


A CONCEPT-BASED PEDAGOGY APPROACH TO
SELECTED UNACCOMPANIED CLARINET REPERTOIRE

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1. PURPOSE

Though unaccompanied music encompasses a significant percentage of clarinet repertoire, it comprises a comparatively small portion of repertoire performed on student degree recitals and at solo competitions.¹ However, study of unaccompanied repertoire provides a valuable pedagogical bridge between etudes and accompanied repertoire that is fertile with opportunity to address larger universal musical concepts, rather than repertoire-specific solutions. This dissertation will demonstrate the application of concept-based pedagogy to selected unaccompanied clarinet repertoire of five different ability levels. Using principals of concept-based pedagogy, each work will be broken down to its component technical and expressive parts in order to address larger musical concepts. Three to five studies (one to address each concept) addressing each work's technical and expressive challenges will be provided and explained.

2. SIGNIFICANCE AND STATE OF RESEARCH

2.1 Unaccompanied Clarinet Repertoire

Only two pieces of unaccompanied music were written for the clarinet before the twentieth century, Anton Stadler's *Trois caprices pour clarinet seule* (1810) and Gaetano Donizetti's *Studio Primo* (1821).² When Igor Stravinsky wrote *Three Pieces for Clarinet Alone* (1919), it triggered composition of another fifteen works for unaccompanied clarinet before 1950 and a

¹ After reviewing the last 100 clarinet recitals given at the University of North Texas, there is a maximum of one unaccompanied work on each recital, where there are at least two (and often more) accompanied works.

² James E. Gillespie, *Solos for Unaccompanied Clarinet: An Annotated Bibliography of Published Works* (Detroit: Information Coordinators, 1973), 14-16.

total of sixty works between 1950 and 1959.³ Since then, the number of unaccompanied works written each year has grown exponentially. As a result, so has interest in the genre.

An exhaustive search uncovered only two published books that address unaccompanied clarinet repertoire: Gillespie (1973) and Heim (1984; 2006). Many dissertations, however, have addressed unaccompanied clarinet music over the course of the twentieth century. They appear to follow several different trends. Dr. James Gillespie wrote the first; it catalogs and annotates all unaccompanied works until 1970 in a systematic and easy to access manner. He expanded this dissertation into a book in 1973. The trend of cataloging works chronologically continued through much of the twentieth-century as indicated in several dissertations such as those by Merriman (1966), Fisher (1970), Stier (1982). As the number of unaccompanied works grew, chronological listing became increasingly difficult due to sheer the volume and geographical spread of these works.

Subsequent dissertations focused on categorizing works by the region or country of origin as in those by Curlette (1991), Campbell (1995), Harsian (2009), and Fukunaga (1988) that examine unaccompanied clarinet works of the Soviet Union, Canada, Romania, and Latin America, respectively. Most recently, scholars have focused on unaccompanied works of specific composers such as Edward Yadzinski in Sperazza (2004) and Meyer Kupferman in DiSanto (1996). Kohl's 2012 article featured one portion of Stockhausen's *Klang*, indicating a trend moving toward the examination of a single piece. Inspecting unaccompanied repertoire through a specific non-nationalistic or chronological lens has also been explored as well as in the Behm (1992) which examines extended technique use and the Schoepflin (1973) which examines stylistic, technical, and compositional trends within a certain time period.

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³ Huot Fisher, "A Critical Evaluation of Clarinet Solo Literature Published from January 1 1950 to January 1 1967" (DMA diss., University of Arizona, 1970), 29-30.

No book, article, dissertation or thesis has been written concerning unaccompanied music that specifically addresses approaches to learning and teaching unaccompanied repertoire in a systematic concept-based method. That is the purpose of this dissertation.

2.2 Concept-Based Pedagogy: History and Application to Music Instruction

In 1963, the U.S. Department of Education sponsored the Yale Seminar, a meeting of music educators, composers, theorists, and historians. The purpose of this meeting was to assess the purpose and process of music education, and whether or not American schools were achieving desired outcomes. This seminar sparked others including *The Contemporary Music Project* (1963), the *Seminar on Comprehensive Musicianship* at Northwestern University (1965), and the *Tanglewood Symposium* (1967), each of which discussed the effectiveness of Music Education in the United States and proposed different ways of achieving successful results.⁴

In 1977, the Wisconsin Music Educators' Association established the *Comprehensive Musicianship Through Performance* program, "as a means of assisting teachers with the development of performance with understanding in school music programs." The model is described briefly as follows:

