2005

A Review of Eight University Clarinet Studios: An Investigation of Pedagogical Style, Content and Philosophy Through Observation and Interviews

Margaret Iris Dees
THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF MUSIC

A REVIEW OF EIGHT UNIVERSITY CLARINET STUDIOS: AN INVESTIGATION
OF PEDAGOGICAL STYLE, CONTENT AND PHILOSOPHY THROUGH
OBSERVATIONS AND INTERVIEWS

By
Margaret Iris Dees

A treatise submitted to the
College of Music
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Music

Degree Awarded
Fall Semester, 2005

Copyright © 2005
Margaret I. Dees
All Rights Reserved
The members of the Committee approve the treatise of Margaret I. Dees on November 2, 2005.

______________________
Frank Kowalsky
Professor Directing Treatise

______________________
Carolyn Bridger
Outside Committee Member

______________________
Eric Ohlsson
Committee Member

The Office of Graduate Studies has verified and approved the above named committee members.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper is dedicated to Frank Kowalsky. He has been my teacher since 1984, a touchstone throughout my life, and the best editor a reluctant writer could ask for.

A special thanks goes to the participating clarinet professors for donating their thoughts and time so freely for this study.

I would like to thank Helen Earl for giving me the right books to read and for time in the red chairs; Dan Moseley for his many suggestions, editing expertise, and ability to draw a good bath; Connie Frigo for constant laughter, advice, and panic maintenance; Deborah Bish for shared angst, solutions and inspiration; Jenny Dees for brilliant prose and David Dees for answering his phone.

I would like to thank Carolyn Bridger for teaching me to play chamber music and for her editing expertise; Eric Ohlsson for always being available for luminous discussions; and Jeff Keesecker for candid commentary.

I would like to thank my parents, Marion Dees and Ellen Zeller for finally letting me go to Interlochen Arts Academy, the financial sacrifices they made for my education, their constant support and the support of their spouses: Marie Dees and James Zeller. I would also like to thank my brothers: Mark, Ben and David, and their wives and families for their support.

Finally I would like to thank Johannes Brahms for this sage advice: when English pianist Florence May asked the composer how to most quickly improve he responded, “You must walk constantly in the forest.”¹ I couldn’t agree with him more!

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEBORAH CHODACKI</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson Observation</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOWARD KLUG</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson Observation</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRANK KOWALSKY</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson Observation</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RICHARD MACDOWELL</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson Observation</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRED ORMAND</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson Observation</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROBERT SPRING</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson Observation</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELSA LUDEWIG-VERDEHR</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson Observation</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

Teachers often have a unique philosophy and teaching style based on the sum of their learning experience. That experience may include contact with their teachers, colleagues and students. When a student comes in contact with a large number of teachers, he has more source material from which to draw in his own teaching.

The purpose of this document is, to present an in-depth descriptive narrative of individual lessons taught by university clarinet professors, highlighting their teaching style and philosophy and to provide a biography and personal interview. This study aims to bring light to the teaching philosophy, application of that philosophy, character and content of instruction, and interaction between student and professor. It is not the purpose of this study to comment on the validity of individual teaching styles, but rather to shed light on that style. This allows the reader to examine a collection of pedagogical approaches to the clarinet.

The qualitative methodology used in this study included the observation of two lessons and a personal interview with each participant. The participants include Deborah Chodacki, Howard Klug, Frank Kowalsky, Richard MacDowell, Fred Ormand, Robert Spring, Elsa Ludewig-Verdehr, John Weigand, and their respective students. The delimitation of this study is that all the professors have had at least ten years of university teaching experience. Students may increase their knowledge and understanding of clarinet playing and performance by applying concepts learned from this study. Inexperienced teachers, while forming their own teaching style and environment, might do well to emulate a more experienced teacher, and more experienced teachers might broaden and enhance their own lesson content and style.
INTRODUCTION

Teachers often have a unique philosophy and teaching style based on the sum of their learning experience. That experience may include contact with their teachers, colleagues and students. Another influence is experience gained from performance itself. When a student comes in contact with a large number of teachers, he has more source material from which to draw in his own teaching. Although studies have been done on specific clarinet teachers and pedagogical topics, no study has sought to reveal individual teaching styles based on the application of their teaching philosophy in a lesson setting. The majority of published projects are based on interviews. Similar projects done in other areas are based on interviews and surveys, but they do not describe lessons or include observations of actual teaching.

The purpose of this document is, to present an in-depth descriptive narrative of individual lessons taught by university clarinet professors, highlighting their teaching style and philosophy, and to provide a biography and personal interview. This study aims to bring light to the teaching philosophy, application of that philosophy, character and content of instruction, and interaction between student and professor. It is not the purpose of this study to comment on the validity of individual teaching styles, but rather to shed light on that style.

Method

The qualitative method of research on teaching is an interpretive approach involving participant observation. This style of research was first used widely for research on teaching in the 1960’s in England and in the 1970’s in the United States, so it is relatively new to the field of teaching research. The combination of observational fieldwork, narrative descriptions and quotations has been used in the social sciences since the early 1910’s. Research methods scholar Frederick Erickson states that the qualitative method is particularly appropriate when researching “what is happening, specifically, in
social action that takes place in this particular setting? The quantitative method of noticing whether or not students are on-task, or if the teacher is using behavior modification skills, is often not meaningful when seeking to better understand what is happening in a studio teaching environment. Knowing that the students are on task does not describe what they are doing.

The qualitative methodology used in this study includes the observation of two lessons and a personal interview with each participant. Participants are: Deborah Chodacki, Howard Klug, Frank Kowalsky, Richard MacDowell, Fred Ormand, Robert Spring, Elsa Ludewig-Verdehr, John Weigand, and their respective students. The delimitation of this study is that all the professors have had at least ten years of university teaching experience. All participants, however, had former students working in the field of clarinet pedagogy and performance, which suggests that they are successful teachers.

This study provides the reader with a collection of clarinet pedagogical approaches from college clarinet professors. Readers might find techniques or approaches to include in their own pedagogical and practice repertoire.

This research project received approval from the Human Subjects Committee of the Florida State University on December 18, 2003.

---

DEBORAH CHODACKI

Deborah Chodacki, Associate Professor of Clarinet, has been teaching at the University of Michigan School of Music in Ann Arbor since 1993. She holds degrees from the Eastman School of Music and Northwestern University where she studied with Stanley Hasty and Robert Marcellus respectively. Active as a soloist, chamber musician, and ensemble member, she has performed throughout the United States and Western Europe. In addition to teaching at the University of Michigan she also taught at Interlochen Arts Academy in Interlochen, Michigan and at the East Carolina University School of Music.³

Lesson Observation

I observed Professor Chodacki in her studio at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Michigan on March 2, 2004. Professor Chodacki’s studio has an open floor plan allowing space for student and teacher movement. The framed artwork and organized workspace created a welcoming and relaxing environment. The first student I observed was a junior who had been studying with Professor Chodacki for two and a half years. This lesson was immediately following spring break.

The lesson began with the student asking about graduate schools. Professor Chodacki’s recommendation was for her to spend some time in the location, hear the students there, take a lesson, and “ask if you can sit in on lessons and trust yourself.” They decided to talk about it further in a later lesson. The student began by playing the first movement of the Brahms Sonata in E-flat Major Op. 120, No. 2, which they had worked on before spring break, and began playing approximately where she ended in her last lesson. She stood while she played. During the lesson Professor Chodacki modeled for her student frequently by singing the clarinet part, and she also sang the piano part during clarinet rests.

The lesson clearly catered to the student’s individual interests and needs. Professor Chodacki asked this particular student, “You are a very visual person, I’ve seen a lot of your art work. What kind of art work would you see when you hear this part? What kind of colors would they be?” The student responded by describing a specific visualization she had for the passage. At one point Professor Chodacki had her student (who was getting flustered) turn in a circle, then another circle, then focus on a person out the window who was walking away from the building, to help her lose her fluster and refocus on the music at hand.

Professor Chodacki spoke frequently in a variety of metaphors and offers visualizations to get the student to achieve specific sounds on the clarinet.

What if you felt less bones and muscles and more the air holding the reed? When you started are you thinking of the bow coming from off the string on it, or is it already on it but with lots of left hand ahead of time? It’s not a key or fingering thing, it’s an air thing…When we articulate do we use the swallowing part of our tongue, or do we use the speaking part? Lovely, don’t be afraid to engage us, take the whole room. This is just your guide [pointed]. It’s a beautiful sound. Go to the full emotion of that dynamic, and a quarter note is a quarter note.

She also had the student play passages slowly for different results. When the student was having a hard time managing her air in one section, Professor Chodacki had her play a small section, slowly and repeatedly, holding onto one note longer, then had the student listen to her sound on that particular note. The student was then able to play the passage at the correct tempo with a beautiful consistent sound throughout. “Do not let your fingers mess with your voice, ever.” She also had the student slow a passage down and articulate long quarter notes instead of short triplets to get the student to use her air more consistently.

Humor was sprinkled into the lesson. The student wanted to try a different fingering. Professor Chodacki responded by saying, “Then how are you going to get to the A-flat? Do you have special Gods you know about that will help your finger do that, that I don’t know about, because if you do, tell me who they are! How will that work? If you squawk, so what, we’ll just wipe it off our face and go on.”

Professor Chodacki emphasized throughout this lesson the importance of the partnership between the clarinet and piano part, both harmonically and technically. “Can
you hear the pianist right away?” The student said no. “Because I can hear you counting, but I don’t hear the piano part.” Professor Chodacki sings the piano part, “Do you get the feeling of that?” The student came in early while Professor Chodacki sang the piano part. “Always, if I start trying to count, then for sure I’ll miscount; I’ve got to know what’s going on around me. Don’t guess, be in the piano part and you can hear how you respond. It’s like a conversation. Next time study this with the score in front of you so you realize the partnership.”

They also discussed how the chord progression affects the phrasing; questions were asked and answered regarding harmonic function and emotional context.

You aren’t going to see a lot on the page unless you are willing to analyze it harmonically and melodically. When we understand the structure, more usually that lines up with our emotions and we learn to trust our emotions even more. It’s like a life preserver. Am I being self indulgent or can I do even more? Even if you did it as a theory assignment for yourself, you’ll be that much more into it because you had to dig.

They discussed the role of duplets and triplets and rhythm in approaching climaxes and use of rubato.

Professor Chodacki distinguished between clarinet technique and other interpretation problems. “May we do a little bit of work in this area here [pointed to music]? I got a little distracted by the clarinet. OK, can we talk clarinety right now? When you are reaching for a wide interval do you want the voicing of that note resonating to be led by the fingers or the air that gets down under the fingers ahead of them?” She also asked the student to consider how she would teach, “If I was your student how could you get that feeling out of me?”

There was positive reinforcement throughout the lesson and it ended by Professor Chodacki saying “That’s a work in progress for you, I have no doubt about you playing it beautifully. You have such a sunny concept for this piece. Thanks for your work.”

The second lesson I observed was a student who sat for her lesson. This was a make up lesson that immediately followed spring break. After playing a few notes, the student began her lesson by playing a Cavallini etude in its entirety. When the student attempted to change reeds, Professor Chodacki asked her to leave the reed on “for a little bit more.” After playing for a while longer and the student had switched reeds again,
Professor Chodacki had her switch back to the first reed. “We want to see what we might discover with your own relationship to controlling the instrument and if we switch reeds we add a variable into it that is going to take away our ability to measure what you are doing with the set-up the way it is. You can switch after.”

In this lesson Professor Chodacki primarily focused on the style of the music, but related concepts such as articulation, finger legato, intonation and rubato and the role they play within the style. At the beginning of the lesson she worked with the student to establish the musical style of the etude.

The mood that you establish at the opening, the tempo, and the sound are really effective. Don’t feel that you have to push the opening. You can simply allow it to sink down into us. I want you to think about the opening statement. Then he [the composer] states it again and invites us to do something either a little more outward, and then he turns a corner. Leave us a little haunted, longer there.

Professor Chodacki conducted as this student played and gently invited her to play softer by saying “shh, shh, shh” in a quiet tone.

Professor Chodacki asked her student questions, engaging the student in problem solving: “Do you notice anything about your intonation? Do you want to use the articulation to draw attention to itself or to show the activity that comes from the tension of the duple slurs? What if you let the articulated sixteenth notes spill you into the duplets?”

At one point the student was frustrated and said, “I can’t do it.” Professor Chodacki immediately finished the sentence for the student, “Yet. I can’t do it yet.” This entire lesson was calm, positive, and Professor Chodacki reinforced the student’s good playing and built on her best attributes. Professor Chodacki said things like, “What you are doing is quite lovely. It’s personal. It’s very beautifully done.” Professor Chodacki had the student repeat a small section many times to teach a phrasing concept and didn’t let the student continue until she understood and was able to play the passage to her satisfaction. Professor Chodacki asked, “Is it clear what we are doing here?” The use of the word “we” instead of “you” implied that the student and teacher were working as a team.
As in the first lesson Professor Chodacki differentiated between strictly clarinet issues and musical issues;

Let’s talk clarinet for just a minute here. I hear you being a little protective of this note here, and since I have played this instrument a little bit myself [laughed] and I know what I feel like just at that register bridge right there, I understand the tendency and the desire to be protective. And in fact I have surrendered to it many times. But, what you have to say is more important than that little bit of protectiveness. Yes?

Professor Chodacki had the student isolate small sections that weren’t working and play them slowly, with repetition. She had the student play three notes, the one before the note in question, to the one after, repeatedly. She asked the student to consider the pitch and then the rhythmic subdivision of the three notes, then directed her to warm it up. When the student was continuing to separate the three notes, Professor Chodacki had her break it down to two, back and forth slurred, repeatedly and suggested half hole fingerings. When the student played it to her satisfaction, she then had her play it a few more times so the student could “feel that sensation.” She then followed the successful playing with the comment, “Quite lovely, that’s quite lovely.”

Professor Chodacki mentioned to this student that approaching altissimo notes was a skill they had talked about many times before and the student perhaps thought, ‘Why is she always bugging me about this, why is she making such a big deal out of this?’ [The student nodded in agreement.] This skill, this ability of yours is only going to liberate you and give you the ability to make many wonderful bridge crossings back and forth in that register. It’s something you want to own, rather than it owning you. If you have a habit of leaving that half hole down when you go to roll back down over the hole, it doesn’t send a message to the standing wave column inside the clarinet clearly enough to change back down [the register]. You go exploring with this so that you understand the benefits of it. And in the meantime I want you to trust me that I’m making a big deal about it because you have so much beauty to share.

This student seemed nervous and fidgety, but was paying one hundred percent attention to her teacher and tried to change her playing to reflect Professor Chodacki’s suggestions.

They also talked about the importance of a clarinet in good working order so that the player doesn’t have to compensate for the horn. When discussing finger technique, Professor Chodacki stated,
Using the finger curve, the finger turns into a little draw bridge that lifts up and comes down. It’s all in the finger, and much less tension in the whole hand, you start feeling your pinkies. They have a little bit different sensation. The pinkies have to do the agility dancing they are like ballet artists, the more you can get the feel of that finger alone. It’s all from this first row of knuckles. It’s a lot less effort. It’s all real simple, natural use of the fingers. We have a lot more agility with the curve. You wouldn’t take a long walk with braces on your knees, why do it with your fingers?

Professor Chodacki talked about the idea of transferring a concept from one piece to another. “The only reason we are spending this much time on this is this is going to transfer to all these other pieces: Cavallini, other Italian Bel Canto, maybe Weber.”

There was also a discussion of reeds and reed placement that Professor Chodacki began with this explanation:

We’ve talked about this in studio class at various times, but let’s talk physical and acoustical properties of reed and mouthpiece. This isn’t just for you, this is for any students in your whole life ahead so you can help them with reed placement. You get it as high as you can and if it’s still not enough structure in the tip for us then we must somehow take wood off the tip. When you get it this high (above the mouthpiece) it’s fine to get it all the way up to eye level where you can’t see the black tip of the mouthpiece but when you get it up above, you have wood fibers vibrating, no longer against the tip rail, what are they vibrating against?

They then discussed what creates the sound; the student mentioned ideas such as air column, the reed, and the mouthpiece. Professor Chodacki continued:

The mouthpiece, the rails, right? It goes against those rails and sets up a column against the tube. What does that do if the reed needs the rail to vibrate, what does it have to spring back off of up here? Right, it’s against nothing and you’ll start hearing it in the sound. Professor Chodacki then adjusts the student’s reed and it sounds and feels better to the student.

The reed discussion was followed by a jaw pressure discussion. “We do need some jaw pressure.” To achieve a focused sound in a passage of running notes, Professor Chodacki had her hold the first note and imagine she was playing the entire passage, then she had her play the passage with her fingers moving. The student finished the etude and then it was time for the lesson to end. Professor Chodacki ended the lesson by saying “Bravo, good for you!”
DEES: Discuss your early musical or non-musical experiences and how they have shaped your career.

CHODACKI: I will take a little slice of what I remember from when I was around nine or ten [years old], grade school, and elementary school. We were all in the gymnasium, sitting in rows on the wood basketball floor. On the stage was the high school band from the school district; they played a couple of tunes. They demonstrated every single instrument; every one stood up and played. I had heard live musical groups before that, but I had never been that close to one, in a group of people that were there just for that concert. We were all gathered in this big space to receive something. I’m pretty sure from the moment they started playing, my mouth was open the whole time. There was just something about being in that space with all those other kids. They [the band] were so close. And then the bassoonist stood up and demonstrated the bassoon. She played a really haunting solo; looking back, I think it was the solo from the slow movement of Tchaikovsky’s Fourth Symphony. I started weeping! There’s just something about that moment, that instrument, the way she played, that melody, I don’t think I thought about anything else, certainly for the rest of the day. I absolutely knew that I had to play the bassoon.

They gave all of us a test in New York State; I think it was called the Seashore test. It’s a test that tests rhythm and pitch recognition relationships. One or two weeks after this band came, they gave the results to our teachers. My teacher called me aside and said that the district was going to be starting group lessons for elementary kids. I went home and asked my folks if I could start on an instrument; it was a clear no. All I could think of was that bassoon. I went back to school, and a bunch of my friends started playing instruments. Once a week they got out of class for lessons. I couldn’t go, I didn’t have an instrument.

DEES: You must have been crushed!

CHODACKI: I remember the hurt, and I also remember this gathering drive, “what am I going to do about this?” One or two students were on the bus that took me home. I would ask them if I could look at their instruments, hold them. I was amazed. “You can make a sound with this?” The next year the band came again, I was in the front row. I’m sure I must have pestered the teacher “Are we going to get there on time, can we leave, can we sit up front?” We heard the band. It was even beyond what I remembered before. They again announced that they were having group lessons. I had a different teacher. They recommended again that I play an instrument. I went home and asked my mom, she was fine with it, she said, “We’ll have to ask your father.” Don’t we all know what that means? It’s like a stone drops to the bottom. We asked, and the answer was still no. I went back to school and proceeded to watch my friends leave for lessons for the second
year. I just couldn’t stand it after awhile. So, I asked if I could come and start watching classes, to catch up if I knew I was getting an instrument.

I told them I wanted to play bassoon. They said, “If you want to be a bassoonist, start on clarinet and then move over to bassoon as your hands get a little bigger.” They put me in a group clarinet class. I told the teacher that I had a relative who had a clarinet. It was getting fixed, and I wouldn’t have it for a while. I totally lied. Totally lied. I started going to group lessons, every three or four weeks, the teacher would ask, with concern, “How’s that clarinet coming along?” I would make up another story. Meanwhile, I was sitting there for half an hour. I was watching four other kids playing clarinet. I would ask one of them if I could play it, for about a minute at the end of class. I did this for the entire spring and the next fall. And, I continued to spin yarns about why I didn’t get the clarinet from the imaginary uncle. I did this for a total of six months. I could watch and hear.

Finally the music director called my parents; my mom answered the phone, in December, right before Christmas vacation. This was sixth grade. I came home from school. My mom confronted me. She didn’t seem angry, but she was worried about telling my dad. I know she told him about me going to class without an instrument for a year. I think she left out the part about the imaginary instrument. He was very angry. He thought he had made it clear that I was not going to be involved with music. He got really silent. We had dinner, it was very quiet, and after dinner, everyone watched the news in silence. There was this great tension in the house.

After about an hour my father said, “Debbie, get your coat and boots on.” It’s winter, Niagara Falls NY, three feet of snow outside, it’s around 7:30 at night. We get in the car, it’s dark, there’s a ton of snow, I’m thinking, “Now I’m in for it.” We go to the worst part of Niagara Falls, to a pawnshop, and my dad bought me a clarinet for fifty dollars. In the case there were some old reeds and a mouthpiece. I couldn’t breathe, I was so excited. The luck of the draw was, it was a really old Leblanc Normandy wood clarinet and it played OK. My dad was still really quiet when we got home. He stood in the doorway of my sister’s and my bedroom. I put the clarinet together. I could already tell he was taken aback. He could see that I knew what I was doing. The reed tasted like the inside of a shoe, at that point I had to make a sound for my father. I played from bottom line e down to low e, slurred. I will never forget the look on my Dad’s face. He said, “Whoa, you really sound like you know what you’re doing,” and he left and closed the door.

That’s among the first that I remember of experiences of great gravity and poignancy. That’s how I got an instrument. That’s the foundation. I didn’t have very many clarinet lessons with a clarinet teacher, in Junior High and High School. I was tremendously affected by everybody around me that played instruments, all different instruments. I had to, it was a necessity. When I was in ninth grade, I got into this orchestra in Buffalo, NY, called the Community Music School Orchestra. I was so lucky, because Kenny Grant [now clarinet professor at Eastman School of Music] told me about it, the summer before, while we were students at music camp in Fredonia, NY.

Pamela Gerhardt was the conductor of this orchestra; she was an amazing violinist and musician. She went to Curtis when she was fifteen. She was on the faculty at the University of Buffalo. Years later, every single person I’ve met that has worked with Pam Gerhardt, either violinists, or people who worked under her as a conductor, they all
smile and say, “Wow, what a wonderful person to make music with.” She went to Ithaca College and taught there, she still lives in Ithaca. If I had to pick a single person, and it is silly to pick just one, she was the most all-encompassing, and had a major effect on me as a person, musician, and clarinetist, because of what she invited me to listen to.

DEES: This goes into the next question, who influenced you? You mentioned how she helped tune your ear, not pitch, but your concept of how we create sounds. You mentioned what she invited you to listen to, showing you these ideas. How is this reflected in your teaching and playing?

CHODACKI: This lady could rehearse like any of the greatest conductors I’ve ever played under. She knows how to rehearse. She was very rigorous and quite challenging; I never saw her shame or humiliate anyone. If she was upset or angry, it was always with the invitation to take more responsibility, for the love of how we serve the language. That is riveting when you are young; you are never punished, but pushed. She heard so much and was such a fine artist, and invited you to hear the same things. There’s this powerful transcendent invitation, to just hear, hear, hear, she always was inviting us to listen across the orchestra. She would stop and say, “You must all know who you have this with.” She would have the sections play together that had similar parts, so we could hear how to respond to other instruments. It’s so global and so specific at the same time.

I did take some lessons my senior year with Allen Sigel. I had to give private lessons to take clarinet lessons. There are so many gifted musicians. We live with the legacy, and are informed by the legacy of Bonade, Ralph MacLane, Stanley Hasty, Harold Wright, Robert Marcellus, spreading the connections through the generations. That’s where we all live, we are branches on that tree. There is greatness all over the place. Allen Sigel, I think he played in the Met Opera Orchestra, moved to western New York, played in Buffalo Phil for awhile, he was professor of clarinet at the University of Buffalo. A renaissance man, this man played the clarinet, but he didn’t play the clarinet, he always sang through the instrument.

The room we had lessons in, in his home, was a room that was almost totally book lined. I walk in, and it’s not just clarinet music, but also the richness of the titles of the books I was surrounded by. I was totally into reading at that time. That’s another aspect of what goes into being a musician, and thinking and feeling clarinet, it’s essential. There it was, sending me the message, silently, it was all so clear, this is where we are going. I don’t remember us talking about embouchure, hand position, how to articulate, I don’t know why, I don’t care why, maybe it meant that I was sort of OK. God knows I studied embouchures for a year before I got my clarinet [laughs]!

He sang, any time we stopped to work on something, he would say, “Listen, you came down this phrase and I didn’t hear this [sings].” Right away, I could figure out what I needed to do to do the phrase. He wouldn’t simply point out and say, “Here you had a bobble between those two notes.” He would sing how he wanted it, and expect me to listen and decide how to change. This had a huge effect on me, I know my tendency is to ask questions first and see what comes back from the person that’s in the room with me. And then see if we need to ask more questions. I have been working with young people for a long time now, they are so bright and imaginative, they are each their own person. There’s such danger in stopping something instead of inviting the imagination to
go on. He just sang, that’s what the bottom line was. I was surrounded by his speaking, and singing, and the books of Shakespeare, and thoughts of the medieval philosophers, and language books. He loaned me recordings to take home and listen to, singers, Harold Wright doing Brahms Sonatas, and string players, the old Philly [Philadelphia Orchestra] recording of Brahms’ [Third Symphony] with Ralph MacLane playing. He didn’t say, this is good, this is bad, he said, listen.

Then I went to the Niagara Falls library and started taking recordings out. Lucky for me, they have the old Mendelssohn Trio, Schubert Trio in B-flat with Pablo Casals, Thibaud, and Alfred Cortot. These are the jewels! Here I am, little me, stumbling upon them. In my last three years of high school, I was listening to primarily string chamber music, orchestras, Harold Wright, Ralph MacLane, Bach Cello Suites with Casals, I had no idea how I was feeding myself, so fortunate was I, that they were there waiting for me.

I auditioned at some different schools, Allen Sigel had worked with Stanley Hasty, and he also knew Harold Wright. Allen Sigel didn’t say, “You have to study with this person,” it was more, this is what is out there. He did think I should consider going to a great academic school, he didn’t want me to get into a conservatory environment and get into a tunnel life-style.

DEES: Tunnel vision clarinet, you are going to die if you don’t play clarinet for the rest of your life.

