A Composer’s Perspective on the Clarinet Concerto

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Abstract

While seminal literature on concerto form analysis and compositions for clarinet and orchestra has been conducted, this undergraduate thesis is an exploration from a young composer’s perspective. My priority was discovering the breadth of what the clarinet concerto has to offer in order to learn how to place my own work as a composer into historical, cultural and aesthetic contexts.

First, I present an abridged history of the clarinet concerto. Despite this musical form being hundreds of years old, concerto composition is still relevant today because it is a display of balance; the best concerti are delicate balancing acts of intimate dialogues and fierce competitions between soloist and orchestra rolled into one seamless performance of engaging yet brilliant music. Second, I have written a guide to composing for the clarinet, based on my own experience and expanded with research by experts. Next, I have conducted studies of seven clarinet concerti: *Concerto for Clarinet* by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Zweites Konzert für Klarinette und Orchester* by Carl Maria von Weber, *Première Rhapsody* by Claude Debussy, *Clarinet Concerto* by Gerald Finzi, *Concerto for Clarinet and String Orchestra, with Harp and Piano* by Aaron Copland, *Clarinet Concerto* by Katherine Hoover, and *Ninian* by Sir James MacMillan. Finally, this research is seen in creative application with my own compositional contribution: *Morning Rhapsody* for B♭ clarinet and chamber orchestra.
Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank my middle school and high school clarinet teacher, Alan Francis. Even though I’ve pivoted to composing, this thesis is evident of my deep appreciation for the instrument and admiration for those who play it well.

I would also like to thank my composition teacher and advisor, Dr. Kenneth Fuchs, as well as my Honors advisor Dr. Eric Rice for their mentorship over my four years at UConn.

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Introduction

When I was younger, I studied clarinet very seriously. I remember practicing the Mozart and Weber concerti. Through these studies, I learned about phrasing and phrase structure, as well as how to construct a substantial theme. While I have given up my studies of clarinet performance to pursue other musical interests, my enduring love and respect for the clarinet concerto repertoire has been a mainstay.

While seminal literature on concerto form analysis and compositions for clarinet and orchestra has been conducted, this undergraduate thesis is an exploration from a composer’s perspective. This document functions like a guidebook for young composers considering writing their first clarinet concerto or other extended composition for clarinet and accompaniment ensemble.

In this thesis, I present the history of the clarinet concerto, a guide to composing for the B♭ clarinet, and specific scoring solutions from seven composers' clarinet concerti across different musical eras and perspectives. Finally, I have presented my own extended composition for clarinet and chamber orchestra called “Morning Rhapsody,” in which I applied what I learned from my background studies and literature review.

Research Questions

The following questions drove the need for this exploration:

1. Which enduring elements across the 300-year history of the concerto are applicable to modern-day composers?
2. How does a composer effectively take advantage of the range and flexibility of the solo B♭ clarinet?
3. What contributions do modern composers have yet to make in the genre?
Chapter One: An Abridged History of the Concerto

Since its inception, the instrumental concerto has presented a head-scratching puzzle for composers. How does one feature a soloist or solo group without detreating from the orchestral ensemble? What if the ensemble parts overwhelm the soloists? How can one soloist ever hope to compete with an entire orchestra? How does one show the best a soloist has to offer without boring an audience with asinine arpeggios? Yet, since its conception, practically every composer has written one or multiple solo instrumental concerti. The best concerti are delicate balancing acts of intimate dialogues and fierce competitions rolled into one seamless performance of engaging yet brilliant music.

The word “concerto” comes from the Italian concertare, meaning “to compete,” but there are other possible meanings as well.\(^1\) This form developed in Italy in the period of 1690 to 1740, and was essentially a sonata with early orchestral accompaniment. There were two parallel developments in Europe during this period that led to the first concerti. First, the San Petronio church in Bologna had a large permanent orchestra, but hired additional players for their annual patronal festival. This called for pieces with the concertato style that juxtaposed added trumpets with the full orchestra. One notable composer was Giuseppe Torelli (1658-1709), known for his violin concerti.\(^2\)

In Rome, the concerto consisted of quick-fire exchanges between the concertino and ripieno. The concertino was the core group of two violinists, a cellist or lutenist, and a keyboard player who were household musicians employed by a patron. Additional musicians would form the orchestra, also called the concerto grosso or ripieno.\(^3\)

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2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
In the Baroque era, Antonio Vivaldi (1678-1709) was the concerto composer who was the most envied and copied. His innovation was making the role of the soloist the structurally dominant element. The defining characteristic of his work was a recurring but slightly varied *ritornello* that the full ensemble plays, interspersed with episodes in which the soloist(s) play with sparser accompaniment. In addition, he gave the soloists unprecedented freedom in which to ornament and improvise. Vivaldi is now known for popularizing the three-movement concerto form.

In all, the Italian baroque concerto effectively fixed the concept of quick dialogue between soloists and orchestra. The typical concerto form of this era has stayed relatively constant throughout history: a first movement that is slow or fast, a second movement that alternates tempi, and a third fast movement.

Meanwhile in Germany, no one was more obsessed with the Italian concerto than J. S. Bach. In fact, he transcribed much of Vivaldi’s and Torelli’s works. Bach combined the formal structure of the concerto with his mastery of counterpoint. In terms of formal structure, he used a three-part scheme for each *ritornello*, consisting of the presentation of a motif, harmonic sequences, and an arrival in the goal key area. Bach did away with the stark contrast between the *ritornelli* and episodes by having a more fluid dialogue between soloist(s) and orchestra. The Brandenburg concerti in particular (BWV 1046-51) contain diverse scoring, a pastiche of

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4 Ibid.
5 Schneider, Amy L., "Approaches to Form in First Movements of Clarinet concerti from Mozart to the Twentieth Century" (*Master's Theses*, 2016. 871), 4-5.
6 Talbot, Michael. “The Italian Concerto in the Late Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries.” Chapter.
8 Ibid.
different national styles and dances; and a magnificent solo cadenza that became a hallmark of the style later on.  

George Friederic Handel (1685-1759) created the market for the virtuosic concerti by composer-performers. Handel invented the organ concerto as a means to excite concert-goers and promote his other works. He used a variety of forms, dances and solo-orchestra schemes in his concerti.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Composer Considerations from the Baroque Era</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. A concerto may consist of either one featured soloist or a featured small group.</td>
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<td>2. The soloist(s) can be the defining structural element of the piece.</td>
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<td>3. Composers can choose between sharply contrasting tutti and soloist sections or a more free-flowing intimate dialogue.</td>
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<td>4. concerti are typically in three movements (fast-slow-fast).</td>
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In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Mozart and Beethoven were heralded as contributing the most to the concerto repertoire. Other composers of note include Joseph Haydn, Luigi Boccherini, Giovanni Battista Viotti, and Jan Ladislav Dussek. In this period, the concerto was written primarily as a vehicle for the composer-performer virtuoso. Aesthetically, “a balance must be struck between grandeur and brilliance.” As opposed to a symphonic work, a concerto would have a greater feeling of intimacy. Intimacy was created with orchestral involvement and dialogue. Audiences expected virtuosity, but preferred it to be woven into the musical fabric rather than existing for virtuosity’s sake.

