
whom she cites, to describe music which aspires to homogeneity of texture and balance
of timbres, which finds its most perfect representation in the string quartet.\textsuperscript{604}

The greatness of Mozart’s Clarinet Quintet is that he did not achieve mastery of
one category at the expense of the other, but rather that he combined two seemingly
opposing categories into one cohesive work. That the ensemble includes a complete
string quartet surely adds to the work’s effectiveness in the chamber music category.
Mozart takes full advantage of this sonority; the clarinet is silent for nearly one-third of
the first movement, completely tacet for the first trio in the third movement, and relegated
to the background and cadences for the opening theme and two of the four variations of

\textsuperscript{601} Sarah Jane Adams, “Quartets and quintets for mixed groups of winds and strings,”
323.
\textsuperscript{602} Ibid, 133.
\textsuperscript{603} Ulrich, \textit{Chamber Music}, 6-7.
\textsuperscript{604} Adams, 98-99.
the last movement.605 The work’s effectiveness in the concertante category is due to Mozart distributing the soloistic and virtuosic textures amongst all instruments, not just to the clarinet part as would be expected. The instruments’ sharing of the soloistic role is written with far greater equality than in previous wind chamber pieces, or even than is typified in a string quintet. In discussing the textural writing of the first movement of the work, Adams states, “…though it is the primary soloist, the clarinet leads approximately 50% of the time, less than would a string quintet's first violin; conversely, the first violin leads for approximately 33%, more than would the second violin in a string quintet.”606

In the author’s opinion, it is in balancing this binary categorical demand of the clarinet quintet that makes for the most effective interpretations of the piece. Rather than simply being a soloist, the greatest interpreters of this work are those who can seamlessly step in and out of that role, blending into the texture of the string quartet when Mozart relegates the clarinet to the accompanying line, yet coaxing the full brilliance of the instrument’s capabilities out of Mozart’s masterful soloistic writing. It is in this ability that the author finds Karl Leister is especially well-suited.

It should come as no surprise to the readers of this document that Leister recorded the Mozart Clarinet Quintet multiple times over a period spanning thirty years. What perhaps is surprising, is how consistent his sound and style remained across the many years that elapsed between his multiple recordings of the work. Leister’s first recording of the Mozart Clarinet Quintet was released in 1965, making it one of his first professional recordings; before his first Brahms Clarinet Quintet recording and his first

606 Ibid, 325.
Mozart Clarinet Concerto recording (recorded in 1967 and 1968, respectively). Leister’s final version of the Mozart Clarinet Quintet was made in 1995, two years after his retirement from the Berlin Philharmonic. Between his first and last renditions, Leister recorded the work two additional times; in 1981 and in 1982. Yet, despite this career-spanning timeframe, Leister’s tonal concept is remarkably consistent. This is in contrast with the works that he recorded over a similar timeframe, including the Mozart Clarinet Concerto, Brahms Clarinet Sonatas, and the Brahms Clarinet Quintet. In these other releases, the listener is subjected to an evolution of sound and style, that, in the author’s opinion, is one of the most intriguing aspects of studying Leister’s recordings. While Leister’s tone is brighter and thinner in certain early recordings compared to later recordings of the same works, his style tends to be bolder, with more dynamic contrast. However, in the 1965 recording of the Mozart Clarinet Quintet, performed with the Soloists of the Berlin Philharmonic, Leister possesses a warmthness to his tone more reminiscent of his later recordings than of other recordings he made around the same time. This could be because the chamber music setting for the Mozart Clarinet Quintet allows Leister to be heard without forcing, which he may have felt obligated to do in a

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concerto setting. Also, the refined, classical style of Mozart perhaps allows for an interpretation with a lighter sound than Leister exhibited in his early Brahms quintet and sonatas recordings.\(^{610}\) Regardless of the reason, Leister performs with a warm and refined sound that displays better blending and tuning than other recordings he made during a comparable time period.

Another aspect of interest in this first Mozart Clarinet Quintet recording is the choice of tempos. The first movement is performed at a tempo of the quarter note equals 117, which is similar to his first recording of the Mozart Clarinet Concerto. While that may seem reasonable, considering the two pieces share many similarities, not least of which is the key area of A major, many other clarinetists execute the first movement considerably faster, including Leister himself, who, in his third recording performs the movement at the much quicker tempo of the quarter equals 130, faster than any of his Mozart concerto recordings. The second movement in the first recording is also executed at a tempo similar to the concerto, at the quarter note equals 39, but, in this case, even slower than Leister’s first concerto recording which falls closer to the quarter note equals 45.\(^{611}\) Leister performs the third movement at a traditional but somewhat conservative tempo of the quarter note equals 125. One interesting choice for this movement is that the second trio, which is led by the clarinet, is taken at the slower tempo of the quarter note equals 110. In this recording, tempos in the last movement are also slow by most performance standards. Leister performs the opening of this movement at the half note

\(^{610}\) See Chapter 12 Brahms Clarinet Quintet for a discussion of Leister’s interpretations of this work.

\(^{611}\) Interestingly, Leister’s last two recordings of the Mozart Clarinet Concerto match this second movement tempo exactly, while Leister’s other two quintet recordings take the movement slightly faster, at the quarter equals 45 and 42, respectively.
equals 63. Some deviation occurs in certain variations (Variation III is performed slightly slower and variation IV is performed slightly faster), but it is minimal. The slow tempo at the opening allows the end Allegro section to be contrasting without being overly fast. The tempo for this closing section is around the half note equals 74. This tempo is similar to what many clarinetists perform for the opening Allegretto (including Leister himself, who, in his second recording, begins the Allegretto at the half note equals 73), and, perhaps, does not provide the section with a true “allegro” feel. Despite these overall conservative tempo choices, Leister’s rendition is very effective. Besides the aforementioned warm tonal quality and impeccable intonation, Leister displays a variety of articulation lengths, seamless coordination with the strings in his trills, and overt, yet, tasteful dynamic contrast. This last point is especially exhibited in the second movement, where, like in his concerto recordings, he plays the return of the opening theme softer than its initial appearance; an effective contrast few clarinetists employ. Leister likewise executes impressive dynamic control in sections where the clarinet is subordinate to the violin, such as measures 34 – 38 in the second movement, where the warmth of his tone allows him to blend into the background with the other strings giving the first violin prominence (See Figure 11.1).

Leister’s second recording of the Mozart Clarinet Quintet is noteworthy for its choice of collaborators: the Vienna String Quartet. With this rendition, Leister moves from his colleagues in the Berlin Philharmonic to an ensemble based out of the city in which Mozart composed this work. However, the overall interpretative result of this

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Figure 11.1 Measures 34-38 in Movement II of the Mozart Clarinet Quintet

recording seems more like a continuance from the first release. The tempos are all executed slightly faster. The first movement starts around the quarter note equals 120, although Leister pushes the tempo ahead at his entrance until eventually settling into a tempo that falls in the mid-120s. The second movement is performed around the quarter note equals 43. The third movement is performed at the quarter note equals 129. The last movement Allegretto begins at the half note equals 72 but slows down through the first few variations. In Variation IV, Leister brings the tempo close to the opening speed. The end Allegro section increases to the half note equals 84, a pleasant contrast to the opening. All of these tempos, while modestly quicker, seem more appropriate to the style of the work. Likewise, Leister’s tone quality, which was already warm and refined in his first recording, is slightly darker and richer. As mentioned in this document, Leister underwent some equipment changes throughout his career, and this recording, made over
fifteen years after the first, represents an improvement in tonal concept that he continually sought. What Leister gains in tonal warmth and in tempo improvements, he loses a bit in overall nuance and blend. This rendition is quite straightforward when it comes to phrasing, with minimal dynamic shifts. This could be attributed in part to the engineering of the recording, as the clarinet seems slightly over-microphoned at times. The second rendition does not exhibit the moments where the clarinet blends into the string sound, as found in Leister’s first recording of the work.

Leister’s third recording of the Mozart Clarinet Quintet, made with the Prazak Quartet, is the outlier as far as his tonal concept is concerned. Here, Leister displays a full, robust and, for him, slightly brighter sound than the other recordings he made of the work. Likewise, his approach to tempo is in keeping with this bold approach to sound. It is quicker overall than the other recordings, especially the first movement, which is performed around the quarter note equals 130. While this tempo limits the amount of phrasing nuance that can be achieved, it exhibits a greater “concertante” flair, showcasing Leister’s virtuosity. This is particularly noticeable in articulated passages, such as measures 63 and 190 where every note is tongued, seemingly without effort, despite the brisk tempo (See Figure 11.2).

Figure 11.2 Measure 63 and Measure 190 in Movement I of the Mozart Clarinet Quintet

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613 See Chapter 4 Instrumental Equipment of Stanley Drucker and Karl Leister.
614 This tempo is a full ten clicks faster than his final recording made the next year and around thirteen clicks faster than his first recording.
Many of the hallmarks found in the first recording, such as the coordination of trills between the clarinet and strings, Leister’s variety of articulations, and dynamic contrast, are apparent here as well.