CHODACKI: Right, he just wanted me to be a healthy, well-balanced person, and if I chose clarinet, great. I had good grades and I loved languages, science, math and literature. My Dad came from a cultural understanding where people in the arts didn’t get jobs. He wanted his daughter to support herself. I was already applying to Cornell, and other academic schools. I went and auditioned a couple of places, Eastman got back to me. I really liked Mr. Hasty, his presence felt like the work would be really deep, and he was a very serious teacher. I got a scholarship offer from Eastman, when I read the letter I was just delirious. I went to work with Mr. Hasty.

I wouldn’t know how to tell you how much he has affected me. I was so blown away, first of all, finally to have a full time clarinet teacher, and have lessons regularly. Being in the hot house with all the other flowers. There was an incredible synchronicity that I ended up there with him. He was very serious about the work, a deep musician, a real question asker, but very clear about what he felt was convincing or not. He is a person that I am continually struck by how he is still growing. He still has those “aha” moments and he is willing to share, even in the middle of master class.

He was very demanding about always playing with intention. You didn’t come into your lessons unless you musically had a presentation. He could disagree with the presentation, but if you hadn’t thought, and felt about it, I knew him to throw people out of lessons, not for missing notes but for coming in and being musically vacant. That’s a pretty strong message, and it’s a good one. No matter what situation we are thrown into, we have to be convincing, we’ve all done it, and we’ll continue to do it. We all know how to fake well when we have to; we’ve had to sight read those shows, subbing for someone else. We all know how to fake with our strength.

He is so rigorous about intention and the meanings of the architecture of the whole piece. You have to understand everything from harmonic, vertical things, to rhythms
against each other and how the horizontal line works against it, over and over and over again. That’s what you go back to, that’s where you start from. If you sight read a Jeanjean etude, it doesn’t feel like you are sight-reading to learn the notes the first time, you have your miner’s hat on and the light turned on. You are looking for the organization right away. You have to woodshed, but you don’t learn the part first and then paste the music on. That’s the one thing generally as his starting point, intention is everything.

He had really great things to say clarinetistically. We didn’t talk about the clarinet a lot, but I remember talking about negotiating technical passages, and us considering together the idea of finger economy. It would be thrown out as a question, and I would have to think about it and decide. This is more meaningful to me now because we live in a world that is moving so fast, instant information. People are thirsty for information; things are slanted towards gathering information instead of knowledge and awareness.

And then of course, there’s Robert Marcellus. I don’t know, what do you say about a man that’s such a lighthouse for everybody? As a player, and conceptually what he emphasized in his teaching, the fundamentals, and ongoing protection of integrity and sound in music. The way in which he could even out the clarinet. There’s just a radiance about his work as a musician. He was unbelievably sculpted in that remarkable group he played in, with Szell on the podium affecting everyone in that orchestra. And to be so young and shaped, to that great hall, his talent and intelligence was able to do with that training. Lighthouse is the best word.

There’s a lot of controversy people get into about teachers and players, and everybody has their favorites. I just am so amazed by so many different players in different ways, when I think of Marcellus, and having gotten to know him some and play for him and work with him, and to be conducted by him, and see him conduct my students at the Arts Academy when he was blind. We spent a lot of time socializing, even in the years after I finished my master’s with him. A very interesting man, very complicated, very perceptive, not just with the clarinet. I think he could hear the grass grow and I think he sensed things about people.

He spoke a great deal to me about the huge influence that Casals had on him. And Mr. Hasty also espoused Casals, Casals, Casals. That’s so great! The two main clarinet influences in my life were both talking about Casals, not clarinet. We’re not talking clarinet, we’re talking music first. Allen Sigel also. By the way, Allen Sigel wrote a really fabulous book called The Twentieth Century Clarinetist that was widely used for many years, I don’t think many people know of it any more. I don’t think it will include the current rage, circular breathing, [laughs] but it is an excellent book.

DEES: [Laughs] I think we should move onto the next question. How would you describe the atmosphere of your studio and what do you do to create it?

CHODACKI: Well, there’s the studio, which is comprised of us, and then there’s studio class, all of us in a room together, and they nourish each other, enormously, and then there’s the studio here at Michigan, which includes the students of my colleague, Fred Ormand. All those students interact. When we talk about studio, let me delineate a bit. I think what I sense in the studio of individuals that I am working with directly, is a lot of mutual support and honesty, with compassion and directness. There’s an incredible
sense of humor that bubbles up all the time, and a lot of cheerleading for each other. I think that they get each other working hard, all the time, and they are really interested in helping each other. They inspire me.

In the studio classes in the beginning of the year we talk some before we start playing, we start playing in the first class. We talk a little first, to get the monkey off our back and so we know that we will be making sounds for each other. I use the class as pure master class, sometimes as coaching, sometimes they get into discussions and I say almost nothing. It’s a performance class and a working class, I ask the class to be a barometer for each other. Very often, the person playing thinks they are playing out enough, but the students listening want more. Either the performer can choose to give more, or they have to struggle with the fact that the audience wants more.

Being open to new ideas and interacting, learning from each other is important. I may get so wrapped up in how a person is unfolding one way, that I forget, maybe we need to do a little more work over here. They go work with some other person in the summer and woof, they are off in a whole new direction, it’s great. That’s what it’s all about.

Also, I invite them to take responsibility for the studio. I make it really clear that it is our class and the riches that we share; we can only go as far as each of them is involved. And we make an atmosphere that we can be utterly honest with each other because that atmosphere is one of support and caring. And we need ears for each other, because that’s what this language is about. They know that I feel inspired by them, and then they keep reaching outward and are more open to each other. I make it clear that it’s a “no holds barred” class, they keep each other in line. I let them know how wonderful their seeking is, and how much I respect it. In our country and in this time we live in, it’s an amazing thing to hear people talk to one another and listen to one another in a meaningful way.

DEES: What are the most important things for your students to learn and how do you facilitate that learning?

CHODACKI: For them to trust themselves, for them to lead with their listening, for them to listen for and recognize and at all times reaffirm their own voice.

DEES: How do you get them to recognize their own voice?

CHODACKI: Truth and beauty is apparent, even when it’s a terrifying or ugly beauty. Let’s pick something well known, the Picasso painting, Guernica. It’s his depiction of a battle scene and war, only it’s cubist. Oh, it is so powerful, but it is a terrible, crude, horrifying beauty. It’s still beauty. It’s a certain awareness about the human condition that is beautiful in its tragedy. It could be the beauty of the most wrenching piece. To lead back to holding the instrument and finding our voice, I think we all, on any instrument, know when our voice is coming out encumbered, or allowed. For us to find ways, once they [students] start hearing pieces of their voice, to remove as much as we can that is encumbering it. And their voice will be different for Schubert, or Shostakovich, ideally. But, everyone has a voice that is unique.
The great players who are truly in their voices blend much better with everyone else because of that. It’s easier to blend, easier to tune, it’s easier to match dynamics when you recognize the shape and tone of your own voice. It’s like a bell that is waiting to be rung inside of you, and it’s the horn that holds the resonation. It can be the most glorious clarinet sound because it is that person, or they can try to sound like someone else and sound sterile.

I think there are qualities in other people’s sounds that help us to find our own sounds, but, it still has to come from hearing our own voices. There really is an apparent, true, genuine voice inside of us. The more we allow it to show, the more recognizable it becomes. It’s a completely different feeling, to pick up the horn thinking that, or thinking, “I’m just going to blow air in the horn.”

Now, if a person is having a hard time hearing their voice, and recognizing it, it doesn’t mean it isn’t in there. As a person becomes more refined in their listening, and more seeking, it always comes out. I don’t think you make a clarinet sound, you find ideas, concepts, ways of being with the instrument physically, and the equipment that serves what you are listening for. I think you can buy mouthpieces that will make a sound for you, but you’re only going to get one sound.

What we are looking for is that you can hear it in the person’s tone, every aspect of their playing. Sometimes what you have to do is ask questions about what they are actually hearing, “Does this sound more clear to you, or more dense, does it sound more thick, or watery?” I like to use words that are non-musical, because I think we have all been human beings a lot longer than we have been clarinet players, so we have associations. Then, I pull it back to a more musical language. Then you have a person who goes into the room actually looking to identify the shape of the sound, is it different? As the students starts to listen for their sound more, it begins to even out more. Then we are able to get more specific about where they are voicing in the mouth. It becomes a habit. Keeping with the music first is a great tool in developing tone quality.

DEES: Has your teaching changed over the years?

CHODACKI: There’s the trunk of the tree, rooted and grounded, fed by all the people we have talked about. It’s not unchangeable, but enhanced as I learn and grow. That has to do with seeing music as being an endeavor that humanizes people, and allows them to be human. Finding, allowing and utilizing one’s voice to connect with other people, and with one’s self, this is a very profound experience for us as human beings. That’s part of the trunk of the tree, that there’s some kind of wonder and awe about being near that process. And these people [students] who intersect with my life for a very short period of time, I don’t know what they are going to be doing years from now, but I better not do anything that gets in the way of them being able to find more honestly, what their heart leads them to. If that’s music, great, if it’s not, great, it will only enhance them as people. I never have any doubts about anyone who wants to study music; it will only enhance them. So, the students finding their voices, that’s part of the trunk, and the clarinet pedagogy that goes along with that. But there are layers being added constantly, by everyone who influences me, every day.

I’ve become even more protective of real integrity issues of how we use the instrument. I have become more and more able to trust myself to speak on behalf of that
integrity. I put more and more responsibility on the person who is playing for me, and that they learn how to practice. I have become more of a nag [laughs]. I'm more relentless, but calmer about it because I trust myself more. It's all about finding your voice.
Howard Klug is Professor of Clarinet in the School of Music at Indiana University in Bloomington. Professor Klug holds degrees from Ohio State University (BME, clarinet) and the University of Maryland (MM, flute) and has performed and taught in England, Belgium, Austria, Israel, Mexico, Venezuela, Iceland, China, Spain and Portugal. In addition to being pedagogy editor of *The Clarinet* for ten years, his many articles have been published in *The Instrumentalist, NACWPI Journal, BDGuide* and *Leblanc Bell*.4

### Lesson Observation

Each week Professor Klug’s students have a two-hour lesson in groups of three or four, and one thirty-minute private lesson. Professor Klug assigns the lesson groups, established in the beginning of the school year, according to levels of expertise. The first lesson I observed was a private lesson, an upper classman who was working on *Tonada y Cueca* by Guastavino. This lesson was on April 15, 2004 and the student stood for his lesson. The lesson was fast paced and no time was wasted in the beginning or end discussing trivialities of the day. Professor Klug occasionally played part of the accompaniment on clarinet, and sang as the student played. He modeled continuously for the student, by playing the clarinet part himself; his clarinet almost never left his hands. Frequently when he was not playing, he would conduct to give his students visual direction. He would occasionally write comments in the student’s clarinet part and stood next to the student as he played.

During the lesson, Professor Klug talked about having the student hear all the “lovely colors” of the piano part. He also mentioned the role of clarinet as accompanist: “This is a little bit difficult passage in the keyboard, you might have to go with them,

---


they have some beautiful arpeggios.”

Professor Klug frequently modeled tone color, had the student listen and try to emulate his sound. “I’m playing a little warmer, try soft lips.” The student started to play and again Professor Klug played the same note. They went back and forth playing the same note until the student was able to match tone color. Professor Klug said, “Try to find [referred to embouchure] the right grip.” Later in the lesson he said, “The middle finger F-sharp is a little too bright and snarley. Use your fourth finger.” At one point he addressed tone color as it reflects phrasing, “The A-flat gets too bright. You are going to have to cover it on the inside with your tongue, a little higher, more forward. Sometimes it’s a deficiency of the horn, sometimes it’s just we’re not paying attention to it. Match up the notes please.”

Professor Klug talked about phrasing choices in regards to notation, “There is an analogy here, when you have two notes side by side with the same pitch they don’t belong to each other. There is a notational clue, why, for example, in this measure is the F not beamed to the E-flat, or the two G’s?” The student responded that they are not in the same phrase.

Right, whether you choose to breathe there or not you have to acknowledge the musical comma. There has to be a little rounding off there. There are different ways of composers sending that message to you: a separated note, flagged, rather than beamed, ought to be a big message to you.

Phrasing and timing were also emphasized in this lesson. In one section he pointed out there was a sequence of three, “Do a little schniggle there. If the F-sharps are not progressively louder there, you won’t sell the sequence.” Later he went on to say during the same passage, “It’s too soft, it’s too soft. It’s unusable.” The student played again, “There you go, good, you don’t need a breath there, don’t take one. OK, next phrase.” The student played. “Then calando, calming, whatever, it’s not an instantaneous thing, it’s where you start to take your foot off the gas pedal, but it really happens over here. When you are going to breathe? Don’t let the piece sag. Where are you going?”

Professor Klug frequently modeled throughout the lesson by playing phrases for his students for them to imitate, while also giving them verbal instruction. “You’re damned if you don’t and damned if you do, don’t be extreme on either end, either nothing
or too much [sang]. It’s a little shy.” There was one instance in the lesson where posture was addressed. As the student played, Professor Klug touched his back, indicating a straighter back, and said, “Stand up.”

Using dynamics to bring out the phrases and intent of the composer were also emphasized. “It’s a thing which we aren’t good at, slowing up and crescendoing….In other words, it’s forte, it’s still forte, it’s still forte. Can you hear me now [laughed]?” Professor Klug started to play as the student is playing, demonstrating what he does not want, and then plays what he does want. Then he said, “I want to sustain the forte. I have to make a slight diminuendo on the A-flat, or the A-flat comes screaming out, it’s not such an important note.” The student plays again and Professor Klug says, “But the rhythm is wrong” The student played again. “No, the A-flat is not an accent.” He models again then says, “It’s really like, simple, match up your notes, OK, simple direction.” The student starts to play again, Professor Klug stated, “No, it’s forte,” the student started again.

They begin work on the Cueca. “This is all by yourself; this is bare ass naked to the world.” The student played again. “This was written for Luis Rossi, Luis says, ‘I hate this opening [laughed].’ You know, we just hate it, the piano stops playing and we are all by ourselves.” The student played again and Professor Klug started to play it also.

At the moment, you are going to have to work on it; this is one of those things you are just going to have to memorize. You are going to be an old crotchety man like me with grandchildren and you’re still going to be working on the damn thing. It has a certain difficulty to it, but right now you are muscling it and that’s why it’s not going to happen.

Professor Klug sings the part and then plays it on his clarinet.

Make it a two bar phrase. The problem is you need to work on it slower, right now it sounds like run-on sentences All those little eighth notes are a world unto themselves, the four sixteenths are pickups [played to demonstrate what he said] then, I want all the notes and all of the music all of the time, twenty-four seven, let’s go ahead.

The student played, and then asked, “Is this the tempo?” Professor Klug answered, “That is a tempo,” then he played the part to model for the student.

After working on the opening section, they continued and addressed note length, “A little stronger, a little crisper, those have a lot of sparkle and bounce to them because
you are with the piano there.” Further tweaking of articulation took place throughout the rest of the piece. The lesson ended with Professor Klug reminding the student of stage presence for his performance that night.

The group lesson I observed was also on April 15, 2004 and included four undergraduate students, one on bass clarinet. The students sat in a line facing Professor Klug, the students played together and individually. This group lesson began by tuning: Professor Klug played a note, and the students listened and matched his pitch. They then moved on to chords in a swing style, and then scale patterns. Professor Klug would start a scale pattern in any key and the students responded by playing that key and scale pattern, all by ear. Throughout the semester ear training also included exercises like playing *Happy Birthday, Irish Washerwoman*, and similar tunes in all twelve keys, by ear. Professor Klug taught this class by modeling and having the students play back what he played in a call and response style. The students practiced with a circle of fifths clock; they played exercises in keys around the clock.

Professor Klug stated that they do not waste a lot of time talking about sound, but by the end of the two hours the students all sound better simply by listening to each other and paying attention. Next, the students continued playing short exercises out of a book called *Finger Food* by Eric Mandat. This book is filled with short, repetitive technical exercises. As the students played through these exercises as a group, some occasionally dropped out and had to rejoin, the group kept playing. Professor Klug also addressed tuning as they played; by playing a note that was out of tune and having them match pitch. They also played measures by themselves, the next student taking over on the downbeat by repeating that measure, until all four had played it, then the first student started on the next measure, in a continuous manner. When the students came to a passage that a majority had trouble with, he would have them play it at half tempo.

They then moved on to Upper Divisional Exam requirement; a barrier exam at the end of the sophomore year for all music majors. Two students in the class needed to pass the barrier exam, which includes a scale component. During class the students picked which scales and patterns the other students played. After the students played their patterns, they moved onto recital and jury preparations. The students who were not
playing studied a score of the piece as the performer was played. This gave the students
an opportunity to perform for their peers before their actual performance.

Three students played their solos for about fifteen minutes each. Before the first
student began to play, Professor Klug reminded her of the problem of being rushed by her
pianist during her recital hearing. He reinforced the idea of being prepared to perform at
a variety of tempos, and to be able to communicate the tempo to the accompanist. This
student began with the first movement of the Mozart Concerto. After she played the
opening, he commented about making ends of phrases softer and perhaps playing more
artistically. The second time she performed the opening Professor Klug played part of
the accompaniment on his clarinet, and frequently maintained tempos by tapping his foot.
He also addressed being aware of the accompaniment when she played and the need to
accompany the orchestra at times. In addition to playing the accompaniment on his
clarinet, he modeled the solo part when he wanted the student to adjust her style or tone.
At one point he said, “When you get older you can finesse the pants off that thing but for
right now just get there.”

The next clarinetist played an arrangement of the Mozart Oboe Concerto on bass
clarinet while Professor Klug accompanied him with his clarinet. Professor Klug does
not believe in limiting the bass clarinet by range or repertoire. This student played almost
continuously, more like a performance than the other students who played, with only
occasional comments from Professor Klug. His comments concerned the dialog between
the clarinet and accompaniment.

The next student performed the Horowitz Sonatina. Professor Klug did not play
the accompaniment, except occasionally, but sang it during clarinet rests. He did indicate
time by snapping his fingers, and modeled the clarinet part. He also stressed the
importance of counting the rests even when there is no accompanist. This student had a
difficult time approaching high notes by interval, Professor Klug responded, “High notes
which have accents on them, or where you reach up by interval: you are maybe a little
scared of them.” He sang to indicate how they should be played. “They aren’t to be
rounded off or denied, they need that accent.” And later, “Let the fingers take care of
themselves, play the things under the notes, the crescendos. Even if you are lucky
enough to get up to the high E, it’s musically unsatisfying, screw up the notes not the
music.” It was then time for the lesson to end.

Interview

April 15, 2004
Bloomington, Indiana

DEES: Discuss your early musical and non-musical experiences and how they have shaped your career.

KLUG: This topic is similar to a series of questions that I regularly put to my pedagogy class, “Why are you guys here? What is it that made all of you finally end up in this as a career…what is it about your early years?” In almost every case, it’s because there was a special teacher. Someone who took us under their wing, gave us motivation, helped us along. Bernard H. Stiner in Waukegan, Illinois, where I grew up, did that for me. He was responsible for quite a number of successful students in his long career. He was an instrumental specialist (clarinet was his major instrument) who traveled to several elementary schools and conducted the all-city Waukegan Grade School Band. I started clarinet in the fourth grade in a class of all clarinetists; I don’t remember at what point I moved to private lessons. When I did, it was to study for many years with Bernard Stiner. My mother was a big motivator to both play the clarinet and to practice. She had played the instrument a bit as a teenager, so had a fondness for it. And I quite remember my first summer playing the clarinet when my mother made me practice two hours a day. That will do quite a bit for you [laughs]! Because of your success on the instrument, you get fired up with the recognition by peers, parents and teachers as to what you are capable of doing. Bernie Stiner and his wife Caryl made personal connections with their students. They had no children; we were their children. They would push us, encourage us, enjoy us, and yip at us when we needed it. When I think about what Bernie had to say musically to me, or clarinetistically, I’m not sure it was greatly insightful, but perhaps it didn’t need to be. He was just so enthusiastic about his students; I think that accounts for a lot. The way Bernie and Caryl made personal attachments to their students was the core of their success, I believe, and I try to incorporate this approach to working with my own students at Indiana.

DEES: Who influenced you and how is this reflected in your teaching and playing?

KLUG: My list of clarinet teachers would run from Bernard Stiner to Robert Marcellus to Donald McGinnis, Robert Titus, Joseph Lord, Anthony Gigliotti, Ignatius Gennusa, Norman Heim and Mitchell Lurie, a who’s who of the clarinet world at different times in my life. I can still remember important things I learned from each of them. The biggest early influence would have been Robert Marcellus during my senior year of high school on the west side of Cleveland. His teaching was all about passing on the Bonade pedagogy, which Marcellus had been taken through himself. I remember a
great deal of those years of lessons with Bob, and I suppose that this was my first experience with such a highly thought out, organized and repetitive way of working on the instrument.

My other clarinet teachers were probably less structured in their teaching. I remember Lurie’s easy professionalism, sort of laid back, non-threatening and a fun person to play for. His approach to teaching might have seemed more casual than other teachers, but he had a way of passing on so much information, and life’s experiences, in a very subtle way.

My master’s degree is in flute, and I also had quite a number of flute teachers along the way, too. Perhaps my most influential flute teacher was Bill Montgomery from the University of Maryland. He was the most highly structured teacher I ever experienced. From detailed markings in the music to motivation and career advice, Bill had his pedagogy clearly thought out. He was Mr. High Energy who was always “up” for your lessons, enthusiastic about your successes, capable of holding out the carrot a little further than you could reach, and highly detailed in the ways in which he explained the instrument. Bill was a complete musician who took great delight in providing you with all of the significant historical, stylistic and acoustic information about a piece of music and the instruments of the time. I must say that his manner of dedication and organization had a very strong impact on my burgeoning teaching career.

As a busy instrumental doubler in my twenties, I also worked with a couple of oboe teachers and saxophone teachers, too. Both the different acoustic properties and repertoire of these other instruments have had tremendous influences on my clarinet playing.

DEES: Is doubling something you recommend to your students?

KLUG: Yes. First of all, as soon as the basic approach to clarinet is relatively stable, I encourage them to work on the other instruments (bass and E-flat) in the family. By the time the students get to graduate school, if they have dreams of being a university teacher, I encourage the DM students to choose career-enhancing subjects for their minors. Since most entry-level college teaching positions require us to do a multiplicity of things (not just teach the clarinet), some of these other valuable skills are things like saxophone, music theory, basic musicianship, woodwind methods, and perhaps a little conducting. These are the kinds of activities I encourage my doctoral students to pursue to improve their employment possibilities. None of my current students, however, are doing any of the wacky doublings (flute, oboe) that I used to do.

DEES: You had mentioned briefly your lessons with Marcellus and Montgomery, their structure and method. Is that something you do in your own teaching?

KLUG: Yes, I try to give them all a clear, detailed structure of what and how I’m going to teach them. For the last three years I have been teaching all of my students (freshmen through doctoral level) with a combination of private and class lessons. Each student receives a thirty-minute private lesson, which is devoted exclusively to the interpretation of whatever they’re working on….solos, chamber music, orchestra excerpts. Each student is also in a three or four member group lesson for two hours a
week. The students in each group are of similar abilities, rather than class level in school. In the group lessons (which I sometimes dub “clarinet boot camp”) we do long tones, intervals, scales, arpeggios, ear-training materials, rhythm work, etudes and transposition. These control and technique building materials are done in a sequential approach, going down the row of students one to the other. So while one student is playing, the others are fingering along. I seldom have to say anything about their preparation as the fear of being under-prepared in front of their colleagues is usually sufficient motivation. These musical drills generally go on for an hour, followed by an hour of “mini performances” in which each class member stands up to play a movement of something they’re currently working on. At this point the other members of the class are asked to comment on the performance, which develops critical ears, communication skills and diplomacy. I must say that both the students and I love the environment of the group lessons. Somehow the two-hour class goes very quickly for everyone (students and teacher), we have fun doing our various group activities, AND the students seem to progress at a faster rate than with the traditional one-hour private lesson format.

DEES: Do you use standard clarinet etudes in their lessons?

KLUG: Mostly I have them do new materials. Since most of the students have done Rose etudes with some other teacher before coming to me, I try to plow new ground with them. As an overall approach for all my students, I use the structure of my own required text, The Clarinet Doctor, which provides a flexible undergraduate curriculum, practicing strategies and pedagogical insights. This book came about back in the mid ‘90s when I revised and repackaged the thirty plus articles I had written for The Clarinet during the decade that I served as its pedagogy editor. The book has served me well for both lessons and my clarinet pedagogy class. But my goal is to always choose materials for my students that are unknown to them, no one else in the studio is playing them (hence no student-to-student comparisons), and they are challenging. I must also say that this is a time when I refocus my students to better address the issues of refinement and quality in their playing. High school students frequently get by with quantity; I work on developing their ears to appreciate quality.

DEES: How would you describe the atmosphere of your studio and what do you do to achieve it?

KLUG: I hope that the environment in my studio is always challenging and fun. While I teach a subject (the clarinet) for sure, I always teach it through the individual. If I’m doing my job correctly, each one of my students receives their own, slightly different, approach from me. I suppose that is always the biggest challenge to any teacher, to impart information to each and every student in a varied and slightly different manner, as though it were freshly minted that day. In general, the dynamics of the group lesson require a teacher to be more enthusiastic, and interesting/theatrical than they might normally be in a private lesson. For me (perhaps the ham in me coming out!), this extra energy is easy to produce and maintain.

In terms of student motivation in a group lesson, the subtle peer expectations to play at a high level seem to almost eliminate any need from me to say anything in this
whether a student is prepared or unprepared is rather self-evident to everyone in the room, and self-correcting. Both my achievers and under achievers are leveled out by the group dynamics, which helps calm everyone down and not to get so anxious about playing for each other. Group lessons can also reduce or eliminate the mental baggage that we have about each other. The teacher might say to themselves as they open up the door, “here comes that not very talented student,” while a student might come through the door thinking, “my teacher hates me.” In a group lesson, all of that stuff is omitted, never gotten to, there’s no time, or appropriateness, for it.