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9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
Regarding Mozart, his innovation to the concerto was the idea that the orchestra is not subservient to the soloist. Rather, the soloist is just the most featured player in an ensemble of more equal actors who may have equally challenging parts in the music. In addition, he changed the expected formal structure, bringing the innovation of hybrid concerto-sonata form. As Dr. Amy Schneider summarizes, “Mozart revolutionized the fusion of ritornello and sonata forms, likening the three solo sections of the ritornello to the exposition, development, and recapitulation divisions of sonata form.”

Beethoven preserved the spirit of Mozart’s concerti, but took the form in new aesthetic directions. Beethoven prioritized more collaborative orchestra-soloist interactions, disrupted some elements of the formal structure, and brought the orchestral grandeur to new heights. The soloist is often “assimilated” into the orchestra to make a forceful impact, and the frequency of dialogues between soloists and orchestra can be used to build momentum towards a climax.

One artifact of the classical concerto is the expectation of a flashy cadenza. A cadenza is usually defined as improvisation on themes from a concerto or sonata movement, placed at a final cadence. Historically, metered embellishments at cadences were common practice. Vivaldi’s were written into the music, in metered time. Mozart’s cadenzas involved suspension of meter that may or may not reference thematic material from the rest of the movement. He also included improvisatory passages elsewhere as transitional, dominant-harmony material, which feature elided cadences. These are called *Eingänge.*

For example, keyboard cadenzas by Mozart, composed for his own later concerti, are typically in three parts. First, he begins with a theme from the movement, which flows into

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12 Schneider, Amy L., "Approaches to Form in First Movements of Clarinet concerti from Mozart to the Twentieth Century" (*Master's Theses*, 2016. 871), 5.
14 Ibid.
sequences of a motive with a pedal note or chord. Then, there will be more passage work, ending with a final trill that instigates a cadence in the home key.\textsuperscript{15}

\begin{center}
\textbf{Composer Considerations from the Classical Era}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Other players in the orchestra need not be simple accompaniment; they may be given equally important or independent lines in the music.
\item The soloist need not always be playing separate material from the orchestra.
\item It is typical to include a flashy, unmetered cadenza that may or may not include thematic material from the movement before the final cadence. This cadenza may be improvised or pre-composed.
\end{enumerate}
\end{center}

The late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries brought some innovation to the concerto genre. Not until the latter half of the eighteenth century did composers truly take advantage of technological advances in wind instruments. Carl Maria von Weber (1786-1826) contributed several virtuosic concerti for wind instruments, including two full-length concerti for clarinet. Notably, he used the chalumeau register of the clarinet in the slow movements for a dark and moody flavor.\textsuperscript{16} Indeed, the clarinet concerto became a catalyst for innovation. In the case of Louis Spohr’s (1784-1859) clarinet concerti, the chromatic runs and trills actually forced clarinetist Johann Simon Hermstedt to add new keys to his instrument.\textsuperscript{17}

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
Composer Considerations from the Romantic Era

1. It is best to take advantage of the whole range of the clarinet and include some virtuosic passage-work.
2. Four-movement symphonic form may be used for a concerto to take the work to grandiose proportions.

Moving forward in history, three-movement concerto form became less rigid. Finally, the three-movement scheme for concerti was broken by Johannes Brahms (1833-1897) for his four-movement Second Piano Concerto, which merged symphonic form into the concerto genre. After 1900 but before World War One, concerti stayed generally in the nineteenth century romantic landscape. In the post-war period, concerti tended to merge with other forms and styles. For example, in his contribution to The Cambridge Companion to the Concerto, David Schneider describes composers who merged the symphony and the requiem with the concerto. In the pre-war period, grandeur and profundity were important aesthetics. This presented the problem of the soloist needing to compete with a large orchestra. The greatest example was Ferruccio Busoni’s (1866-1924) “behemoth,” a five-movement piano concerto that included an offstage men’s chorus in the last movement.

In between the First World War and the Second World War, Schneider exalts Berg’s Violin Concerto for its programmatic associations, elements of requiem and “special profundity.” Berg also understood the innate dramatism of the violin and used that to his advantage in the piece. The next trend in concerto composition was “concerti for use,” such as Paul Hindemith’s (1895-1963) Trauermusik for viola and string orchestra.

18 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
Immediately post-war, the concerto was used as a means of reckoning feelings of political unrest and for processing the collective trauma of war. For example, Karl Amadeus Hartman (1905-1963) composed an anti-fascist *Concerto Funebre*. Covering a vast emotional range, Benjamin Britten’s (1913-1976) Violin Concerto (op. 15), was a response to the Spanish Civil War, even though it was written in a more conservative compositional style.22

Composers post-1945 were more self-conscious about the traditions that accompanied the word “concerto,” but kept composing them, trying to find new ways to create instrument-ensemble dialogues in their new harmonic languages. In the modernist reckoning with traditional genre expectations, many composers deemed their works “anti-concerti” by giving the orchestra more of a starring role and utilizing through-composition.23 Even though modernist composers tried to escape the tradition of the concerto, the reality is that audiences still loved the concerto. Whittall boldly asserts that “composers born around and after 1940 confirm the failure of twentieth-century music to follow a single, progressive track away from tonality, traditional formal design and familiar generic categorization, in keeping with the continued institutional support for the larger-scale and the virtuosic.”24 In other words, while composers tried to compose “anti-concerti,” people still wanted to play and hear more traditionally-inspired concerti in the concert hall.

**Composer Considerations from the 20th Century**

1. concerti may also have political or personal programmatic associations, much like a tone poem.
2. In an anti-concerto, one may eschew the typical form constraints and entirely through-compose their work, or give the orchestra a more starring role.

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22 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
Chapter Two: A Composer’s Guide to the Clarinet

The clarinet is an extremely versatile and flexible single-reed woodwind instrument. Like the violin of the woodwind family, the clarinet can play virtually anything. However, there are a few considerations that need to be made in order to effectively write for the glorious “licorice stick.”

There are at least ten possible clarinets in different transpositions, but the most common soprano types are in B♭ and A. There are twenty-five holes and keys on the clarinet, and one rest for the right thumb. The B♭ clarinet has a range of concert E3, up to C7 (but the upper limit is really dependent on each player).²⁵ Most repertoire does not exceed G6, as pitches above this point are more unstable and can have a strident tone quality.

The left thumb is responsible for the register key. Because of the harmonics produced by the clarinet, the register key produces a jump of a twelfth instead of an octave, as one might expect (i.e., the flute’s register key produces a jump of an octave). For example, the fingering for C4 (the thumb hole, and first, middle and ring finger of left hand covered) will produce a G5 when the register key is added. Therefore, the clarinet can produce large jumps, but quickfire octave intervals are more cumbersome than a flute or saxophone player might expect to see. Because the register key dramatically changes the shape of the air column within the clarinet, it would be acoustically impossible to execute a quick and even tremolo between C4 and G5.