It is startling to listen to Leister’s last recording of the Mozart Clarinet Quintet (made with the Brandis Quartet) immediately after listening to his third recording of the work because his tone is so different. This is Leister at his warmest and darkest tonal concept. It proves a fitting companion to his last recording of the Mozart Clarinet Concerto. Besides tonal similarities, the pacing of the first two movements (which are alike in tempo marking and form) are comparable. The first movement is slightly slower in the quintet recording at around the quarter note equals 120 versus 124 in the concerto. The concerto is slightly slower in the second movement at the quarter note equals 39 versus 42 in the quintet. And, befitting works by the same composer, these two recordings display comparable performance style: light articulation and subtle dynamic shifts. Because of this stylistic similarity, some of the same criticisms apply as well: there is less dynamic contrast in this recording than in some of the others and less variation in Leister’s articulation. Furthermore, in the author’s opinion, not enough contrast exists in tempos between the Allegretto opening of the fourth movement and the closing Allegro section. Leister and the Brandis Quartet begin the movement at the half note equals 74 and end at the half note equals 82, a difference of eight beats per minute. In contrast, his other recordings exhibit a difference of at least ten beats per minute, which the author feels is a more effective pacing that creates a sense of excitement and finality. Regardless, this rendition is remarkable for its beauty of tone, overall ensemble blend, and subtle phrasing nuance.
As with the Mozart Clarinet Concerto, Leister’s recordings of the clarinet quintet are not the most preferred by clarinetists according to the author’s survey, despite his clear affinity and experience with the work. However, also like the concerto, Leister was the second most preferred interpreter of the quintet, with over 20% of respondents choosing him. The most selected clarinetist in this case was Harold Wright with over 38% of respondents choosing him. This is an interesting choice considering that Wright was the third choice of survey respondents for the Mozart Clarinet Concerto with only 6.86% selecting him. However, Wright clearly possessed a fondness for the quintet, as three commercial recordings exist of him performing it (with an additional live performance recording with the Juilliard Quartet) as opposed to his one commercial recording of the Mozart Clarinet Concerto.

Wright applies many of the same stylistic approaches to the Mozart concerto recording and his quintet recordings. These include a varied approach to articulation and a “romantic” approach to tempo (liberally employing rubato and tempo changes within movements). Perhaps Wright’s interpretation of the quintet ranks higher than his concerto recording because these elements that Wright brings out (more than many other clarinetists) seem to fit the chamber style. The smaller group setting lends itself to greater interaction and communication which allows for more freedom in tempo and phrasing; much more than found in a large orchestral setting.

What is especially remarkable about Wright’s Mozart Clarinet Quintet recordings is how varied they are from one to the next. Analyzing tempos within his own recordings

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of the work shows great contrast: in his slowest recording (from the Marlboro Music Festival), the ensemble begins the first movement at around the quarter note equals 102; in his quickest performance of the movement (a live performance recording with the Juilliard Quartet), the movement is performed at the quarter equals 130. Perhaps even more interesting is that in the studio recording of the work with Wright and the Juilliard Quartet, the ensemble executes the opening of the movement at a quarter note equals 105, twenty-five beats per minute slower than the same group’s live performance. Likewise, this ensemble pairing displays a similar tempo disparity in the last movement: the tempo in the studio recording begins near the half note equals 66 and the live performance begins at the half equals 76. These differences demonstrate that the musicians do not just share an affinity for the work, but also a willingness to explore how dramatic tempo changes might alter the character and mood of the piece.

It is in the recordings where the first movement starts in a slower tempo that we see the most fluid approach to time. In both the Marlboro and Juilliard Quartet recordings, after the strings begins the work, Wright pushes the tempo ahead at the clarinet entrance in measure 7, only to have the strings slow the tempo back down in measure 9. This push and pull of tempo between clarinet and string quartet is exhibited in much of the movement in each recording. This is most dramatic at the development section where the theme is again iterated at a slow tempo (measure 83), this time with the clarinet leading and the strings abruptly changing to a much quicker tempo at measure 89. Both recordings take the section from measures 89 to 115 faster than the quarter note
equals 120 until the main theme returns at measure 118 at its original slower tempo around the quarter equals 105 (See Figure 11.3).^{617}

Figure 11.3 Measures 80-119 in Movement I of the Mozart Clarinet Quintet
Blue brackets denote original tempo and red brackets denote accelerated tempo

Figure 11.3 Measures 80-119 in Movement I of the Mozart Clarinet Quintet
Blue brackets denote original tempo and red brackets denote accelerated tempo
Regarding articulation, Wright is one of the most distinct interpreters of the work. One of the more intriguing discoveries when analyzing different recordings of the Mozart Clarinet Quintet is how uniform the articulation choices are amongst artists. This is in contrast to the Mozart Clarinet Concerto where articulation choice is one of the main distinguishing factors between interpretations. In the quintet, measures that include long strings of sixteenth notes tend to vary between notes being all articulated, all slurred, or alternating in a tongue two-slur two style. Measures that begin with an eighth note followed by sixteenth notes are frequently all articulated. In the first movement, this includes measures 40-41, 63, and 190 (See Figure 11.4 and Figure 11.2).\(^{619}\)

\[\text{Figure 11.3 Measures 80-119 in Movement I of the Mozart Clarinet Quintet}
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Blue brackets denote original tempo and red brackets denote accelerated tempo.

\[\text{Figure 11.4 Measures 40-41 in Movement I of Mozart Clarinet Quintet}
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\(^{618}\) For a detailed discussion of articulation variety in recordings of the clarinet concerto, see Chapter 10 Mozart Clarinet Concerto.

In contrast, similar measures in the first movement of the Mozart Clarinet Concerto do not share the same consensus. Concerto measure 141 possesses the same rhythmic delineations as measure 40 in the quintet, yet it is often performed all slurred.\(^{620}\) One interpreter who plays this passage of the concerto articulated rather than slurred, is Wright, who performs the similar measure of the quintet articulated as well. This shows that he is not just distinct in the variety of articulations he chooses, but is perhaps also one of the most consistent within a style.\(^{621}\) One of the articulations that makes Wright unique within the context of the Mozart Clarinet Quintet is his employment of slur two-tongue six in select sixteenth note passages. He most often performs this articulation style in arpeggiated passages. In the first movement, he uses this particular articulation in measures 78 and 196 for all of his recordings (See Figure 11.5).\(^{622}\) In contrast, Leister slurs both measures mentioned above in all of his recordings. This shows an equal consistency, but a differing stylistic view. Leister chooses to demonstrate the legato character within Mozart most often, while Wright seems more open to displaying a broader stylistic range.

![Figure 11.5 Measures 78 and 196 in Movement I of the Mozart Clarinet Quintet](image)

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\(^{620}\) This articulation style is performed by Robert Marcellus and in all recordings by Karl Leister, the two most favored interpreters of the work.

\(^{621}\) Another artist who articulates both passages discussed above is Jack Brymer.

One aspect of interpretation that both Leister and Wright share, missing from many other clarinetists’ renditions of the work, is their implementation of a lilting feel to the second trio of the third movement. This effect can be created by playing the third beat of each measure slightly broader than the preceding two beats of this 3/4 time section. Considering that the section is in the style of a Ländler, a country dance, the approach seems especially appropriate. By performing this trio in a distinct fashion, it highlights the difference in character from the rest of the minuet-styled movement.

While not one of the preferred interpreters of the Mozart Clarinet Quintet according to the author’s survey, it is worth noting that Stanley Drucker made three recordings of the work, which is more than any other early standard literature he recorded. These recordings include two commercial releases, one with the Elysium String Quartet and one with the Essex Quartet, as well as a live recording release featured on the Heritage Collection set with the Juilliard Quartet. Even though Drucker is not known for his interpretation of this repertoire, these recordings are all of a high quality and present interesting comparisons.

The performance that provides the most pertinent comparison is the live recording with the Juilliard Quartet; the most established quartet with whom Drucker performed the work, and an ensemble that has already been mentioned for their two recordings with

623 Lisa Johnson, “Mozart’s Quintet for Clarinet and Strings,” 60.
Wright. The first, and most pronounced contrast between the Drucker-Juilliard Quartet live recording and the Wright-Juilliard Quartet performance is that the Drucker and the ensemble take both repeats in the first movement. This is not just at odds with Wright’s performance, where neither repeat is taken, but at odds with all the other recordings that the author has analyzed where taking the first repeat, and not the second, appears to be standard practice. This is quite interesting considering that Mozart wrote two repeats in the movement. One would think that disregarding Mozart’s written instructions would be a minority decision, but the opposite holds true.

Regarding pacing, the Drucker-Juilliard Quartet tempos differ from both Wright-Juilliard performances, except in the fourth movement. In this movement, the opening tempo falls around the half note equals 75 and the end Allegro section settles near a half note equals 85. This is very similar to the Wright-Juilliard live performance. The first movement in the Drucker performance is around the quarter note equals 120, a traditional tempo that is faster than the Wright-Juilliard commercial recording and slower than the Wright-Juilliard live recording. Drucker’s second movement is performed close to the quarter note equals 40, which is marginally slower than Wright’s performance with the group. Drucker and the Juilliard Quartet perform the third movement around the quarter note equals 144, a relatively fast tempo for this movement. While this effectively portrays the dance-like character, it perhaps does not allow for as much phrasing nuance as slower tempos, like the ones that Leister and Wright employ to bring out the lilting Ländler feel.