In my teaching, and in my life, humor is an important life force that puts things into perspective and helps me deal with the fact that we’re fallible human beings. As I constantly remind my (over-achieving) students, “this isn’t life and death it’s just the clarinet.” I try to get them to relax to achieve growth and I attempt to be a bit of a cheerleader to their efforts. I also like to have students in my studio who are, in every sense of the word, “good people.” I want to enjoy them as individuals, not just clarinetists. The personality of the students who audition for my studio is almost as important to me as their clarinet abilities in deciding whether I accept them. I must say that I would rather not deal with the difficult or destructive personalities that occasionally come along. It makes the lessons arduous and can cancel out the value of my teaching, it literally can nullify me. I’ve noticed, however, that any overly large egos are usually kept in check by the group lesson atmosphere.

As part of my studio atmosphere, I also try to avoid picking apart everything that my students do. Let’s be honest here, EVERYONE’S playing has tons of things that need improving, but if you limit the number and kinds of faults that you focus on, lots of other things will improve on their own, as time passes. I want my students to achieve the skill of continuity….to keep going despite note or control issues along the way. Too many students stop playing because something goes wrong, or they think something is about to go wrong. Students are quite often apologetic about mistakes, sometimes verbally so, to which I generally don’t say anything at all. I don’t want them to get visually or vocally diverted from their most important task--keep going! As such, I treat mistakes as natural and inevitable, to eliminate the rather common approach of playing NOT to make a mistake.

To help eliminate excessive stopping, everyone must keep the ball going in group lessons, and I preach recovering from mistakes rather than ruminating over them. I think that students these days spend too much time on too little materials. Polish, polish, polish. That’s not how the world works, which is gobble, gobble, gobble. These days you have to be able to learn quickly and get on with it in a professional setting. Therefore, I focus the bulk of my teaching on giving my students an essential musical vocabulary: tone, tuning, technique, sight-reading and transposition skills. The better we are at the basics the easier it is to play the monuments of our literature. AND you cannot learn to play the clarinet while working on Mozart, Weber and Poulenc. Most students want to tackle these pieces without already having their “clarinet ducks” in a row. It really cuts to the fact that too many students want to avoid foundation drills that give them the essential command of the instrument. Why? Because it often isn’t fun. It’s my job to make it fun.

DEES: What are the most important things for your students to learn and how do you facilitate that learning?
KLUG: I really like them to have good tones. I emphasize that a lot, and while you may not always see picture perfect embouchures from my students, I believe that all of their tones are quite matched and uniform. I’m less concerned with how the embouchure looks than how it sounds, so I do a great deal of aural teaching. The group lesson provides an interesting exercise in tone matching in that the students’ tones at the end of a two-hour lesson vs. at the beginning show a dramatic improvement. They unconsciously listen to each other, and me, and make subtle improvements quite without me saying anything.  

Another important item to work on is reducing the tension that so often affects hands/arms, embouchure and tongue. Often this comes about because students are trying to make themselves play accurately, rather than just allowing it to happen. I try to get them to chill out and relax. Often things go together: students play forte, grab the clarinet tighter and squeeze the mouthpiece too hard. If you can get one part of the system to lighten up, say the hands, very often everything else will slack off a bit, too. Students commonly work too hard to play loud or fast. I have a hunch that the traditional method of “working things up the metronome” can be partially responsible for the incremental tension that creeps in as one plays faster. To avoid that, I’ve found some success with playing a passage very slow, over and over. In such an ultra-slow environment the hands relax completely and one plays the notes easily. Once this feeling becomes comfortable, then double or triple the speed, but keep the same feeling in the hands. Most students will then be able to glide through the thorny passage with ease. One should apply the slow hand feeling to the fast passage in order to ALLOW yourself to play fast, never MAKE yourself play fast.  

The last element about facilitating learning is to think of lessons as progress checks, not performances. We are all works in progress, and learning is incremental, often invisibly so. Keep undue pressure off the students; they supply enough of their own in most cases. Cut them some slack on nit-picking, a lesson shouldn’t be turned into being nibbled to death by ducks.  

DEES: Has your teaching changed over the years? If so, how?  

KLUG: I think of myself as a student of the instrument, too, and I’m continually working on my own clarinet playing; experimenting with embouchure, hand and posture revisions/ rethinkings, in order to understand my own playing better and improve it if I can. This information, when successful (and some of it isn’t, to be sure!), is then passed on to my students. Sometimes I’ll have a former student of mine (from only four or five years ago) come back to IU to sit in on a class. Afterwards they’ll say, “how come you never told me that!?” I have to freely admit that I didn’t know it then, that I’ve learned some things since they were my student.  

I believe there is a solid connection between a teacher’s skill on the instrument and what they’re able to have their students achieve. I don’t believe you can teach a thing or place that you haven’t visited yourself. Students are prone to copy what you sound like and how you play. As I often tell my IU Teaching Workshop attendees, “if you don’t like how your students sound, then YOU should go practice more!”
I find teaching so incredibly challenging. It is an attractive learning process to me, and I’ve always been inquisitive about the cause and effect of various problems. While I’ve had a thirty-five year career of having lots of helpful” guinea pigs” on which to hone my craft, and I believe I’ve gotten pretty good at diagnosing most of the issues, I’m always looking for other ways of expressing my thoughts and quicker ways of solving problems.

Lastly, I believe that I’ve gotten better at understanding my students; what drives them, their concerns, how they learn best. It is a far different time now, and learning environment, than it was thirty to forty years ago. Back then, you just shut up and did it; no complaining, no excuses, no going to see the dean if your teacher was angry with you. These days there can be a lot of psycho-babble about how everyone is doing and feeling, and taking the temperature of their mood before they head in a certain direction. I think that students are younger psychologically today, and not sufficiently responsible for themselves. They seem less secure with who and what they are. Perhaps we had some of those same issues when we were students, but we just shut up and got on with it. Kids today are more prone to be verbal about how they’re feeling, to let it out, that sort of thing. An additional complication is that many kids these days are on medication for learning disabilities and chemical imbalances. So here the teacher is trying to figure out why a particular student isn’t getting something, and the reasons for the impasse are wholly beyond the clarinet. It’s a very complicated issue.

Perhaps as a result of students being more needy for a sympathetic and emotionally connected teacher, and partly because I’m getting older, I guess (!), I am making a much deeper and more personal connection with my students these days. As I indicated before, I’m teaching the instrument more through the student than I ever did, and I believe I make it clear how important they are to me as “people with problems.” I make myself open and available to them as a mentor of life issues as well as the clarinet. This approach seems to have borne fruit. I do care a lot about all of them and I think they give that back to me as well, it’s a two-way street. I trust them to do the work and they trust me to lead them in the right direction.

DEES: It’s interesting you mention you think teaching has changed. I feel I was the end of a generation of teaching styles. You just went to your lessons and learned to play clarinet. You tried to drain the teacher of their knowledge. It was, perhaps, a more formal environment, too.

KLUG: Yes, but you were also required to produce more!

DEES: You are one of the many people I’ve talked to who has said they think the students have changed. It’s very interesting to me.

KLUG: You have to be cautious about saying that in general, as people our age generally believe that the younger generation is going to hell in a hand basket! I must say, however, regardless of how you would characterize students’ personalities and learning approaches these days, I believe that they are now more narrowly prepared on clarinet than they used to be. Perhaps as a part of the “polish, polish, polish” approach I spoke about earlier, it seems that so many student applicants to IU these days have spent
too much time on too little material leading up to their auditions. Very few (an amazingly low number, actually) know all of their major and minor scales (and we never ask for the most difficult ones). So many of their solos seem to have been learned by rote, thereby making future changes or alterations impossible. To assess a student’s true musical skills, we have incorporated rhythm charts for them to clap and pitch sets on the piano to match with their clarinets. We pay more attention to the GPAs and the standardized test scores from the SAT and ACT than we did in the past; the higher these things are, the greater the potential for growth. We also ask them a couple of questions to respond to, to get a sense of their personalities and the commitment to their art. And all of this must be done in seven to eight minutes! Mostly we get the evaluation right, I suppose, with the only unanswered question being about their level of motivation and work ethic once they get to school.

DEES: Speaking of motivation, how do you motivate your students?

KLUG: Firstly, I get them to buy into the concept that change is necessary and that they will have to embrace it. Change will take them out of their comfort zone for sure, but without that there will be little progress. This is usually less of a sell to the undergraduates who are generally the human sponges of the clarinet world. Often the graduate students are less willing to go down the garden path with me, and it finally has to occur to them (rather than me imposing it on them) as a good thing to do. This quite often happens when the grads get beaten out by the undergraduates for chair positions in our orchestras after blind auditions behind a screen! I think it also helps that our clarinet student body is generally of a high level, which provides its own kind of subtle, peer pressure. All the students learn from each other in this way.

I periodically remind my students that I’m the “bad news bear.” I tell them what’s wrong with their playing. I try to also make sure, obviously, that I supply a fair number of kudos, too. I try to use language that is inclusive, such as, “we need to do this,” or “let’s make sure we keep the tempos steady,” etc. I think that the change of pronoun can be helpful from the usual “you.”

Sorry to keep hitting on this whole group lesson thing, but when I’m trying to effect change in some aspect of a student’s playing, the rest of the students in the group are incredibly helpful to me as I try to take someone comfort zone. If I suggest an embouchure change to a student in a private lesson, it is just my word against the student’s, and all they know is that the new embouchure feels weird (it’s out of their comfort zone). But when the rest of the students in the group begin to chime in with words of encouragement about how much better it sounds, the student is convinced! I’ve seen this work so well, so many times, that I have come to rely on these unscripted responses from the group members to help me sell all kinds of changes. The group members also supply their own motivation to “keep up” with each other. While I assign students to these groups based on similar skill sets, there are still things at which each excels (and those individuals then serve as examples to emulate) and the others strive to keep up. The group is sort of innately self-motivating, a very cool thing!

DEES: Is there anything else that you would care to add about your teaching?
KLUG: I like to take my students to places they haven’t gone before; new literature, new ways of thinking about playing the instrument, improving their ears and sense of rhythm, developing an ability to play music in a swing style, giving them the tools they need to learn new music quickly. And I try to do this in a fast-paced environment of collegiality and humor, with lots of challenging games to whet their appetite and keep them mentally alert, and where I’m the big kid on the playground pushing the merry-go-round at a slightly faster speed than is comfortable.

As you look around my studio, you can hardly help noticing that it is cluttered! The walls are covered with pictures of present and past students, and those of guest artists and master class teachers. I consider my students to be a kind of extended family, and I insist that they be generous and supportive of one another’s activities. When one of them does a recital, ALL the others are expected to attend. AND they will go backstage afterwards to pass on congratulations. My students are young professionals in the making and they need to support their pals. Yes they are competitors of a type, but I expect them to be genuinely friendly and supportive of each other. They must be good “clarinet citizens.”
FRANK KOWALSKY

Frank Kowalsky has been Professor of Clarinet at Florida State University since 1984. He has performed with orchestras throughout the United States and is a former member of the United State Marine Band in Washington, D.C. He is active as a chamber musician, and performs regularly with the Seattle Chamber Music Festival. He was also a member of the faculty at Interlochen Arts Academy. Dr. Kowalsky holds degrees from the Eastman School of Music, the Manhattan School of Music, and the Catholic University of America.5

Lesson Observation

Professor Kowalsky’s studio is spacious. In addition to pictures of his family and former students on display, he had black and white pictures of clarinetists and musicians on the wall. Floor lamps, tapestries, and an arrangement of dried cut cane (with leaves) created a peaceful environment. Professor Kowalsky had a relaxed demeanor in lessons, produced by a calm tone of voice and posture. To keep a record of what the students worked on in lesson, Professor Kowalsky keeps a file on each student and writes down what they worked on at the end of each lesson.

On Thursday November 20, 2003, I observed a first year master’s student. Before she started playing the student commented, “That [new] warm-up made me so happy on Monday. I was happy all day long, I thought ‘this is the coolest thing’.” Professor Kowalsky commented, “If you practice your scales every day you will be happy for the rest of your life [laughed].” Professor Kowalsky set the metronome to quarter note equals eighty and she played a major scale in a slurred eighth note pattern, then in triplets, then sixteenth notes, then articulated the sixteenth note pattern, the full range of the instrument.

5 The Florida State University College of Music, “Frank Kowalsky,”
The first aspect of the student’s playing Professor Kowalsky focused on was her physical carriage and breathing. After she finished one key Professor Kowalsky said, “A couple of things I’d like you to watch out for as you do this, and this will make it even more fun [laughed]! I’d like you to get the breathing going, think about that with every breath you take. It should just be free and open, say ‘Aaah’, yeah. Just plant it, you are a tree, put down those roots.” The student played then stopped. Professor Kowalsky responded,

Careful of your air leak. You happen to have a fabulous sound, it’s so clean and clear and centered, well voiced, and it’s just beautiful. And if you really breathe low, you are going to have the feeling that you are getting something out of you, self expression in a strange sort of way because it’s just a scale. It’s just going to feel really satisfying. You know you are consistently faster than this [the metronome] and you are continuously pulling yourself back. You might want to consider setting the metronome faster, or else just pay a little more attention. Again, same scale. You will be able to breathe lower if you don’t arch your back, a slight sense of leaning forward.

The student moved and responded, “Oh yeah!” then played the scale again. “What we really want is your shoulders over your hips, but sometimes we think they are over the hips and they are like this [demonstrated].” The student decided to sit more forward on her chair, she then continued playing the scale with the same patterns. Professor Kowalsky helped position the student’s head and had the student lean forward and back by pivoting from her hips and not scrunching her spine. The student played again and said, “It feels so open!” Professor Kowalsky said,

That sounds nice…there’s just a few places where for whatever habits we have, the way we use our body just tends to constrict a little bit. Things to remember are just to make your back longer, make your neck longer. Then you have the flexibility of moving from your hips. You can always use a neck strap if you want. I like the Claricare, [neck strap brand] it’s the one with the Velcro and it’s stretchy. The only problem is it tends to pull you down, you have to watch for that.

The student played the scale exercise again, triplets slurred, articulated, and said, “It feels so open now I don’t know how to control my reed.” Professor Kowalsky responded, “You may need a harder reed, you’ll get used to that.”
Professor Kowalsky then helped the student to improve her articulation and asked, “Can you tell me what you are doing with your tongue, where it’s touching?” They discussed the position of her tongue, and the student realized, “It’s almost underneath.”

After further discussion, Professor Kowalsky replied,

Like you are trying to stick your tongue between the reed and the mouthpiece? [The student said yes.] You may be slightly low on the tongue, it should be just the very tip of the tongue…We are going to try to get your articulation in the high register a little more comfortable. Here’s what I’d like you to do. I’d like you to point your top lip more [down] make it from your nose to your top lip, longer, taller. ‘Ooh.’ Really engage your top lip, bring the corners forward. Give me good support and I’ll bet you that the tongue will fall right into place…the tongue hardly moves at all.

The student then moved on to the minor scales and arpeggios.

As the student continued to play her warm up for Professor Kowalsky he made comments in between the exercises. He reminded her to stay with the metronome, to engage the top lip, use lots of support, and told her when he thought it sounded good. At one point the student asked what he did with his throat when he played high notes.

Professor Kowalsky answered,

I don’t want you to ever do anything with your throat. Do you mean a vowel? It’s more ‘Aah’, it’s more open. [The student thought she was closing her throat off.] That’s an interesting idea, it’s more open and it’s counter intuitive. We think it’s ‘dah-eee’, that’s what it sounds like it should be, but it’s really ‘dee-yawh’. So if you are more free and more open in the upper register you’ll have a better time with it. You’ll be able to hit those notes.

The student continued with the F major arpeggio. She played it several times in a row and Professor Kowalsky commented, “It seems a little impatient, everything’s ahead…Nice, now put a little less mouthpiece in your mouth…When you have less mouthpiece in your mouth there’s more room for your tongue. We want the tongue right at the reed….it sounds beautiful.” After she played the last articulated arpeggio Professor Kowalsky said, “It sure sounds good to me. Now we are going to forget all that stuff and just play. Let’s move onto the Rode.”

The student commented that she felt like she was going to be fighting to incorporate the work she had done on her warm up. Professor Kowalsky said, “Don’t
fight, just play. That’s what practice of the fundamentals is for. And then you just forget it and play, it will rub off in time.” She then began playing a Rode etude in its entirety. After she finished playing Professor Kowalsky focused on achieving a variety of tone colors and the relationship of the reed with the student’s sound flexibility. Professor Kowalsky commented,

You have some real gutsy moments there and some really interesting accents and cross rhythms. The way you lean on some of these notes. I like the way you play. The only thing I would say about this is it sounds a little monochromatic to me. Your best sound, at least with this reed, is a kind of a forte. You seem most comfortable doing that and it seems hard for you to get any kind of variety in the color. I have reeds like this sometimes. Is the reed a little stiff?

They then had a reed discussion and decided the reed was probably too old. Professor Kowalsky played the beginning of the etude and said, “See if you can get a sound that will work both loud and soft.” Later in the lesson he commented, “I think you have lots of colors at your disposal. You have a beautiful piano. Just do it—[student made excuses] just do it. The reed is not the greatest, just do it.” The student began playing again while Professor Kowalsky conducted.

After the student played with tone color, Professor Kowalsky incorporated musical analysis into her phrase ideas. He stopped her and said,

There’s something different in this [pointed to music] passage, even though it all looks the same. The difference is that this is two measures of the same chord, and most of here is one, then it changes. So, here you need to be at one level for two measures and this [the next group] needs to be a little more, not necessarily a crescendo. Show your audience that this is a unit and this is a unit [referred to the measures with different chords].

The student played again. Professor Kowalsky stopped the student and said, “Here we’ve got two measures, two measures, two measures, guess what? Now we have one measure and then half measure, half measure, half measure. Now, he’s [composer] is getting excited. That’s the real crescendo.” The student continued to play while Professor Kowalsky conducted. Professor Kowalsky then asked her what was happening harmonically in a particular measure. After discussion she realized it was a diminished seventh chord. Professor Kowalsky explained,
It’s probably the only diminished seventh in the whole piece. The composer uses it very sparingly, so it’s a special moment. And you’re right, it does lead to B, which is the dominant, and finally to E. This is the place [diminished seventh chord] that is the special one, the one you have to really go for, the whole two measures. Can we get into that, start here [indicated in music].

The student continued playing to the end and Professor Kowalsky said, “I wouldn’t do too many ritards, it tends to break it up too much. It’s a judgment call. I’m all for strategic ritards.” She continued playing and he conducted her through the previous trouble area. Professor Kowalsky then played the end for her. After hearing the model, the student understood the concept and replied, “Oh!” They ended the lesson by talking about the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday.

The second lesson observed, on November 20, 2003, was another first year master’s student. The lesson began with a discussion regarding concerns the student had about attitudes in a recent rehearsal setting. Professor Kowalsky assured her she was doing all the right things, “The day will come when they decide it’s much more trouble to keep bad feelings going, and accept the good that is happening. You just stay where you are, you are OK. Don’t deviate, don’t waver, it will spread. Hang in there, you have my full support.” The student then commented that her mouth hurt from playing so much recently. She had been biting to compensate for tired muscles. The student began playing a Baermann etude.

The first aspect of the student’s playing Professor Kowalsky worked on was her tongue position and how this could be related to her bite. She played the entire etude and Professor Kowalsky said,

Cool. Wow. It’s not everybody who has the courage not to play faster and faster in these last two lines [of the etude] because it is so repetitious, slow and long. The reed sounds mighty soft to me; that might be where the biting is coming from. You may be trying to create resistance. Let’s talk about some mechanical things where you might relieve the bite. The mouthpiece and reed tell you to bite or not, and it’s really, really hard not to follow those instructions. But there’s one thing you can do. If the mechanics of the throat and tongue position are right, you are less likely to bite. It sounds to me like your tongue is back low. Sean [Osborne, in a recent master class at FSU] said ‘shhh’. Mr. Marcellus said ‘eu’ [like French syllable teu]. Say ‘shh’ like you are shushing somebody [student complied]. Remember that feeling. Play the first phrase like that [student
played. Yeah, but stay there, even as you descend into the throat tones. Shh, shh, shh [student played]. Yeah, yeah! Do it again, keep it even closer to the reed, higher, more forward [student played]. That’s it, I just think that sounds great.

The student commented that it was a lot easier to control and felt more comfortable. Professor Kowalsky replied,

I just think you are forgetting that when you drop your tongue down, the only thing you have left is your bite. And you will have to bite. But if you bring your tongue up, you are creating resistance that way. You feel it, then you can blow a little more comfortably. In other words, you have some control and then you’ll probably find that you can let go of your bite. That sounded so good. Start here, and just play a line or too. Say, shh.

As the student played Professor Kowalsky said “Shh” to remind the student to keep her tongue position high and forward.

He then stopped her after a technically difficult section that went over the break repeatedly. He had her play a long B, the most resistant note on the clarinet, and reminded her of the ‘eu’ or ‘shh’ tongue position.

The B’s need to have the higher tongue, but more support because the higher tongue creates more resistance and the B is more resistant to begin with. Play the B again and then play that small section [from the Baermann etude]. Now it’s getting ‘denim-ed’ a little bit [the bell was in the student’s jeans, in between her knees]. Is your neck strap tight enough? It looks like it isn’t doing much. Let’s move it up and see what happens [student played]. Yes, that sounds great. It sounds simple, it sounds like one voice instead of changing for registers. A lot of the things that I was going to mention before seemed to have cleared up. Mostly that you sounded uncomfortable as you ended notes.

After adjusting the student’s neck strap, Professor Kowalsky turned his attention to the actual written music. Addressing the problem of mistakes in printed music, he suggested adding a slur. He made the student aware of mistakes in the Baermann etudes, “I hereby give you permission to edit this music. There’s not a single page that is perfect, they all have mistakes. If you wonder about anything, you are probably right.” They continued to work on this etude as Professor Kowalsky reminded her of the ‘shh’ tongue position, conducted, and occasionally counted as the student played. After completing the etude the student moved on to another Baermann etude she had prepared.
The student played this etude in its entirety and after she finished Professor Kowalsky laughed along with the student and said, “OK, a little mental block up to the [altissimo] G! You know what I like so much about what you are doing here, is that there are some mistakes but they aren’t stopping you. You are not letting them get to you. When you do that, little by little, the mistakes will disappear.” He then played the beginning for her, emphasizing a crescendo. She then played it again. “That sounds wonderful, how about more crescendo down here?” Professor Kowalsky played, then the student played. He then said, “Oh! That was a diminuendo actually.” The student and Professor Kowalsky played back and forth, repeatedly. The student then played by herself while Professor Kowalsky conducted. They worked on other sections by Professor Kowalsky modeling an idea and the student playing after. As they worked in this manner, Professor Kowalsky made comments like, “Almost, is your tongue really in a ‘shh’ position? Yes! Good! Yes, indeed, yes.”

Later they worked on musical inflection which Professor Kowalsky explained, “There’s a little something about inflection. Do you know what I mean by inflection? [The student said yes.] It’s what you emphasize and what you don’t. The subtleties that can’t be written in the music. It sounds to me like you are taking the energy into the downbeats. So that the B [downbeat] just that [indicated small amount] much softer. The B is the most important note. But if you make it also the loudest, it’s a little too obvious. It seems like it’s a little too obvious, and it has the strength of being the downbeat anyway. Listen to this [played emphasizing both styles]. When you play it that way [B’s loudest] what are you trying to tell me, is my epidermis showing, what are you doing?

They both laughed and he played it again, correctly. “It needs to sound conclusive without being in your face. You try it.” The student played it again with less emphasis on the B. Professor Kowalsky responded, “Love it!” The lesson ended with Professor Kowalsky writing in the student’s music what he wanted to hear for next week.

Interview

November 20, 2003
Tallahassee, Florida

DEES: Discuss your early experiences, musical and/or non-musical, and how they shaped your career.
KOWALSKY: I started in the first grade with music lessons. That was in a pre-instrument class. In second grade I graduated to the recorder and third grade I got a real instrument, a clarinet. Ever since then it’s the only thing I really loved to do, the only thing I wanted to do. My mother would not let me practice until I had done everything I needed to do. Like, finish your vegetables or you don’t get to practice. Or, make your bed or you don’t get to practice. To me it was never practice, it was always play. So I never really understood that it was supposed to be hard work. It never was. That was all I wanted to do, that’s all I did. It wasn’t work, it’s what I did. There was never a decision, should I do this, or should I do something else. It was always there.

I rarely meet students like that. Fortunately at FSU, there are some fantastic undergraduates, they are consumed by it, but they are the exception, still the exception. Most people have to make a decision: Is it right for me? Is it practical?— that sort of thing. I never asked those questions. In fact, when I showed up at Eastman as a clarinet major, it was only after I had been there for half a year that I found out there was such a thing as Music Education. I didn’t understand that. I met someone who was a music education major and I said “What’s that?”

DEES: My friend, saxophonist Connie Frigo, told me that in Amsterdam, they don’t have music education programs, they just have music. They aren’t as focused on teaching or pedagogical aspects; you just learn to play your instrument well.

KOWALSKY: There were times when I was very inspired by something and I decided this is it for me. I suppose I did ask if it was right as a career.

One of my early teachers was a New York doubler and a jazzer. He played a lot of sax and he played clarinet, Wally Bettman. That was when I was in seventh grade, maybe ninth, something like that. You know what he used to say? “Let’s test your clarinet for leaks.” He would take a drag of Lucky’s or Camels, he would smoke during the lesson, and he would blow smoke through the horn and see if any came out the keys. I am absolutely serious. Wally was always saying how hard the business was and that got me worried. This was in New York City, I was in ninth grade, but I got worried; if Wally doesn’t think this is such a great thing to do or he’s having trouble, I started to have doubts. But I never had doubts that this was what I wanted to do with my time.

