

Theses of the DLA dissertation

Péter Szűcs

EXTENDED TECHNIQUES IN THE
HUNGARIAN SOLO CLARINET
REPERTOIRE

Interpretation and Notation

Supervisor: Balázs Horváth

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I. Preliminaries of the research

Extended techniques, i.e. unconventional ways of playing the instrument and the exploration of new tonal territories, have permeated the international literature on the clarinet for decades. In different ways, and to different degrees, these trends have also affected Hungarian composition. Based on my preliminary research, I have come to the conclusion that the techniques covered in my thesis appear in a "pure" state and make the best use of the instrument's characteristics in solo compositions, and I have therefore decided to examine and illustrate the tonal possibilities of my instrument and their application through the works of Hungarian composers for solo clarinet.

Another important background is my nearly two decades of performing, during which I have collaborated and experimented with composers on numerous occasions, even as a co-composer and witness to the birth of a piece. Throughout the composition process, from both a composer's and a performer's point of view, the following sources have been an important starting point for us in the use of most extended playing techniques:

- Rehfeldt, Phillip: *New Directions for Clarinet*. Scarecrow Press, Berkeley, 2003.
- Bok, Henri; Wendel, Eugen: *Nouvelles techniques de la clarinette basse*, Paris: Editions Salabert, 1989.
- Sparnaay, Harry: *The Bass Clarinet: A Personal History*, Barcelona: Periferia Sheet Music, 2011.
- Clarinetist Heather Roche's website: <https://heatherroche.net/>
- Clarinetist Gregory Oakes' website: <https://www.gregoryoakes.com/multiphonics/index.php>

Apart from the fact that the books and websites mentioned above have also pointed me in the direction for my research, they are incomplete, as they do not contain enough information from an acoustic or methodological point of view and leave a lot of unclear questions, which in my experience often lead both authors and performers astray in their use of an effect.

These facts have further motivated me to produce a synthesis work that draws on the latest research in this dynamically evolving field to provide up-to-date information on extended clarinet techniques, including their historical background, acoustic properties and methodological implementation.

II. Sources

There is virtually no literature available in Hungarian that is closely related to my topic. The fact that I have used sources in Hungarian is due to the multidisciplinary nature of my thesis. Among these sources, I would like to highlight Gergely Itzész: *Flautológia. New and Modern Flute Methodology*. It soon became clear to me that there were some inescapable sources of literature relevant to my research area. These include, for example, Bruno Bartolozzi's *New Sounds for woodwind*, which can be regarded as the cornerstone of research in this direction, and the already mentioned and much-published Phillip Rehfeldt: *New Directions for Clarinet*.

It comes as no surprise that the most active researchers in the instrumental techniques listed in my dissertation are American wind artists, in most cases doctoral students at universities. Therefore, I have used as secondary sources several DMA and PhD dissertations and articles from *The Clarinet*, a quarterly journal that has been published for nearly fifty years.

Of course, the sheet music of the solo compositions was also a primary source. It is not an easy task to examine an ever-expanding repertoire, and it is inevitable that certain compositions will slip one's radar. An important starting point for me was the database of the Budapest Music Center and the music collection of clarinetist Csaba Klenyán, to whom dozens of works have been dedicated by Hungarian composers over the last twenty-five years. The research was complicated by the fact that most of the works were unpublished and only available through personal contacts. On several occasions, I personally contacted the composers of the works in question, and in each case received valuable information and clarification.

III. Methodology

The structure of my dissertation follows the path and the editorial principle set out by the literature sources mentioned earlier. In the subsections of the two main parts, we move from monophonic modes of pitch and timbre modification to polyphonic techniques with complex acoustic properties and requiring more practice.

Reading through a number of dissertations written over the last 10-15 years has encouraged me in my desire to explore the techniques discussed from an interpretation perspective and to share my practical experience and subjective feelings with the reader. I have done this by comparing and sometimes contrasting major English-language sources on the subject in some chapters and by discussing the use of notation.

An important question for me was the origin and musical history of certain ways of playing, involving other instruments. Therefore, my thesis contains information not only in the context of the clarinet, thus going beyond a traditional source of clarinet literature. The focus of my work is not only on the technical aspects of the instrument but also on the music itself. However, instead of a general analytical work covering the whole musical fabric of the pieces, I have focused on the playing technique presented in the current chapter, by selecting a few bar passages.

IV. Results

In my doctoral dissertation, by examining the repertoire of Hungarian composers for solo clarinet and the tonal possibilities of my instrument through the repertoire, I did not aim to assess the last sixty years of Hungarian composition, but I trust that the enthusiastic reader and those interested in this topic will find answers to questions such as: To what extent did our country's composers regard the clarinet (and bass clarinet) as a solo instrument? What do they mean and in what roles can we find the effects discussed in their works? Is there a unified trend in this respect and how characteristic is the tendency to experiment? How are certain playing techniques (e.g. *vibrato*, *glissando*) that have long been used in clarinet literature expanded and given different meanings?

My dissertation has also taken on the task of listing all solo compositions for clarinet. The 146 pieces collected are tabulated and grouped according to the playing techniques I have examined, and I have included them as an appendix to the thesis, providing a useful source for future research.

V. The documentation of the activity related to the subject of the thesis

A significant part of my musical activity has been supporting the cause of 20th century and contemporary Hungarian music. For more than ten years I have been a member of the UMZE Chamber Ensemble and of intellectual groups of performers through which I have experienced first-hand the changes in Hungarian contemporary music. I have performed on many occasions at concerts where the solo compositions quoted in my writing are performed. The knowledge I have gained through my research into extended techniques has also influenced the development of my interpretative skills, which of course I feel not only in the performance of Hungarian works. Without wishing to be exhaustive, here are some of my past and future concert performances to document my work:

- 28 May 2018 **Péter Szűcs bass clarinet recital** (FUGA-Budapest Architecture Centre)
- 30 June 2018 **Kurtág e a sua Circunstancia**, Terras Sem Sombra festival, (Santiago do Cacém, Portugal) (Máté Bella: Insomnia)
- 2 January 2019 **Eötvös 75** - Birthday concert of Péter Eötvös (BMC Concert Hall)
- 13 October 2019 **Cafe Budapest - Faces of the clarinet** (BMC Concert Hall) (works by Máté Bella, Balázs Horváth and Samu Gryllus)
- 12 March 2020 **Swing it** (Theater am lend, Graz, Austria) Concert with the Schallfeld Ensemble
- 14 May 2022 **Composer's evening of instrumental and vocal pieces by Balázs Horváth** (BMC Library) (Balázs Horváth: Life)
- 5 February 2023 **Transparent Sound New Music Festival - Autour de nous**. Concert with the UMZE Chamber Ensemble (BMC Concert Hall) (David Hudry: Transmission)

- 21 April 2023 **Ligeti in Good Company** (Reaktor Vienna, Austria) Concert with MIKAMO-Central European Chamber Orchestra

In addition to the above mentioned concerts, I also use my experience in researching the subject in my university teaching every day.