Despite some tempo differences, there are some noteworthy similarities between Drucker and Wright’s performances. One of the most striking is their use of vibrato. For
American orchestral clarinetists, use of vibrato is unusual.\textsuperscript{625} Their minimal employment of vibrato also makes Drucker and Wright unique amongst players from other countries, like Reginald Kell and Gervase de Peyer from England, whose use of vibrato is far more prevalent than either of their American counterparts. In this aspect, the author finds Drucker the most effective practitioner of vibrato for his use of it in the Mozart Clarinet Quintet. On the one hand, Drucker uses vibrato more often than Wright does in his recordings, providing Drucker with additional contrast and color at times. On the other hand, he is more judicious in its usage than Kell or de Peyer, whose ubiquitous vibrato usage dulls its effectiveness, in the author’s opinion. The author feels that Drucker’s use of vibrato in this piece is most effective in his commercial recording with the Elysium Quartet. This is the performance where Drucker utilizes the most amount of vibrato; however, subtlety and only on particular occasions. For instance, in the first movement, Drucker employs vibrato sparingly. However, in the Adagio second movement, its usage becomes ever more pronounced. This helps highlight the more lyrical and intimate quality of the movement. In the third movement, the author likewise finds Drucker’s use of vibrato very effective. As the third movement is in the form of a minuet with two trios, there are multiple sections that contrast in style. In the opening minuet section, Drucker seldomly uses vibrato, if at all. However, in the second trio, where the clarinet assumes the lead (after being tacet in the first trio), his usage of vibrato becomes much more pronounced. This is an effective way of highlighting the contrast of the section, and, in the author’s opinion, especially appropriate for the character of the trio, which is in the

\textsuperscript{625} Use of vibrato is more typical for American clarinet soloists, such as Richard Stoltzman and David Shifrin.
style of a rustic dance. Additionally, Drucker successfully employs vibrato in the fourth movement of this recording. Because the fourth movement is a theme and variations, there are even more opportunities for character change as well as texture change. In this movement, the clarinet frequently switches from an accompanying role to one of melodic prominence. Drucker minimizes vibrato in the variations where the clarinet is more subordinate, but increases the vibrato on held notes where the clarinet is the lead voice, such as in Variation I. This stylistic nuance is noticeable in his live performance with the Juilliard Quartet as well, and so is clearly a deliberate and practiced choice for this work.

Also, like Wright, Drucker is quite effective at altering his articulation lengths as another means of creating character change. In both his Elysium Quartet recording and his live Juilliard Quartet performance, Drucker plays with a more legato style articulation in the first movement, but a more secco style in the fourth movement. This is especially noticeable in the live Juilliard Quartet recording in Variation IV, where the clarinet and first violin alternate fast sixteenth note arpeggiation (Figure See 11.6).

It is most common for the clarinetist to articulate these passages in a slur two-tongue two style (Leister employs this particular articulation choice in all of his recordings). Yet, in Drucker’s live performance, he instead articulates every single sixteenth note, after slurring just the first two sixteenths, at a tempo close to the quarter note equals 140. This contrasts with his two other recordings where he employs the standard slur two-tongue two pattern (with the Essex Quartet) and an equally unusual

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Figure 11.6 Measures 1-16 in Variation IV of Movement IV of the Mozart Clarinet Quintet
style of slurring the first two measures of the passage and reverting to a slur two-tongue two style for the next two measures (with the Elysium Quartet). Drucker’s execution of a different articulation pattern in this passage for each of his recorded performances displays his propensity, like Wright, towards experimenting with varieties of color, texture, and nuance in a piece, even one as standard as the Mozart Clarinet Quintet.

These stylistic explorations are somewhat at odds with an interpreter such as Karl Leister. It was mentioned in the previous chapter (Mozart Clarinet Concerto), that Leister “could have been searching for the character that most accurately and truthfully brings Mozart’s conception to life,” because of the subtle changes and linear stylistic evolution apparent in his multiple recordings of the work.627 It should come as no surprise that Leister brings this same feeling of continuity of style, with subtle changes in tempo and phrasing, to his recordings of the Mozart Clarinet Quintet. Where artists like Stanley Drucker and Harold Wright leave a legacy of numerous recordings of this masterpiece, each sounds distinct and fresh compared to the others which they have released before or after. Leister’s renditions, on the other hand, sound closely aligned. After listening to all of Leister’s recordings of the work, one is left with the impression of confidence in a stylistic approach, which, while never sounding bold, sounds authoritative. Instead of an opportunity to experiment with stylistic concepts, Karl Leister seems to present each recording as a reassertion of an interpretive statement. That this statement is presented with a beauty of tone that is more apparent with each recording makes it all the more compelling.

627 See Chapter 10 Mozart Clarinet Concerto, 199.
Chapter 12

Brahms Clarinet Quintet

Of all the works recorded by Karl Leister, it is the *Clarinet Quintet in B minor, op. 115* with which he is most associated. Clarinetists interviewed for this document unanimously selected Leister’s recording of the Brahms Clarinet Quintet with the Amadeus String Quartet as an important rendition for clarinetists to know.628 Likewise, in the author’s “Definitive Clarinet Recordings Survey,” respondents preferred Leister’s recording of this work; remarkably, the only recording in the survey where Leister was the sole favorite.629 For a piece that occupies a special place in the clarinet repertoire, and one that possesses a long history of revered artists recording it, this distinction is especially significant.

Formally, the Brahms Clarinet Quintet is strikingly similar to its most notable forerunner, the Mozart Clarinet Quintet. This work is also discussed in this document and happens to be one that Leister has released multiple, well-regarded recordings.630 Discussing the similarities between the two works, Colin Lawson states, “Each work

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628 Clarinetists interviewed for this document were: Mitchell Estrin, Steven Cohen, Larry Guy, and Michele Zukovsky.
629 Leister’s recording of Weber’s first clarinet concerto was tied with Sabine Meyer’s recording as the preferred recording of that piece.
630 See Chapter 11 Mozart Clarinet Quintet.
contains an opening sonata movement, a ternary slow movement and a concluding set of variations.”\textsuperscript{631} Lawson further notes that Mozart “directly anticipates Brahms” in “integrating the clarinet with the string texture to a remarkable degree.”\textsuperscript{632} Additionally, the use of a clarinet in the key of A (as opposed to B-flat) was undoubtedly influential on Brahms.\textsuperscript{633} Perhaps most interesting are the parallels between the virtuosi for whom each work is written; both pieces were written for extraordinary musicians who inspired their composer friends, late in their lives, to write multiple works for the clarinet. Lawson even mentions that “…it was Richard Mühlfeld’s performance of Mozart’s Quintet which played a major part in inspiring Brahms to begin work on his own Clarinet Quintet.”\textsuperscript{634}

Despite the many similarities between these two quintets, and the undoubtable influence that Mozart’s work had on Brahms, the Brahms Clarinet Quintet is a distinct and monumental achievement in its own right. Although the Mozart quintet exhibits moments of melancholy, Mozart’s choice of A major provides the work with an overall sense of optimism and joy. Brahms’ choice of B minor, on the other hand, gives his work, in the words of Malcolm Macdonald, “…a spirit of mellow reflection, tinged with autumnal melancholy.”\textsuperscript{635} Colin Lawson emphasizes that “The character and mood of Brahms’ Clarinet Quintet is markedly influenced by the degree to which the tonic key of B minor prevails,” and that “There can scarcely ever have been a work of such length so bound to one tonality.”\textsuperscript{636} Adding to this prevailing sense of melancholy are unifying

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\textsuperscript{632} Lawson, \textit{Brahms Clarinet Quintet}, 1.  
\textsuperscript{633} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{634} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{635} Malcolm MacDonald, \textit{Brahms} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 362.  
\textsuperscript{636} Lawson, 47.  
\end{flushleft}
features, such as the choice by Brahms to end every movement of the work at a soft dynamic and to infuse each movement with descending melodic motives.\textsuperscript{637} The most important of these compositional devices would be the theme of the first movement which returns to end the entire work with a “winter chill in the autumnal glow.”\textsuperscript{638}

When searching for information on how to interpret this masterwork, an obvious starting point for the clarinetist is in the written accounts of Richard Mühlfeld, whose playing style inspired all of Brahms’ clarinet works. Although Mühlfeld was alive during the beginnings of recorded sound, unfortunately no known recordings of his playing exist.\textsuperscript{639} However, numerous documents that describe his playing survive. While reading these accounts, it is clear that Mühlfeld was a unique and inspirational presence who impacted numerous composers and musicians. Early in his career, Mühlfeld partook in the premiere performance of Richard Wagner’s Ring Cycle which led Wagner to write a letter recommending him for the Meiningen Court Orchestra, stating, “While conducting several symphonic pieces I became aware of Mr. Richard Mühlfeld as an extraordinarily gifted clarinetist.”\textsuperscript{640} Hans von Bülow, conductor of the Meiningen orchestra and an influential figure in the musical scene of Germany during the time of Wagner and Brahms, described Mühlfeld as the “most gifted artist” in the woodwind section of his orchestra.\textsuperscript{641} And, of course, Brahms himself was enamored with Mühlfeld’s playing.

