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The Clarinet Through Western's Century: An Exploration of its Twentieth Century Repertoire with Additional Historical Commentary on Western Michigan University

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THE CARL AND WINIFRED LEE HONORS COLLEGE

CERTIFICATE OF ORAL EXAMINATION

Christopher M. Jacobson, having been admitted to the Carl and Winifred Lee Honors College in Fall 1999 successfully presented the Lee Honors College Thesis on March 15, 2003.

The title of the paper is:

"The Clarinet Through Western's Century: An Exploration of its Twentieth Century Repertoire with Additional Historical Commentary on Western Michigan University"



Mr. Bradley Wong, Music



Mr. Carl Doubleday, Music

Student Recital

2002-03 Season
417th Concert

Saturday 15 March 2003
Dalton Center Lecture Hall
7:30 p.m.

CHRIS JACOBSON, Clarinet
Gunta Laukmane, Piano

assisted by
Lindsay Wile, Clarinet

*"The Clarinet Through Western's Century:
An exploration of its twentieth century repertoire
with additional historical commentary
on Western Michigan University's School of Music"*

Henri Rabaud
1873-1949

Solo de Concours

Daniel Gregory Mason
1873-1953

Sonata for Clarinet and Piano Opus 14
III. Allegro moderato

Francis Poulenc
1899-1963

Sonata for Two Clarinets
I. Presto
II. Andante
III. Vif

brief pause

Ronald L. Caravan
b. 1946

Excursions for A Clarinet

Paquito D'Rivera
b. 1948

Vals Venezolano
Contradanza

Chris Jacobson, a senior, is a candidate for the Bachelor of Arts degree double majoring in music and public relations. This program is being presented as his Honors College thesis project.

RECITAL TEXT

Rabaud- Solo de Concours, with Gunta

Thank you and good evening. The piece you just heard was my examination. Right now we are seated inside a room of the Paris Conservatory. The judges, you, closely have evaluated my performance. I, of course, hope you give me a passing mark. I hope to not only pass, but to win the coveted Premier Prix (First Prize), in other words, the gold medal. Winning the gold medal would open doors to new playing opportunities. But in reality, this is not the Paris Conservatory and I'm not playing in order to pass an examination.

But at the Paris Conservatory, at the turn of the 20th century, dedicated students with immense musical talent practiced diligently to prepare for their diploma examinations. Yes, diploma examinations. If the student passed a preliminary round of sight-singing, musical analysis, and sight-reading on their instrument, he or she could then proceed to the final examination. The final examination itself was a prepared solo. Students at the conservatory had exactly four weeks to memorize this solo, called the solo de concours. The student's performance then would be assessed critically by a jury of leading artists of the time and the composer of the required solo. Also, it is important to remember that students did not have to win the gold medal in the competition in order to graduate from the conservatory. They simply had to demonstrate a high level of proficiency on their instrument acquired from their years of intensive personalized training.

Henri Rabaud wrote the Solo de Concours for the year 1901. His piece also was used as the required solo for the 1908, 1915, 1925, and 1937 examinations. Rabaud was famous as a conductor and professor before he became prominent as a composer. He served as opera director of the Opera Comique and national opera in France and served a one-season position as musical director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra in 1918 and 1919. Rabaud eventually became musical director of the Paris Conservatory in 1922 and remained in that position until 1941. During his distinguished music career, he wrote numerous operas, oratorios, symphonies, symphonic poems and chamber music.

This next piece by the American composer Daniel Gregory Mason, dates as one of the earliest American clarinet sonatas. Its late romantic style draws comparison to the clarinet sonatas of Johannes Brahms.

Mason came from a musically gifted family. His uncle William Mason was a distinguished concert pianist and teacher and his grandfather Lowell Mason was a composer and music educator considered by many to be the father of American church music.

Mason studied music at Harvard and in Paris before joining the music faculty at Columbia University in 1905. He served as professor of music there from 1929 to 1940. A well-known author of books, including *Music in My Time* in 1938 and *The Quartets of Beethoven* in 1947, his music output included three symphonies, most notably the Lincoln Symphony in 1936, and much chamber music.

Mason- Sonata for Clarinet, Mvt. III, with Gunta

When Mason's clarinet sonata was completed in 1920, music departments at colleges and universities across the country were delivering music presentations to the general public.

In Kalamazoo, Michigan, Western State Normal School under the presidential leadership of Dwight B. Waldo, was in its 17th year of operation training the future teachers of Michigan and the United States. At the same time, the school's music department was in its seventh year of operation under the direction of Harper C. Maybee, who would spearhead the artistic initiatives of the department for the next 32 years. His leadership in the department was succeeded by Elwyn Carter, who would witness the awarding of the first Bachelor of Music degree in 1945, the creation of WMU chapters of Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia and Sigma Alpha Iota international music fraternities in 1948, accreditation by the National Association of Schools of Music in 1950, and the first summer high school music camp on WMU's campus in 1951.

In the 1920s, composer Francis Poulenc shocked the French bourgeoisie with his contributions to the French art music of the time. Poulenc was a member of "Les Six", a group of composers in

the 1920s that associated themselves with the unconventional and whimsical music of Erik Satie. Satie's followers, including Poulenc, opposed "the vagueness of Impressionism. They advocated simplicity and clarity. They also thought emotions should be more restrained than they had been in late 19th century romantic music."