Clarinet players have standard major and minor scales, arpeggios, diminished seventh chords, and chromatic scales (and perhaps modes) completely in their muscle memory, so it would be wise to include these items as fast-and-furious filigree instead of something more

freely composed. The clarinet is designed to make these items free of finger-tangles, but other fast combinations of notes might be more unwieldy.

The lowest register of the clarinet is the *chalumeau* register. The tone is dark, woody, and sexy – like dark chocolate. This register is not naturally loud and is very easily overwhelmed. Because it is so low, notes in this range take a bit longer to speak, and you can sometimes hear the air going through the whole instrument. This range spans (transposed) E3-E4. Some clarinets have a low E♭ (transposed) key, but this is not standard.27

The middle register of the clarinet is called the “throat tones.” This range is somewhat difficult to tune, and many clarinetists employ alternate fingering for their specific instruments. This range is somewhat comparable to a *passaggio* in an operatic voice. It is the bridge between the *chalumeau* and the next register, the *clarion*. As with an operatic singer, a good clarinetist will be able to make a seamless transition between registers. This area of the range is still somewhat weaker and slightly nasal in quality in less experienced players, but it should not be avoided. The throat tones span F3 to B♭.28

The break from B♭3 to B-natural 3 (transposed) is the most problematic area of the clarinet. The clarinetist must transition from having no keys covered to all keys covered.29 Therefore, a trill from these two notes in this register is ill-advised. There are workarounds with alternate fingerings, but they still don’t sound particularly accurate.

The *clarion* register of the clarinet is sweet and bright, yet still warm and woody. This range is from B4 to C6. Above the staff, the clarinet can sound flute-like or quite piercing and saxophone-like, depending on the intent.

26 Valladares, Gabrielle Alissa. 2022. Women and feminism in classical and jazz history: Katherine hoover’s clarinet concerto in context. (Ph.D. diss., The Ohio State University), 8.
Despite these differing colors, most clarinetists are very skilled at making an even tone, so it is indeed idiomatic to compose florid lines that traverse the registers. Arpeggios and scale traversing three octaves are commonplace in even intermediate repertoire.

The altissimo register of the clarinet is piercing and shrill, while maintaining a good center of tone and pitch. This range spans C#6, traditionally up to G6, but most players can achieve about a fourth higher than that. The altissimo register is essentially a controlled overblown squeak, so it is unpredictable and more difficult to execute fast tonguing here. If a composer wants to use a note in this range above a G6, it is best to make a big deal out of it, because it is truly a feat for a good clarinetist to make it sound beautiful. In my personal experience, I recommend not choosing to start a phrase above a G6. These ultra-high notes work better when approached by step or leap. Because these notes are controlled by overblowing, a great deal of scooping and sliding can be achieved as an extended technique (think of a police siren or puppy whining).

In expressive capabilities, the clarinet is unrivaled. The stand-out element of the clarinet, in my opinion, is the incredible dynamic range in all registers. The clarinet can play the softest of most any wind instrument, so a clarinet section is a great accompaniment tool in an orchestra or wind ensemble. In terms of articulation, legato lines come easily. A clarinetist can also play the most delightfully dry staccatos. Double-tonguing is more difficult on a single reed, so players tend to prefer single-tonguing. Clarinet players are prepared to single-tongue very quickly, so this is no problem.

There are a few extended techniques that are quite fun to play. The first are glissandos and pitch-bends, a-la New Orleans jazz or Klezmer playing. The best example is the famous opening of Gershwin’s “Rhapsody in Blue.” However, not all true slide-glissandos work on the
clarinet, so it is best to consult a clarinetist. In general, “true” glissandos, made by manipulation of the mouth and tongue (rather than quickly playing a chromatic scale), are more easily executed when contained within one register. Another technique is an echo-tone or sub-tone, which is done by suppressing the vibrations of the reed with the tongue.\textsuperscript{30} This is used in Berlioz’s \textit{Symphonie Fantastique}. A third extended technique is multiphonics, which are controlled over-blowing to produce two pitches at once. The effect is akin to overtone singing. The best resource on this technique is Heather Roche’s article, \textit{27 Easy B♭ Clarinet Multiphonics},\textsuperscript{31} which includes instructional demo videos, fingering diagrams and more.

The last consideration: do not under any circumstance force the clarinetist to play for too long without a break. Playing clarinet is messy business, and not allowing proper breaks could cause disaster in a performance. The clarinetist may need time to wipe the saliva out of their instrument or blow moisture out of a key it has collected in. In addition, the strain of holding a mouthpiece in the mouth can tire out the delicate musculature of the face. Finally, a clarinet’s sound is propelled by breath, which is impossible if the clarinetist suffocates first. Circular breathing is not a standard technique for clarinetists. If the composer cannot sing a line in one breath, it is advisable for the composer to reconsider the phrasing.

\textsuperscript{30} Piston, \textit{Orchestration}, 172.

Chapter Three: Literature Review

The goal of this review is to provide examples of masterful use of the clarinet and the orchestra in the context of the clarinet concerto throughout a range of compositional styles and eras. In each case study, I give some biographical details, followed by explanations of small sections of note from each of the works. This approach, while not an exhaustive analysis, should give a good overview of some classic pieces and some rarer finds in the clarinet concerto canon. The full YouTube playlist of the selected scores may be found at this link:

https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLQx8WCjXCA3tg6hf-e7-5zYDusOTHOF2J.

Full citations of selected scores can be found in the bibliography on page 62.
Concerto for Clarinet by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

The first selected score is Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart’s (1756-1791) Concerto for Clarinet, K. 622. This work was likely completed in early October of 1791, composed for a benefit concert given by Mozart’s friend, clarinetist Anton Stadler. The themes for the first movement were derived from sketches for a piece for basset horn, but reworked to the key of A so they could be played on A clarinet. Today, many people still perform this piece on the A clarinet. The piece is in three movements: Allegro, Adagio and Rondo Allegro. The performance time is normally a half-hour long.

The first movement casts the clarinetist as a cheeky sprite, with meandering yet mellifluous lines that traverse the entire clarinet’s range. There is a lengthy tutti introduction that introduces primary and secondary themes. Then, the clarinet comes in with a paired-down string accompaniment. Above all else, Mozart’s clarinet writing is playful and completely idiomatic.

This excerpt, shown in Figure 1, shows off the agility of the clarinet in one of the most dramatic moments of the piece. Mozart takes a pair of augmented seconds, Bb-C# and C-D#, and displaces them by octave, highlighting a thirteenth jump between the C#4 and A5. Then, Mozart plays with chromatic neighbors with a motive transposed up each of the chord tones of a (concert pitch) B-major triad three times, ascending in range.

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33 Ibid.
A chromatic scale follows, shown in Figure 2, finishing with a cadential trill that leads to a cadence F# minor. The goal of this cadence elides with the orchestral *tutti* entrance, creating an exciting build in momentum. In all, the section from mm. 214-227 “affirms the modulation to F# minor and conclude[s] the second solo episode.”