Circumstances were really in my favor. I was very lucky. In the city at that time there was no music program at the elementary level in public schools. In Junior High we did have a music teacher, although there was no orchestra and there was not a music curriculum. There was, however, a neighborhood music school, called The Neighborhood Music School, it’s probably still there, it’s in the Bronx. I took music lessons there from the very first day until I was about to graduate from high school. That’s where my lessons were. Along with every lesson you got a one-hour theory class every week. I did all the theory there, and by the time I got to high school I was taking composition with Elias Tannenbaum, who at that time was a pretty well known electronic music-type, cutting edge composer.

DEES: And everybody who took lessons there took theory?
KOWALSKY: They had to take theory classes. And there were little ensembles. But it was a whole life that was there. I went there on Thursday afternoons.

DEES: A community.

KOWALSKY: Yes, there was a real identity; that was who I was. If it weren’t for that I wouldn’t have had that early training. Starting that early, it was so easy.

DEES: You were immersed in it; it was just what you did.

KOWALSKY: Yes. I can tell you about my first clarinet lesson which I remember very well. Arthur Stracher was my first teacher. It was at The Neighborhood Music School, I was in third grade, and my father was in there with me. The teacher held up the mouthpiece and he said, “Do you know what is missing?” And I said “The rest of the clarinet?” and both of the adults burst out laughing. Then he says “No, it’s the reed.” I said “OH! I didn’t know that, there’s a reed, what’s that?” So then he showed me the reed, then he put it on, then he showed how to put the ligature on, about how high on the mouthpiece it should be. Then he said “Here’s what you do, you put your lower lip over your teeth [demonstrates] then you put the reed on there, then you put your top teeth on the mouthpiece. OH! All this was a surprise to me, it was great! Then he said “Now blow.” So, I blew. Honest this was the last thing anyone said to me about embouchure until I was getting my master’s degree and Leon Russianoff said: “You know maybe you should try pointing your chin [laughs].” My chin was all bunched up like this [models]. Nobody said anything about it because it worked. I was really lucky, the mouthpiece and reed worked. I didn’t have to do anything mechanically that was crazy, I didn’t have to bite down, I didn’t have to do anything.

DEES: How did you know what it was supposed to sound like, or did you just blow?

KOWALSKY: I just blew and made a sound and he said “Yes that’s pretty good!”

DEES: Did he play for you at all?

KOWALSKY: I guess so [pauses]. But the thing is, I think I was so fortunate because they just left me alone, and they let my ear develop. I found my sound because I got a concept of sound, not because somebody said “You have to do this, and point” and nobody talked to me about muscles. I suppose that’s probably my weakness as a teacher because I never cared about embouchure [laughs]. All these, you know, little details [laughs] I didn’t care about it. I just didn’t even know what it was, Mr. Hasty never said anything to me about it. Ever.

DEES: Probably because you sounded fine.
KOWALSKY: I sounded good. Yeah. So, they left me alone, I was very fortunate to have teachers like this. But, the thing that helped my sound concept was the Ed Sullivan show. It came on about eight p.m. and I was always in bed by then. But once in a great while Benny Goodman would be on the Ed Sullivan show. My father would get me out of bed and he would bring me downstairs to the basement where we had our TV set up. This was in the 1950’s, you know, this was not cable. He brought me there and I would watch Benny Goodman and then I would go back to sleep.

DEES: Did they interview Benny Goodman or did he just play? Is it like talk shows today?

KOWALSKY: No, he just played. That’s probably the reason why I stuck with the clarinet, because he was such a hero to me. I actually believed, I didn’t really believe, but I sort of had this fantasy, that if I practiced all the time, maybe Benny Goodman would happen to be walking down the street and just at that time, hear me practice and knock on the door and say “It sounds good kid, keep it up.” This is what kids believe.

DEES: Aside from Benny Goodman, who has influenced you, and how is this reflected in your teaching and playing?

KOWALSKY: I had two primary teachers that had enormous influence. One was Leon Russianoff. I started with him when I was a senior in high school. Leon made you feel really special, and important. He had a great big heart. He had lots of mechanical things for me to practice, and I felt like I was always accomplishing something. I knew exactly what to do, he laid it out, it was great.

DEES: So you had little victories in your practicing.

KOWALSKY: Oh yeah, all the time. Leon was so encouraging and really knew how to get the most out of people. The other huge influence was Stanley Hasty. He was an enormous intellect, and is. I don’t know, I can’t even begin to tell you. That was the biggest influence because I was at college with him for four years, day in, day out. From him I have the methods/etudes and phrasing. Hasty’s initial job for all of us when we first came into his studio was to free us up, to get the tension out of our throats. And he did that very well, opened everybody up. That was the first thing that happened. He had a very clear easy, organized method of articulation, we went through that. Etudes were wonderful music and I never get tired of them.

DEES: Do you think that is reflected in your teaching?

KOWALSKY: Yeah, sure. Initially I started doing all the same etudes, and teaching articulation the same way. I’ve changed because I think playing has changed and I have other ways of teaching the same sort of things. It’s all the same ideas, the same concepts. Hasty and Russianoff were coming at the same kind of sound and the same kind of end result and they came from two different directions. Russianoff from the
heart and Hasty from the head. Hasty wanted us to know how the instrument worked; he actually had a method of phrasing. Russianoff was more: "Here’s how it sounds, make it sound like that."

DEES: You said Hasty had a method of phrasing, can you explain that more.

KOWALSKY: He was interested, you know, I am going to know more after I talk to Liz Gunlogson tomorrow and get reminded [Liz is writing a treatise on Hasty]. Hasty is interested in groups of notes, rather than the notes that happen to be in the measure, or the notes that happen to be beamed together. The groups of notes, depending on the style, the first note of the group would be the first note of a slur and the last note of the group would be the last note before the next slur. If you have triplets, two slur one tongue, two slur one tongue, those are three note groups. This gave the phrase such interesting rhythmic vitality. He would not let us accent a staccato note if it happened to be the first note of the beat. Often you would get very interesting results if you thought of that note, if the first note was staccato, and the next note started the slur, that first note on the down beat as a staccato note would be really interesting if you gave it the inflection of an upbeat. And so we were doing stuff like this.

As far as the phrasing goes, I tell you, I don’t know how he did it. Somehow we knew the direction and where to take the phrase and where the top of the phrase was and how to lead to it. And I don’t remember him exactly teaching it like that, except to show in every phrase. He just wrote it down, he wrote the dynamics, or changed the articulation if there were mistakes in the music. But he would write the dynamics and give us tenuto marks, accents, staccatos, not staccatos, whatever. He just edited everything. Pretty soon we caught on and we understood his voice. I can remember after I graduated I eventually found my way to Catholic University, it was quite a while after that, I was getting my Doctorate Degree.

DEES: That was when you were playing in the Marine Band?

KOWALSKY: I was in the Marine Band. And we were doing La Bohème (at Catholic) and there’s this amazing solo in, I think the third act. I am playing the solo, and the conductor looked at me, and he liked what I was playing. It was very emotional music, it’s beautiful. And afterwards he came to me and he said “How do you know how to do that, where did that come from?” I said, “Well my teacher, Mr. Hasty.” And the conductor scoffed and he said “No, that’s just you.” But it’s true, that’s just what Hasty taught us to do.

DEES: But it becomes you, after a while, doesn’t it? You understand the music.

KOWALSKY: Sure, sure. But he marked in the phrasing and the expression for all these phrases and we just learned it, we figured it out.

DEES: So, if you look at Rose Etudes, if you are doing something like that, the repetition of shaping phrases a certain way eventually transferred to other pieces.
KOWALSKY: That’s exactly what happened, yeah.

DEES: How has your teaching changed over the years?

KOWALSKY: Things change, music changes, concepts of tone on a national level evolves and it changes over generations. We’ve been through a couple, even since I was in school. In New York we just played. Then I got to school and somebody said, “you need to have a dark tone.” Dark tone? What was that? What are you talking about? Just make it sound like a clarinet. And then I got into the Marines and right about then suddenly dark took over. There were some very prominent players and mouthpieces being made that really enhanced the depth and solidity in the sound that we hadn’t heard before. And in the hands of people who were not so good at it, it came out tubby, in others it came out gorgeous. I mean wow, this is a clarinet? Amazing.

DEES: When was this?

KOWALSKY: In the early 1970’s. Some of the players getting the big jobs, not all of them, some of them, were playing with a sound that nobody really had heard before. So this grew, everybody was doing that. To have any kind of brilliance or brightness in the tone seemed really old fashioned. Now it seems to be back.

DEES: The brightness.

KOWALSKY: Yeah, brilliance. Some nice stuff going on, very, very interesting. If you don’t change, if you don’t keep up, then you risk being old fashioned and out of touch and you really are not serving your students very well.

There was an oboist whom I met; he was an elderly man when I met him. Some place in South Florida, I ran into him. He was long since retired from playing and he was teaching a few students and he would show up at Solo/Ensemble competitions and stuff like that and I got to know him a little bit. Sweet man. One of his students was playing the oboe, fantastically talented, and sounded so bright, the paint would have peeled off the walls. Bright is not the word. It was the real old-fashioned French style scrape of reed. And it was so out from what we had heard. And the thing is, this guy, in his hey-day, he played in the Chicago Symphony. He was great. The world changed around him, and he didn’t change and so he was not doing his students any good. A student playing like that now will not be taken seriously as an oboist.

DEES: You talk about changing and staying open to new trends in the clarinet world. How do you keep on top of that or stay open to that?

KOWALSKY: It’s not easy. You have to remain in contact and in circulation and you have to see what is going on. Either bring new players to where you are, or go. A good thing to do is the clarinet conferences.

DEES: So you bring a lot of guest artists in to play for your students, and give master classes.
KOWALSKY: Yeah, we do. And sometimes it’s tricky because we hear conflicting ideas. And those ideas work. So hmm, what do you do? You tell your students one thing and you bring somebody else in, and they tell your students something else and the students sound better. It’s time to rethink a concept or two once in a while. It’s only hard because it was different.

And the technology of pedagogy is better. We just know how things work now. Nobody told me anything about, when I was growing up, about exactly what the tongue does in the mouth. Now I am in contact with young professionals who know. And we know these things now. And I’ve had to change some of my technique and I’ve had to change some of my teaching.

DEES: How do you do that? I’m dealing with this right now, you get a way of playing that works for you, and you want to cling to it, because it works. We are human beings, we don’t like change. How do you change?

KOWALSKY: You will only change if you decide that what you are doing doesn’t work well enough. That what you are doing is not working as well as what someone else is doing. And you say “Well, how do you do that?” “I do it like this.” Hmm, I don’t do that, maybe I should think about it. What do you do when you are teaching and you are a professional and you practice, what is it you do? You think about these things, all you do is practice your fundamentals and you think about it and learn new literature. And then you try it out on your students and you say, “Do this, try this.” Fortunately, students forget a lot!

Let me tell you what happened with Paul Votapek. I am so indebted to him. Paul came and did most of a Doctoral degree here at Florida State and he had been in Chicago, studying with Larry Combs. And fortunately Paul was a great gentleman and didn’t expect me to be up to that level, at least at that time. I made some suggestion about articulation. And in the nicest possible way Paul said, “Gosh, you know (totally innocently) Larry told me just the opposite.” And I said, (ahem, swallowing hard for dramatic effect) Oh yeah? What did he say? And so Paul explained what Larry had said, and I realized instantly that Larry was right and I just missed it, you know, was off base. And from that moment on I simply reinforced that idea with Paul whenever that situation came up. At the end of the year Paul said to me “You know what I like so much about your teaching? How much you have helped me with my articulation [laughs].” And I said, “Paul you taught me that!” He said, “I did?”

So, fortunately, it may be a little bit uncomfortable for someone to come in and teach your students better than you do. But if all you do is take those ideas and reinforce them, your students think you did it [laughs]. But you do have to be open to it, you have to be open. Give yourself up to it. You’re human, you are going to make mistakes, and your students need to know that too.

DEES: That is a profound statement. I think that is especially hard for new teachers. Because you are trying to prove yourself to your new students that you do know what you are doing and they can trust what you are telling them. But, things do evolve!
DEES: How would you describe the atmosphere in your studio and what do you do to create it?

KOWALSKY: We have two professors and we consider it one studio with two teachers. A great majority of the time, my students take lessons from me, and Debbie’s [Deborah Bish] students take lessons with her. But, there’s an exchange of students, it goes on all the time. She has her areas of expertise and I have mine. I never hesitate to send one of my students for an extra lesson with her so she can help them with something and vice-versa. Every one of my graduate students sooner or later goes and knocks on her door and asks for a lesson [laughs]. Her students don’t necessarily come knock on my door for lessons, haven’t figured that one out yet.

DEES: You are too intimidating [laughs].

KOWALSKY: Maybe. We consider that all of the students are ours, and we are a resource for all of them. Our doors are always open. What we don’t have is rivalry between studios. There is a sense of support and closeness among students, and I work very hard to foster that.

DEES: How do you foster that?

KOWALSKY: We have classes with each other’s students; we get to know all of them. We are both nurturing people and we don’t let any criticism by other students get nasty. We set a tone of positive reinforcement and the students pick up on that. And pretty soon they do it for themselves. There are so many students that it’s past critical mass and it takes on a life of its own. They learn from each other, a lot. There are some really good players, good graduate students. We don’t segregate upper class from lower class and graduate students; they are all in there together. The graduate students are all good enough that they are not intimidated. I just think it’s a healthy place as far as the clarinet studio is concerned.

DEES: If you have a student who is not being supportive of his fellow students, how do you handle that?

KOWALSKY: Once in a while somebody is there who, for one reason or another, makes the atmosphere less healthy. I’ve talked to people about their attitudes, about how they behave. It’s always from the standpoint of, this behavior is not working, it’s turning people against you, and if you continue it’s going to be really hard to get a job and it’s going to be hard to keep a job because your colleagues are not going to like you [laughs]. You are a wonderful person, and you are a terrific player, but that is only part of it. That’s only part of getting a job and holding onto a job. Whether it’s in the orchestra or university, and at Florida State we are training more people for teaching. And that’s certainly a large part of it. It’s assumed that you know what you are doing and you are not going to be destructive to the technique of your students, but you get tenure if your colleagues want to continue working with you. So, if you poison the atmosphere
and you make people not want to be around you and they get tired of listening to you complain all the time, it just doesn’t work, and that’s pretty much the truth of it. I don’t have a leg to stand on if I tell them not to behave that way just because I don’t like it. And then students police themselves.

DEES: They get ostracized [laughs].

KOWALSKY: Yeah! If somebody’s practicing something and somebody else stands in front of the door and starts playing the same thing, faster [laughs] well, that word gets around.

DEES: Do you ever have students that you just don’t connect with personally, how do you handle that?

KOWALSKY: Well, I’m very patient, extremely patient. I mean, it doesn’t bother me to tell students the same thing week after week. There are some students; you just don’t click with everybody. I don’t think there is much to deal with, I mean, I can’t tell a student to change their personalities. I can change their behavior if I think it’s destructive to them.

DEES: Would you ever recommend that they study with somebody else?

KOWALSKY: Well I never have, because until recently we only had me.

DEES: Or even suggest they go to another school.

KOWALSKY: Oh, absolutely, if somebody is clearly unhappy, and is not being productive for themselves, for the ensembles. I would have no hesitation in saying, “rationally speaking, perhaps it’s not the place for you. Maybe you should go somewhere else, you know, or take a year off, come back some other time.”

DEES: What are the most important things for your students to learn and how do you facilitate that?

KOWALSKY: Fundamentals of technique. Fundamental skill. They’ve got to know how to play the scales, and to play the instrument. They’ve got to develop a love of practicing, and I try to instill that in them.

DEES: How do you instill that in them?

KOWALSKY: By teaching them how to practice so that they feel rewarded every day that they practice. And that it’s not drudgery. If you practice technique properly then you feel that you’re better when you’ve finished the session than when you began. There’s always got to be something that you’re learning. Some new finger pattern, a new lick, a new run. And if there’s something that you can do at the end of the day that you couldn’t do before, then you feel good. “Wow, I did this!” It’s not going to happen every
day, but it better not be too long without feeling that, or else pretty soon you’re going to be discouraged.

They’ve got to learn the technique, they’ve got to learn how to practice. They’ve got to learn the literature, the etude literature, and the traditions of the clarinet studio. They’ve got to learn solo literature, the orchestral literature. When I first came here, I was appalled at the ignorance the students had about symphonic music. They knew nothing. They just couldn’t recognize anything, any Beethoven symphony, Brahms. They didn’t know what it was, they had no relation. The only reason we really play the clarinet is because we love the literature. We love the instrument, but it’s the literature, we want to play that music. You have to question why you’re playing it, if you don’t know what music was written for it. And the answer is they’re probably playing it because in high school band there was a social situation and they felt included and they were part of a group and they loved their director and they liked the uniform.

DEES: And they were kind of good at it.

KOWALSKY: Yeah. They were good at it.

DEES: Positive reinforcement from their teachers and parents.

KOWALSKY: Yeah, right, but now that you’re in college, it’s different, there’s got to be a reason in the literature itself.

DEES: To continue playing.

KOWALSKY: Yeah, so I made listening a required part of our studio classes every week. I would assign a symphony, a concerto, something every week, have them listen to it. Every four or five weeks I’d have a drop the needle test where they’d have to identify the piece and the movement.

DEES: How did that go over with your students?

KOWALSKY: It was fine. It went great. They will do what you want.

DEES: You did one piece a week.

KOWALSKY: I think so, something like that, yeah. It’s not profound, you don’t have to talk about the form or the key or even the history of it, just listen to it, be able to recognize it and say, “Oh, I know what that is, I’ve heard that before,” that’s all. Basically I was a self appointed teacher of comprehensive musicianship and all I wanted to do was teach them literature and theory and clarinet [laughs]. After a while I realized, this is a big school of music and we have other people, professionals who are doing that stuff, or should be.

Anyway I pretty much stopped doing that. It took a lot of my time and was a lot of effort. I’m still happy to talk about that to students and give them listening lists and inspire them. When I was in school at Eastman, I loved the music library and they’d have
record players set up. You could go back in the stacks yourself and pick out all the
records you wanted. I spent one to two hours there every day, listening to just about
every record in the library. I listened, and I’d get the score to the ones I could get the
score to, and just follow along and listen. It was great. I think that was my education.

DEES: People don’t do that any more. Do you find that your students still do
that?

KOWALSKY: Very few of them, very few. Times were different then. They’re
busier now. They’re busy, they have more to do. I never had half the stuff to do that these
kids do, and so I had time to do it. And I was motivated. And I had the opportunity, there
were thousands of records to listen to. At Eastman, I had one English class a semester,
one academic class, and one ensemble. And the ensembles didn’t meet for six hours a
week, well maybe the wind ensembles, well no I think it was three or four hours a week.

DEES: Hunsberger was there when you were there?

KOWALSKY: Yes

DEES: When did Fennell leave Eastman?

KOWALSKY: He left the year before I got there, he must have left in ’62, maybe
spring of ’63. But I entered the fall of ’63 so he was just newly gone. And Don
Hunsberger was, I’m not sure when he started, but he was fairly new on the faculty then.

DEES: You were talking about when you were in school you spent a long time in
the library listening to records. And students have many more demands on their time
today. Do you think that’s leaving a hole or void in their musical education, or
development as musicians?

KOWALSKY: Well, I don’t, the ones that are truly motivated, the best of them,
they’re going to seek it out. They’ll find ways to learn it. We have orchestral excerpt
classes, and they have to listen to those, and so they’re learning ten important excerpts a
semester.

DEES: And if they’re going to do it, they’re going to go out and find other things.

KOWALSKY: Right, the best of them will do it. I have graduate students who
come in, who are very sophisticated in what they know. They know a lot of literature,
have a lot of experience, been taught very well. Sure, it’s happening.

DEES: Do you think people are attending concerts as much as when you were
growing up?

KOWALSKY: Yeah, yeah more recitals. Nobody went to any recitals at Eastman.
DEES: And now they have to.

KOWALSKY: Yeah, they have a certain required number of recitals here, but at Eastman they didn’t go to any. The joke was, at Eastman there was this great hall, the main hall, and off that hall was the recital hall. So everybody was lounging around, there were benches.

DEES: There are more people sitting in the hall than in the recital [laughs].

KOWALSKY: Oh, yeah, [laughs] by far. In fact, we’d be sitting out there smoking, and someone would finish the recital, and they’d come out, and we’d say, “Hey, how’d it go [laughs]? How’d it go Jimmy?” But the ones we wanted to go to, we did. The thing is, there was a twelve noon recital and a one p.m. recital and a four p.m. recital and an eight p.m. recital.

DEES: There were recitals all the time

KOWALSKY: But there was one person who was always there, it was some guy who lived in town.

DEES: There was a woman at NU like that, she was at every single clarinet recital, opening candy wrappers, sitting in the back of the hall, and there was always a student who took her home.

KOWALSKY: There’s always one person like that, in every town.
**RICHARD MACDOWELL**

Richard MacDowell is Professor of Clarinet at the University of Texas at Austin. In addition to giving master classes, he has performed in chamber, orchestral and solo settings throughout the United States, in Canada, the Dominican Republic and Taiwan. Prior to teaching at UT, he taught at Interlochen Arts Academy. He holds degrees from New England Conservatory (BM), and Northwestern University (MM). His teachers include Leon Russianoff, Stanley Hasty, Rudolf Kolisch, Peter Hadcock, and Robert Marcellus.6

**Lesson Observation**

Richard MacDowell’s studio environment is relaxed, but the content of the lessons is very demanding and high caliber, an interesting juxtaposition. This lesson was observed on February 18, 2004; the player was a graduate student who had a recital in two and a half weeks. In this lesson Professor MacDowell stressed recital preparation: he focused on stage presence, finger legato, articulation, and phrasing. He frequently conducted as the student played and modeled by singing clarinet parts, on one occasion he played an example on the student’s clarinet. This student was clearly an advanced student. Many times Professor MacDowell would ask for something, such as lighter articulation, and the student was able to adjust her playing immediately.

The lesson started with the student playing Schumann’s *Romances*, she stood up after Professor MacDowell suggested she stand and reminded her that she would be standing for her recital. Posture was the first topic Professor MacDowell addressed in this lesson:

Fundamentally there’s something that still bothers me and that is that you really aren’t keeping a straight-up balanced posture, you’re off a little bit…and so you are putting slanted pressure on the reed with your bottom teeth. You have to keep that straight. And when I looked at you in the

---

Symphony [they had a recent concert] you were a little off too. We’ve worked on this.

The student responded that she had been working on it. Professor MacDowell continued by saying, “It’s a quality of nerves, really. When you get nervous you forget about it, and that’s just when you really need to be worried about it. Under pressure that’s an old habit that will keep coming back until you really put the kibosh on it.”

The next topic Professor MacDowell addressed involved performing and capturing the audience’s attention,

Now, in this piece there are certain notes where we rest and we try to take as long as possible, one of them is the first C [sang to demonstrate]. This is the first piece that you are going to play. You haven’t really established a mood yet and so it’s very important, [sang opening phrase to demonstrate emphasis on C] you’ve got to look for ways to stretch the rhythm. You’ve got to have a beautiful phrasing structure to organize the eighth notes around. Find notes you can hold on to and make events; that first C is an event [sang again to demonstrate phrasing]. Let’s try again.

Professor MacDowell sang and conducted as the student played. She was then able to play the opening to his satisfaction and they moved onto the main body of phrasing. He asked for color changes in the tone quality depending on phrasing and also asked for more emphasis of upper neighboring tones, effectively reminding the student of the theoretical placement of notes:

Yeah, that’s another cadence [sang to demonstrate] There’s a little bit of a comma in the music here [sang again]. Good, good. That phrase is built on two upper neighboring tones, [sang] but you did it just fine, let’s go on…You take a little bit of extra time and suddenly you have enough time to say what you want to say, with each of those two things, they don’t have to be joined in an awkward way.

Timing was an issue addressed frequently in this piece by Professor MacDowell:

OK, but your ritard got going so slow and just stayed there; I think you should ritard to the end [demonstrated by singing and snapping time with fingers]. Now, having said that, I think if you ritard too early, you’ll never get there. Because you are setting a precedent [sang] when you spend that much time on it then we are expecting [sang again, and ground to a painfully slow halt] so you really can’t get away with that.

And also approaching high notes by leap:
In every case when you have a large rising interval you really have to support the lower note a little bit more, that’s what I was going to say when you have the B-flat [sang] you really have to make the lower note as full and vibrant as you can, [sang again] so listen for that.

Professor MacDowell always let the student know when she achieved what he asked for by praising her with positive verbal feedback and continued to model by singing and occasionally gave verbal feedback for corrections. At this point in the lesson the soprano and pianist for Schubert’s *Shepherd on the Rock* entered the room. There was discussion about where the students should stand for the performance. Professor MacDowell told them where he usually stood for this piece, but also suggested alternatives. They reorganized their positions, tuned and then the pianist began playing the opening too fast. Professor MacDowell immediately responded, “OK this is andantino, so I think I have a more relaxed view of andantino [sang demonstrate] and the forte/piano is as much an indication of time as dynamics.”

The pianist played the opening again, this time more relaxed and with better phrasing. While the pianist was playing, Professor MacDowell started snapping his fingers to indicate a preferred time, then sang, and said, “Not so driven …yes, a little slower.” After the vocalist entered Professor MacDowell focused on rhythms. To the vocalist he said, “This dotted rhythm here [indicated in music] has to be very strict, it sounds exactly like triplets.” The ensemble played again and the dotted rhythm was better, but slipped back into a triplet feel. Professor MacDowell responded,

That’s not really exact [sang to demonstrate, exaggerated dotted rhythm]. If anything, err closer to the downbeat, because what you have to do is important. She [the pianist] is playing triplets. It’s a rhythmic distinction.

I thought that sounded much more succinct and beautiful, what you just did, because the long notes didn’t dominate the texture of the phrase. I think that works very well.

Professor MacDowell coached this ensemble by essentially becoming a member of the ensemble; he sang and conducted throughout, praising them when they understood. He spent most of the time coaching them on timing and phrasing; “Again, don’t be so enamored with the long notes, because it decreases your readiness to move.” As the ensemble played again and he said to the clarinetist as they continued playing, “OK, you
have to coordinate with the piano, we’ll work on that. More, more, more [sang as they played] a few more beats to go [laughed]! Then the clarinetist ran out of air and stopped.