Many of Poulenc's early works, including his *Sonata for Two Clarinets*, written in 1918 and revised in 1945, mimicked the neoclassicism of Igor Stravinsky. Neoclassicism was a 20th century movement in music characterized by a return to the compositional styles of the 17th and 18th century Baroque period composers. The movement was a reaction to the "unrestricted emotionalism of late romanticism."

Poulenc- Sonata for Two Clarinets, with Lindsay

INTERMISSION

With the retirement of Elwyn Carter in 1965 and the appointment of Robert Holmes as the new director of the Department of Music, the department saw many additions to its musical offerings. In the fall of 1967, a convocation series of weekly music major concerts was first established and in 1969, the first full-stage opera was presented in the Laura V. Shaw Theatre. Also in 1968, WMU's Department of Music received a charter of the Pi Kappa Lambda, the national music honor society. WMU's Pi Kappa Lambda chapter remains active today and offers membership annually to outstanding music students. In 1980, the Board of Trustees at WMU approved the name change of Department of Music to School of Music, recognizing its increasing student enrollment and growing national and international prominence. In 1982, the School of Music relocated from Harper C. Maybee Hall to the new 157, 000 square foot state-of-the-art Dorothy U. Dalton Center. Altogether, 1982 was a truly historic year, for the concerts office student employees affectionately were given the new, more professional title of "Troll". No longer was I referred to as simply Chris, but rather Troll Chris.

Ronald L. Caravan is a performer of both the clarinet and saxophone. He popularly is known as a mouthpiece maker who has manufactured saxophone mouthpieces since 1975. His clarinet mouthpieces, like his saxophones ones, are used by advanced students and professional artists. They began production ten years later in 1985. Ronald Caravan holds a doctor of musical arts degree from the Eastman School of Music and began teaching clarinet and saxophone at the Syracuse University School of Music in 1980. Dr. Caravan performs regularly on soprano saxophone with the Aeolian Saxophone Quartet in addition to being an active solo recital performer. He has composed and published several works for clarinet and saxophone, including *Excursions for A Clarinet*. It is important to note that the piece is titled *Excursions for A Clarinet*, or in other words, Excursions for Clarinet in A, rather than excursions for “a” or singular clarinet.

Caravan defines excursion as “a going forth, a journey chiefly for recreation or pleasure, a deviation from a definite path, a digression, a movement outward from a mean position or axis.” In many of his pieces, including *Excursions*, Caravan introduces and experiments with unconventional sound qualities. The listener is awakened by traditional accelerandos and ritardandos and intrigued by portamentos, or undefined notes mapped along an approximate melodic line. Caravan also introduces sharp tongue releases, and smorzatos, or attacks and releases on the instrument by embouchure pressure. The contemporary feel of the piece is stressed by the playing of multiphonics, which occur when two pitches are produced simultaneously by special blowing and fingering techniques determined by the performer. A piece similar to Caravan’s *Excursions*, is his *Polychromatic Diversions* for Bb clarinet.

Caravan- Excursions for A Clarinet

Today, Western Michigan University has an enrollment of over 29,000 students and WMU’s College of Fine Arts is one of only 22 in the nation that houses music, theatre, dance, and the visual arts. In the early 90s, the School of Music witnessed several of its resident faculty ensembles perform at some of the nation’s most prestigious music venues, including the Kennedy Center and Carnegie Hall. Presently, the School of Music is serviced by 39 full-time faculty, 41 graduate assistants, and 13 professional staff and it continues to remain active as a vibrant international center for arts training.

Paquito D’Rivera is a Grammy Award winning musician, child prodigy, and gifted writer. Born in Havana, Cuba, in 1946, he began his performance career by an engagement with the Cuban National Symphony. D’Rivera eventually defected from Cuba in 1981, and since arriving in the United States, has been on a mission to “bring Latin American repertoire into the forefront of the classical arena.” Increasingly popular for his compositions in addition to his performances, D’Rivera’s works have been commissioned by chamber ensembles and symphonies throughout the world, including a flute concerto by the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington, D.C.

D’Rivera’s *Vals Venezolano* and *Contradanza* are two Latin dances extracted from his piece for woodwind quintet titled *Aires Tropicales*. *Aires Tropicales* was premiered by the Aspen Wind Quintet at the Frick Collection in New York City in April 1994. Both dances are lively tributes to legendary Spanish composers. *Vals Venezolano* is a high-energy syncopated waltz tribute to Venezuelan composer Antonio Lauro and *Contradanza* honors Cuban composer Ernesto Lecuona.

Equally adept in Bebop, classical, and Latin musical genres, D’Rivera’s discography includes over 24 solo albums, two of which have won Grammy Awards, including his 1997 award for best latin jazz performance, an album titled *Portraits of Cuba*.

Paquito D’Rivera- Vals Venezolano and Contradanza, with Gunta

Christopher Jacobson

Lecture Recital
Lee Honors College Thesis Presentation
Dorothy U. Dalton Center Lecture Hall
March 15, 2003