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\textsuperscript{637} Ibid, 47-48.
\textsuperscript{638} McDonald, 366.
\textsuperscript{639} Lawson, 67.
stating in a letter to Clara Schumann that “There is no way to play the clarinet more beautifully than this Mr. Mühlfeld does.”

In regard to Mühlfeld’s tone, there is reason to believe that he played with a rather extreme vibrato, a characteristic that was probably as controversial in Mühlfeld’s time as it is today. The renowned English clarinetist Jack Brymer retells the impression of a viola player who had performed the quintet with Mühlfeld, who stated that Mühlfeld played with “a big vibrato,” and clarified that it was “much more than Joachim,” Brahms’ violinist friend who premiered the work with his quartet. This is especially interesting, as Mühlfeld began his musical career as a violinist, and it is this background that likely added to the distinctive quality that set him apart as a clarinetist.

Trying to identify more specifics regarding Mühlfeld’s interpretive style is difficult. Descriptions of Mühlfeld’s playing as being “individual” and “emphatic” exist, which the author assumes to mean that he was not subtle in his playing style. This would seem to correspond with a prominent vibrato, as well as to statements about his tone being “heavy and over-predominating.” Some interesting comments about his playing style note his employment of different timbres for different registers. In the book Richard Mühlfeld, Brahms’ Clarinettist, the authors Maren Goltz and Herta Müller examine a collection of performance reviews saved and documented by Mühlfeld’s brother, Christian Mühlfeld. In this section of the book, the authors call attention to

642 Ibid.
645 Ibid.
646 Lawson, 69-70.
647 Ibid, 70.
multiple critics who describe his tone as similar to certain instruments in different dynamics and registers. For instance, one critic describes Mühlfeld taking on “the voice of the flute” in soft passages, whereas “the lowest notes in full volume sounded like a bass clarinet or a bassoon.”648 This concept was reiterated by another critic who stated that Mühlfeld “made out the dark timbre of the bassoon in the bottom register, a gentle and stroking oboe in the middle notes, and for the top the soft sound of a flute.”649 The author finds in the above descriptions an interesting correlation with Jack Brymer’s use of “contrasting tessituras” as discussed in Chapter 10 of this document. Brymer has been cited as using a “broad tone, in the manner of a baritone voice” for mezzo forte and forte musical lines in the chalumeau register of the instrument and “a thinner tone, with the quality of a high female voice” in softer, higher musical lines.650 This seems similar to Mühlfeld’s employment of a bassoon-like timbre in the lower register, a wind instrument with a vibrant, resonant tonal character, and a flute-like timbre in the upper register, which would imply a clearer, more open sound. This also contrasts with the tonal characteristic of Leister, whose recordings display a trajectory towards a more unified, homogenous sound concept across the registers and dynamics. It is worth noting the significant contrast of playing styles between the clarinetist (Mühlfeld) for whom the work was written and the clarinetist (Leister) who now is perhaps most associated with the work.

Like many of the works discussed in this document, Leister’s affinity for the Brahms Clarinet Quintet can be established by the simple means of looking at how many

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648 Maren Goltz/Herta Müller, Richard Mühlfeld: Brahms’ Clarinettist, 221.
649 Ibid.
650 David Etheridge, Mozart’s Clarinet Concerto: The Clarinetist’s View, 152.
recordings of the work he has made, and over how many years he has returned to it. Leister has released an astounding six studio recordings of this masterwork, more than any other work.\textsuperscript{651} These recordings transpired between 1967 and 1996. An additional live performance recording from 2005 exists, which, though not commercially available, impressively documents Leister’s stylistic evolution involving a single work spanning thirty-eight years.\textsuperscript{652} Even so, Leister’s first recording of this piece, made with the Amadeus String Quartet, is still the most celebrated.\textsuperscript{653}

Undoubtedly, a large part of this album’s success is due to Leister’s performance partners, the Amadeus String Quartet. Leister referred to the ensemble as “The most fantastic in the world.”\textsuperscript{654} The quartet was especially known for their collaborations with other musicians. An obituary published in the Guardian for Siegmund Nissel, the group’s second violinist, stated that the quartet achieved “household name status for performance of the Viennese classics - above all, the string quartets by Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven and Schubert, and works with an additional instrument, such as Mozart's Clarinet Quintet and

\textsuperscript{651} Karl Leister has stated he recorded the work eight times, but the author has only discovered evidence of six studio recordings. Leister has recorded the Mozart Clarinet Concerto four times and the Mozart Clarinet Quintet five times, both remarkable numbers in their own right, making his at least six studio recordings of the Brahms Quintet even more astounding. An analysis of this live recording is not presented in this document as it is not available to the public. However, a commercial recording with the same ensemble, Karl Leister and the Leipzig String Quartet, is discussed in the document.

\textsuperscript{652} Karl Leister gifted the author a professionally mastered, non-commercial recording of this special concert.

\textsuperscript{653} Johannes Brahms, Johannes, Brahms: Complete String Quartets, Quintets, Sextets, Amadeus Quartet and Karl Leister, recorded in 1967, Deutsche Grammophon 474 358-2, Compact disc set.

\textsuperscript{654} Karl Leister, Interview with Peter Geldrich, December 19, 2005, Berlin, Germany.
Schubert’s String Quintet. While the Brahms quintet is not specifically mentioned in the above quote, it fits both categories mentioned; works for quartet with an additional instrument and a Viennese classic. In the book *Married to the Amadeus*, Muriel Nissel, Siegmund’s wife, states that “The recordings they [the Amadeus Quartet] made in conjunction with other artists were of great importance.” She lists their collaboration with Leister on the Brahms Quintet amongst these recordings of “great importance.” The collaboration between Leister and the Amadeus Quartet truly makes this recording stand out from others. The string players and Leister are in perfect balance throughout the recording with no part over-dominating, and every line heard appropriate to the texture. Yet, the ensemble does not sound as though they are playing cautiously. There is a remarkable amount of nuance in this recording; arguably more than any of Leister’s other renditions. In an interview with the author, Leister made a point to emphasize that the movements were not broken down into multiple takes. The Amadeus Quartet insisted upon this and all four movements were recorded in entire takes.

A hallmark of Leister’s many performances of the work is his ability to bring a hushed timbre to pianissimo sections. Leister accomplishes this to a greater degree than other clarinetists in the recordings that the author analyzed for this document. An example of this is measures 51 through 54 in the first movement (see Figure 12.1).

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657 Ibid.


The part is not marked pianissimo but simply *dolce*, with a crescendo to a forte printed in measure 55. Leister’s whispered timbre at his entrance in measure 51 and the downbeat of 52 highlights the dolce character and allows for an effective crescendo to occur. This character is also present in the second movement in measures 128 through 131 (see Figure 12.2).\(^{660}\) This section is marked pianissimo, which remains the prevailing dynamic through the end of the movement. In listening, one gets the sense that Leister is playing just loud enough to keep the reed vibrating and no more. Leister’s ability to employ a hushed quality in his playing also makes moments where the clarinet functions as accompaniment especially effective. This is noticeable in measures 9 through 12 in the second movement (see Figure 12.3), where, after the clarinet begins the movement with the melody, the first violin takes over and the clarinet plays soft syncopated quarter notes. In the recording with the Amadeus Quartet, Leister blends into the texture more than in other recordings of the work, either by Leister himself or by other clarinetists in recordings analyzed by the author.

\(^{660}\) Brahms, Quintett für Klarinette, 2 Violinen, Bratsche, und Violoncell, Op. 115, 21.
Figure 12.2 Measures 128 to 131 in Movement II of the Brahms Clarinet Quintet

Figure 12.3 Measures 9 to 13 in Movement II of the Brahms Clarinet Quintet
This technique is likewise employed in soft passages where the clarinet is in unison with strings, such as in measures 123 and 124 in the first movement (see Figure 12.4).\textsuperscript{661} In this section, the clarinet part is written one octave below the first violin and Leister’s unique tone enables him to seamlessly blend into the violin’s sound.

![Figure 12.4 Measures 123 to 125 in Movement I of the Brahms Clarinet Quintet](image)

Another trademark of Leister’s playing style is his long, fluid musical lines. This is particularly on display in the lyrical second and third movements throughout all of his recordings. Leister’s rendition with the Amadeus Quartet is particularly noteworthy for his performance in the beginning of the second movement. Here, the clarinet has the melody for the first seven bars (see Figure 12.5).\textsuperscript{662}

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\textsuperscript{661} Ibid, 8.
\textsuperscript{662} Ibid, 13.
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Figure 12.5 Measures 1 to 7 in Movement II of the Brahms Clarinet Quintet

The ensemble performs the movement with a starting tempo around the quarter note equals 41, and broadens the tempo further into measure 5, where there is a written sforzando. Leister plays the entire phrase, which takes about thirty-three seconds, in one breath, the only recording where he does this. Few other clarinetists accomplish this feat. The only recording that the author found where the opening of this movement is executed in one breath is with Herbert Stähr (Leister’s colleague in the Berlin Philharmonic) and members of the Berlin Octet. However, Stähr plays the opening at a tempo of the quarter note equals 46, five clicks faster than Leister, which affords Stähr an additional five seconds. Most other clarinetists choose to take a quick breath after the second

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measure in order to last the remainder of the phrase (Reginald Kell, Harold Wright, and Stanley Drucker all breathe at this moment). In all of Leister’s other Brahms quintet recordings, he chooses to breathe after the second beat in measure 4. David Shifrin also chooses this place to breathe.