He also wanted them to be more aware of their dynamics and the various role dynamics can play in chamber music. At one point he wanted the singer to be more aware of dynamics and phrasing, he said, “What’s your dynamic here? You’ve got a long way to go, if you start here, I can’t imagine, we’d have to leave [laughed].” At another point he instructed the clarinet, “No, it’s far away, shhh.” And he also commented on the interrelationship of dynamics and commented to the clarinetist, “You’ve got to imitate her [indicated fp] and definitely don’t bog down here, you want to keep moving, or else you’ll die and it didn’t happen that time, it was great, but just be warned it is a possibility.” Again he commented to the singer regarding dynamics and vocal quality, “Can the phonation not influence the volume? I’m hearing [sang with exaggerated swells] I don’t know what kind of airspeed you need to aspirate the vowels or consonants that you are using but try that again.”

As the students continued to play he commented on dynamics and phrasing,

Crescendo to the larger value. Beautiful [students continued to play].

OK, this is a beautiful juncture here where you can take time on the upbeat and you can go with her [sang to demonstrate] really place the downbeat. OK, that first time, there definitely wasn’t enough umph to it. The second time was fabulous.

The clarinetist then asked a question, “The same thing has been happening on that passage, where it just does not come out [note not speaking]. Could something be wrong with my instrument?” Professor MacDowell responded, “No, I think maybe you are jostling the low side key with your finger, [student played again] Yeah, there you go. I’m not sure we have time to go into the fast section today, let’s save that for next time.”

Before the next lesson started several students were in Professor MacDowell’s office getting help with reeds. Professor MacDowell does quite a bit of reed work with sand paper and knives and teaches a reed making class. This lesson was a sophomore music education major; she played seated and performed a Rose etude. Professor MacDowell was sitting in his office chair, relaxed, which created a relaxed environment for the student to play in.
In the beginning of the lesson Professor MacDowell focused on her embouchure. He taught this student embouchure by having her do exercises with her mouth and tongue without the clarinet. After playing the opening passage she squeaked and said, “Was that me?” Professor MacDowell laughed and said, “No one else is playing! Yeah, you are biting. You have to use your lower lip a little bit better, we’ve talked about that, you are putting too much pressure on the reed. You have to use faster air and more ‘shh shh shh’. Do that without the clarinet.” The student said “shh” to get a feel for her tongue position and then played. She immediately sounded better and was able to play with more control. Professor MacDowell let her play for awhile then stopped her and said, “OK, tell me that’s not fabulous—it is certainly better.” The student agreed that it was better and easier.

He went on to talk about her altissimo register,

With the altissimo register, what do you associate with the altissimo register? Fear, right? Fear and loathing; and that translates into tension. When you are alone and you are just practicing and you are doing scales and arpeggios and stuff, you’ve got to really try staying relaxed, and pretend the altissimo register is just another note on the clarinet, which it is, let the air do the work, don’t feel like your face has to do the work. Where do you play the clarinet from? All your head does is connect the air up to the reed. Don’t do more than you need to; keep your awareness [indicated abdomen]. The clarinet isn’t naturally unfriendly in the altissimo register, we make it unfriendly by getting tense about it.

At one point the student was getting discouraged about her playing, and stopped playing. Professor MacDowell responded, “[Student’s name] you get the most amazing sound, you get a great sound! It will get more consistent with time, keep working at it and be patient.” The student made some comments and then continued playing. Professor MacDowell later stopped her and said, “You know what happens when you cross the throat register? You tighten up slightly, and then you relax again as you go lower. Can you play that last phrase and concentrate on relaxation? [Student played again.] Did you hear it? Yeah, that sounds great, much better, what did you do?” The student responded that she just didn’t bite, she was aware this time exactly where she was tensing up. Professor MacDowell commented, “In a way it doesn’t matter what you did, just analyze it so you can do it again and key into that sound.”
In the next section they worked on rhythm and pulse. Professor MacDowell commented, “The metronome in your head is lopsided [laughed].” He then pulled out a metronome, set it to the correct tempo and had the student subdivide to correct the problem. There was another rhythm problem and he reminded her she was playing sixteenth notes and should be playing eighth notes.

You can’t play things without having a sense of pulse. Your sense of pulse has to be the skeleton, if the shape of the skeleton is wrong then you can’t even recognize what the body is supposed to look like. You’ve got to be much more concerned. You can get as good a sound as anybody in this studio if you can establish more mental control and keep a steady rhythm. If you can hear a phrase before you play it, including the proper rhythm and the proper phrasing, that’s what you have to do.

Later in the etude he asked the student about the key she was playing in. She wasn’t immediately sure, but realized it after she looked at her music and thought about it. Once she was thinking more broadly in terms of key, she made fewer note errors.

At the end of the lesson he asked the student if she wrote the phrasing in the part. She responded that she was doing what was on the page and “kind of doing my own thing.” Professor MacDowell replied,

Writing it down and doing your own thing are two different things. Doing your own thing every time you play it, you’ll get that many different versions. I really want you to figure out how to play this thing, according to your own musical instincts. Eliminate all the stuff written on the page, start fresh, that was written in by an editor. I really think if you play each phrase about twenty-five times you will come up with a great way to play it. But you didn’t do that. I want you to be able to march in here and tell me, and tell yourself “I’m an authority on this etude. I know this etude inside and out because I’ve played each phrase and I know exactly how I want it to sound.” And then when I tell you it’s wrong, because I’m always right [laughed] I want you to discuss it with me. Based on the fact that you had played it lots of times and you know how you like to play it. And then if you are wrong I can tell you why you are wrong, but I can also appreciate the fact that this is how you like to play it. I think you should find the way you like to play each phrase. This is about developing your musical intuition.

They ended the lesson by talking about what to practice for the next week, and he reminded her to continue to work on relaxation and phrasing.
DEES: Discuss your early musical or non-musical experiences and how they shaped your career.

MACDOWELL: I found my Dad’s metal clarinet in the attic when I was in fifth grade and I just started playing on it by ear. I was just attracted to it. But the earliest musical experience I can remember was in third grade. My third grade teacher was a singer and every once in a while she would sing something to the class, she had a beautiful voice and I was smitten with her. That was my first crush—my third grade teacher and that she was a singer. So I have always been attracted to a lyric approach to the instrument. That was reinforced in high school when I took lessons with Charlie Bay. He was teaching at Ithaca College when I was at Ithaca high school. He wouldn’t play in lessons, but he would always sing. I always tried to imitate singing. He was the reason I went to Eastman. I didn’t know anything about clarinet teachers out there when I was in high school, but I knew there was a pretty good music school up the street, ninety miles away. That’s why I went to Eastman, I didn’t apply anywhere else, so it’s good that I got in [laughs].

DEES: Was he your first private teacher?

MACDOWELL: Well, my first private teacher was in sixth grade. I took group lessons. He wasn’t what you would call a high powered clarinet teacher because he allowed me to play with the reed up for six months, so he wasn’t very observant.

DEES: [Laughs] So when did you finally turn your mouthpiece around?

MACDOWELL: When I noticed everybody else had their’s the wrong way, I realized maybe I was the one who had it the wrong way.

DEES: What was Charles Bay like as a teacher?

MACDOWELL: He had me play excellent literature that challenged me both musically and technically and I like his lyric approach to the clarinet. Also he had just finished studying at Eastman so there were a lot of Hasty things that he talked about. And the good thing, actually what inspired me just as much, or maybe more, was that I was the first clarinet in the Ithaca High School band and Frank Battisti was our band director. I never knew music as any kind of competition; it was just experimenting, playing new crazy music and stuff like that.

DEES: Who influenced you and how is this reflected in your teaching and playing?
MACDOWELL: Well, one person that really influenced me was Donald Sinta [saxophonist], he was also teaching at Ithaca College and he came down to play with the high school band several times a year. He was, and is a fabulous player. He got so many incredible colors on the saxophone and made his own reeds, he was just head and shoulders above anybody that I had seen or heard. And also once a year Fredrick Fennell would come down and conduct a concert. I enjoyed that. But, I never thought of myself as competitive, or tried to advance myself. I was never aggressive or ambitious and I think that is a weakness that I have in terms of what I do. But I had good people around me. Leone Buyse, formerly principal flute of the Boston Symphony, was there, there was a guy named Philip DeLibero, who sounded just like Don Sinta. And my best friend was Damian Bursill-Hall who is now co-principal flute in Pittsburgh.

DEES: This sounds like a different high school experience than most people have. When did you know you wanted to major in music?

MACDOWELL: Well, in those days, the late sixties, the idea of even having a career was not very popular. I was interested in a lot of things other than the clarinet and I eventually quit the clarinet.

DEES: Completely?

MACDOWELL: Yes but it was only for about half a year, and then the Army convinced me that going to music school was preferable to being killed in Vietnam.

DEES: What year was this?

MACDOWELL: That was in 1969. It was September and I was all set to go back to Eastman, and I just didn’t want to- so I went down to New York City and auditioned for Manhattan School of Music, I figured I’d do something different and it was exciting to be in NYC at that time.

DEES: So the big draw for that change was just to be in NYC? There wasn’t a particular person you wanted to study with?

MACDOWELL: No, I studied with Blayman, Herb Blayman, he wasn’t really a huge influence. It was quite difficult, actually. He would only teach in his living room in Tenafly, NJ. Every week I would have to take a bus. We would have to stand up for lessons in this huge living room, with this huge carpet. The pile would come up to my knees, so I would wade into the middle of the living room and try to play something. It took a lot of energy because it was deader than a doornail. I talked a lot in lessons just to avoid playing! I eventually left and went back to Ithaca and lived in a farm house on top of a mountain.

DEES: So what happened after you got out of your service? You were living in a house on the mountain? That sounds fabulous! Were you playing much back then?
MACDOWELL: Eventually, yes. After getting out of the draft, I got back into the clarinet, started practicing.

DEES: Why did you go back to practicing?

MACDOWELL: I decided I really wanted to play clarinet.

DEES: It kept coming back to you.

MACDOWELL: Yes; it was summer and I had a gig playing in the Nantucket Main Street Band. I enjoyed living on Nantucket—it was a fun place and the band was quite good. Everyone in it was from New England Conservatory, or Juilliard, or Eastman, and the parts weren’t easy. I liked New England so I auditioned for NEC and got in.

DEES: Who did you study with there?

MACDOWELL: First Charlie Russo, then Peter Hadcock.

DEES: How old was Peter Hadcock? Was he already in the Symphony then?

MACDOWELL: He was pretty young; yeah he was already in the Symphony. He was a very hard teacher then, with a very dry sense of humor. The most effusive comment that I ever heard him say about my playing was “hmm, that’s about how it should sound.” Later in life he got more into teaching, I like the workbook very much and use it in my teaching.

DEES: That’s one of the things I realized a while ago; that just because you are a good player doesn’t mean you are a good teacher, or that you enjoy teaching. Did he play very much in lessons?

MACDOWELL: No, hardly ever. The way the conservatory worked was that we would meet in the lobby and find a practice room to have the lesson in. He never had an office. It wasn’t a good set up. But I enjoyed the playing a lot. There were some good people; there were fabulous flute players there. That was nice and I enjoyed the orchestra. I played a lot with Chris O’Riley, who does the “From the Top” radio show now on NPR. And I studied chamber music with Rudolf Kolisch.

DEES: What was he like?

MACDOWELL: Kolisch was an amazing teacher. He didn’t allow music into the coaching, so everything had to be memorized first of all. His musical insights were very profound and came from a bygone era. He had a thorough knowledge of a piece’s architecture and expressive possibilities. He would say “You don’t really know a piece until after the first hundred performances.”
DEES: How did you learn to both teach and play?

MACDOWELL: I was a pretty bad teacher at first. My best influences were, of course, Stanley Hasty and Robert Marcellus, both magnificent teachers. Marcellus was the more intrusive teacher; he went right into your mouth and tinkered around until everything was just right.

DEES: How did he do that with you?

MACDOWELL: Like he did with everybody. I was playing on a Johnston mouthpiece. I had taken lots of lessons with Stanley Hasty, years before I came to Marcellus and he was an enormous influence too. Most of his musical ideas I have great respect for and try to pass on to my students. Marcellus only hinted at the musical stuff and certainly when he played it was obvious, but he thought of his teaching as a continuation of the Bonade school—forming a certain sound, respecting past masters of the instrument, carrying on George Szell’s musical ideas of orchestral playing, very traditional stuff, really. I think he did because he noticed everybody else was in this bite and blow stuff. The whole tradition of making a really three dimensional sound, something that was really very special was dying away.

DEES: Who did Hasty study with?

MACDOWELL: Hasty’s main teachers were Ralph McLane and Rufus Arey. Hasty did take a couple of lessons at Juilliard with Bonade, but he didn’t like him. There was probably a clash of strong personalities. McLane was a great teacher and a magnificent player. You can hear from some of his recordings what an incredible sound he had.

DEES: A lot of the “teu” syllable and specific instructions like that are from Bonade and then Marcellus?

MACDOWELL: All from Bonade and Marcellus.

DEES: You teach that way too, don’t you?

MACDOWELL: Yeah, I think that is what gives the most spectacular results too. The ultimate experience when I was studying with Marcellus, the biggest breakthrough I ever had on clarinet was with Marcellus, where I really felt like I had really touched on the certainty that that was how to play the clarinet correctly. I think I was playing one of the Cavallini Caprices and I just wound up completely relaxing my eyes and forehead, just like this [demonstrates] and all the tension drained from my face and this glorious sound came out. It was just like I was fitting my body around the clarinet without changing it at all and the clarinet just knew how to play, I just got out of the way. I stopped dictating to the clarinet and allowed the clarinet. When you do that just the right way and you have that effortless experience, everything, intonation, everything suddenly lines up. I try in my teaching to get people up to that threshold where they are actually
discovering some kind of breakthrough themselves. That’s what will give them a North Star or guiding light so they can be independent and follow it themselves. They don’t need to always be led around.

DEES: I remember a couple of lessons like that with you, and I still go back to that, even now, to lessons in high school.

MACDOWELL: And I always practice the Cavallini Thirty-six Caprices and the Jeanjean Sixteen Etudes. That is what I relate to, those experiences. That is a way of going back to it.

DEES: It’s the foundation for you.

MACDOWELL: Yes.

DEES: When did you start working on those etudes?

MACDOWELL: At Northwestern with Marcellus.

DEES: Why did you want to go work with Marcellus? What did you know about him?

MACDOWELL: I knew about Marcellus by then, I had some students at Ithaca College who went to study with him.

DEES: Had you heard him play much at that time?

MACDOWELL: Yeah, sure, I wasn’t a total fan, yet. I thought his Mozart Concerto was in its way perfect, but a little boring. And I still feel like that, that’s not him at his best and the microphone was a little close to the clarinet so you really don’t get a sense of how beautiful his tone really was.

DEES: Why did you go study with him?

MACDOWELL: I knew him as a major pedagogical figure, certainly everybody knew about him. A lot of Hasty’s students had gone to study with him; I sent a tape in of my playing with my application to study at Northwestern. It was late, of course, so I sent it overnight express. It arrived at Regenstein Hall at the same moment Marcellus arrived with a list of students he was accepting that year. He [Marcellus] later said “Richard, it was just like a Hollywood movie [laughs]. I’ll give this guy five minutes.” So he took it back to his office and heard it, liked it, and crossed the bottom name off the list and put me on there.

DEES: Isn’t it weird the little things that happen in our lives that change everything.
MACDOWELL: I often wonder what would have happened if I had to leave Ithaca college, that was the base of my income. I was doing a lot of playing then, that’s what I miss most about having a major teaching job. But, the rest is history, I went to Northwestern. I was playing a Johnston with tons of vibrato and my fingers where smashing against the clarinet and I was biting like crazy, my bottom teeth were loose all the time and I had a huge sore on my bottom lip all the time. It was just amazing, within six weeks, of not particularly hard practicing, I solved all of those problems, not by doing anything, just by doing less. Planning out the minimum effort of all my muscles that was required to do what I needed to do. That’s where I developed my finger technique, which is one of my better features. It just happened naturally, it’s not something I sweated over hour after hour. I guess I kind of assimilated it from watching him [Marcellus] and listening to him. He had a certain dignity that you didn’t want to disturb. Hasty was the same way.

The greatest, sort of iconic teachers that we venerate owe a lot of their success to the aura that they have around them. Hasty, because he just really wanted you to play well. He would get angry if you didn’t because he just had such high hopes in your ability to play something well, with musical understanding and expression: something he would be happy with it. You could just feel that, you could sense that he would be really frustrated if you couldn’t do what he wanted you to do. Marcellus accomplished the same thing by his sense of decorum. If you did anything a little crudely, he would say [imitating Marcellus in a soft spoken, slow voice] “My goodness, Richard, what sort of reed do you have on?” He would feel sorry for you that you had to put up with such a poor quality sound, that you were having any trouble. That’s not particularly good pedagogical knowledge, it was just that he was used to the highest quality. You sensed it and you wanted to get up there, wherever it was, because that’s where all the music was being made and you just wanted to be there.

DEES: Did he ever talk to you specifically about the tension, or was it from being at NU, and being around his other students, that it evolved naturally?

MACDOWELL: Sure he talked about finger tension, position, all of it. My first lesson with him consisted of going from top-of-the-staff “g” to “f” in half notes, over and over and over. I really started hearing intervals after the first half hour, and it was all about finger speed and tension. He also talked a great deal about embouchure stability: keeping the minimum amount of tooth pressure on the reed and keeping a stable, secure embouchure holding the reed and mouthpiece in place. I really don’t think Marcellus needed to think too much about that himself –he had such an overbite, all he had to do was put the clarinet in and blow. Biting wasn’t an issue. But it certainly is for people with less pronounced overbites. You really have to figure out a way of not putting pressure on the reed, and couple that up with the oral cavity and your air.

DEES: As far as your own teaching, and how you teach now, how has your teaching changed over the years?

MACDOWELL: I try to be a little more organized and encouraging than I was before. Because I don’t think that was my real strong point at Interlochen. You can’t just
duplicate your lessons with Marcellus and Hasty because that happens on a different level. You have to figure out the level of the student. With younger students I keep mentioning certain ideas, and eventually it will click.

DEES: Where do you get your concept of playing? I know you listen to a lot of music, all the time.

MACDOWELL: I think I start with the sound first, that’s what I notice when people play, that’s the first thing I notice. That’s what I am really good at fixing right away.

DEES: As far as being more encouraging, can you think of specific your teaching has changed?

MACDOWELL: Well, you learn not to give up on students. The student you heard last night went to Interlochen, was somewhere in the middle to lower part of the pack, went to Michigan, was somewhere in the lower part of the pack. She came here, and it’s really been a success story, because she didn’t give up, she kept at it. Sometimes students are like trying to start a fire with wet matches, you just have to keep at it and a lot of times if you talk to them as if they were above where they are now, and they tend to grow into that.

DEES: Rise to the occasion.

MACDOWELL: That makes it interesting. More patience and don’t make snap judgments. Marcellus would never talk down to students in those summer master classes no matter how bad they were. And they left the master classes playing better no matter how bad they were.

DEES: How do you think he did that?

MACDOWELL: Even just the sound of his voice, there was a certain intonation and tonal structure that came through in his clarinet playing too and I think you can communicate that sort of extra-verbally just by how you are talking and the patience and delicacy you use to describe tone, it actually forces you to become more sensitive to tone quality just by the structure of the language.

DEES: And the importance of it.

MACDOWELL: It opens up perceptions that aren’t normally available otherwise.

DEES: I’ve never thought about it in relation to tone quality. But music does reflect the accent of language. I never thought of it as much for tone and how you teach and get your point across.

MACDOWELL: It’s a linguistic sort of pedagogy without being direct.
DEES: How do you describe the atmosphere in your studio and what do you do to create it?

MACDOWELL: I like them to be supportive and relaxed with each other and with me. I depend on feedback from them to know what’s really getting through and what isn’t.

DEES: I was noticing when I was observing the Schubert coaching, the students are very relaxed, and they laugh every now and then when it’s appropriate, but they come back to the music. It’s a very open and engaging studio.

MACDOWELL: I want us to treat each other as colleagues in a way. I have more experience and more knowledge about the subject matter, but I think that by treating them like colleagues they can become their own master easier. They can realize that it’s their responsibility to learn to play the clarinet, to do scales and Vade-Mecum [Jeanjean] and stuff like that. I can’t lead them around by the hand for the rest of their life; it’s time to make the transition into an adult that is responsible for their own future.

DEES: You are on the journey together; you are not spoon feeding them.

MACDOWELL: I don’t want them to think they are the kids and we are the big grown ups.

DEES: Do you think you started off that way?

MACDOWELL: I don’t know, you could probably tell me more than me.

DEES: I guess at Interlochen you were always trying to get us to call you Richard, and I could never do it [laughs]. Aside from the name calling [laughs harder] it was always, “Here’s what you need to do, here’s how to do it, go make it happen.”

MACDOWELL: Yeah, so maybe that’s more of an older brother kind of thing.

DEES: That’s one thing; I’ve talked to my music friends about the shift in the level of formality in lessons. When I went for a lesson with Mr. Marcellus it was a pretty formal atmosphere, maybe it’s a generational thing.

MACDOWELL: He was always like that.

DEES: This will lead in well to the next question. What is the most important thing for your students to learn, and how do you facilitate that?

MACDOWELL: I want them to leave here with a standard that is so high, that when they sit down to practice in the future, they will always have things to inspire them and make them get better. I try to instill in them those kinds of qualities, not in a
discouraging way, just to know Bonade, Marcellus, McLane. All these people are just amazing. We are all indebted to them for our standards, they are always there. We should never forget that they are there and we can get closer to them.

DEES: Do you do “drop the needle” tests with your students? How do you introduce your students to their playing?

MACDOWELL: When we have excerpts I’ll do that, or sometime I’ll do a whole studio class on just listening.

DEES: You had mentioned before the idea of them being able to teach themselves. How do you motivate your students?

MACDOWELL: I think it is important to have a good atmosphere among the studio, free of conflict and free of unhealthy competition. The students can come to the orchestra concert and hear another student play fabulously, and to realize they are part of the studio. And I think it’s important for me to play too. It’s good for them to know that I can play and to know that I know what I am talking about. And I hope they would be motivated by a desire to be the best clarinet player that they can. I know a lot of times my education students are better than they’ll ever have to be, so they don’t have a reason to get better than that, except that I want them to be. Hopefully they get excited enough by their own potential that they will want to get better too.

DEES: Having high standards.

MACDOWELL: And that would certainly be good for their students too.

DEES: Anything else you would care to add?

MACDOWELL: I think music is one of the best things you can do in a time like this. You know, money and greed and power rule America. And from that point of view nothing could be more irrelevant than learning clarinet, but I think it is really important to be concerned with expressing your self emotionally. I think practice is sort of like meditating, I think it is meditating, in a way. It’s a great way to spend your life to make people more aware of the spiritual, emotional side of things. I think it is sorely needed. If you are going to do anything with your life, music is a pretty good thing.

After we finished the interview, Professor MacDowell continued to talk more about student motivation: “One of the best ways to motivate a student is to have them play in a lesson with a really great sound, or phrasing, for them to get a glimpse of greatness, so they realize what it’s like. Then they won’t say, well that will never happen to me [when they hear a great player]. You show them that can be them.”
Fred Ormand is Professor of Clarinet at the University of Michigan. He has performed with the Detroit and Chicago Symphonies, and is a frequent performer of chamber music. In addition to teaching at the University of Michigan, he also taught at Florida State University and the Interlochen Arts Academy where he founded the Interlochen Arts Quintet. He has performed as soloist with orchestras in the United States and Europe and given master classes in England, Denmark and Sweden. He has recorded the clarinet music of Amilcare Ponchielli and published a manual on clarinet reed making, *The Single Reed Adjustment Manual.*

**Lesson Observation**

On March 2, 2005 I observed an undergraduate lesson. Professor Ormand sat next to the student, had a calm demeanor and spoke in a gentle voice. This helped to create a relaxing lesson environment. The student began by playing Baermann scales then scale exercises, and then a Cavallini etude. Professor Ormand focused on the student’s sound, “Stop and reset your embouchure so you aren’t gripping so much.” Then he commented on how the student’s articulation affected his sound, “OK, come back and let’s go again from here *indicated in music* and I want you to put one long slur over that section. I want you to really listen to your sound in that slur.” The student slurred. “Now, put the articulation on that slur, and keep that same sound.” He later said, “Again, listen to your sound, it tends to get away from you as it gets louder, really listen, focus it in.” After the student finished the etude Professor Ormand said, “OK, now, let’s go back. Slur it, but I want you to make it a good healthy forte this time. As you are doing that, really think about these muscles *indicated his embouchure with his hand* staying right there. Work at how this [embouchure] feels in a forte.”

---

7The University of Michigan, “Fred Ormand,”
http://www.musicacademy.org/FacultyArtists/FacultyBios/ormand.html.
Once the student improved his sound at the forte level, Professor Ormand then worked on consistency of sound while playing arpeggios. He asked the student, “In those measures [the student just played] which notes are jumping out? [The student was unsure.] Play it again and listen right here.” The student played again. Professor Ormand asked, “Which is longer than the rest?” The student answered correctly this time and Professor Ormand continued, “This is where you fine tune it. You have to use a tiny bit less air on that B to make it sound even.” The student played again, more evenly. Professor Ormand then had him add the articulation in. He finished the etude, Professor Ormand then assigned a new one for the following week and corrected articulations in the student’s music by writing in his part. He suggested setting the tempo according to the most difficult part, then sang parts of the etude while conducting, which gave the student an idea of phrasing. They then moved on to the Schumann *Fantasy Pieces*.