"In the CMP process, the rehearsal is seen as a laboratory where students can develop an understanding of musical concepts such as expression, melody, rhythm, harmony, texture, timbre and form by being involved in a variety of roles including performing, improvising, arranging, composing, conducting, and analyzing music."⁵

In 2007, Lynn Erickson pioneered the idea of concept-based instruction. She utilizes many similar principles as CMP but applies these principles in the elementary classroom rather than a large band setting. Her three publications: *Stirring the Head, Heart, and Soul: Redefining*

⁴ Michael L. Mark, *A Concise History of American Music Education*, (Lanham, MD: Rowan & Littlefield Education, 2008), 126-134

⁵ Patricia O'Toole, *Shaping Sound Musicians: An Innovative Approach to Teaching Comprehensive Musicianship Through Performance* (Chicago: GIA Publications, 2003), 8-9.

Curriculum ¹³ and Instruction (2007), *Concept-Based Curriculum and Instruction for the Thinking Classroom* (2006), and *Concept-Based Curriculum and Instruction: Teaching Beyond the Facts* (2002) all explore ¹⁷ the concept of integrated thinking - seeing the patterns and connections of knowledge at a conceptual and transferable level of understanding.

Clearly, the idea of using concept-based pedagogy in teaching to achieve a deeper understanding is nothing new or revolutionary. However, bringing the conceptual nature of instruction to the attention of students, explaining how to transfer large concepts learned in one piece to new contexts in other areas, and making that the basis for instruction in the private lesson has yet to be explored in resources for unaccompanied clarinet.

Conventionally, many ²⁶ teachers believe that the purpose of teaching is to transfer knowledge that will eventually lead to independent understanding. Concept-based pedagogy is the notion that ⁵ students will, “know factually, understand conceptually, and do skillfully. ⁵ Traditionally, curriculum and instruction has been more two-dimensional in design (know and able to do)—resting on a misguided assumption that knowing facts is evidence of deeper, conceptual understanding.”⁶

In an applied studio context, “factual knowledge” comprises successful strategies clarinet students learn in order to practice and produce an effective performance of a specific piece, and how these strategies connect back to fundamental pillars of playing the clarinet correctly in the mechanical sense. In a typical master-apprentice system, many students, especially younger students, move on to a new piece after learning another piece, taking only small pieces of larger concepts that they learned in the first piece, essentially creating an entirely new context for each subsequent piece. In a repertoire-based teaching setting, students apply knowledge learned for a

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⁶ H. Lynn Erickson, *Concept-Based Curriculum and Instruction for the Thinking Classroom* (Newbury Park, CA: Corwin Publishing, 2006), 5.

specific piece to *that* specific piece without being specifically taught how to apply that knowledge to the next piece studied. Concept-based pedagogy aims to prevent this limited approach.

Using concept-based pedagogy as its backbone, this dissertation will explore specific areas of fundamental musicianship as defined by the Comprehensive Musicianship Program with regard to the specific chosen works for unaccompanied clarinet. By studying these pieces via larger concepts, students will acquire transferable knowledge useable in many different contexts, rather than learning a piece solely within its own context.

2.3 Concepts Addressed

As mentioned earlier, this dissertation will address specific concepts of musicianship through examination of five different unaccompanied pieces of five different difficulty levels. In *Shaping Sound Musicians: An Innovative Approach to Teaching Comprehensive Musicianship Through Performance*, Patricia O'Toole, a founding Wisconsin Music Educator of CMP, addresses the specific concepts of musicianship, namely expression, melody, rhythm, harmony, and form, that will be used as the basis for examination in this dissertation. Using these as a conceptual basis, five unaccompanied works for clarinet will be analyzed and discussed. Three to five studies will be written to explore and practice the challenging elements of each unaccompanied work.

2.4 Solos to be Examined

In order for this project to be accessible to a broad spectrum of students, it will examine unaccompanied solos of five differing difficulty levels: (1.) middle school, (2.) early high school, (3.) late high school, (4.) early undergraduate, and (5.) late undergraduate. The general technical and expressive capabilities of each level will be determined by survey of available lists of repertoire. For solos from the middle and high school levels, the University Interscholastic

League Prescribed Music List and NYSSMA guidelines were be used in selection. For solos from the university undergraduate level, repertoire lists collected a survey of several different university clarinet studios will be used. The university clarinet studio repertoire lists that will be consulted include those from Ithaca College, the University of Minnesota Duluth, Northern Illinois University, and Iowa State University.