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34 Schneider, Amy L., "Approaches to Form in First Movements of Clarinet concerti from Mozart to the Twentieth Century" *Master's Theses*, 2016. 871.
In this excerpt, Mozart creates a dynamic build to the climactic cadence in a new key using the whole range of the clarinet. In some scores, beats 2-4 of measure 223 and beat 1 of measure 224 are actually transposed down an octave from what is written here, which is only possible on an A clarinet. Mozart composes fluently with limited material by embellishing simple ideas such as intervals and triads in order to compose compelling and exciting lines for the clarinet. The clarinet can navigate neighbor-tone passages, arpeggios and octave displacement with ease, so Mozart shows how to highlight these elements by ornamenting otherwise simple lines in key places in the music.

The following orchestral *tutti* is true to Keefe’s assertion that Mozart believed the orchestra was not “subservient” to the soloist.\(^{35}\) The bassoon is highlighted with a short, soaring

solo, shown in Figure 3. It is doubled by the cellos, but the bassoon is more prominent in the texture because of the piercing nature of high notes on the instrument. The inclusion of the bassoon is a needed contrast to the clarinet; we are reminded of the warm, reedy tone of the clarinet through its comparison to the bassoon and cellos. Therefore, Mozart shows that composers need not fear showcasing solo lines in other instrument groups, even for other woodwinds. The contrasting timbres of different woodwind instruments only serve to highlight the unique facets of the clarinet through their comparison.

Figure 3: Mm. 228-233 from Mozart’s Concerto for Clarinet, Allegro. K. 622, Movement 1

In all, Mozart’s concerto for clarinet is a dynamic and playful composition with a balanced first-movement concerto form. As Schneider writes, “because there exist[ed] only a small number of concerti for the clarinet as compared to those for piano or violin, composers were perhaps less inclined to feel bound by pre-established expectations when writing for the
instrument and may have been more willing to experiment with formal designs.” In my view, the increased importance of the orchestra and duet-like passages in this concerto show Mozart’s experimentation with the concerto, to great musical effect.

36 Schneider, Amy L., "Approaches to Form in First Movements of Clarinet concerti from Mozart to the Twentieth Century" (Master's Theses, 2016), 1.
Zweites Konzert für Klarinette und Orchester by Carl Maria von Weber

Carl Maria von Weber (1789-1826) was a German composer, conductor and pianist of the early Romantic movement. His best-known compositions were his operas and his compositions for clarinet. He wrote six clarinet works, the Clarinet Concertino (1811) the Clarinet Concerto in F minor (1811), the Clarinet Concerto in E-flat major (1811), Theme and Variations for Clarinet and Piano (1811), the Quintet for Clarinet and String Quartet (1815) and the Grand Duo Concertant for Clarinet and Piano (1815). Clearly, Weber was in great demand for clarinet works. In fact, all these six works were written for Heinrich Baermann (1784-1847), who was a soloist and Munich orchestra player.\(^\text{37}\)

Weber’s Zweites Konzert für Klarinette und Orchester (in E-flat major), op. 74, is a truly virtuosic feat for the clarinetist. It is in three movements: Allegro, Romanze, and Alla Polacca.

A favorite moment is a three-octave scale in the clarinet that happens in the first movement before a large orchestral tutti. This moment happens twice, once in the exposition and once in the recapitulation. Weber makes use of a (concert) F scale, which on the clarinet is transposed to the G major scale, shown in Figure 4. The articulation is usually performed as each note being separated, which at this speed is very impressive and rather difficult, especially traversing three complete octaves. Weber understands the athletic feat of this effect, and uses it to emphasize the power of the cadence to the dominant key area; therefore the scale is an extension of the dominant harmony. In addition, the delicate staccatos of the clarinet are left to shine on their own by the orchestra completely dropping out. Weber chooses to bring the orchestra back in on the cadential trill for dramatic effect.

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The second movement is a reference to an operatic aria. In my favorite section, the clarinet mimics an operatic *recitative* (seen in Figure 5), which a spoken-rhythm, dryly accompanied section of an opera means to propel the story or action further. Even the notated separate beaming of the clarinet’s part is similar to the way vocal recitative is notated. Of course, Weber keeps the clarinet in the clarion range to allow for a sweet sound that cuts over the strings. As Weber was most famous for his operas, this reference makes complete sense and brings the drama of the concerto to new heights. The recitative blooms into a downwards-spiraling figure in measure 69, mimicking the long melismas in melancholy *bel canto* arias.
The final movement is a fast, quirky movement titled *Ala Polacca*, which means the music should be played in the style of a polonaise, which is a Polish dance normally in ¾ time. The main theme demonstrates the agility of register shifts on the clarinet and highlights the execution of quick rhythms and articulation patterns. For example, in Figure 6 one can see thematic material containing sixteenth notes without slur markings, indicating that each note should be separated.
Figure 6: Mm. 100-104 of Weber’s Zweites Konzert für Klarinette und Orchester; Movement 3.

A contrasting moment (seen in Figure 7) in a minor-key section of this movement happens when the clarinet plays arpeggio accompaniment underneath a brief flute solo, while the strings keep time. The brief change in timbre of the solo instrument only makes the final buildup to the ending only more impactful. The ending is a tour-de-force of chromatic runs that are extremely difficult, yet playable. While the orchestral writing is not entirely innovative in this movement, the clarinet writing is exciting and makes full range of what the instrument can do.
The same can be said about Weber’s second clarinet concert as a whole; the piece does not have very interesting orchestral textures, however it is a masterclass in idiomatic writing for the clarinet. While the tuneful runs, arpeggios and virtuosic melodies that decorate the piece seem impressive, they are thoughtfully written. It is no wonder that clarinetists love to play this piece.
**Première Rhapsody by Claude Debussy**

Claude Debussy (1862-1918) was a French composer famous for his creative, painterly orchestration and new harmonic ideas. Debussy wrote only two pieces for solo clarinet. They were a *Petite Pièce* in 1910, and the *Première Rhapsody* for Clarinet, composed later that same year but finished in 1911.  

"Première Rhapsody" is a one-movement piece, but it is as virtuosic as any concerto. The *Petite* piece was actually written for sight-reading examinations at the Paris Conservatoire. It seems this exercise compelled Debussy to write *Première Rhapsody*, dedicated to clarinetist Prosper Mimart (1858-1928). That year, he orchestrated the version for piano accompaniment for the full orchestra.

Debussy’s mastery of the orchestra creates a gorgeous texture on which the clarinet can shine. First, there is a full presentation of a sing-song theme in the solo clarinet, seen in Figure 8.