As the student played the first movement, Professor Ormand stopped him at the end of phrases to work on the phrases. He conducted the student almost the entire time the student played. Professor Ormand sang a rubato as the student was playing, “It’s better…the finger motion seems to be reasonably good and it doesn’t seem like you are really slamming the keys, think about the air a little bit more. You are obviously hearing the phrase nicely now, pretend that you are a singer.” The student played more with the timing of the phrase. “This time go from that D to the A-flat without thinking up for it. Really keep the air between the two. I know he [Schumann] has that little funny crescendo/diminuendo mark on there, think of that more as an expressive marking rather than an up and down [dynamically] on that.” Professor Ormand then played the phrase for the student to hear what he meant. As the student continued to play Professor Ormand stopped him at the ends of phrases and played small parts of the phrase for the student to hear. He then had the student play small portions of the phrases, repeatedly, to work on legato fingers and phrasing.

Professor Ormand said, “What I am hearing, it’s almost a general pattern, is that you know where you are going. But when we get to the peak we do more on the peak than we do on the notes coming up to it. Lead to the A-flat so that it feels natural when you arrive there. Make it feel natural.” Professor Ormand went on to say things such as, “Moving forward…getting more excited…now prepare,” as the student played. Next he
said, “It is a little like this [indicated stair steps with his hand]. Can you make it more of a line as you get louder?” He also sang the accompaniment part and occasionally counted rests as the student played.

In the second movement Professor Ormand had this student play the opening without the leaps so they will understand the melodic line. Professor Ormand said, “Schumann added the leaps just for excitement, that’s [without the leaps] the true melody which comes back later.” Later in the movement, Professor Ormand recommended this voicing, “Dah-eee” when approaching a high C by leap. This particular student used a “Dah-ahh” syllable and the C was popping out. He was able to make a smoother connection with the “Dah-eee” syllable. Professor Ormand made suggestions for timing and legato fingers as the student played, and continued to conduct and sing. He suggested ideas such as, “legato, legato…take your time.”

They moved on to the last movement and Professor Ormand prefaced the opening with, “With real fire now!” The student began playing the last movement, Professor Ormand stopped him about half way through and suggested, “Make a real change in character as you go back and forth between those two styles.” Professor Ormand then played the part and exaggerated the styles. As the student continued playing Professor Ormand conducted, and sang frequently.

The second lesson I observed was on March 4, 2004, a graduate student preparing for the Buffalo Philharmonic audition. He needed a new cork for his mouthpiece. Professor Ormand suggested using plumber’s tape instead of dental floss until he has time to get it fixed properly. The student began the lesson with the Debussy *Premiere Rhapsody* which was required for his orchestra audition. Before the student began playing Professor Ormand asked him, “OK, what happens in the first measure.” The student sang the opening and Professor Ormand said, “Yes, it’s that third octave and the triplets that you have to get your tempo from.” Professor Ormand then sang the accompaniment and counted as the student played.

Professor Ormand also commented on knowing who was playing with the clarinet in the accompaniment. He stopped the student and said,

OK, good. Just a couple of little things now. The measure before [rehearsal number] one, the piano has [sang] triplets in the right hand and off-beat bass notes in the left hand. Now, when you come in at one you
want to be locked in to those off-beat bass notes. This you did pretty well, when you got to the second line I wasn’t quite as convinced by your switches between two’s and three’s as I might have been. When you get into the triplet [sang] if we are playing this as a solo piece, you have a little bit of flexibility with the pianist on that. For an orchestra audition like this, I think I would be just a little bit more accurate on the rhythm, really lock in and be very convincing. You can still be expressive and still do that.

Later Professor Ormand said, “I think you will get better trills [at En retenant peu à peu jusqu’au] if you just space those slightly [sang]. That way you get a good clean start to every one of them. And to me those are just like colors.” The student continued to play and Professor Ormand sang the accompaniment. “Can that be a little more articulate [sang]?” The student played. “At this section [rehearsal five] what has the melody? [The student didn’t know.] The piano has the melody, it’s a chordal type accompaniment. You are the obbligato over all of this. What you have to do to be very effective is much more dynamic contrast [sang]. Give much more shape to those.” The student played again, and as he played Professor Ormand conducted and said things like, “Crescendo…BIG…a little slower…decrescendo.” He then stopped the student and said, You need to work at that to get it a little more convincing out in the hall. Play it for some of the other clarinet players and see if they are getting the dynamic contrasts. This is a funny piece in that regard. You are really trying to create an atmosphere. You are really trying to show a beautiful sound. A lot of it is written in this soft range so when you have an opportunity to make contrast you have to do it. Originally when Debussy wrote this thing it was originally big high leaps [sang]. Guy Dangain, the French clarinet player, has actually performed that version. It doesn’t make any sense but he does it. He [Debussy] simplified it once he went to the first printing of it. Just work on that, trying to get the dynamic contrast across more. Let’s continue with the triplets.

The next topic Professor Ormand addressed was trill fingerings and intonation.

Does your one-and-one work [A-sharp fingering, twelve measures before six]? Try trilling that with the one and one. The fingering you are using is out of tune. The only reason I go for that one is just the intonation. The other fingering [standard] you are trilling A-sharp to B and it makes the B really sharp [when right index finger is left down on a-sharp key] It’s more than a half step. For an audition like this, little things like that are important.
Professor Ormand later commented on what to do in an audition: “Now let’s say you are in the audition and your pianist doesn’t set the tempo that you want there [Scherzando before seven]. Rather than being real obvious about it, come in at their tempo, but move it forward [or slow it down] gradually.” As the student continued on through the piece, he had some technical difficulties at rehearsal number seven and stopped playing. Professor Ormand replied, “Discretion is the better part of valor here. I would take it a hair slower so you can really control those.” The student commented that he doesn’t normally have trouble in this section. Professor Ormand responded,

But look, you are hitting it cold, this is a typical sort of thing that can happen in an audition. Sure, you are going to look over these things. But, you are through to the finals and you have been playing all day, you are a little worn out, a little tired. And those are the times when it rises up and bites you! I can tell you from experience! So when you take an audition, take it a hair slower than you are used to.

Professor Ormand also recommended to practice the sixteenth note passage after seven using the articulation as it is written in the music to keep from rushing. “It [the tongue] will hold you back in the heat of battle.”

The student continued to play while Professor Ormand sang, conducted and made occasional comments about dynamics, and breathing. In the rest at rehearsal number twelve Professor Ormand said, “This needs to be more ‘paganistic’ here. To me this always looks forward to what Stravinsky would do in the *Rite of Spring* a few years later. The piano is all off beats, similar to the Stravinsky.” Getting into the *Plus animé* (before eleven) Professor Ormand suggested,

If you figure this out mathematically, this [the measure before the *Plus animé*] is basically two-thirds the tempo you want to go here [*Plus animé*]. Marcellus used this as a means of setting that tempo up. So that you play the sextuplets and switch over, take those last two groups of sextuplets and switch them over to [groups of] fours. And you are in the new tempo. Martin Katz was crazy about that, it makes it so much easier for the pianist.

At the *Un peu retenu* (twelve) Professor Ormand asked the student to be more dramatic, “Add a certain heaviness to them [the last three quarter notes].” As for the piece as a whole in an audition situation Professor Ormand added,
I would really look at the dynamics things in there and look at the
cleanliness of things in there. You want it to be immaculate in that regard.
Good, real good. Do you know it from memory? Practice it from
memory. And, not that you are going to do it from memory in the
audition, I wouldn’t risk it in an audition, but I would have it so well
memorized that you really know it in your head what you are going to
sound like. So as you are practicing it you are listening to it as a member
of the audience would listen. Good!

Interview

Ann Arbor, Michigan
March 2, 2004

DEES: Discuss your early musical or non-musical experiences and how they have
shaped your career.

ORMAND: The first person I really attribute much of what I do, and any success
I’ve had, is to my high school clarinet teacher, Robert Davidson. I grew up in Junior
High and High School in the small West Texas town of Plainview. He had studied with
the principal clarinet in the Chicago Symphony back in the 1920’s, Joseph Schreurs, and
was a really fine clarinetist. Schreurs had wanted him to go into the Chicago training
orchestra. He was making money playing the theaters in Chicago. His mother had taught
him to read all the clefs when he was studying piano and he transposed anything by clef.
In the theater pit he was just a goldmine. A singer would come in one day and need to
take something down a minor third; it was nothing to him. Then the theaters dried up in
Chicago and he got a music education degree, and came back to Texas to teach. He had
grown up in Texas. He had outstanding, winning high school bands for twenty-five
consecutive years, taking the top prize every year. He was a very fine clarinetist and had
a beautiful sound. Although he didn’t practice a lot, he could just always pick it up and
play. I give him a lot of the credit.

From there I went to the University of Michigan and studied with Alberto Luconi.
He came to this country with Toscanini on an orchestra tour, jumped ship and stayed
here. He played in the Detroit Symphony briefly and then ended up teaching at the
University of Michigan. I didn’t really realize how valuable Luconi’s training was at the
time. It more or less suited the demands of the wind program here at that time, which
changed over the years. We did a lot of solo material, not as many etudes as I like to do
with my students today, but a lot of solo material. Again, he was a very fine musician.

I went from there to Michigan State, studied with Keith Stein, got my master’s
degree, then after that I was out teaching. I got a Fulbright Scholarship to go to London.
A very influential person to me was Bernard Walton; he was really amazing for an
English player. He had thought through everything he did on the clarinet. Generally, you
don’t find a natural talent doing that. He told me a story that during the Second World
War, he was put into a band in England, they did that to save the musicians. He told
stories like seeing Dennis Brain, his uncle, and his father, all three marching down the
street playing French horn.
DEES: That’s quite a band!

ORMAND: Bernard said when he came out of the band he couldn’t play anything softer than mezzo forte.

DEES: I can relate to that.

ORMAND: Yeah [laughs]! He said that as he was getting back into work in London, he sat down and figured out what he had to do to play the clarinet. He verbalized it very, very well. He started from the breathing, through the articulation, the hands, and how you held the instrument, every aspect of playing that you could think of. He could do it very concisely. He always used to joke and say, “They write all these books about how to play the instrument; I think maybe I could write a pamphlet.” He was just very good that way. Everything kept relating back. One of the biggest influences he gave me was, “Don’t look for quick fixes, start the long-range solution.”

I went and played for him when he was in this country a year later. I was struggling a little bit, still with some things. He said, “We planted the seeds, I’m seeing this, and this, and this has grown, and this is improving, give yourself a little more time.” It was about two years before I really understood how everything worked that he had started. I realized then, that the longer you take to fix something, and really fix it right, the better it’s going to be.

Along with clarinet lessons with Walton, I had Alexander Technique lessons in London from Walter Carrington. He was an original student of Mathias Alexander, is now in his eighties, and still considered the leading Alexander teacher in the world. I got these lessons for next to nothing, and didn’t realize at the time that I was studying with someone who was going to be a legend. That was a biggie experience.

Then, when I returned here and was working in the United States, I went and studied with Robert Marcellus on an out-of-town basis. He really put the pieces together in a lot of things. We had basically only one thing to really fix in my playing as far as he was concerned, that was the articulation. We just worked on the staccato, and the cleanliness of the staccato, and we did literature. He was always a really good mentor to me after that. I know he recommended me highly for this position [University of Michigan]. He really helped me in Chicago when I was teaching at Northwestern University that year. They were looking at him to come there; he was really responsible for me playing in the Symphony.

DEES: That was while he was still in Cleveland?

ORMAND: Right, we would go to his house; I have many fond memories. One day they were having an eclipse. Marian was trying to get the paper with the hole to work and couldn’t quite manage it. After my lesson, we went out in the garden and we all juggled around until I got the thing lined up so we could see the eclipse. I visited with him when he was on tour conducting the Interlochen [Arts Academy] orchestra; he still had sight in one eye at that point. We just had a marvelous dinner and evening afterwards, that was very fun, many pleasant memories.
DEES: When you were teaching at Interlochen was he conducting the orchestra?

ORMAND: No, I was the one who recommended him for that position as I was leaving. I can’t say that I had that much influence, but I put his name in the hopper. After I left, they brought him up there. I would have loved it, had he been there. Frank [Kowalsky] had the benefit of that, and got to pick his brain about a lot of things. Real enigmatic person. I remember one of my students when I was teaching at Michigan State. She had studied with him at NU, and went back and took a lesson with him. She said that she played Beethoven Eight for him, and afterwards he said “Kathy that’s just truly amazing,” and half way home she thought, what did he mean by that [laughs]?  

DEES: Did he mean it was good, or bad [laughs]?

ORMAND: Yeah, it’s certainly amazing that you are doing that [laughs]! He could drop those phrases on you that would absolutely keep you thinking for days. “[Marcellus’ tone of voice] Well, that was really a stentorian tempo.” Yeah, some other funny ones too.

DEES: This brings me to my next question. Who influenced you, and how is this reflected in your teaching and playing?

ORMAND: I remember working with Jay Light, who taught oboe out at Drake University in Des Moines; he is now retired. He had gone through Curtis, and was a Curtis trained oboe player. He was a great influence on me. We always were pushing each other about pitch. We also had a Messiaen Quartet group that we [Interlochen Arts Academy Faculty] toured with. We organized the Messiaen Quartet because there was no resident woodwind quintet, as they no longer hired a resident oboist or bassoonist. We did a performance of Messiaen on the campus and then sat down and said, OK, how about if we go and play for expenses. We made a little sample CD, one of those Time/Life book type things that you put on a record player. We wrote every place we could find in the state of Michigan that first year and ended up with about ten concerts. Little by little the group caught on, then we split up and left, which was too bad, because it was a good group. We played in the Museum of Modern Art in NYC, and we played in DC, got nice reviews and so forth. It was a really special musical experience, performing that work for different audiences and on the road. It is still a very big work for me; I love it. Those were really good colleagues, Fred Miller, the cellist, Brian Hanly, violin, and Gary Kirkpatrick, a really special pianist. Fred and I still stay in touch.

Going to the Marcel Moyse seminars in Vermont; that had a big influence on me. I think partly through the musicians that I met there, and also the fact that he opened my eyes to romantic music, and what it was really like. Moyse played the first performance of the Stravinsky Octet. Literally, he could transport you back into that century, just the way he described things. Those were really good experiences. Playing in the Grand Teton music festival I met Lauren Kitt, principal clarinet in the National Symphony, sitting next to him was great.
The year that I taught at NU and played in the Chicago Symphony Orchestra was a year not to be topped. Hearing those great musicians all around me was just a great experience. Sitting next to Clark Brody and seeing the things that he did was just eye opening. (I have never heard any one produce a purer legato in Tchaikovsky’s Sixth Symphony.) I was sitting right there, and I didn’t hear any pop, just beautiful connection with the fingers. And, hearing Bud Herseth sitting there behind me, laying it down time after time after time.

DEES: Having had those sounds in your ears and being surrounded by those great musicians, is that a touchstone for you?

ORMAND: Yes, but it was a long time ago. I still hark back to things that I learned that year. When I was just starting to play with the CSO I ran into a person that I graduated with on the street. He asked, “Oh, aren’t you terribly nervous?” And I thought about it for a second, and I said, “No, you know, there is so much right going on all around you that it is a lot easier to play.” I remember that part more than anything else. I remember doing the big E-flat solos in Til [Eulenspiegel], and having Wally Kujala turn around after the fourth one of those and say, “Well, you batted a thousand [laughs]!” That was a real confidence builder, and playing Rite of Spring with Solti, playing the E-flat parts in that great work was a terrific experience.

The next year I played extra with Cleveland, when David Shifrin, who had studied with me in high school, was principal clarinet there. I went over and played second clarinet for him on a couple of concerts. It was interesting, the difference between the two wind sections. They were both good, but they had little differences. That was interesting to observe. They were really different personalities. You can imagine that if you went to Philadelphia or Boston, there would be little idiosyncrasies as well.

There were two people on the faculty here that I have to say were huge influences on me, well three actually. The first is Martin Katz [pianist]. I got to do a number of recitals with him. We’ve done two clarinet and voice recordings, where he played piano, and my wife is the soprano. Martin was a huge influence because of all his work with singers over the years, the great singers. You go back and hear the recordings he did with Marilyn Horne, that’s one of the great voices of this last century, that’s as good as it gets.

The first recital I ever did with him, he was on leave, but coming in to do some master classes. We would rehearse whenever he got here and could find a few hours. On the first recital we played Beethoven’s Trio, [Op. 11], Poulenc’s Sonata, Berg’s Four Pieces [Op. 5] and the Max Bruch Trios with viola, [Op. 83] we did five of those. I came to the first rehearsal a little fearful, but immediately I realized it was going to be the best musical experience to work with him, and it always has been. He’s just a real inspiration. There’s nobody that out-works him, the simple things like off beats that we had in the Nicolai recording, and his after beats are just perfection itself. A simple little thing like that, and he takes such care.

Another one was John Mohler, who was the clarinet teacher here for many years; he was a great colleague in terms of teaching me how to deal with academia. That is important; I wasn’t always the best at that.

For many years, right next door, I had Armando Ghitalla, former principal trumpet of the Boston Symphony. He was an absolute dear friend. I would go in and play things
for him, and he would listen with non-clarinet player ears. There are others such as Jim Croft who was a great friend at FSU, and Bill Winstead who was a wonderful colleague. He was absolutely a great colleague, he would be rehearsing something like the Mendelssohn Concertpiece with bassoon, doing a run at a pretty fast tempo, and Bill would stop me and say, “I think that A-natural is a little bit sharp, the A is just a little high.” That was an ear!

And some of the conductors, Solti, Giulini, a young Leonard Slatkin and Claudio Abbado when he was young, they were just phenomenal. Abbado came with the great Italian pianist Pollini, and the program was the Brahms Piano Concerto No. 2, the Brahms Third Symphony. We had rehearsals Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and then the concert Thursday night. The first day of rehearsal, he spent the entire rehearsal on Brahms Third. You can imagine the old codgers, “We’ve played this Symphony our whole lives, we know this Symphony, and I guess we’ll spend the whole day tomorrow on the Piano Concerto.” The third day dress rehearsal we pretty much ran through both pieces, straight through, “Thank you gentleman, see you tonight.” [Abbado] When we finished the third concert in that series, and I’ve heard others talking about this thing before, everyone was just milling around downstairs saying, “We haven’t sounded that good in years.”

DEES: Why was it different?

ORMAND: He was so clear, so demanding about what he wanted, there was no time wasted, it was, “Gentlemen, thank you, I want this [gestures]. No, could we have this?” It was very clear.

Marcellus had told me, when I called him and told him we were playing with Abbado, he said, “He will be very low key in rehearsal, but watch out when it comes to the concert.” He did all of his rehearsing very precise, but when it came to the concert he really turned it loose. It was exciting to play for him.

His nephew, Roberto Abbado, comes to the Music Academy [of the West] now. Roberto is very much the same way, he’s very patient with the students, but he warns them at the dress rehearsal, “Keep your eyes up here tonight.” A couple of times they’ve needed extra clarinet playing, I had to go in and play extra with the orchestra. He was very appreciative, and sure enough, on the podium that night, it was not the same conductor. He was flamboyant, and really pushed the orchestra to its limit. That’s what it’s all about. That clarity. The people who’ve had the biggest influence, Martin is certainly one of them, and I have a lot of great colleagues here on the faculty. I think the world of Michael Haithcock, the band conductor, he’s really first rate. And Ken Kiesler, the orchestra conductor, he is a truly great musical talent, he’s very demanding of the students, but he really knows what he wants. I’ve been here for twenty years; it’s the longest I’ve been in one place and Michigan has been very good to me.

DEES: How would you describe the atmosphere of your studio and what do you do to create it?

ORMAND: I try to keep it relaxed. My students from years past, like David Shifrin, and Lee Morgan, some of those guys just tell horrendous stories about how
demanding and mean I was at Interlochen. They warn their students when they come to study with me at the Music Academy, “You better be prepared, he’ll get all over your case.” As I’ve grown older, I try to keep things a little more in perspective, but still try to push the students. The hardest thing I find, is to get them to ask each other questions when they hear one of the others do something really well as “Hey, how did you practice that, what is your tongue movement like, how do you keep the hands relaxed when you are going that fast?” things like that. We try to keep it relaxed and keep a healthy competition going. We do all our auditions screened now, which has made a big difference. The kids feel a lot better about the results.

DEES: You have a weekly studio class; do you have any other activities outside of lesson time?

ORMAND: The studio class is basically a performance class, although I do use it as a resource class in terms of things like instrument maintenance, group lesson on excerpts, things like that. Outside of class, I encourage them to go to the recital series, and to hear the visiting orchestras. I’m finding that my students are not going and listening enough to orchestral recordings, and getting the scores.

DEES: Do you think listening is something that has waned over the years?

ORMAND: Yes, I used to have a sign on my wall here, a Stravinsky quotation that I wrote down when I was at Interlochen, “To listen is an effort, to hear has no merit, a duck hears also.” There’s too much “just hearing” going on today. You give a student a piece of music, what is the first thing they say? “Where can I find a recording of this?” “Where can I find a recording of this?” I grew up in an era when my teacher played some of the stuff for me, but he also said, well the tempo marking is this, go home and practice it.

DEES: Go figure it out, make it happen.

ORMAND: Yes, I think it is too easy in many regards, they find out what it sounds like in a hurry. I have a junior, great fingers, great articulation, and it goes in one side and out the other. If he’s not practicing it every day, he can’t do it. We are working on his retention. I think not having to play from memory is a problem. As a result of not having to play from memory, we don’t use our ears as much. If you are playing from memory, you really have to hear what is going on. Again, the flood of recordings that you can hear is not always a best benefit.

DEES: Students download recordings off the internet, and they have no clue who is playing.

ORMAND: What orchestra? [As if having a hypothetical conversation with a student.] Well, it was English. OK, but which orchestra? Well it was some orchestra in Europe. Oh, it just drives me nuts, absolutely drives me nuts. That’s one of the things I do crack down on, and it is getting better. The other thing is just getting the scores out and looking and seeing what is the groundwork for that solo. One of the biggest
problems audition committees mention is that they come in and play Beethoven, Brahms and Stravinsky exactly alike. There is a different style for each.

DEES: And knowing who is playing around you.

ORMAND: Exactly.

DEES: What are the most important things for your students to learn and how do you facilitate that learning?

ORMAND: I am so boring in the sense that I continually emphasize basics. You may have heard things like this from John Weigand, [a former teacher of the interviewer] but one of the things that helped my teaching as much as anything I have done in years, later years in particular, was to take golf lessons myself. Put myself back into the role of student. I’ve always been fairly gifted with that, but on my own, it didn’t get any better. I decided about ten years ago to improve my golf game, I started taking lessons with a teacher here, and he really got under my skin. He said, “You know anybody with that much talent, that doesn’t really work at this and get better, is just a waste of time.” We say the same thing to our students all the time!

I’ve kept it up and studied with teachers around the country. I have one now in NC, near Asheville, he has the patience of Job. What I’ve seen over the years is exactly what we do in clarinet teaching. If you give them all the information at once, it’s overload. He takes one little thing and has you work on that, when that’s really working, he adds another thing on to that, and another thing, and pretty soon you can look back and see, oh yeah, that’s why we started doing that, so we can get to here. It’s the same thing teaching an instrument. And, realizing how much repetition you have to do to instill a habit, which I detest, I want a short cut.

I feel like I give them the tools of good basic clarinet playing. I insist on the Baermann scales. I know they get tired of me doing those five note exercises I use, but they really work. There’s a book by Alessandro Carbonare, the great Italian clarinetist, called Il Suono: Arte e Tecnica that you have to get from a company in Rome. You can go on his web site, www.carbonare.com. It is a book of vocalises that take you up into the extreme altissimo register, after starting down in the low register. Those are a big help with my students. With the younger students, I use a lot of things like Kroepsch, [416 Studies] the standard Rose, [40 Etudes, 32 Etudes, 9 Caprices] with the advanced students we get into Jeanjean [16 Etude Modernes, 18 Etudes] and Baermann [Complete Method for Clarinet, Op. 63, Books 4 & 5]. Also I find the Polachek studies, Bach Cello Suites, and Kal Oppermann’s books very useful. I am very catholic in my taste in those things, right down the middle of the road. I am less fussy than I was when I was younger about certain details, but I’ll learn to look at things a bit more and say, “OK, is this going to hold them back, or is this really worth fussing with at this time?” I do try to get them on a good mouthpiece, that’s half the battle, right there.

DEES: What kind of mouthpieces, generally, do you use for your students?
ORMAND: I still go back to Richard Hawkins a lot. I got away from his stuff for a while because it didn’t make enough sound, but he has some new ones that I really like. I still go over to Bob Scott in Lansing; he does really good work, particularly in certain areas. I try to teach them the basic things of balancing reeds, that sort of stuff. I finally published a reed manual that is out and available.

DEES: Where did you get your reed concepts?

ORMAND: Years and years of just doing it. The man I give the most credit to, Alexander Williams, who was Toscanini’s principal clarinet in the later years of the NBC Symphony. I worked with him one summer and he showed me how to balance reeds, and I just started doing it. The great thing is, when you are a teacher, if you are willing to do that for your students, you pick up a lot of reed skills. I think that it is John Mack who said, “A reed a day keeps the psychiatrist away.” If you fixed a reed every day on the clarinet you would have so many reeds you wouldn’t know what to do with them. If you are fixing them for your students, you get these skills. I do too much for my students as a fault; they don’t do enough on their own.

Reeds, and getting them to use the air. I don’t talk about breathing a lot because Alexander people used to say “Give somebody a book and ask them to read it out loud and observe the way they breathe, they will be tongue tied half way down the page.” You don’t think about how you breathe, like when I am talking to you now. I have many tricks that I use to try to get them to use the air well, but I don’t talk about diaphragmatic breathing or anything like that. Walton was a big believer that you take a lung full of air and you don’t have to squeeze to let it out, it will just come out. Particularly when you combine that with Marcellus’ high tongue position, then it all sets up really nicely. I do many things that way. Articulation is still the hardest thing in the world to teach. I have started to experiment with double tonguing. I visited with Corrado Giufreddi; he is just an amazing clarinet player in Parma, Italy that double tongues beautifully. He can also circular breathe and you are not aware of it.

DEES: And it doesn’t completely change the sound?