In addition to the lyrical character of its opening, the second movement contains the longest section of virtuosic writing for the clarinet in the work. The middle section of the second movement, starting at measure 52 and marked *Più lento*, is comprised almost entirely of gypsy-like flourishes in the clarinet part while the strings are subordinated to tremolos and sustained, chordal accompaniment. Malcolm MacDonald describes this section as encompassing “a desolately beautiful series of florid clarinet arabesques that spiral and swoop over a fantastic string texture of rustling tremolandi. The effect is of wild, spontaneous improvisation…” For the author, this “effect of wild, spontaneous improvisation” is best achieved by Leister in his early recording with the Amadeus Quartet, where the flourishes are imparted in a quicker and bolder style than in his later renderings, which are more reserved.

If there is fault in the Leister-Amadeus Quartet recording, it is that Leister is not quite as refined in his pitch and tonal quality. Perhaps partially due to his bold playing, and partially due to the instrument he utilized, Leister occasionally is out of tune with the quartet and his tone becomes thinner. Both instances occur most often in the upper range of the instrument. However, this can also result in some more effective moments when Brahms’ dynamic marking indicates a bolder style. Leister’s later renditions of the

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665 See Chapter 4 Instrumental Equipment of Stanley Drucker and Karl Leister for a discussion on Leister’s change in instrumental setup.
work, which are notable for their homogenous and near perfect intonation, lack intensity at times. An example of this bold playing in the early rendition, and more tempered playing in later recordings, appears in the second movement from measure 68 to 72 (see Figure 12.6).\textsuperscript{666} This is the climax of the movement, and possibly of the entire piece, as measure 70 contains the only written fortissimo dynamic of the entire work, and the clarinet’s printed high G on beat two is the highest note for the instrument in the work.\textsuperscript{667} Leister’s early recording with the Amadeus Quartet presents the most intensity at this particular moment.\textsuperscript{668} In other recordings, such as those with the Vermeer Quartet and the Brandis Quartet, Leister is all but drowned out by the string quartet. His last recording with the Leipzig String Quartet exhibits a good balance here, but an overall lack of excitement in the work’s climatic moments.\textsuperscript{669}

If one is searching for a rendition of the Brahms quintet that best captures the work’s intensity and vitality, the recording with the British clarinet soloist Reginald Kell

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Figure 12.6 Measures 68 to 72 in Movement II of the Brahms Clarinet Quintet
and the Busch Quartet would make for a fitting choice.\textsuperscript{670} The author feels that none of Leister’s recordings fully achieve this effect. Indeed, Kell’s recording is considered “one of the most celebrated interpretations” of the work.\textsuperscript{671} Leister himself considers the Kell recording to be “very good,” and in a conversation with the author, he pointed out the connection between the year of Kell’s recording and his birth, 1937.\textsuperscript{672}

There is also reason to believe that Kell’s playing may be more closely aligned with how Richard Mühlfeld would have interpreted the work. Kell played with a distinct vibrato, a quality that, as previously discussed, Mühlfeld employed as well. Robert Philip in his book \textit{Early Recordings and Musical Style} states that Kell’s “phrasing is extremely flexible, with detailed dynamic nuances, a wide dynamic range, and a vibrato which varies in prominence from one note to another…The slow movement of the Brahms’s Quintet shows that in a really dominant solo his vibrato becomes very prominent."\textsuperscript{673} Besides a similarity in vibrato usage, the description of Kell imparting flexible phrasing, dynamic nuance, and a wide dynamic range would all be in keeping with descriptions of Mühlfeld’s playing cited earlier. Another connection between the two eminent clarinetists is the fact that both began as violinists.\textsuperscript{674} This mutual background might account for several of their shared stylistic traits. In describing Kell’s style, clarinetist John Denman

\textsuperscript{671} Lawson, 79.
\textsuperscript{672} Karl Leister, Interview with Peter Geldrich, December 18, 2015, Berlin, Germany.
stated that he was “the equal of the violin, cello and piano soloists of his time, matching their styles of rubato and vibrato.”

In terms of Kell and the Busch Quartet’s recording being among the most exciting renditions, this is apparent right from the beginning of the work. The opening tempo, of approximately the dotted quarter note equals 50, is among the fastest analyzed by the author. Several of Leister’s recordings fall in the mid-40s, including his recordings with the Vermeer Quartet, the Berliner Solisten, and the Brandis Quartet. Interestingly, Leister’s quickest tempo occurs in his last recording with the Leipzig String Quartet. In this rendition, the movement starts around the dotted quarter note equals 50 but decelerates in speed by the clarinet entrance in measure 5. Leister performs with freedom in the opening clarinet line, distorting the sense of pulse. However, the tempo accelerates to around 50 again by measure 18 and retains that pulse for most of the movement. Leister’s recording with the Amadeus Quartet exemplifies a similar trajectory. Although it begins a little slower than the Kell recording, as well as Leister’s later recording with the Leipzig Quartet (with an opening tempo around the dotted quarter note equals 47), the ensemble quickens to a tempo around 50 by measure 26. This is a tactic also employed by Kell and the Busch Quartet. Even though the ensemble starts the work at one of the fastest tempos analyzed by the author, they push the tempo even faster at measure 26, to around the dotted quarter note equals 60, far quicker than any other rendition heard by the author. These tempos may not strike the reader as particularly fast for a movement designated as Allegro, but in the Kell-Busch recording, the section from measures 26 to

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35, which has each part alternating sixteenth triplet note passages, sounds frantic (see Figure 12.7). The author wonders if it is because of this recording, which is among the earliest of the work, that the standard tempo for the movement seems to have settled at the dotted quarter note falling somewhere in the mid-40s.\textsuperscript{676}

\begin{figure}[h]
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\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure12_7.png}
\caption{Measures 26 to 35 in Movement I of the Brahms Clarinet Quintet}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{676} Other recordings that use this slower tempo are David Shifrin with the Emerson String Quartet and Harold Wright with the Boston Chamber Players. Ibid, 3.
Regardless of the suitability of Reginald Kell and the Busch Quartet’s tempo choices, they do add an element of excitement and intensity to the work. These rapid tempos also make lyrical passages, where the ensemble slows the tempo, especially contrasting. Kell and the Busch Quartet perform the *Quasi sostenuto* section (starting at measure 98) near the dotted quarter note equals 45, which is the tempo that many ensembles execute most of the movement. But because they perform the proceeding tempo quicker than the dotted quarter note equals 60, the *Quasi sostenuto* feels especially relaxed. While this section, in most recordings, occurs at a slower tempo than what proceeds it, Kell and the Busch Quartet’s significantly quicker pulse provides a particularly striking contrast.

This contrast holds true for Kell and the Busch Quartet’s second movement. Their tempo for the *Adagio* is among the slowest analyzed, with the opening section performed near the quarter note equals 40, and at times, the group broadens the tempo even more than that. This provides for a distinct difference in feel to the quick tempo of the *Allegro* first movement. One of the interesting discoveries one makes when analyzing recordings of the Brahms quintet is that often the first two movements are performed at a similar pulse, with the dotted quarter note pulse of the first movement executed at a comparable speed to the quarter note pulse of the second movement. All of Leister’s recordings possess tempos for the first two movements within 10 beats per minute of each other, and several, including his recordings with the Vermeer Quartet, Berlin Solisten, and Brandis Quartet, are within 5 beats per minute of each other. In the author’s opinion, recordings that feature a greater contrast in tempo between these two movements are more effective. For Leister, it is his first and last recordings, with the Amadeus and
Leipzig String Quartets respectively, that provide the greatest contrast. Kell does this to an even greater degree than Leister or any other artist analyzed by the author. Kell likewise creates great contrast within the second movement by performing the *Più lento* section, discussed earlier, at a faster tempo than most other artists. It is hard to gauge tempo for this section due to the freedom of the rhapsodic clarinet part, but Kell plays the various flourishes faster than many other clarinetists, adding intensity and drive to this section. Furthermore, in the most climatic moment of the section, from measures 68 to 72 (see Figure 12.6), Kell is less cautious in the upper register of his instrument, which allows the clarinet to soar over the string parts. This is also the case for the very last section of the work. At the end of the fourth movement, starting in the pickup to measure 211, the clarinet plays an ascending line without any string accompaniment for about three measures (see Figure 12.8).677

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677 Ibid, 35.
This ascending line raises in volume as well, climaxing with a printed high E at a forte dynamic on the downbeat of measure 212. This is the second highest note of the work, and the remainder of the work (the last 11 measures) descends both in range and in volume. Kell performs this last ascending line in a full and deliberate manner, where Leister and others (for example, Shifrin and Wright) seem to approach the forte high E with caution, which results in a smoother line, but perhaps does not effectively display the character of this last musical climax.