**Figure 8:** Rehearsal 2 from *Première Rhapsody* (1911) by Claude Debussy, Piano Reduction.

Once the tempo picks up, the other winds, particularly the oboe, participate in a back-and-forth dialogue (see Figure 9). The winds play this sing-song theme, then the clarinet interjects with a rising diminished seventh-chord arpeggio. This exchange happens twice, much to the delight of the listener. The theme is somewhat fragmented, with the first two measures of

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38 Chandos Liner Notes  
39 Ibid.  
Figure 8 being repeated rather than the contour eventually curving downwards. Instead, the contour of the line reaches upward, further emphasized by the rising arpeggios in the clarinet.

**Figure 9:** Excerpt from Première Rhapsody, op. 124 by Claude Debussy.

![Musical Excerpt](image)

Directly following the passage above, a mini-cadenza leads into a double-time section, marked “Scherzando.” After a descending chromatic sixteenth-note passage, the clarinet lands on an F4 (concert). This is in the throat tone register of the clarinet, so it can tend to sound awkward and out-of-tune when accented. To help support the *sforzando* and accented articulation, Debussy brings in the french horns and string pizzicati. In the “*en retenant*” section, the clarinet plays mid-range trills on half notes, while the strings produce quarter note chords in harmonics. The result is a magical, shimmering texture. Out of this passage (see Figure 9), a rhythmically augmented version of a previous theme is played by the clarinet in the sweet *clarino* register over harp arpeggios.
Figure 10: Excerpt from *Première Rhapsody* by Claude Debussy.

A note on the ending of this piece: it is startling on a first listening. After a very difficult passage of chromatic sixteenth notes over the break between B♭₄ and B₄ building up momentum, there is a *forte* brass soli (see Figure 11) before an unaccompanied upwards flourish in the clarinet, which ends the piece on a high D♭₆ (concert).
Figure 11: Ending of *Première Rhapsody* by Claude Debussy.

The surprising ending makes sense for a piece that quixotically alternates between lush, flowing music and quirky scherzando passages. In fact, this range in characters and moods is what propels a single-movement piece to compete with much longer concerti in the genre. It is therefore a great choice of repertoire for programs that cannot fit a longer concerto.
Clarinet Concerto by Gerald Finzi

Gerald Finzi (1901-1956) was an English composer, known initially to me for his vocal settings of British poets such as Thomas Hardy and William Shakespeare. His musical influences were other English composers such as Sir Edward William Elgar (1857-1934) and Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958). His music has been described as being in the English pastoral tradition and still writing in a mainly tonal harmonic language.¹¹

Finzi’s Clarinet Concerto, op. 31, was completed in 1949 after his war-time duties had ended. It was commissioned for the three Choirs Festival held at Hereford Cathedral. The clarinetist Frederick Thurston was joined by the strings of the LSO, conducted by Finzi himself. Finzi had originally intended the Clarinet Concerto for clarinetist Pauline Juler, but she was unable to perform the piece due to her pregnancy. However, in 1943, Finzi wrote the Five Bagatelles for her and strings, which became another beloved staple of the solo clarinet repertoire.

The most remarkable aspect of this composition is Finzi’s unstoppable counterpoint skills. Practically no system of the score goes by without a satisfactory contrapuntal moment, giving the entire work a forward-driving motion and intrigue that makes the half-hour go by in a blink of an eye. This soulful work is in three movements: “Allegro vigoroso” (which actually has a number of slow sections), “Adagio, ma senza rigore,” and “Rondo: Allegro giocoso.”

The first movement is a wonderful example of motivic development. This takes the form of a charming dialogue within the first minutes of the first movement. After a sweeping section with the soloist floating over all the strings, the texture breaks, revealing a new rhythmic motive

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in the clarinet. This is echoed in the viola. The clarinet in the *chalumeau* register and the viola in the middle of its range both have a dark, woody quality to their sounds, making the dialogue sound like it is between two siblings. After this dialogue, this motive actually becomes an accompaniment figure throughout the movement, eventually being passed to the second violins in octaves.

Figure 12: Excerpt from Gerald Finzi’s (1901-1956) *Clarinet Concerto*, op. 31, Movement 1.

Figure 13: Transformation of the highlighted motive from Figure 13. (pg. 112, first system.)
Another interesting viola-clarinet dialogue occurs at Rehearsal 5, around the midpoint of the movement. The viola and clarinet are part of a canonic texture over a pedal tone in the cellos. Again, the pairing of viola with the clarinet brings out the richness and warmth in both of these instruments. Of course, this is the same theme that Finzi uses throughout the movement, which was originally presented in full at Rehearsal 1 with the solo clarinet’s first entrance. In this presentation seen in Figure 14, it is transposed down a sixth, with the viola and clarinet completely intertwined. This kind of closely intertwined counterpoint continues until the Più Animato section that propels into the clarinet cadenza.

Figure 14a: Opening clarinet melody from Gerald Finzi’s (1901-1956) Clarinet Concerto, op. 31, Movement 1, pg. 109.
There are simply too many beautiful moments to describe here, but a final section I would like to highlight is the simple yet effective way the strings fill in the gaps of space between clarinet phrases. A great example of this is two measures before rehearsal mark 4, which features a lovely chorale in the upper string parts. Before this chorale, plays an ornamented version of the melody that was discussed previously (see Figure 15). After a flourish that curves upward, the clarinetist must take a breath. In this break, Finzi writes another flourish in the first violins that echoes the same contour and crosses over the clarinet. He is not afraid to steal attention away from the soloist with adventurous string writing, making the string orchestra an equal actor.

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42 Ibid.
In the second movement, the clarinet actually becomes the accompaniment at some points, dancing around the melody in the strings. As seen in Figure 16, the violin and viola play a flowing melody over a bassline that gently meanders downward. The clarinet fleshes out the harmony by playing arpeggios in the chalumeau and throat registers, as to not overpower the strings. In fact, the clarinet is marked *pianissimo* while the strings swell to a *mezzo piano*. Eventually, the clarinet takes over, creating a naturally moving and swelling conversation within all the instruments.
The most remarkable example of contrapuntal writing is when Finzi juxtaposes a swirling scalar pattern in eighth notes with the same melody as above. The scalar pattern, which is joined by the clarinet, sometimes crosses into the range of the melody, creating a wave-like feeling because the crests of each phrase are interlocking. This scalar pattern continues as the bassline in quarter-notes, coinciding with the development of the theme in the violins after the double-bar, all of which is transposed up a semitone.
Figure 17: Excerpt from Gerald Finzi’s *Clarinet Concerto*, op. 31, Movement 2.

Closer to the middle of the piece, the clarinet’s melody will cross under the first violins, creating more of a duet texture than a soloist-accompaniment texture, as seen in Figure 18. In all, this movement represents an unusual integration of the clarinet and string orchestra, but this contributes to a great deal of interest for the listener in a musical landscape where concerti sometimes can consist of only lackluster orchestral accompaniment. Instead, the clarinet and orchestra work together.
Finzi prefers to score the clarinet in a constantly intertwined dialogue with the strings rather than as a stand-alone soloist, but this does not cause balance issues – mainly because the juxtaposition of one reed instrument against only strings has enough timbral difference to always be distinguishable. Despite this timbral difference, it is clear that Finzi is still concerned with balance in his composition.