ORMAND: No, he can double tongue and it sounds great. He goes all over the clarinet with the most beautiful double tonguing you can imagine. He doesn’t use it unless he absolutely needs it. I went and spent a couple of days with him. He gave me the basic things to start out with; I can do it in certain places, but not to where I can really control it well. In another year I think I will be able to teach it and get my students started on it if they want to. I’m not going to do it, except with the really advanced students who already have a great foundation. If you put that on top of a poor foundation, it’s just a disaster.

DEES: You were talking about being able to teach this next year with your advanced students. Has your teaching changed over the years?

ORMAND: I think probably the biggest change occurred when I came here. This is a funny school in some ways. I think in many ways the students here are very sensitive
to criticism, and I had to find ways of saying it more gently. That was one of the things that backed me off the aggressiveness that I had before I came here. I think that as much as anything, I’m more lenient about certain fundamentals, but I want good, solid fundamentals. The golf teacher, Jim McLean, I just saw him on TV last night, he reminded me of some of his theories. He has what he calls corridors of success. You might be on the sides, or somewhere in the middle, but as long as you don’t stray outside of the corridor, you are going to be OK. I tend to look at those corridors a little wider than I used to.

DEES: Over time, you have been able to figure out the things that will fix themselves naturally.

ORMAND: Yes, and I’m not teaching music education students or performance students, I’m teaching students. I’ve had two music education students that have been just terrific. We need good teachers out there, we really do. We see less and less really good fundamental teaching coming up all the time.

If you can lead them to water and get them to really want it. Some kids have to have it, they’ll ask each other, use all their resources. That’s the biggest thing. I probably don’t quite have the drive that I used to, probably not as demanding. But, then again, we get a good level of student here, they really want it. A few students just don’t make the commitment; they could go into other studies and knock them dead, but no commitment to the clarinet. You have to make the commitment. I think ever since I studied with Walton and he gave me the idea that you are planting seeds, you are watering those seeds and you nurture them, and you hope that they grow over time, that’s the biggest thing about my teaching that has changed.

Richard Hawkins is really good at giving kids good fixes. What it tends to do is to get the sound in their ear, and then they’ll go to the practice room and figure out how to keep it. I’ve never been really good at that. Keith Stein was a teacher that every once in awhile, you would come into a lesson and he’d say, let’s go back and work on this little exercise. It would be an exercise you had done a million times with him, he would keep chipping away at it, and he’d say, “Keep thinking about that this week.”

DEES: How do you motivate your students?

ORMAND: I’ve had students that were studying with me that have said, “You just don’t motivate me.” The thing that helps about being at a school like this, I’m so lucky in that regard, is that they hear good clarinet players all the time. I think that is a motivational factor. When David Shifrin studied with me at Interlochen there was another clarinet student there, John McLaughlin. In those days, they had bloody Friday [challenges] at the Academy every week, every week! David once told me that after a practice session, he remembered packing up his clarinet and starting to leave, he heard John down the hall, still practicing Capriccio Espagnol. Well, he went back in his practice room, opened the case, took out the clarinet and went back to work. That’s the best motivation that you can have, hearing peers really working hard, and really wanting it.
I can count on the fingers of two hands the students I’ve had over the years that were sublimely talented. And on one hand the students who were really talented and worked. It’s not enough to have talent; you have to work at your art. Ask the great ones. The only thing you can do is give them the best tools you can give them, and hope that they listen to enough music and hear enough great music performed that they want it, and will keep working towards that. More people get there by hard work than natural talent, that’s the name of the game.
ROBERT SPRING

Robert Spring is Professor of Clarinet at Arizona State University. He holds a BM, MM, and DMA from the University of Michigan and his teachers include John Mohler, David Shifrin and Paul Shaller. As a soloist he has performed with wind bands and symphony orchestras throughout the United States, Canada, Europe, Asia and South America. He has released numerous recordings and is known for double tonguing, circular breathing, and other contemporary techniques.

Professor Spring exudes enthusiasm for clarinet playing; he is frequently in the practice room by six a.m. and rarely takes a day off. He and his students follow a strict clarinet warm up that includes long tones, Klosé scales, then thirds, arpeggios, and articulation exercises (primarily for tongue speed and accuracy). The complete warm up takes approximately forty five minutes. This warm-up is done before the students come to lessons. Professor Spring records his student’s lessons for them onto a compact disc for their use during their practice sessions.

Lesson Observation

On April 14, 2004 I observed a doctoral student’s lesson on Leslie Bassett’s Soliloquies. She was not preparing for a recital, but rather spending the remainder of the semester going through literature. The lesson began with a discussion of upcoming recitals and dress rehearsals of other clarinet students. After the student played the opening runs, Professor Spring stopped her to write anchors and groupings in the music to make playing the passage easier. They then discussed fingering options. Professor Spring then modeled the passage and instructed the student to play the opening, “Pretty mean, like you are really mad.” The student tried it again and Professor Spring said,

Do you want to know how I practice this? This is like the hardest thing in the world. I was at the premiere of this piece [Feb. 18, 1976, Ann Arbor,

---

9 Robert Spring, “Clarinet Warm-up” personal handout.
MI] and Bob Onofrey was a good friend of mine. I remember when he got it. Leslie Bassett was just here a few weeks ago and we were just talking about this. He gave it to him with just six weeks to learn it and poor Bob was just panicked. What he did, and this is what I do all the time, is divide this up into fours and sixes [counted and wrote in music, then played to demonstrate]. Either way you divide it up, the big thing is you have to save up enough air. This has to go on really long, uncomfortably long [Played it again demonstrating groupings and then speeding up]. It has to be really really fast.

They then moved on to the next section which includes leaps and staccato figures. After the student played, with Professor Spring singing along, he said,

Good! Now you can also do this metrically, it changes the rhythm a little bit but when I played it for Mr. Bassett he didn’t notice. If you do it metrically, [played to demonstrate] eighty [on the metronome] will do. It’s not perfect, but it works. Now what about the resonance trills, they are different on your horn, right?

The student was playing a Rossi clarinet and demonstrated the trill on her instrument. They experimented with different fingerings. Professor Spring said,

Yeah, I like that one; that is particularly percussive. You have those hard pads on your clarinet, he [Luis Rossi,] puts on Valentino’s? [The student said yes.] Mine are Brannen [Bill Brannen, Evanston, IL] soft pads. Just find something that is going to give you the biggest effect.

The student continued playing through the altissimo run. Professor Spring said, “Try it an easier way, play the G on the side.” He then demonstrated the fingering by playing the passage on his clarinet. “Then you don’t have to tongue so many of them, [continued to play] except for the B, maybe. Try that from the D.” The student tried the new fingerings. The student worked on matching pitch, then discussed pitch and tried some alternate fingerings.

In the next section they worked on double tonguing. The student said she had talked with another student and that student said she needed to use more of a “Guh like a ‘Kh,’ like a G almost, because I still have trouble getting the K part.” She then played to demonstrate. Professor Spring turned the metronome on and said, “Try this with me, we are just going to play ‘ta-ka-ta’. They then practiced double tonguing by both taking turns playing with the metronome. He suggested that she needed to push the ‘ka’ part of the exercise sooner. They played more and then he demonstrated the passage in the
Bassett by tonguing sixteenth notes at a metronome marking of quarter note equaled one hundred seventy two. He then demonstrated the entire phrase, suggesting a double tongue at the very end.

After discussion of practice techniques the student played the next section and Professor Spring laughed then said, “You are trying to play clarinet too well! You are backing way off in the altissimo; you have to let it do what people have told you never to do.” The student played again with some altissimo notes not speaking; Professor Spring suggested she use the real fingering and not an alternate for that note. He then said, “The problem with this piece is you have to work out a section, then another section, section, section, and then you have to put it all together, and that’s what makes it really hard.”

They continued working through the rest of the movement addressing fingering choices, performance and practice styles. Professor Spring said at one point,

The reason I play it this way is because this is the way I heard it in 1976. I remember this was an amazing performance. What Bob Onofrey did on this recital was he did the Bassett, Bolcom’s A Short Lecture on the Clarinet, Bill Albright’s Saint’s Preserve Us, all on the same recital along with another one…It was an amazing concert. We all just sat there with our jaws on the floor.

Later in the lesson they addressed the issue of multiphonics. Professor Spring explained by saying, “What I’m doing is playing a low E and it’s a feeling of the tongue moving in the front of the mouth, and it’s really loud…What your job is now [laughed] is to find a practice room next to a singer and keep doing that over and over and over again!” During Professor Spring’s multiphonic demonstration he and the student played back and forth while he made suggestions as to how it might feel,

Really weird…There is a great piece you can use to practice this, William O. Smith’s Fancies for Clarinet Alone. He has this really great study where you use that fingering to get all sorts of multiphonics [demonstrated]. My tongue is way forward in my mouth, almost like anchor tonguing and the jaw goes forward too [played again]. That sounds like a test of the emergency broadcast system [laughed]. You can experiment with it later.

They then moved on to the second movement. Professor Spring sang, conducted and tapped his foot as the student played. There was more discussion of fingerings and differences in the Rossi and Buffet instruments. Occasionally Professor Spring played
along with the student. “Do you know about the thing at the end, the dot? There are two stories about that. One is that it is just a blot of ink on the page. The other is that when Bob Onofrey played it he changed the timbre there. But Bassett said, ‘I think it’s just an ink spot’.”

While working on the third movement Professor Spring referred to his personal copy of the Bassett. He then sang the tempo for practice, and suggested thinking of it in groups of four, “That’s the only way I could practice it, otherwise I was all over the map.” They then played it together at a slower tempo. He went on to talk about what a great piece it is and that Leslie Bassett was very excited that it is now being played at the Paris Conservatory.

Before the student left her lesson, she asked him a question about a page of a Françaix sextet, The Hour of Nothing. Professor Spring stated that he had never seen it before. He looked at it, and said “If you want to, go copy that page and I’ll learn it.” If he thinks it will help, Professor Spring will take the time to learn a section of a new piece that a student is studying.

The next student I observed was on April 12, 2004; a Master’s student who had a recital coming up soon. She played seated, used a neck strap and her pianist played with her. She tuned with the piano then played the Pierne Andante and Scherzo. As she played Professor Spring walked around the room, conducted, sang and snapped his fingers to indicate the direction he wanted her to go. At one point he asked her to keep playing, but quit swelling.

After the introduction he stopped her and said, “First of all fix the reed, it’s barking at you. Another thing, watch all the swells, you have to think longer lines, and I think it is too slow. I think [quarter note equals] eighty is a better tempo. Go on from there.” The student continued to have trouble with swells; Professor Spring played it for her with the piano. The pianist mentioned she had heard this phenomenon referred to as the “seasick sway.” They all laughed.

As they continued Professor Spring sang and snapped his fingers to encourage the student not to lag in tempo. Professor Spring reminded her that she would be able to hear what she was doing by listening to the recording of her lesson. Professor Spring pointed out to her in an articulated section, “You are jawing too much, and you are moving your
jaw too much when you articulate.” He played the section for her to hear, and had her play it again with, “More air behind the tongue.” The student finished playing the piece.

Before the student began the next piece, Professor Spring commented that he didn’t like the reed she was playing on, “It changes sound from soft to loud too much. The softs are nice but the louds get barky.” The student changed her reed and began the Gordon Jacob *Mini-Concerto for Clarinet*. Professor Spring continued to sing and conduct as she played. After the student finished the first section he said, “That seems really slow to me. I think it can have more motion, or direction.” She played it again and he responded, “I’ll shut up. I think maybe your interpretation is different than mine. That’s not necessarily bad. When you do have motion, it shouldn’t be stair step here, but more of a wave so it all relates.”

Professor Spring commented before the last movement that her shoulder looked a lot better. This student “has a habit of looking like a vulture while playing. We have been working on it and it is getting much better. You [the student] can make fun of me now!” The student laughed and mentioned his coffee drinking habits. There was a wealth of good natured humor in Professor Spring’s studio.

The student then began to play the last movement. Professor Spring made only a few comments such as, “Long lines…play out more” while the student played. She played the entire movement without stopping. “The last movement is really impressive when you play it right. You are doing a really good job of making me like this piece more.” They moved on to Cavallini’s *Adagio and Tarantella*.

Before she began the Cavallini Professor Spring said, “There are two versions of this, maybe even more. This one has a long opening that other versions don’t have.” After the student played the opening Professor Spring stopped her and said, “I think the opening could be more dramatic, it’s too predictable and straight.” She played a bit of the beginning and then moved on to the next section. Professor Spring continued to conduct and sing when he wanted her to adjust her tempos or phrasing, but let her continue to play. After she finished the piece Professor Spring responded, “Both the last note in that and the *Mini-Concerto*: you are preparing too much. If you just go up to it, instead of preparing it [he crossed himself, got tense and sang the last note] it will be a lot better off!”
At the end of the lesson Professor Spring and the student talked about how much recording lessons and being able to hear the lesson helped with learning. Professor Spring closed the lesson by saying,

[Student’s name] your technique is really clean. If you can quit swelling I’ll be really, really happy. At the end of the Cavallini I was just thinking ‘this is really clean technique’ and that’s a hard piece to be clean on. You are doing a really good job. Don’t be so scared of the Pierne, you really play it quite beautifully, just think long phrases and don’t go too slowly. It’s a Paris [conservatory] contest piece, it’s supposed to be seven to eight minutes long, not fifteen.

Interview

Tempe, AZ
April 12, 2004

DEES: Discuss your early musical or non-musical experiences and how they have shaped your career.

SPRING: I started piano lessons when I was young, and I hated it. I started in the junior high band, I heard that and it was this amazing sound. I told my father I wanted to be a band director when I was in tenth grade. He told me that he, for years, tried to discourage me. I drove to Ann Arbor, I played the Weber Grand Duo Concertante for John Mohler and he told me I wasn’t very good. [laughs] We started lessons and I got the Baermann, and I didn’t practice the first week, it seemed so easy to me. When he played it, I’ll never forget that, I never knew you could go from A to B without having a lump in the sound. After I heard him do that, I suddenly realized.

Winning the concerto competition at Michigan [University of Michigan] as a junior, and as a graduate student, that was a major direction change for me. I taught public school for a bit, I was a band director and taught marching band. Then I moved to West Texas State University and was there for three years, in the middle of that I finished my Doctorate. I started there teaching clarinet and saxophone, it turned into pure clarinet in the third year. The band director threatened to quit and one of the contingencies of him staying was for them to hire a full time sax teacher. So, I didn’t have to play sax anymore. I moved here when I was thirty three and I didn’t apply because I heard it was a rigged job, then I did apply and they offered me the job, I turned it down, they reoffered it and I took it.

Pieces that changed me, Bill Smith’s Variants, Eric Mandat’s music, Subotnick’s Passages of the Beast –that was early 1980’s. The Smith piece, I bought in 1977, that was right when I got my Masters degree. I got my Master’s in 1978. Eric Mandat wrote SubtrainS O’ StrataS fearS for me in 1996.

DEES: How did you meet him?
SPRING: He interviewed for my job at West Texas, he played *Folk Songs*, I was just blown away, my mouth hit the floor, I couldn’t believe it. I asked him if I could get it, he said no, he hadn’t published it yet. The next year he played at the clarinet convention in Minneapolis, I told everybody, you have to hear this guy play. The place was just packed. He started playing and there was silence in the room. When he finished, people were throwing babies in the air and lighting Bic lighters, it was incredible [laughs]! It was just incredible.

Then the big change I made came when I recorded the *Dragon’s Tongue* CD, I decided to move in a certain direction. It might have been a little before that, with the Joan Tower CD, when I realized that I could do things that other people probably didn’t want to do, but I could do them. It changed the way I focused my life.

DEES: You had said earlier that before that time, you had actually considered stopping music.

SPRING: I was tired. I was tired of the students I was getting, I had a couple of good students along the way, but it wasn’t like it is now. I think I was just trying to be something that I wasn’t. I don’t know what I was trying to be, I don’t know. I think I was always trying to be some kind of orchestral player. It’s funny, I played in a chamber orchestra in Columbus, Ohio, and I loved it, but I think it was something I wasn’t.

Going back to the teachers that influenced me, John Mohler taught me the basic technique, the foundation, it was just wonderful. When I was doing my DM with him, he was completely different. At that point, he expected that the foundation was there. He let me do anything I wanted to do; I opened my first recital with a quarter tone piece. I know he told me he couldn’t play it, but he let me do these things. If I veered too far off one way or another he would kick me back to the middle. If I did that piece on a recital, the next thing he would make me do was a Brahms Sonata, or Mozart. Everything had to be balanced out, but he let me explore areas that he probably shouldn’t have [laughs].

And David Shifrin, both David and Don Sinta opened these expressive doors that I didn’t know existed. At that point, the big thing was David’s use of vibrato, that was a concept I had never thought of on clarinet before. His whole concept of changing the tone colors, I had never heard or considered that before. John’s focus was primarily on making sure you had a good sound that was focused and consistent. David was, “No, no man, you can be bright here, or really dark here, use vibrato here, you can pierce here.” That’s also when I changed over to Jim Pyne’s mouthpieces, in 1976.

And Randy Kohlenburg, the trombone professor at UNCG, influenced the consistency of my teaching the most. I learned from him the importance of having good colleagues and having consistency in teaching and playing. He helped me become a teacher as opposed to being just a player. He and I taught in Iowa together for six years.

DEES: How would you describe the atmosphere of your studio and what do you do to create it?

SPRING: I work really hard for two things: my philosophy of teaching is for the student to become independent of me. That’s the big goal. I don’t think that you learn well in tense situations, I think that you learn well when you feel comfortable in the
situation that you are in. The atmosphere in my studio is very open, students are not afraid to express an opinion, as you can see [laughs]. And I think that is healthy, nobody ever gets ugly. I think it is healthy for students to be able to feel they can say something to me and I’m not going to yell at them. I worked really hard to create that. When I started here it wasn’t that way.

Things that I do: I require every student to go to every other student’s recital. That helps to create that openness, and students feel that everyone is working together. I guess that we will always have disagreements, sometimes it's not the older students who have disagreements with me, it’s the younger students! My whole goal is to disagree without being disagreeable. I work really hard to create an open atmosphere. It’s often hard to do when you get students who want to beat someone else out for an orchestra chair. I go down and walk though the practice rooms and see one of the older students who is helping out a younger student.

DEES: What do you do when you have a student who is extremely competitive and doesn’t get along well, or is not positive with the other students?

SPRING: I generally try not to recruit that kind. But, sometimes you find out they have that tendency. I have had a lot of heart to heart talks with students. I tell them the story about how I run into so many people, for instance, our band director is Gary Hill, he and I were in school together. In the School of Music here, there are many people who I went to school with. You never know when these people will come back in your life. There was a school I had applied to in 1980 or so, on the East coast. When I interviewed there, the band director told me I was going to get the job and I would hear from the next day. Well, I didn’t hear from them until months later when I got a letter stating they had hired someone else. Well, when we hired a band director here, I was chairman of the committee and he called me and said, “Well, I hope this isn’t a rigged job, I was involved in a rigged job earlier this year where they told me I got the job and I left and never heard from them again.” I said, “Yeah, it reminds me of what you did to me twenty years ago.” There was this deathly silence. He said, “I was hoping you had forgotten about that [laughs].” I try to let my students understand that.

DEES: This leads into the next question, What are the most important things for your students to learn and how do you facilitate that learning?

SPRING: For the younger students they just need to learn how to play the clarinet. And that is hard for some of them to realize because they don’t like all the technical things that we are doing. I think that basic finger motion has to be learned at a young age or it’s just not going to be learned. Basic sound has to be learned, and articulation. Or, they are going to get to the point where they are preparing recitals and they just can’t play. I think the most important thing for them to learn at the younger age is how to play the clarinet.

I facilitate that by organizing every lesson into three really distinct areas: the warm up, the technical studies and the musical work, which is the culmination of that. About the first seven minutes is a warm up, next they do some kind of technical study, an etude, or some kind of orchestral excerpt, something that is difficult, then they are
working on solo repertoire after that. I really want them to see that this is the important aspect. The other thing is that I think it is hard to make them realize that it all works together. When you are talking about technical things, that also has a lot to do with the musical aspect of the piece they are playing. If they can’t do the technique then they can’t do the music. When I first started here I had a student, this was the first year, who was just terrible. She said, “You are nothing but a technician.” This was a girl who couldn’t play *Come to Jesus* in whole notes [laughs]. I tried not to lose my temper and I said, “Well, what do you want to do?” She responded, “I want to play music.” “What kind of music,” I asked. “Well, I want to play the Mozart Concerto.” I said “OK, let’s look at the Mozart Concerto, the end of the exposition, the arpeggios, anything.” And of course she couldn’t play that. And she says, “Well, I like slow things.” So I said, “Let’s do the slow movement then.” She couldn’t enter on the A, she couldn’t make any sort of entrance. I told her, “This is all technique, and from what I gather, you just can’t play the clarinet [laughs].”

The older students, what I try to do with my graduate students, most of them have fairly good technique. In fact, with my DM students, if I don’t like the way they play I just don’t take them, it’s just too many things to work on. With the MM students I try to fix any problems that might be there. I try to get them to work really hard the first semester and get them thinking about the clarinet and then let go and see what happens. They get really mad the first two weeks because I’m not telling them what to do, they are used to their teachers telling them what to do, they get really mad. Then, they start to get creative.

The student in here before, she will tell you she was one of the dullest students I had, and I think she is pretty creative in the way she approaches the music now. I just try to get them to think for themselves musically. If they are practicing three hours a day, that’s twenty-one hours a week, and then they have me for an hour. Out of twenty-two hours, I am their teacher only one of those hours so they have to learn to identify their own problems. The important thing to learn at a young age is to learn how to play the clarinet. At the older ages I try to get them to think through the creative process.

DEES: When do you start teaching extended techniques?

SPRING: Well, I have this freshman right now, he’s smart as a whip, he’s scary smart. He’s not perfect yet, but he really wanted to explore, so I actually gave him Ronald Caravan’s *Excursions for Clarinet* and let him try it. It was unbelievable! He has started to do things that have carried over into his “real” music; I let him do that early. Sometimes I will do it younger if I feel like the throat is really tense, it will force them to loosen up. I don’t ever teach double tonguing or circular breathing, if they do that they are just doing it because I can do it. I think my male students generally do it more than my female students, it’s a macho thing, they are trying to do it better than me, and most of them do! I think it’s a matter of trying to do something better than a teacher.

DEES: And you play a lot, you have a very busy performing schedule, so they hear you a lot. Has your teaching changed?
SPRING: Oh, a lot. With my younger students I think I am stricter, with my older students I think I am more relaxed. With the younger ones, I am more so now than ever, just insistent that things be set before we move on. I get so many Master’s students that have issues that you don’t realize in the audition and they need to be fixed right away. I have seven student recitals this weekend, so I think that what you end up doing is repertoire and knowledge of repertoire. More repertoire helps. Trying to vary repertoire, makes life a lot more interesting. That comes from teaching. And you have to stay really organized; if I wasn’t organized I would be dead.

DEES: How do you motivate your students?

SPRING: John Mohler always said you motivate your students by playing for them and making them try to emulate what you are doing. If the students aren’t motivated at this level, to do things on their own, you have the wrong kind of student. They aren’t going to have someone out in the world telling them “You have to practice!” I try to recruit students who are motivated, other than that I try to keep things interesting, to give them programs or etudes that are interesting. I work really hard so that everyone is playing different things, I keep them interested that way. I actually think my schedule, although they complain about it, helps keep them interested because they hear me practicing new things all the time, and they want to learn those things.

DEES: There’s a lot going on here

SPRING: I think part of it comes from the teachers’ excitement on the topic. I took four courses in Anthropology when I was an undergraduate student. The reason I did it was because my first Anthropology teacher was so excited, and I thought, this must be really cool. So, I think if you have a teacher who is really excited about their topic, I think that excitement goes in. Sometimes I think I am failing with some students, but if you can be relatively excited about your topic, that helps.

DEES: How do you maintain that excitement, you’ve been teaching here for how many years? How do you maintain that freshness?

SPRING: Seventeen years, I think it’s the playing, it’s the performing! I’m recording five concertos this year, the first recording of all of them was Katherine Hoover, the second was Black Dog, which was written for Frank [Kowalsky]. Scott McAllister is coming here in two weeks to do X and we are doing the first recording of that as well. I’m relearning that right now. Peter Schickele wrote me a new concerto that we recorded in January and we just did the Bassett Fantasy, and then X is May 19. And I did a tour, I was in Israel three weeks ago, I’m going to China in three weeks, I was in Belgium in February. What keeps you going is the freshness of new things. That also presents problems.

DEES: How do you stay grounded?
SPRING: That’s part of it, without management you end up getting too busy, it’s either feast or famine. I don’t know, every summer I take a little bit of time, even if it’s just two weeks and I go back and do nothing but play Baermann scales and Rose etudes for a week, just to get myself focused in on what clarinet is again.

DEES: Do you ever take time off?

SPRING: No, actually, I didn’t play for two days on my honeymoon. And in 1996 I got the flu really badly and I didn’t play for a week. When I got back from Israel I got really sick for one day, I didn’t play that day. This is the way I relax, other people make model cars, I just like to practice, it’s my time. Did you see the newspaper on the music stand when you came in? I read when I practice, I memorize really quickly; I play licks over and over again.

DEES: Do you have photographic memory?

SPRING: No, it’s patterns. I like to practice, it’s relaxing for me, it takes my mind off things. I think that you have to remain really excited about what you are doing. When I was at Morningside College I really wasn’t enjoying band directing anymore. I was hating it. One of my brothers said, “It’s time you looked for a new job because you obviously don’t like what you are doing.” I think if you don’t like what you are doing you should do something else. I’m really lucky that I am paid to do what I really really like to do, and people call me from all over the place and ask me to come play. I get paid to do what I like and it’s wonderful. One of these days I’m sure it’s not going to be exciting anymore, I’ll do something else. I’ll retire, but not until the stock market goes back up [laughs]!

DEES: Anything else you care to add?