However, there are drawbacks to the Kell-Busch Quartet recording. The most apparent is the poor sound quality, most likely due to the recording technology available during its early recording date of 1937. Also, as mentioned previously, some of the tempo choices, while exciting, can make certain sections of the work sound frantic. Another characteristic of Kell’s playing that can, at times, detract from the style of the piece, is his tendency to provide excessive nuance, which can disrupt the phrase. For the author, this is most noticeable in the third movement. The movement opens with a linear melody marked *semplice* in the clarinet that lasts for 7 measures, after which, the violin joins in an octave above. No break exists in the musical line for 20 measures, and for the entire first section this linear character persists. Leister’s warm, homogenous tone seems particularly well-suited to this section’s *semplice* style. Kell on the other hand adds unwritten accents that disrupt the smoothness of the line and make the phrase sound more angular. Furthermore, it should be noted that Kell and the Busch Quartet do not precisely adhere to the form of the work. The ensemble does not take the repeat in the first movement and omits the repeat in the fourth movement from measures 145 to 160. Every other performance analyzed took each repeat as notated. This is a reversal of the
analysis from the Mozart Clarinet Quintet where only one recording adhered to Mozart’s form by taking both repeats in the first movement (Stanley Drucker’s live performance recording with the Juilliard Quartet).

The Brahms quintet recording that was the second choice (among the clarinet community) to Leister’s rendition with the Amadeus Quartet was David Shifrin’s performance with the Emerson String Quartet. Like the Leister recording, this selection is likely due to the collaboration between Shifrin, one of the most distinguished clarinet soloists of the present day, and the Emerson String Quartet, arguably the most acclaimed string quartet of their generation. The performance of both clarinetist and quartet is gritty and intense, perhaps to a greater degree than Leister and Amadeus. Because of Shifrin’s use of slight vibrato, he better matches the string timbre and add greater resonance to his tone than Leister achieves. The Shifrin-Emerson performance is also nuanced, with pronounced dynamic contrast.

In the author’s opinion, some of the tempo choices in the Shifrin recording are not as effective as other performances. The first two movements of the work are at almost identical pulses, with the first movement performed approximately at the dotted quarter note equals 45 and the second movement performed at the quarter note equals 44. This relatively slow tempo for the first movement does not allow for much contrast in tempo between sections. For instance, the Quasi sostenuto section in the first movement is

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678 David Shifrin’s recording received only one vote fewer than Karl Leister’s (27 votes for Shifrin and 28 for Leister).

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performed by the ensemble around the dotted quarter note equals 41, not much slower than the opening tempo. Some contrast is achieved by the ensemble’s acceleration of the section just prior to the *Quasi sostenuto* to above the dotted quarter equals 50. However, because the opening section does not have as much of an allegro tempo, the *Quasi sostenuto* feels more like a return to the opening tempo than an entirely new pulse. The similarity in tempo between the first two movements also can make the opening of the second movement sound a little hurried. And while Shifrin’s playing exhibits more intensity than Leister’s, he does not attain the same level of dynamic nuance in his soft playing.

In 2002 Stanley Drucker released the recording, *Stanley Drucker Plays Brahms*, which contained his first commercial recording of the clarinet quintet.\(^{679}\) While not the repertoire for which he is known, this album is remarkable for its presentation of the entire chamber works of Brahms for clarinet by one of the world’s most prominent clarinetists in the twilight of his career. This recording was released more than fifty years after Drucker began his career with the New York Philharmonic.\(^ {680}\) Despite Drucker’s association with more modern repertoire, the performance of the clarinet quintet on this recording is excellent. Drucker plays with a more prominent vibrato than on recordings early in his career, which, like in the renditions by Kell and Shifrin, works well within a texture of string instruments that all employ vibrato. Additionally, Drucker and the Elysium Quartet are well-balanced, with the clarinet always audible but never over-dominating. Also, contrary to Drucker’s extensive musical maturity, the recording sounds

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\(^{680}\) See Chapter 1 Stanley Drucker Biography for a chronology of Drucker’s career.
youthful and light, opposite of the weighty tom that it is often portrayed to be by many clarinetists. This is especially noticeable in the second movement. Drucker and the Elysium Quartet perform the opening section of the movement at around the quarter note equals 49, a fast tempo compared to other recordings. The Più lento section in the movement is likewise performed at a comparatively quick tempo. In some cases, this can be exciting, but in this recording it sounds less rhapsodic and free, and instead, more measured. For the author, this lack of nuance diminishes the effectiveness of the work’s performance.

A second recording of Stanley Drucker performing the work, from a live performance in 1968 at the Library of Congress with the Juilliard Quartet, exists. In the author’s opinion, this is a more satisfying performance. One advantage to this recording is Drucker’s collaborators, the Juilliard Quartet; a more established string quartet that has a long history of performing with Drucker. This performance is also in stylistic alignment with other recordings by both Stanley Drucker and the Juilliard Quartet. The tempos are far more extreme, with a great deal of give and take of pulse within movements. In this performance of the Brahms quintet, the Juilliard Quartet begins the work at around the dotted quarter note equals 40, a slow tempo for the movement. Then,

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682 An excellent live performance recording of Stanley Drucker performing the Mozart Clarinet Quintet with the Juilliard Quartet is discussed in Chapter 11 Mozart Clarinet Quintet. Drucker’s very first commercial recording was of Bartok’s Contrasts alongside Robert Mann, who is the first violin of the Juilliard Quartet. This recording is discussed in Chapter 5 Bartok Contrasts.
683 This characteristic was discussed regarding the Juilliard Quartet’s recording of the Mozart Clarinet Quintet with Harold Wright in Chapter 11 of this document.
at the clarinet entrance, Drucker accelerates the tempo to around 44 to the dotted quarter note, a more standard tempo (though still on the slow side in the author’s opinion). The tempo moves ahead even more by measure 25 to around the dotted quarter note equals 50. While the faster tempos are still within a normal range for recordings of this work, the slower opening gives them a feel of greater excitement and intensity. At the *Quasi sostenuto* section, the ensemble slows the tempo down again, to below the dotted quarter note equals 40. This gives the section a special poignancy, while also allowing the ensemble room to accelerate one last time at the end of the movement. Although the tempos are slower overall than Drucker’s commercial recording, the author believes that the fluctuations in tempo give this performance more energy, though not as much as the Kell recording. The second movement shares these characteristics as well. The ensemble begins slower than any of the other recordings analyzed, at well below the quarter note equals 40, and exhibits a great deal of fluctuation from phrase to phrase. The *Più lento* section is played with much intensity by both Drucker and the Juilliard Quartet. Drucker, in particular, performs more forcefully here than he does in his later recording with the Elysium Quartet, and more than Leister does in any of his recordings. Unfortunately, the recording is not of the highest quality, most likely due to it being a live performance recording rather than recorded in a studio setting.

If one were to search for a recording of the Brahms Clarinet Quintet that was the most daring in tempo choices and displayed the most exciting overall performance style, the revered Reginald Kell and Busch Quartet live recording would exemplify this description. If one were looking for a performance that presented the work with the most tonal warmth and beauty, then it would be difficult to find a better choice than Leister’s
last recording with the Leipzig String Quartet, when his tonal concept had evolved to its peak level. And if one were looking for the closest representation of both the above differing performance characteristics, the author would argue Leister’s rendition with the Amadeus Quartet would best straddle these two worlds. It is perhaps for this reason that the clarinet community voted for the Leister-Amadeus Quartet recording as their preferred rendition of the work. And, even though Leister recorded the work numerous other times, he refers to his recording with Amadeus as “The best recording on the market.”\textsuperscript{684} It is hard to disagree with that assessment.

Upon hearing the quintet played by Mühlfeld, Clara Schumann stated, “And how Mühlfeld played! As if he had been born for this work. His playing is at once delicate, warm and unaffected and at the same time it shows the most perfect technique and command of the instrument.”\textsuperscript{685} When listening to Leister perform the work in any of his masterful recordings, it becomes clear that Clara Schumann’s statement could just as easily be applied to him. The irony is that Leister is likely among the clarinetists most opposing in style to Mühlfeld, the muse for this work. That Leister is today the interpreter of choice for this piece demonstrates how compelling his interpretive style is to the modern audience. In listening to the global trend in clarinet playing towards a warm, homogenous sound, it is hard to find a greater model than Karl Leister. And there is no greater example of his playing than in his many recordings of the Brahms Clarinet Quintet.

\textsuperscript{684} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{685} Lawson, 40.
Chapter 13

Conclusions

In a masterclass at Northwestern University on July 1, 1982, Robert Marcellus played various recordings of select clarinet players from an earlier generation for the participants with the intent of exhibiting particular “tonal concepts.” In his introductory remarks before playing the recordings he stated:

In the days when I was growing up instrumentally there were a lot of personalities and timbres playing the instrument...The thing that impresses me...is personality in that timbre and the musical communication...I have a great feeling that when I hear so many wonderful young people, of all stages and directions during the course of several years’ time, I have a feeling that a lot of them don’t really know exactly what you want to sound like. I think that is important; that you take the good that your ear hears from many different players, they can be from different schools as well. If you’re anything like I was, if you hear something, you’ve got to have something of that in your sound...So take the best from the people whose playing you admire the most.