Finzi continues to solve issues of balance within the orchestration in ingenious ways in the third movement. First, there is an idiomatic flourish based on an arpeggiated C major scale in the second measure of Figure 19 below. Under the flourish, Finzi confidently scores a swell in divisi strings with each instrument in the mid-low of their range, creating a powerful and intense body of sound. Then, the clarinet’s line reaches down into the chalumeau register at a quieter dynamic level. As to emphasize this drop in intensity, the violas, cellos and double bassists do not play until the second beat of the measure. They play short pizzicati in the middle of the sustained dotted-quarter-note in the clarinet, ensuring no important melodic information is covered up. As a harmonic pad, Finzi scores the violins on an open fifth, while the first violins divide to produce natural harmonics. The result is transparency with the shimmering string chord in fifths and fourths, which leaves room for the beauty of the clarinet melody to shine through.
Finzi’s *Clarinet Concerto* is unique for being scored for string orchestra rather than for full orchestra. In addition, the clarinet and strings are integrated and woven together more intricately than in earlier concerti, meaning that they truly function as a team in this piece. Finzi’s contrapuntal work is remarkable, giving the piece a sense of fluidity and forward-motion that highlights the beautiful idiomatic melodies played by the clarinet.
Concerto for Clarinet and String Orchestra, with Harp and Piano by Aaron Copland

Aaron Copland (1900-1990) was an American composer inspired by studies with Nadia Boulanger, jazz, folk music, neoclassicism and more. One of his main goals was to create “American sounding concert music.”43 Copland had a wide-ranging style and his musical material was equally scattered. The Concerto for Clarinet and String Orchestra, with Harp and Piano was commissioned by jazz clarinetist Benny Goodman (1909-1986) in 1947, twenty years later than Copland’s first jazz-inspired works.44 The result was music that maturely synthesized subtle references to jazz. Apparently, Goodman found the original concerto too technically challenging, so he encouraged Copland to alter sections of the piece. Critics thought the piece was “lightweight” and “second-rate,” but the concerto became one of Copland’s most frequently performed works.

The first movement is described by Copland as a “languid song form.”45 It begins with a soaring, melancholy melody over a ground-bass pattern. In this first movement, the clarinet is treated as simply the solo voice of a rhapsodic piece for the entire string orchestra. The clarinet melody is actually rather troublesome, as some of the phrases land in the throat notes in unison with other instruments, which is notoriously difficult to tune. Some trouble-spots are highlighted in Figure 20. Because the octaves at which these notes are played are matched exactly in the strings, this presents a challenge for the clarinetist to tune exactly. While this movement is beautifully constructed and composed, composers should note that seemingly simple melodic lines like these can present unique challenges due to the nature of the instrument.

44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
What is perhaps the most unique element of this piece is the construction. The first rhapsodic movement ends in a long unaccompanied cadenza that allows the clarinetist to finally show off. The cadenza starts off *cantabile*, and as the orchestra disappears, the clarinet winds up the tempo and modulates through several key areas to the sprightly, fast and staccatissimo second movement, which ends the work.

Copland reshapes the concerto cadenza as a cinematic transition between the two movements, rather than the original purpose of ornamenting a structurally important cadence. The entire cadenza emphasizes syncopations, which is seen in Figure 21.
A final chromatic flourish upwards leads into a tied-over E-natural, which underneath the string pizzicatos of the second movement begin. This transition is very unique in the history of concerto forms, especially for a two-movement piece. This cadenza is so substantial that it almost becomes like another movement. Copland’s piano concerto was also in two movements.\textsuperscript{46}

The second movement is quirky and groovy in a way only Copland can compose. It contains many quick orchestra-clarinet dialogues and takes advantage of the dry staccati a clarinet can create even on its highest notes, which matches nicely with the string players and the

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid.
percussive piano. There is even a bluesy section (Figure 23) accompanied only by string bass, which sounds perfectly apt in the Benny Goodman recording. These bluesy elements and syncopated rhythms are then further developed until the end of the movement.

Figure 23: Mm. 297-301 from Aaron Copland’s Concerto for Clarinet, Strings, Harp and Piano

The ending is a mix of Stravinsky-like stabbing chords in the strings and a Rhapsody-in-blue-esque glissando in the clarinet up to the final chord. In all, this concerto is a rollercoaster from start to finish – a lyrical first movement flows into a cadenza, which transitions into a quirky, rhythmically driving finish with stunning virtuosity in every instrumental part.
Clarinet Concerto by Katherine Hoover

Katherine Hoover (1927-2018) was an American flutist, composer and advocate for women in classical music. While studying flute and music theory at the Eastman School of Music in 1955, she was “discouraged from composition” because there were “no women composers.” In her role as a flute and theory teacher in NYC following her education, she was asked to write pieces for school concerts, which were well-received and propelled her towards composition. In the 70s, her compositions won several awards, and she won a NEA fellowship. Once her career took off, she finished the Clarinet Concerto in 1987 for jazz clarinetist Eddie Daniels and the Santa Fe Symphony. This piece was near the beginning of an immensely productive few decades that included eleven chamber works featuring clarinet.

Unique to Hoover’s concerto is that improvisation is required in all three movements. While Copland wrote his concerto for jazz clarinetist Benny Goodman, in the score there are no indications for improvisation of any kind. As discussed in my chapter on the history of the concerto, there is precedent for performers to take extended improvisatory cadenza breaks while performing concerti. Therefore, this is a good melding of the jazz and classical canons. It is “steeped in the art music style,” but contains jazz elements such as the improvisation, pitch-bending techniques on the clarinet, orchestration that includes the alto saxophone in the orchestra, as well as tighter voicings in section soli moments that is reminiscent of jazz horn section writing.

The concerto is in three movements - the first and third movements are Allegro, which “frame” an elegy as the middle movement. In her program note, Hoover describes using jazz

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48 Ibid.
“harmonies, rhythms, and riffs.” I will discuss examples of all these elements, including the improvisatory sections. The recording with clarinetist Robert Spring (who has championed many of Hoover’s compositions) totals to just under twenty-four minutes, making it about the standard length for a three-movement concerto.

The first movement is a lively Allegro with a meandering key center and primary time signature being ¾ time. While there isn’t a clear tonal center, both the melody and string ostinato patterns that make up the movement largely consist of the notes of the C altered scale (seen in Figure 24), a common scale used in jazz improvisation, particularly on dominant chords. Since Hoover uses jazz-inspired extended harmony in almost every chord, I think the comparison is warranted.

**Figure 24:** The C altered scale

![C Altered Scale](image)

While the movement is reminiscent of jazz, there are still elements of rigorous classical composition. One interesting element is a double-reed and alto saxophone soli at measure 46 (Figure 25) in which the reeds are pitted against each other in a fugal, chromatic, and highly rhythmic counterpoint. This section reappears as melodic material several times throughout the piece to add rhythmic momentum. In addition, it is given to different sections throughout the orchestra for coloristic contrast.