The solos to be analyzed include Elliot Del Borgo's *Elegy* for middle school; Sven-David Sandström's *There is a bluer sky, a wall with roses...* for early high school; Giacomo Miluccio's *Rhapsodie pour Clarinette seule* for late high school; ²⁵ James Cohn's *Three Pieces for Clarinet Alone*, Op. 78 for early undergraduate; and William Bolcom's *Chalumeau* for late undergraduate level. These works were chosen for their accessibility in technique, range, and required expressivity. In an effort to explore the vast plethora of available unaccompanied repertoire I have attempted to choose works about which there is little to nothing written and few recorded performances.

3. METHOD AND APPROACH

This dissertation will be divided into two halves. The first will detail the state of research on unaccompanied clarinet music and concept-based pedagogy in order to demonstrate prior research trends and clarify the void this research fills. Background information will guide the reader to the thesis that comprehensive musicianship addresses issues of concept-based pedagogy primarily in the large ensemble setting; however, concept-based pedagogy is a useful tool when applied to teaching unaccompanied clarinet repertoire in a private instruction setting.

The second half of this dissertation will address the five selected works for unaccompanied clarinet listed above. For each piece, background information including a

biographical overview the composer's other works for clarinet, and a composer's other notable works will be provided to provide a complete context for each work.

Each work will then be broken down according to issues of expression, rhythm, timbre, and form. Each of these elements will be addressed with a specific study written to accompany that work, the basis of which can be synthesized to address similar issues in other works, thereby teaching not just a specific piece but specific transferable strategies that address concepts. The goal is for students to begin studying works with accompaniment *after* they already have a clear idea of how to employ the foundational principles of practice, technique, and expression in order to create an effective performance. The following is an example of the background information and what an etude on note grouping would look like for the Del Borgo.

3.2 Elliot Del Borgo Example

Composer Elliot Del Borgo (1938 – 2013) is best known for his prolific output for band at all levels consisting of over six-hundred compositions. He received a ¹² B.S. from State University of New York, an Ed.M from Temple University, and an M.M. from the Philadelphia Conservatory of Music. Del Borgo garnered international fame not only as a composer, but also as a clinician and conductor. Before his death, ²¹ he was awarded an honorary doctorate from the State University of New York at Potsdam, where he taught composition and theory for nearly thirty years.⁷

Del Borgo wrote *Elegy for Solo Clarinet* in 2010 for his friend and famed clarinet pedagogue David Etheridge, who passed away in the same year. Etheridge was ²³ David Ross Boyd Professor of Clarinet at the University of Oklahoma where he worked for thirty-four years. He met Del Borgo when they worked together at SUNY Potsdam, where Etheridge worked before

⁷ "Biography," Elliott Del Borgo Website, last modified January 1, 2015, accessed November 8, 2017, <http://www.elliottdelborgo.com/bio.html>.

Oklahoma. As a former student of Stanley Hasty, Etheridge placed a premium on teaching the next generation of clarinetists while also maintaining an active career as a performer.⁸

Elegy for Solo Clarinet is a short, but challenging work appropriate for middle-school aged students. The rhythmic elements of the work accentuate the difference between duple and triple subdivision, challenging the student to develop that skill. Tonally the work is mostly major and minor, with excursions to related areas. The melodic elements of the work utilize primarily step-wise and small leap motion up and down, making it possible for students without pattern reading or note grouping skills to read and learn the technique with diligent practice. The form follows a basic ABA form, with a return of the first section at the end and contains phrases that are primarily in sentence structure, with a microphrase followed by another microphrase and finished with a longer consequent making interpretation and phrasing of this work easier for a younger, more inexperienced student.

Because the elements of the work are so clear and straightforward, this is perfect for application of concept-based pedagogy principles. Of primary interest in this etude is note-grouping and pattern reading. Both skills are required of mature woodwind players and pieces such as this one, with few odd leaps, are the perfect opportunity to address this with the young student. Additionally, application of these concepts allows for discussion of certain kinds of practice concerning both note-grouping and pattern reading that will also be of long-term value to a student of any level.