The clarinet players, to which he referred and played recordings of, were the principal clarinet players in major American symphony orchestras from the early to mid-twentieth century. The players included Daniel Bonade (Philadelphia and Cleveland Symphonies), Simeon Bellison (New York Philharmonic), Robert McGinnis (Philadelphia Symphony), Robert Lindemann (Chicago Symphony), Ralph McLane

(Philadelphia Symphony), among others. Stanley Drucker shared Marcellus’ sentiment. In his interview with Ed Joffe he stated:

I learned by listening to recordings when I was a kid. I listened to Cahuzac play the Hindemith concerto. I listened to him play the Nielsen concerto, before I recorded it, and the sound was extremely clear, small in a way, but crystal clear, with a nice approach to the piece. So that’s a big influence on me. I learned from listening to every player; I learned something. 687

The idea of consulting recordings for pedagogical purposes also receives overwhelming support by the clarinet community at large. In the author’s “Definitive Clarinet Recordings Survey,” 77.65 percent of the 101 respondents said that their clarinet instructor does, or did, “recommend listening to recordings to aid in the preparation of repertoire,” 84.71 percent of respondents said “yes” to “when preparing repertoire (solo, chamber, orchestral, etc.), do you consult recordings for reference,” and 89.29 percent said that they “have [their] students listen to recordings to aid in the preparation of repertoire.” 688 There is a clear consensus that listening to recordings of master players is of great benefit in developing one’s tonal concept, ideas on phrasing, stylistic interpretation, and overall musical understanding.

If there is one overarching conclusion that this document proposes, it is that Stanley Drucker and Karl Leister are indeed master musicians who all clarinetists should listen to in order to help establish their own concepts of sound, style, and phrasing; and that the wealth of recordings that each of these artists has produced offers an invaluable resource for the developing musician to study. Each chapter of this document provides

evidence for this conclusion. The biographical chapters for each clarinetist trace the long careers of both, demonstrating that their own particular playing style was cultivated and nurtured by, and with, many of the greatest musicians of the twentieth century. The chapter on their instrumental equipment shows divergent paths available to the clarinetist: Leister spent his life following a sound ideal formulated in his mind and sought the equipment that would enable him to realize it; Drucker, by sticking to essentially the same equipment throughout his whole career, demonstrates that one’s own personality can shine brighter than any particular clarinet or mouthpiece.

While the various chapters on these artists’ major recordings cover many specifics regarding interpretive choices for both themselves and their peers who have recorded the same repertoire, they likewise provide some broad conclusions. To listen to Drucker is to hear a musician capable of infusing vitality into any repertoire, and to maintain that vitality across a sixty-year career. He also shows that one’s musical personality does not need to be subordinate to markings on the page. Leister’s legacy is that one’s growth as a musician never needs to end. By listening to his recordings of the same pieces over more than a twenty-year timespan one witnesses the perfecting of a tonal concept; a concept that has inspired the clarinet community for the past half century. And while Drucker shows that a musician’s individual personality can enhance any performance, Leister demonstrates that it is enough to present a musical score as a work of art, with beauty of sound and absolute clarity.

Although Drucker and Leister are of the same generation, in the author’s opinion, they also are exemplars of opposite performance trends. In his book, Early Recordings and Musical style, Robert Philip points out that there is a generational difference in
musical styles, which he attributes to the growing prevalence of recordings and the influence of improved recording techniques on more recent players. Philip states that, since the 1930s, “…there has been a trend towards greater power, firmness, clarity, control, literalness, and evenness of expression, and away from informality, looseness, and unpredictability.”689 He continues on to say:

Recorded performances from the early part of the [twentieth] century give a vivid impression of being projected as if to an audience…that the precision and clarity of each note is less important than the shape and progress of the music as a whole. They are intended to convey what happens in the music, to characterise (sic) it. The accurate reproduction of the musical text is merely a means to this end.690

In contrast, Phillip states that late twentieth century musical interpretation “has shifted significantly. The accurate and clear performance of the music has become the first priority, and the characterization of the music and its progress is assumed to be able to take care of itself.”691

Although Drucker and Leister are of the same generation, a close study of their respective recordings reveals a stark difference in musical outlook along these same lines. When listening to the long legacy of recordings that Drucker has released, the overall impression one is left with is of a player who displays the sensibilities that Philip attributes to musicians from the early twentieth century. As Philip puts it, the performances from this time “…are volatile, energetic, flexible, vigorously projected in broad outline but rhythmically informal in detail.”692 This is, of course, an over-

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690 Ibid, 230.
691 Ibid.
692 Ibid, 234.
generalization of Drucker’s playing, and it would be inaccurate to describe most of his performances as “rhythmically informal.” However, much of the description holds true for many of his performances. Indeed, the author believes that in his greatest recordings, Drucker comes across as volatile, energetic, and flexible in his playing. These are certainly characteristics of the recordings discussed in this document. And it is likely not a coincidence that a remarkable amount of Drucker’s most effective recordings are from live performances or were recorded in a single take. This is true for all of his Copland concerto recordings, his Nielsen concerto recording (where the clarinet part was produced in a single take), the world-premiere performance recording of the Corigliano concerto, and the various performances discussed from the 5-disc set of live performances contained in the *Heritage Collection*. Drucker’s effectiveness as a live performer is entirely in alignment with Philip’s assertion that early twentieth century recordings give the impression of being presented to an audience. It is this aspect of his playing, that it always sounds fresh, energetic, and exciting, that makes him such a compelling artist.

By contrast, Leister’s recorded output more closely aligns with Philip’s description of the more modern interpreter: “accurate, restrained, deliberate, and even in emphasis.” Like descriptions regarding Drucker, this too would be an over-generalization. Many of Leister’s performances, at times, are energetic and flexible. But, when broadly examining the works that Leister has recorded numerous times over the course of his career, as this document does, one observes a general trend towards greater consistency of tempo, emphasis, and tone. This is not to say that Leister is in any way a less compelling artist than Drucker. However, what makes Leister compelling, in the

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693 Ibid.
author’s opinion, is the singular beauty of his tone. In an interview with Lee Gibson in 1979, Leister stated, “We must do more for the sound in the music—to get our own voice. But there's something else. We must ask ourselves what we like and find this way, not stopping until we get it.” Remarkably, Leister’s quest for musical perfection never stopped, and he leaves a legacy of recordings that document that quest. Later in the same interview, Gibson stated, “We find in this country [United States of America] that your sound is the kind of sound we have always tried to get… Actually I find there is much more communion with your sound than with some of the other sounds we've heard. In other words, we're trying for your sound.” It is the very existence of so many recordings by Leister that allows for clarinetists to try to emulate his sound, and for so many others to marvel at it.

Perhaps this categorization of Drucker and Leister should not come as a surprise considering the orchestras and conductors that helped propel the careers of these two artists. While both the New York Philharmonic and the Berlin Philharmonic are heavily recorded ensembles, the conducting style of Leonard Bernstein, which marks the bulk of the New York Philharmonic’s output, is more in-line with Philip’s description of early twentieth century interpretations; while Herbert von Karajan was at the forefront of recording innovation and of the restrained, yet accurate, interpretations that seemed to result. It also is worth noting that Drucker’s tenure with the New York Philharmonic pre-dated Bernstein, so during Drucker’s most formative professional years, he was playing under the batons of musicians truly from the early twentieth century era: Dimitri

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695 Ibid.
Mitropoulos, Bruno Walter, and Adolph Busch (with whom Drucker worked prior to his appointment to the New York Philharmonic). 696 Leister on the other hand, after a brief position with the orchestra of the Komische Oper Berlin, was hired directly by Herbert von Karajan as principal clarinet of the Berlin Philharmonic, and was trained exclusively by Karajan, whose tenure almost exactly mirrored his own (Leister retired from the Berlin Philharmonic four years after Karajan’s departure from the orchestra). 697

Indeed there is an irony to the characterization of Drucker exemplifying an old-world interpretive style and Leister helping pave the way towards modern interpretation: namely, that Drucker is most known for his interpretation of modern works, while Leister’s most highly regarded recordings are of eighteenth and nineteenth century repertoire. While this irony dismisses the fact that both artists have wonderful recordings from a broad range of eras, it holds true that the repertoire for which each artist is best-known is significantly skewed toward music from these specific time periods. Despite this irony, the association each musician has with a music that is contrary to their performance style is validation of the author’s premise: that the musical style of Drucker and Leister supersedes any particular composition or musical era and the clarinetist can benefit in the development of their own individual style by listening to the recordings of both artists. Proof of this can be found in artists such as Martin Fröst. Fröst is one of the most renowned clarinet soloists contemporaneous to this document. He is admired for his virtuosity in addition to his “championing new music and new techniques for clarinet

696 See Chapter 2 Stanley Drucker Biography for details of his career and conductors with whom he has worked.
697 See Chapter 3 Karl Leister Biography for details of his career.
performance." These are characteristics that would align Fröst with the playing style and repertoire choices of Drucker. But when interviewed in *The Clarinet* about clarinetists who inspired and influenced him, he described first a recording of the Mozart Clarinet Concerto with Jack Brymer as soloist, “and of course, Karl Leister…”

It is not the intention of this document to assert that Stanley Drucker and Karl Leister are the sole artists that clarinetists should look to in cultivating a musical style and sound. In fact, for each recording of these artists that the author has analyzed, numerous other recordings by comparable artists are discussed as well. It is the author’s hope that this document will serve as just a small part of a growing body of research that investigates the stylistic merits of an ever-expanding catalogue of recordings that can benefit the clarinet community through close study. For the author, the recordings of Drucker and Leister present an intriguing starting point because of their divergent stylistic approaches and the vast amount of repertoire preserved for posterity in the recordings they made throughout their long, illustrious careers. For the clarinetist looking to learn from their example, it would miss the point to try to emulate either artist’s unique musical approach. Rather, they should listen to Stanley Drucker and Karl Leister with open ears and minds to the endless possibilities of which, they prove, the clarinet is capable. And then start the journey towards crafting their own musical voice.