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Interestingly enough, this reed instrument combination brings back melodic material from the “bluesy” melody at mm 59-66 as interjections between the solo clarinet’s virtuosic passages. The top voice in these chords alternates between the flat sixth and flat seventh scale degrees with a syncopated pattern, similarly to the earlier melody.
One of the main jazz influences is in the rhythm, particularly in the orchestra. For example, in measure 20, the brass and strings have syncopated, stabbing chords in a harmonic progression to CMaj7(b9). The chords are closely voiced in a big-band-jazz style, seen in Figure 27 below. This kind of transition happens at almost every change in color or mood in the piece, especially at the very end in a similar harmonic progression to Cmaj7(b9) at the very last chord of the movement (seen in Figure 28 below). At the end, the chords are orchestrated more thickly and are more widely voiced to make each chord sound more forceful.
Despite being a modern composition, the form of this movement is quite standard. There is an introduction, then an exposition from mm. 13-66, then a mini-cadenza that flows into a developmental section. There is a recapitulation from mm. 120-170, then followed by a cadenza that elaborates upon melodic material from the movement. After the cadenza, there is a coda section that wraps up all melodic and textural elements of the movement in a condensed form, culminating with an improvisatory section with jazz-like slash notation and chord symbols that leads into a final flourish to a “button.” Therefore, the first movement follows most conventions of typical concerto form, but with more improvisatory sections and jazz influences.

The second movement, which is an Adagio, is titled “Elegy,” for Hoover’s friend Lee Goodwin. There is not much information about who Goodwin was, but Hoover’s husband’s last name was Goodwin, so perhaps Lee Goodwin was a relative or in-law. An elegy in music evokes the Greek elegos, a sorrowful lament for someone who has passed away. This movement is also the longest in the concerto.

There is a soaring, plaintive melody underscored by undulating chromatic lines that slowly climb upward, creating mystery and tension. The thin orchestration in the beginning

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50 Valladares, Gabrielle Alissa. "Women and Feminism in Classical and Jazz History: Katherine Hoover’s Clarinet Concerto in Context."
features strings and vibraphone, which creates a hazy quality. Out of the chromatic undulation, there comes almost-hopeful cluster chords in the strings with a syncopated rhythm. The clarinet has extended runs and scales, which culminates in an extended improvised cadenza at measure 52. The performer is instructed to “improvise… mainly on materials (and mood) of measures 1-23,” but there is a written-out solo option in the clarinet part, which clarinetist Robert Spring has chosen in the 2005 recording I have included in the YouTube playlist on page 15.

The main motive of this movement is a weeping descending minor second, which the horn section plainly iterates at the closing of the improvised cadenza (seen in Figure 29).

Figure 29: Mm. 53-55 from Katherine Hoover’s Clarinet Concerto, Movement 2

In addition, this minor-second motive creates the accompaniment for the creeping chromatic counterpoint sections. For example, in measure 24-30, there is an orchestral interlude that begins with a chromatic line that uses every chromatic pitch between D4 and Ab5. This section is used as a transition point to reach the fourths chords in mm. 30-52. However, instead of the fourths being simply stacked to create quartal-sounding harmony, Hoover revoices the chords and gradually adds accidentals and harmonic alterations to increase the depth and intensity leading up to the cadenza at measure 52.
The movement reaches a climax with the clarinet in the altissimo register, with the orchestra more thickly orchestrated on the syncopated cluster chord figure from the pre-cadenza section. The volume and intensity winds down until the end, which ends on a suspended D chord. Rather than this elegy being too dour, the suspended chord at the end leaves space for hope, light and recovery.

The third movement presents the most interesting figuration for clarinet yet so far. Hoover makes use of a combination of graphic notation elements, slash notation and regular notation to create a framework for the solo clarinetist.
In the middle of the third movement, Hoover creates an unusual orchestral texture. On top of extended harmony in the brass section, Temple Blocks sound, creating clicking horse hooves while the clarinet wails away. For me, the mental image is of a New Orleans brass band on the street during a parade.

Figure 32: Mm. 85-89 from Katherine Hoover’s Clarinet Concerto, Movement 3
The brass drops out by measure 80, leaving just the Temple Blocks and clarinet. The most interesting moment is when the clarinet is instructed to imitate the pitches of the Temple Blocks. The movement ends with another free cadenza, then a short Allegro Vivace coda that crescendos to a final “button.”

In all, while Hoover’s concerto is quite standard in formal structure, her use of the orchestra and synthesis of jazz elements makes for a memorable concerto that should be circulating orchestral programming more often. Dr. Gabrielle Alissa Valladares’s dissertation has been the only scholarly source I have seen on Hoover’s Clarinet Concerto, so I owe a good deal of my understanding to her research.
**Ninian by James MacMillan**

Sir James MacMillan (b. 1959), from Scotland, is one of the most frequently performed living composers of our time. MacMillan’s most famous works are either for chorus and orchestra or concerti with orchestra for instruments such as piano, percussion, oboe, violin, and viola. He often writes on spiritual and political themes. A highlight of one such sacred work was his *Stabat Mater* being performed at the Sistine Chapel in 2019. Critics describe his music as containing “excitement, raw emotional power and spiritual meditation.”

MacMillan “Ninian” was composed in 1996 for celebrations of the Year of Ninian. St. Ninian was a founding father of Scotland in 397 AD. The three movements are based on three tales about the saint. MacMillan describes the works as being “also a collection of tone-painting which give an impression of these ancient tales.” The concerto is about a half-hour long, but the third movement takes up about one-half of the entire runtime.

In all the examples I’ve presented thus far, I have admired the way composers have featured the solo clarinet by creating transparent orchestral textures or witty dialogues between instruments. I admire the first movement of MacMillan’s “Ninian” for the opposite reason. At the climax of the movement, the clarinet begins a melody that meanders upwards for forty-eight measures, crescendoing gradually from a *cantabile* mezzo-piano all way to a *violent* fortissississimo (****) with the clarinet screaming at the very top of its register. What is most remarkable about this passage is that the melody is doubled in the orchestra the entire time! The passage is first doubled by the violas and second violins, then is passed to the first violins and first flutes. Because of this doubling, MacMillan is able to get away with a thicker orchestral

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texture, with rich harmonies building throughout the section as the melodic instruments climb into the tops of their registers.

MacMillan says “the first movement describes how reivers came by night to steal Ninian’s herd of cattle.” The bull kills the leaders of the reivers, but St. Ninian resurrects him. This makes the bull so mad that it stamps its hoof in solid rock. This slowly building section from measure 121 until the **fff** stabbing chords, marked “violent” at measure 178, I interpret to be the leader of the reivers coming back to life and the bull subsequently raging. The anguished cluster chords are prominently scored with the brass, especially trumpets, loud and high in their range. Therefore, by measure 169, the doubling of the first violins, flute and piccolo allows this screaming melody line to be sustained over the brass screaming equally as forcefully. These stabbing, violent chords at measure 178 are likely representing the bull stamping its hoof into the rock. MacMillan scores a cowbell being frantically beaten at 178 to further illustrate the image of a bull going on a rampage.