The concept of note grouping is especially important for woodwind players of all ages because of the technical demands of our music. ¹⁹ In his book *Note Grouping: A Method for Achieving Expression and Style in Musical Performance*, Thurmond discusses this concept in

⁸ "David Etheridge," World Clarinet Alliance, last modified January 15, 2013, accessed November 8, 2017, <https://www.wka-clarinet.org/VIP-Etheridge.htm>.

detail, but does not use examples specific to actual pieces of music. The Del Borgo presents a great situation in which note-grouping can be applied. The beginner clarinet soloist is faced with a fair amount technical challenge from the beginning of the work. The passage at the beginning is comprised of large leaps, a tricky technical spot with sixteenth notes, and a flowing eighth note line that doesn't at first appear to have any pattern, making it difficult for a young clarinetist.



FIGURE 1: *Elegy for Solo Clarinet*, Elliot Del Borgo m. 1 – 12.

In measure three we see the first sixteenth-note grouping (see Figure 1). This could pose a particular challenge for the beginner because of the rhythm of the subdivision combined with the particular pitches required. By practicing the thumb motion from A⁴ to Bb⁴ and the switch from A⁴ down to D⁴ in duple and triple subdivisions sequentially, students will train their hands to move in the correct way regardless of speed (see Example 1 below).



EXAMPLE 1: Technical Practice of A to Bb passage.

The eighth note line in the passage presents a more salient challenge to the beginner clarinetist because of the seemingly lack of pattern. Upon closer inspection, though a pattern is presented (see bracketed motives above). The melodic line is comprised of rising and falling three note scale segments. These segments are preceded and followed by larger leaps of a third or more which could create precision issues with the young clarinetist. To make reading such lines less difficult, students could perform the F-major pattern below (see Example 2). This study I have written moves to C-major to relate to the harmonic demands of the repertoire, but this modulation to a closely related key is common of most tonal music and thus applicable as part of a student's technical study in the key of F. Because this could be difficult for a younger student to achieve, the following short study could be used in any key and at any subdivisional level to address both technical practice and the difficulty of achieving a consistent tone quality on the large leaps.



EXAMPLE 2: Ascending and Descending Scale Segment Study.

A series of etudes of similar style with similar discussion will be written for each unaccompanied work to address issues of expression, rhythm, timbre, and form. These will increase in length and difficulty as the difficulty of the works increase.

4. TENTATIVE CHAPTER HEADINGS

1. **Introduction**

Explains the goals of the dissertation, presents the current state of research in unaccompanied clarinet repertoire and concept-based pedagogy demonstrating the need for this project.

2. **Unaccompanied Clarinet Repertoire – Background and Selection Criteria**

This chapter will discuss the history and trends in research regarding unaccompanied clarinet repertoire, highlighting its rise to becoming a key element of the clarinet repertory.

3. **Concept-Based Pedagogy – Background and Application in Private Instruction**

An introduction to the basic principles as well as evolution of concept-based pedagogy will be explained with an emphasis on transferring conceptual knowledge from one piece to another.

4. **Middle School Level: *Elegy for Solo Clarinet*, Elliot Del Borgo**

Here background information on the composer and piece will frame study of the foundational concepts contained in each piece. Please see example under the ‘Method and Approach’ section.

5. **First and Second Year High School Level: *There is a bluer sky, a wall with roses...*, Sven-David Sandström**

Background information on the composer and piece will frame the work. It will also highlight the specific pedagogical difficulties for that skill level in order to lead into short etudes address issues of expression, rhythm, timbre, and form.

6. **Third and Fourth Year High School Level: *Rhapsodie pour Clarinette seule*, Giacomo Miluccio**

Background information on the composer and piece will frame the work. It will also highlight the specific pedagogical difficulties for that skill level in order to lead into etudes address issues of expression, rhythm, timbre, and form.

**7. First and Second Year Undergraduate Level: *Three Pieces for Clarinet Alone*,
Op. 78, James Cohn**

Background information on the composer and piece will frame the work. It will also highlight the specific pedagogical difficulties for that skill level in order to lead into etudes address issues of expression, rhythm, timbre, and form.

8. Third and Fourth Year Undergraduate Level: *Chalumeau*, William Bolcom

Background information on the composer and piece will frame the work. It will also highlight the specific pedagogical difficulties for that skill level in order to lead into etudes address issues of expression, rhythm, timbre, and form.

10. Conclusion

The conclusion will restate key points regarding the current state of research on unaccompanied music and the potential significance of the proposed study within that body. The connection between teaching unaccompanied music via concept-based pedagogy will be highlighted. The transferability of the knowledge gained through such practice and study will be evidenced in the studies and discussion produced for each piece as well as the research produced that connects an increasingly important educational movement to applied instruction at many levels.

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