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Works Cited

BOOKS


MUSICAL SCORES


ARTICLES


https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/lifestyle/1983/01/21/discord-in-the-orchestra/689f4aaa-b10a-4d49-aaf8-aa62f9a7f8a5b/?utm_term=.0a761194f554


INTERVIEWS/CORRESPONDENCE/MISCELLANEOUS


Cohen, Steven. Email message to Peter Geldrich. November 2, 2015.


Guy, Larry. Email message to Peter Geldrich. October 9, 2016.


Marking, Bruce. Email message to Peter Geldrich. September 12, 2016.


Discography


Appendix A:

Definitive Clarinet Recordings Survey
Q: Which is your preferred recording of Bartok’s Contrasts?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benny Goodman with Joseph Szigeti and Bela Bartok</td>
<td>28.57% 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanley Drucker with Robert Mann and Leonid Hambro</td>
<td>20.41% 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harold Wright with Joseph Silverstein and Gilbert Kalish</td>
<td>20.41% 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joaquin Valdepeñas with the Amici Ensemble</td>
<td>10.20% 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify):</td>
<td>20.41% 20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answered 98
Skipped 5
Table 2A

Q: Which is your preferred recording of the Nielsen Clarinet Concerto?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Louis Cahuzak with the Royal Orchestra (Frandsen)</td>
<td>14.58% 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John McCaw with the New Philharmonia Orchestra (Leppard)</td>
<td>11.46% 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanley Drucker and the New York Philharmonic (Bernstein)</td>
<td>40.63% 39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Håkan Rosengren and the Swedish Radio Symphony (Esa-Pekka Salonen)</td>
<td>12.50% 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify):</td>
<td>20.83% 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Answered</strong></td>
<td><strong>96</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Skipped</strong></td>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

0.00% 5.00% 10.00% 15.00% 20.00% 25.00% 30.00% 35.00% 40.00% 45.00%
Table 3A

Q: Which is your preferred recording of the Corigliano Concerto?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stanley Drucker with the New York Philharmonic (Mehta)</td>
<td>53.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michele Zukovsky with the LA Philharmonic (Williams)</td>
<td>15.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Stoltzman with the London Symphony (Leighton Smith)</td>
<td>17.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eddy Vanoosthuyse with the Brussels Philharmonic Orchestra (Meyer)</td>
<td>1.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify):</td>
<td>13.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Answered</strong></td>
<td><strong>92</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Skipped</strong></td>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4A

Q: Which is your preferred recording of the Copland Clarinet Concerto?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benny Goodman with Columbia Symphony Orchestra (Copland)</td>
<td>32.67% 33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanley Drucker with the New York Philharmonic (Bernstein)</td>
<td>5.94% 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Stoltzman with the London Symphony Orchestra (Tilson Thomas)</td>
<td>20.79% 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Shifrin with the New York Chamber Symphony (Schwartz)</td>
<td>25.74% 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify):</td>
<td>14.85% 15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answered 101
Skipped 2
Table 5A

Q: Which is your preferred recording of the Weber Concerto No. 1 in F minor?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Karl Leister with the Berlin Philharmonic (Kubelik)</td>
<td>25.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charles Neidich with the Orpheus Chamber Ensemble</td>
<td>15.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabine Meyer with Staatskapelle Dresden (Blomstedt)</td>
<td>25.53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Shifrin with Orchestra di Padova e del Veneto (Golub)</td>
<td>8.51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify):</td>
<td>24.47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answered 94

Skipped 9
Table 6A

Q: Which is your preferred recording of the Mozart Clarinet Concerto?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Robert Marcellus with the Cleveland Orchestra (Szell)</td>
<td>48.04%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karl Leister with Academy of Saint Martin in the Fields (Marriner)</td>
<td>10.78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harold Wright with the Boston Symphony Orchestra (Ozawa)</td>
<td>6.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack Brymer with the London Symphony Orchestra (Davis)</td>
<td>3.92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify):</td>
<td>30.39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answered | 102
Skipped  | 1
**Table 7A**

Q: Which is your preferred recording of the Mozart Clarinet Quintet?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reginald Kell and the Fine Arts Quartet</td>
<td>5.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karl Leister and the Berliner Solisten</td>
<td>21.43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanley Drucker and the Essex Quartet</td>
<td>5.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harold Wright and the Julliard Quartet</td>
<td>38.78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>29.59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answered: 98  
Skipped: 5
Table 8A

Q: Which is your preferred recording of the Brahms Clarinet Quintet?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reginald Kell and the Busch Quartet</td>
<td>5.26% 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karl Leister and the Amadeus Quartet</td>
<td>29.47% 28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanley Drucker and the Elysium Quartet</td>
<td>4.21% 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Shifrin and the Emerson Quartet</td>
<td>28.42% 27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify):</td>
<td>32.63% 31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Answered 95

Skipped 8

291
Q: When preparing repertoire (solo, chamber, orchestral, etc.), do you consult recordings for reference?

Table 9A

<p>| | | |</p>
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Q: Does your clarinet instructor/Did your clarinet instructor recommend listening to recordings to aid in the preparation of repertoire (solo, chamber, symphonic, etc.)?

Table 10A

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Q: If you instruct clarinet, do you have your students listen to recordings to aid in the preparation of repertoire (solo, chamber, symphonic, etc.)?

Table 11A

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**Stanley Drucker Live Recording**

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**Ricardo Morales Studio Recording**

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Appendix C:

Permissions to Reprint Musical Examples
From: Malecki, Katharina  
Sent: Friday, May 8, 2020 3:43 AM  
To: 'Peter Geldrich'  
Subject: AW: Inquiry About Utilizing Excerpts from Mozart Clarinet Concerto in Doctoral Dissertation

Dear Mr Geldrich,

Thank you for your kind inquiry.

Of course we have no objection if you use musical excerpts from the edition of the Mozart Clarinet Concerto protected by us in your dissertation.

We wish you much success and remain

with kindest regards,

Katharina Malecki · Print Rights Manager · Foreign Rights Manager

Baerenreiter-Verlag Karl Voetterle GmbH & Co. KG  
Heinrich-Schuetz-Allee 35-37 · 34131 Kassel  
Germany

Phone: +49 561 3105-159 · malecki@baerenreiter.com  
Fax: +49 561 3105-245 · www.baerenreiter.com  
PC-Fax: +49 561 31806-38

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Twitter: www.twitter.com/Baerenreiter  
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Geschaeftsfuehrer: Prof. h.c. Barbara Scheuch-Voetterle, Leonhard Scheuch  
Firma und Registergericht Kassel HR A 6553  
Komplementaerin: Voetterle-Vermoeogensverwaltungs-GmbH Kassel HR B 3965
Dear Mr Geldrich,

Thank you for your letter. We are happy to grant free permission to use the excerpts from the Henle edition of Weber, Clarinet Concerto No. 1 in your dissertation. Normally I would ask you to make sure to acknowledge the copyright, but I see that you’ve already done so in the appropriate, scholarly manner.

We wish you much success!

Best wishes,

Kristina Winter  
Marketing Assistant

G. Henle Publishers  
Forstenrieder Allee 122  
81476 München  
Germany  
phone: +49-89-75982-21  
fax: +49-89-75982-55  
www.henle.com

G. Henle Verlag e.K., München
From: Edizioni Eufonia
Sent: Tuesday, April 28, 2020 6:14 PM
To: 'Peter Geldrich'
Subject: R: Permissions to use excerpts from Mozart Clarinet Concerto in Doctoral Dissertation

Congratulations on your study. We authorize you to use the extracts of k622. We ask you to insert : by Edizioni Musicali Eufonia - Italy)

Silvio Maggioni

Edizioni Musicali Eufonia
Via Trento, 5 - 25055 Pisogne (BS) Italy
Tel. +39 (0)364 87069 www.edizionieufonia.it
P.IVA: 03514390172
Codice destinatario: KRRH6B9
edizionieufonia@pec.it

INTERNET- Marcia Brillante (E. Bellotto)
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April 28, 2020
Peter Geldrich
University of South Carolina
RE: “Concerto for Clarinet & String Orchestra” by Aaron Copland

Dear Peter:

We hereby grant you gratis permission to include excerpts from the above referenced work in your dissertation for University of South Carolina.

We do require that you include the following copyright notice immediately following the excerpts for which it pertains:

“Concerto for Clarinet & String Orchestra” by Aaron Copland
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Boosey & Hawkes, Inc., Sole Licensee.

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Thank you.

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Erin Dickenson
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