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53 Ibid.
MacMillan proves even further in the third movement, “A mystical vision of the Christ-child,” that a clarinet concerto need not leave out the orchestra from all the fun. In fact, my favorite element of the piece is a brass “Quasi chorale” which interrupts a senza-misura cadenza in the Solo Clarinet. The choral comes back three times, each repetition becoming longer and more complexly scored. The chorale is likely representative of a holy man “belch[ing] forth sacred hymns from his throat” after he had eaten the sacrament. MacMillan instructs the brass section to play “solemn and intoxicated,” which in practice sounds remarkably like a boisterous older priest being so possessed by the holy spirit that he begins singing. There are even scoops written into the brass parts that make the chorale sound like an older man is singing it. The clarinet cadenzas interspersed between the chorales are mystical and florid, perhaps representing the mystery of the religious story on which MacMillan has based the work.

Finally, MacMillan’s intention of featuring the orchestra with equally challenging music to the soloist becomes clear with the ending of simultaneous aleatoric cadenzas in all the

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54 Ibid.
woodwind instruments gradually fading into nothing. The piece ends with simultaneous
cadenza-fragments being repeated ad libitum in the piccolo, flutes, oboes, english horn, clarinet
and bass clarinet, bassoons, double bassoon, and solo clarinet, shown in reduction in Figure 34
below. The percussionists are instructed to “play well after the soloist has stopped, then fade
gradually to nothing.”\textsuperscript{55} The percussion section, scored on tubular bells, tuned gongs, and bell
plates creates a mystical, far-away church-bell sound. Conventionally, a concerto ends with one
technically challenging cadenza for the solo instrument. MacMillan changes the expected form
by including \textit{four} unmeasured clarinet cadenzas in addition to this woodwind cadenza
free-for-all.

Compared with other clarinet concerti, MacMillan’s is unusual for several reasons. First,
his use of story and representation within the work crosses over into tone-poem territory. Second,
the orchestra in this piece has, at times, even more challenging music than the soloist, making
this concerto a true team effort. His “Ninian” is a lesson for composers that a concerto can be an
equally fulfilling exercise in writing for orchestra as it is a feature for a singular instrument.

\footnote{\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.}
Figure 34: M. 188 of Movement 3 from Sir James MacMillan’s “Ninian,” reduced score.

* Each woodwind player plays its own independent repeating phrase.
** Play until well after the soloist has stopped, then fade gradually to nothing (end independently).
Chapter Four: Creative Practice

Introduction to “Morning Rhapsody”

My contribution to the clarinet concerto repertoire is “Morning Rhapsody,” which is an approximately 10-minute piece for chamber orchestra and solo clarinet. A chamber orchestra was chosen for the increased probability of this student composition being played by a professional or semi-professional ensemble. The orchestration, in addition to the solo clarinet, is flute, oboe, clarinet in Bb, bass clarinet, bassoon, horn in F, trumpet in Bb, trombone, two percussionist, celesta/piano, and a 4:3:3:2:1 string section.

The compositional material for this piece was derived from a commission for clarinetist and University of Nevada professor Joshua Anderson. For his research, he is compiling a collection of etudes for developing clarinetists by living composers akin to Cyrille Rose’s famous 24-etude book. One of my contributing etudes in F major was the starting point.

The first opening theme of this etude is based on chords resulting from stacked fourth and fifth intervals, which to me sounded dreamy and magical. This expansive melody demanded an orchestral treatment, which is why it was the main theme on which I composed “Morning Rhapsody.” One can see the melody highlighted throughout the piece, fragmented, developed and transposed several times throughout the work.
I took formal inspiration from Debussy’s *Premiere Rhapsody*, hence why the piece is in one movement, of about the same length and tempo. Even so, I was able to take away elements of inspiration from all seven of the pieces I studied. In the programmatic conception I have of this piece, I imagine the solo clarinetist playing the role of a sprite who ushers in the rising of the winter sun and waking up of the whole forest. With the orchestral textures that include celesta, piano, icy *sul ponticello* strings and rushing scalar figures, I create a dreamy atmosphere. In my program notes, I have written, “*Imagine refracted rays of light melting icicles and the smell of pine needles. Stage directions for the soloist, which may be interpreted to best suit your space, are presented in bold typeface with a box around them.*”

The full orchestral score of “Morning Rhapsody” can be found as an appendix at the end of this document. Instrumental parts and performance rights may be requested via my website at [https://www.sarahmarze.com/sheet-music](https://www.sarahmarze.com/sheet-music). In addition to the score, a recorded electronic
representation of the music, which has yet to be premiered, is available online at

https://on.soundcloud.com/i2k9v.
Bibliography


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morning rhapsody

for Solo Clarinet in Bb
and Chamber Orchestra

SARAH ANN MARZE
morning rhapsody

The solo clarinetist is a sprite who ushers in the rising of the winter sun and waking up of the whole forest. Imagine refracted rays of light melting icicles and the smell of pine needles. One of the two recurring melodies is borrowed from an etude I wrote for clarinetist Josh Anderson. Stage directions for the soloist, which may be interpreted to best suit your space, are presented in bold typeface with a box around them.

**Instrumentation:**

Solo Clarinet in Bb  
Flute  
Clarinet  
Bass Clarinet  
Bassoon  
Horn in F  
Trumpet in Bb  
Trombone  
2 Percussion*  
Piano and Celesta  
4 Violin I  
3 Violin II  
3 Viola  
2 Cello  
1 Double Bass

*Percussion I: Glockenspiel, Tubular Bells (share), Xylophone, Crotales, Marimba  
Percussion II: Timpani, Suspended Cymbal, Tambourine, Mark tree, Tubular bells (share)

**Duration:** approx. 10 minutes
MORNING RHAPSODY

Freely $j = 50$

Misterioso $j = 90$

Sarah Ann Marze (ASCAP)
To Timp.
MORNING RHAPSODY
soloist in the wings
MORNING RHAPSODY

Fl.

Ob.

Cl. in Bb

B Cl.

Bsn

Hn in F

Tpt in Bb

Tbn.

Xyl.

Pno

S. Cl. in Bb

Vln I

Vln II

Vla

Vc.

D. B.
MORNING RHAPSODY
MORNING RHAPSODY
accelerando

accelerando

Dolce \( \text{\textit{L}} \) = 72

stenso

senza sord.

Fl.

Ob.

Cl. in Bb

B Cl.

Bsn

Hn in F

Tpt in Bb

Tbn.

Mar

Timp.

Sel.

S. Cl. in Bb

Vln I

Vln II

Vla

Vc.

Db
MORNING RHAPSODY

Subito Allegro

To Sus. Cym.

off the string

mf
MORNING RHAPSODY

Fl.

Ob.

Cl. in Bb

B Cl.

Bsn

Hn in F

Tpt in Bb

Tbn.

Glock.

Sus. Cym.

Cel.

S. Cl. in Bb

Vln I

Vln II

Vla

Vc.

D. B.

171 172 173 174
MORNING RHAPSODY