SPRING: Things go good and things go badly, and you have good students and you have bad students. You are never going to have all good students. One of the reasons we are hiring a second clarinet teacher is that I have a number of students that I don’t see, that are totally seen by TA’s and it shows because they have had no consistency, and you listen to them play and you think “Oh my God,” and then you have other students that play really well. Randy Kohlenberg also told me: if you want one really good student you better have eight students, if you want two really good students you better have twelve. You always need in your studio one hotdog, one player who is unbelievable, you always need that one player because everyone else looks up to them and they will raise the level for everybody. Also, you have to like something about every student. It’s impossible to teach someone you don’t want to spend time with.
ELSA LUDEWIG-VERDEHR

Elsa Ludewig Verdehr is Professor of Clarinet at Michigan State University. She has performed with the Verdehr Trio on national and international tours throughout Europe, Canada, Central and South America, India, China, Asia, Australia, Egypt, Greece, and Turkey. In addition to her many recordings she is active as a recitalist and clinician, and as an orchestral soloist. She holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the Eastman School of Music where she studied with Stanley Hasty.  

Lesson Observation

At this stage in her teaching career Professor Verdehr accepts only graduate students in her studio, but sees undergraduates for extra lessons on occasion. On April 22, 2004 I observed a doctoral student’s lesson on Weber’s Clarinet Concerto No. 2. This student had just presented his first DMA recital and this was his first lesson since the recital. He was learning the Weber in preparation for a concerto competition the following summer. This was his first time playing it for Professor Verdehr. The student played seated.

The student played through most of the first movement. Professor Verdehr occasionally sang the accompaniment while the student played. She stopped him and the first thing she mentioned was the edition of the music. Professor Verdehr talked about the importance of knowing which edition of music the player has:

The Kell edition [student’s] is really the original the way he [Weber] left it. That’s a biggie when you are playing Weber, Mozart, or any of these people. In general what you are playing are other people’s ideas of articulation, dynamics, even ornaments. Reginald Kell did us a big favor when he put out the International edition. He [wrote] the clarinet part as it was left on the autograph. Here, if you look [at the music], not a single articulation, here no f, which is a biggie, and all the way through, no articulations. Even Charlie Neidich might not be able to triple tongue that, I’m not sure, we could ask him! First thing you want to do is look at the

---

original [score] and see what the autograph had. That gives you leeway to do a lot of different things with the piece. First of all, here after the opening [sang] that’s very quiet in the strings. Then the clarinet comes in [sang] that’s the first thing I always change is that piano [wrote in student’s part]. Then you really should go through the rest of it and get an idea of what’s been added. For instance, there’s no turn at all [sang] most people do a turn. But that particular turn [referred to the one in the part] I don’t think is very good. In many places it doesn’t say anything about dynamics [pointed out places in the music] and I think if you look at the parts you will be surprised at how many differences there are. For instance, [in] that closing section, there is no articulation at all, it’s up to us. This is good to know because you can go through this, using your intuition and according to your tonguing abilities you can come up with articulations that fit the piece. One of the first things I did when I played with an orchestra was to add some articulations… I made some passages that are repeated have an echo effect [the first time was f, the second time p]. Then if you follow the Hasty rule about when you have an echo effect, you make a crescendo the first time and don’t the second. I go along with that as well [sang an example]. Then, also when you do the echo I think it heightens the effect if you change the articulation as well, it just sounds better. I also thought about how many similar articulation patterns we could stand before it starts to sound like an articulation exercise.

Professor Verdehr continued explaining articulations and dynamics as she sang and wrote in the student’s part. She suggested the student think about what he’d like to do and come up with his own set of articulations:

That’s fair since they really expected performers to do that in those days. I’m just telling you my reasons for what I did. And I always like to say too, that [Robert] Marcellus did us a big favor when he recorded the Mozart Concerto. All of a sudden we found that you didn’t have to tongue everything…But I think he made the point by that recording; Mozart didn’t write a lot of articulations either. You [performers in the eighteenth c.] had to figure out what to do with the articulations. Just because one could tongue fast wasn’t a good enough reason. In general, scales often sound better tongued than arpeggios do, if you are trying to play Mozart or Weber. This works if you are trying to go for some elegance or élan, without having too much articulation and busy virtuosic stuff. That’s what I think he [Marcellus] did in the Mozart Concerto, and that influenced me a little bit when I came up with my articulations in this piece.

She continued and talked about selling a piece of music to an audience:

The other thing about Weber is that he’s class B, he isn’t class A, but what we’ve go to do is make him class A. And I think that is true with a whole
lot of our clarinet pieces. If we do them right, then they are really going to be something. Even the Nielsen Concerto, which really is class A, if you don’t do it right then it falls down because people get a little bored with it. It seems too long, it has so many sections. And if you don’t make all the different personalities, that basically depict the person for whom it was written, it doesn’t work either. Now in Weber, if you just keep doing it straight four-four all the way through and play what’s on the page, it’s going to get a little on the dull side. With Weber you want to treat it like Mozart and give it a little elegance and grace. Try not to have it be virtuosic when it really isn’t supposed to be and when it is, really go for it. Let’s see what I mean by all that.

At this point in the lesson she had the student play the opening phrase and she stopped him and sang her own interpretation of the phrase. She then sang and explained each phrase and had the student play each one, making suggestions as they progressed. She suggested toning down the dynamic levels, “All of these fortissimo’s, particularly in the classical and even romantic era pieces, the ff we can do in this day and age is usually too loud, I’m going to leave that to the symphonic band!”

Professor Verdehr then talked about judicious slurring, “Frankly I can’t tongue eight notes successfully so I just throw a slur in. That was an old Hasty thing too: if you aren’t great at tonguing, it’s not good to have two and two [slur two, tongue two] all the time so then do two and six, for instance. That can really help you out there.” And later said, “I’ve never been above trying to do something that made things easier, if it does successfully what I want to do musically. And that’s really the most important thing to me, what I want to do musically.” As she continued to teach she frequently referred to the cellos or other orchestral instruments as she sang the accompaniment.

As the student played, she conducted, sang, and tapped her foot. She referred to the non-edited score when she wanted to point a detail out to the student. At one point she referred to a non-harmonic tone as the “Mona Lisa of non-harmonic tones,” referring to the melodic line in the popular tune from 1950, Mona Lisa, made famous by Nat King Cole. She then indicated to the student that he needed to really sing through those notes, emphasizing the non-harmonic tones. She referred to notes such as this as “expressive intervals”.

She said about trills, “Identify the first note and toward the end let the trill go faster, it adds intensity, like a crescendo…You can trill faster and better with the left
hand but sometimes it’s not as controllable as the right hand. That’s something you have to work on.” For the remainder of the lesson Professor Verdehr conducted the student while he played, then she sang the phrases for the student to give him an example of her interpretation. She sang referring to note lengths, articulation, phrasing and dynamics.

When they finished working on the first movement Professor Verdehr said,

I think these little things are the hints behind the music. This is what makes the music, it’s not just the notes and the rhythms and the articulations and the dynamics, that’s just the very beginning. What is important is the relationship of the phrases, and the personality of the phrases. Having revealed all of this, I look forward to hearing it next time [laughed]! That’s what I really find fascinating and I never noticed this stuff when I was working on it myself. It wasn’t until I started teaching and I didn’t have to worry about the execution of it, which is a big advantage, you begin to see all these other things, all these relationships in the music. You see how a composer puts these things together and you realize you’ve got to know that to play [the piece] really well. A lot of these pieces I played first, when I go back to them I have so much more of an understanding because of the teaching I did of them.

The next lesson I observed (on April 22, 2004) was an undergraduate student who normally studies with Frank Ell (another clarinet professor at MSU). She has had lessons with Professor Verdehr prior to this lesson and they began the lesson by talking about the thumb position of the right hand. The student commented that the thumb position was completely different on her A clarinet because the thumb rest was a rounded, moveable thumb rest. Professor Verdehr said, “Those are such a drag, I just changed my thumb rest eventually on my newer instrument.” Professor Verdehr has her students use a piece of one inch long rubber surgical tubing on their thumb rests. This offers more flexibility and can be supported by a larger portion of the thumb. This position also allows for more stability and “disperses the weight of the clarinet along the whole length of the thumb rest.” Her students have had fewer hand problems using this thumb position and they do not use neck straps. Professor Verdehr spent the beginning of this lesson making a new thumb rest for the student’s A clarinet. The thumb rest was too wide for the tubing and Professor Verdehr suggested she have Scotty [Robert Scott] sand it down, or change it out.

Professor Verdehr explained she found this thumb position after “I switched to double lip I found I couldn’t hold it anymore the way I had before…that’s really when I
began to analyze all the things I was doing physically. That then became an important part of my teaching. I realized at the beginning of each semester with new people, I should spend time analyzing what they were doing and seeing about doing things better.” This resulted in a Monday night fundamentals class for all first year students. Professor Verdehr has “a million and one” handouts that she gives her students that include tips such as how to hold the fingers,

Then scale exercises, fragments, arpeggio fragments and such. The idea being to start with three or four notes, holding the clarinet exactly correctly, and using the fingers correctly and building from there. I do two sessions first on hand position, and fingers, with various exercises, then one on embouchure with tone exercises, and tonguing, then basic acoustics. We do a lot with that first semester then Jeanjean etudes and various etudes to talk about musical principles, and then we get into the repertoire.

She continued to work with this student on her new thumb position, physically moving the student’s thumb.

First of all it [the right thumb] really must not point down hill, it must point uphill; thumbnail pointing to the ceiling…and get that rectangle between the first finger and thumb. Now I’m just going to take your fingers, elongate your fingers slightly. Now, remember we talked about if I dropped my hand my fingers are more straight than a real curve. That will take awhile to develop, just hang in there.

The student commented that it felt awkward. Professor Verdehr responded, “Well, Linda Bartley once said ‘That hurts!’ and I said well, learn to live with it, and she did [laughed]! We used to have a lot of fun at lessons…Once you learn to get all the weight of the clarinet on that thumb; it’s just a wonderful sense of freedom…” They continued to adjust thumb and finger positions and Professor Verdehr said, “Every time you do that it’s a little bit better. You do that several times a day and then you go ask some of my other students and they’ll say ‘Oh you poor thing she’s doing that to you too’ [laughed] If you forget how to do it, just come back.”

They then moved to the left hand. “Once you are working on your hand position, always have your clarinet in a position that you would play it.” As the student tried her new hand position, Professor Verdehr made suggestions of ways for her to adjust her hand position. Often when the student adjusted one area, another area would move and
need to be tweaked. Professor Verdehr said to the student, “That’s about seventy five percent and yesterday you were at fifty percent, you are really very close. Keep working on it and come back and show me what you are doing in a few days.” She adjusted the students’ fingers again and said, “Yeah, keep doing that and then you do all those tedious finger exercises. But if you do them with the right position and the right finger action they’ll do you good, otherwise you’ll just ingrain those bad habits and bad hand position and they won’t work. They will also teach you how to be relaxed. Once I got here and I didn’t have a teacher anymore bit by bit I uncovered all these bad habits that I had. And I had a lot of them. But teachers never said anything because they felt like if it worked let’s not mess with it too much. But that’s why I decided not to do that after twelve years of being here and being on my own I figured all these things out. I figure it’s my duty to go with them [the student] and figure this out. It’s not my most fun thing, but it’s the duty and the responsibility of the teacher. Then the students are able to refine these ideas and adapt them to their own way of playing. Then theoretically it will be a lot easier to do what you want to do musically.

The student asked if she had any suggestions, because she still had to play in ensembles where she tends to revert to her old hand position. Professor Verdehr answered,

Then you just have to forget it. You just keep doing the best you can, and you look forward to those vacation periods when you can sit down and try not to do anything wrong! To play the clarinet one hundred percent, well is really hard, but boy we keep trying! You need to be sensible, you can’t expect immediate change. When I was switching to double lip I would practice six or seven times a day, but only for about ten minutes, talk about frustration! But you will be fine, just keep working on it.

Interview

March 12, 2004
East Lansing, Michigan

DEES: Discuss your early musical or non-musical experiences and how they shaped your career.

VERDEHR: My first formative musical experiences, if you exclude hearing my father’s amateur string quartet every Saturday night when I was quite small, were two: I had an excellent high school band director, Sharon B. Hoose, under whose leadership we
played transcriptions of orchestral works—Franck D Minor, New World Symphony and even Rhapsody in Blue with me at the piano—those pieces were my first introduction to playing classical music. And the Transylvania Music Camp, now Brevard Music Center, where I first heard Iggie [Ignatius] Gennusa. There I heard him perform the Mozart Concerto during my first week as a camper when I was a sophomore year in high school and I was flabbergasted. I had no idea the clarinet could sound so beautiful and after that I was hooked!

After high school I attended the Oberlin Conservatory of Music and worked with George Waln who gave me a wonderful basic grounding on repertoire and technique. I’ve always been grateful that he was such a thorough and demanding teacher—he was just the right person for me at the right time.

The Eastman School of Music was actually my third choice for graduate school, and it was so very lucky that I went there because I don’t think I could have had a better teacher or situation, nor better preparation for what I do now -- I am very grateful that’s the way it turned out. I knew Stanley Hasty slightly before going there, only because I had attended a Phi Mu Alpha dinner dance while I was visiting friends in Rochester and he and his wife were chaperones. I met Mr. Hasty at a dinner dance, isn’t that crazy? Now you wouldn’t attend a school if you didn’t know more about the teacher and audition for him/her but in those days everything was so much simpler -- there were fewer students and actually there weren’t that many really good teachers, which I think there are now. Everything was totally different, smaller and more comfortable actually -- here the music department was small and quiet when I first came; now it’s bustling all the time, day and night!

In any case, I started studying with Mr. Hasty and that was just fantastic (I eventually spent five years with him). I first started a master’s degree and finished that in one year. I’ll never forget that, at the end of that first year, a job playing second clarinet in the Flint orchestra and teaching in the Flint public schools came open, and my Mother thought that would just be a great job for me. I knew I could do better than that, and I said no, I didn’t want to apply for that -- we had quite the discussion about that! Then I wanted to start a doctorate so I could continue to work with Mr. Hasty. When the admissions office said I was too young to begin a DMA, I stayed anyway finishing up a music education degree I had begun at Oberlin. During that year I taught lessons in a nearby high school to make enough money to live. Every day that whole year for lunch I had a peanut butter and raspberry jam sandwich, because that was all I could afford [laughs]. Those were lean times and I was lean too! I made it through that year and for some reason that extra year made me old enough to start a doctorate in the eyes of the administration!

At the end of my second year at Eastman a clarinet position opened at Ithaca College. I got the job but I basically didn’t really want to go there—instead I wanted to start a doctorate and I didn’t want to leave Mr. Hasty’s instruction. It worked out that I was able teach there two days a week there, every Friday and Saturday -- eight hours of teaching both days, two hours driving one way and two hours back and then sometimes I would study on Saturday night! I was such a gung-ho kid. Also that year, the Rochester Philharmonic second and E-flat position opened up so I auditioned and won that opening. Thus during my third, fourth and fifth years, I had the Ithaca job, plus the Rochester Philharmonic job and then we often did recordings with the Eastman Wind Ensemble. I
did sixteen albums with them, perhaps making four hundred to five hundred dollars a weekend, so basically for a student, I was rolling in money, it was just amazing. I also had an assistantship which paid for my tuition (when tuition was one thousand dollars a year). Life was good! I paid cash for my first car, a little VW bug; I wasn’t really anxious to leave Eastman at all.

That time period, I think, was really a golden time of Eastman clarinet players. Larry Combs was there, Pete Hadcock was there, Norman Heim who for years was at the University of Maryland, Henry Miyamura who for a long time was principal clarinet in Honolulu, and Charlie Bay was there—any number of really fine clarinet players. With players like those, the Eastman Wind Ensemble was a wonderful group to be in. Also, the great thing about Fred Fennell was that he treated us like colleagues rather than students -- we felt like we were all in it together, conductor and players, and that made us try harder. That group would turn over about twenty to thirty percent every year, but he always made it sound professional and we all took a lot of pride at being part of the group. I will ever be grateful to him for his influence on my life and career.

Actually I’ve been so lucky as I’ve had so many great influences in my musical life over the years-- Stanley Hasty of course, Fred Fennell and Howard Hanson to a certain extent too. During my second year I was appointed principal clarinetist of the Eastman Philharmonia by him and I held that position for the next three years. He gave me that chance to play so much great repertoire—we often did [The] Pines of Rome, as he had studied with Respighi -- and many other works of the important orchestra literature. So I was playing in these wonderful groups and of course I didn’t want to leave Eastman. But around the fifth year I thought maybe it was time. Mr. Hasty generously gave me free lessons that last year since I wasn’t enrolled at the School, only writing my doctoral paper. (It was very long, over four hundred pages, with almost an equal number of musical examples, which someone did for me on a musical typewriter, quite an innovation back then. Not a computer but a typewriter, and at enormous expense for me.) The paper was on the eighteenth century clarinet concertos other than Mozart Concerto—works of Johann and Karl Stamitz, Pokorny and Johann Melchoir Molter. So that fifth year I spent my time writing that and doing those two jobs but then it seemed time to look for a permanent, full-time job.

A clarinet position opened up at the University of Wisconsin--four of us auditioned for that job and the fourth person took it. Can you imagine turning down such a plum job these days? But at that time, the University of Wisconsin didn’t have a music building and my office would have been downtown above a pizza parlor. I felt there would have been no sense of belonging or camaraderie with other music professors and I didn’t feel that I wanted to go there. Yet the instant I walked into this building [School of Music at Michigan State University] and walked down the hall to Keith Stein’s studio, I knew I wanted to be here. I just had a feeling this was right. So I left Eastman to take that one-year job replacing Keith Stein while he was on sabbatical. This was basically a quintet job at that time so for the audition, I checked out every woodwind quintet that the Eastman library had, took out the clarinet part of every one of them and practiced them. I bought the music for the Françaix, the Barber and the Nielsen quintets because I knew those would probably come up in the audition and practiced them too, so when I got there for the audition I was ready [laughs]! I got the job and spent the first year here and, now, it’s going on forty two more.
I was able to stay because when Keith came back from his sabbatical he asked that they keep me on as a second clarinet teacher, for which I have been always grateful. I taught clarinet and some saxophone those first years. We were on the term system then, a great system because you and the students could work really hard for ten weeks each of three terms. I know we got more accomplished during that system than the present semester system. Then, as time went on I had better and better students, and pretty soon I taught mostly grad students.

For the first twenty years here at MSU, I played in the faculty quintet, the Richards Wind Quintet. Then Walter and I were married in 1971 and we started the Verdehr Trio in ’72. We had already done the Bartok *Contrasts* together and other chamber music works, but in 1972-1973, the first real season of the Trio, we really got serious about it. We started out with pianist David Renner, who left MSU after a few years to go to the University of Texas and then worked with several different pianists, among them Deborah Moriarty who is chair of our piano division here. Gary Kirkpatrick joined us at the end of the ’70’s and played with us for about eighteen years. Our first big tour was in 1981-1982 while on sabbatical leave for the year. It was the first time we went to the Orient (Hong Kong, Singapore), then on to Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, finally Egypt and Turkey. It was a great year! We really solidified as a group during that tour. We had started commissioning pieces in ’77—the first commission being *Nocturnes of the Inferno* by Jere Hutcheson, an MSU faculty member. I started the out-of-school commissioning with Karel Husa, Leslie Bassett and Alan Hovhaness. Later Walter took it over and now does almost all of the commissioning. We are kind of a “Mom and Pop” organization as the two of us do everything necessary for the management and running of the Trio. Basically Walter is the brains of the group, has the good and innovative ideas, and does the commissioning, and I do the practical applications -- the organizing, the typing, the preparation of the materials etc. An aside, I never missed taking a sabbatical -- in 1975 we took two terms, from January to June but thereafter always a full year. And I brought some wonderful clarinet players to teach my students while I was away: Thea King and John McCaw came twice, Georgina Dobrée, and Luis Rossi were here as well as Stanley Hasty and Larry Combs doing master classes, and last year Colin Lawson, Charlie Neidich, Ted Oien and Peter Jenkins from Australia Ballet and Opera. It’s been a wonderful time at MSU all told, a most supportive school to us in so many ways.

DEES: You’ve already touched upon my next question a bit, but who has influenced you and how is this reflected in your teaching and playing?

VERDEHR: Obviously Mr. Hasty influenced me the most, and I didn’t realize it so much at the time. He dealt so much in principles, and these principles keep coming back. Not a day goes by where something I teach or play doesn’t relate to something he told me, a principle he taught which in my teaching and playing has became one that I’ve used really dozens, hundreds of time. A simple example is in the first movement of the Mozart Concerto, I did that my second year with him. Just as the development starts, about eight bars after the clarinet enters, there’s a scale passage that goes [sings]; then there’s a repetition or echo of it. He suggested that in such a place play the first time with a crescendo, definitely and clearly, then the second time with absolutely no crescendo. This will heighten the difference between original phrase and the echo. That has worked
thousands of times, and it really does make such a difference, making the contrast so clear.

Some of the things I was just saying to the student playing the Weber Second Concerto [in a lesson earlier in the day] were adaptations of his idea on fitting the articulations first to the line and second, for variety. But also, one must consider one’s own tonguing limitations --if you need to, he said, put in a “judicious slur.” That’s just plain common sense, and actually a lot of his teaching was good common sense, thoughtful sensible principles that apply over and over and over. While I have found him to be my most important influence, maybe the other most important influence was, well, there are two or more.

While I was at Marlboro (Music Festival in Vermont) for four summers during my first years at MSU, I worked with [Marcel] Moyse [the great French flutist who founded the Marlboro Festival with Rudolf Serkin] and also Harold Wright. I often sat next to Harold Wright in various chamber groups thus heard him play a lot. He’d give me a long lesson once during each summer--we’d get together and talk or play for two or three hours. I’d ask him a question and his answer would lead to another question and discussion and to another, etc. That would buoy me up for the year and give me all sorts of things to think about and work on. [Richard] Stoltzman was there at the same time I was, and both of us changed to double lip at about the same time. I didn’t change simply because Harold Wright played that way, although you couldn’t help notice the smoothness and the beauty of the sound and the legato of the intervals. It just seemed to me it was something I needed to do. I thought my sound was a little on the tight side and I needed a little more of the bottom of the sound. But he was a wonderful influence in so many ways and also he was such a wonderful person. In fact, when he died I wrote a long letter to his wife, I was so fond of them both, mentioning some of the funny incidents I remembered about him. She wrote back saying how much she had enjoyed hearing those stories as she hadn’t known about them. Others had written about what a great player and musician he was which she already knew but this brought his personal side back to her as well.

For example, the weekend at Marlboro was sort of a tense time as there were important concerts and the big concert was Sunday afternoon at 4:00. After that the participants either went out to dinner or the wives of the musicians would cook up some sort of specialty meal for those who stayed on campus. Many times I would stay “on campus” as it was a wonderful way of getting to know such great musicians in a more personal way, and after dinner there would be a square dance or some similar activity. Once there was such a square dance evening and a number of groups of eight were dancing. Well, Buddy [Harold Wright] would infiltrate one group of eight as they were dancing, increasing the number to an unbalanced nine. This disrupted that group so he then went on to the next group and the next and the next until finally everything just ground to a halt in confusion. He would just do things like that; he was really a very funny man. I remember once we were putting away chairs to get ready for such a dance and somebody accidentally dropped a chair. Then someone else dropped a chair, so then Buddy picked up a chair and he threw it, and then other people began throwing chairs, so it became a kind of crazy time which he instigated. Not only such a wonderful player, but he was also just such a nice, fun person to be around.
Marcel Moyse musically really opened my eyes as well—he is reflected a lot in my teaching. Do you know the third movement of the Reicha Quintet, Op. 88, No. 2, I think—in E-flat major—it has that gorgeous oboe solo [sings]. Well, in places like that he would sing the passage and then would describe it, likening it to a beautiful sunny day, in great detail—he used a lot of such imagery. When he finished talking about a passage it was so much more meaningful and you really had an idea of what you wanted to do with it. Every Tuesday night at Marlboro we would have a Moyse night, I guess you would call it, and from his “melody book” (a compilation of operatic melodies he had put together) we would each play an opera melody which he would then coach. That meant Harold Wright, Mike Bloom [principal horn in Cleveland Orchestra] as well as us lowly ones; everybody played an opera melody on which he commented. It was always frightening to be in front of those incredible woodwind players and play those melodies. But Moyse brought such imagination and imagery to each tune and somehow, and in so many different ways, he taught you to do many different dynamics and colors and personalities. I think he was probably my most important influence in that way.

Other influences were, as I said earlier, George Waln who really laid the groundwork for my playing career in those four years at Oberlin. Then Mr. Hasty enlarged my horizons in every aspect and taught so many principles that it was possible for me to continue to teach myself long after I finished my studies at Eastman. Actually I’m still learning! By the way, I think that is so important—that you teach students in such a way that they can teach themselves—that’s the whole essence of teaching to me—so that when they leave the studio for the week before the next lesson or when they graduate and leave the university, they know how to teach themselves based on the way you taught them—otherwise, what have you done? Once I was asked to be an observer for the teaching of someone who was being considered for tenure. In her lessons her comments were: “play that note longer, well, why don’t you try this fingering”, “that sounds pretty good but let’s try it over here.” And I thought, there is just nothing the student can take out from that lesson and apply to other situations—observing those lessons really clarified for me how important it was to teach my students to teach themselves and to be clear in what the student should do once before they leave the studio. I feel working with if Mr. Hasty left me with so much to build on and then Moyse just opened my eyes to how much really could and should be done with a piece of music and how what’s on the page is just the beginning. You have to start there, but then find the intent behind it and you have to figure out the personality of the work and how everything relates—and the relationships are endless if you start looking. I find that really fascinating. And, another influence, of course, Iggy Gennusa—without him I probably never would have played the clarinet.

At Marlboro I played with Rudolf Serkin who was another important influence on me. We played the Beethoven, Op. 16 Quintet with winds and did several performances of that. It was eye opening—there’s a long introduction [sings] and then the piano goes into all sorts of wonderful roulades and distant harmonies and unrelated keys—it’s a kind of Sturm und Drang episode. He made it really come to life so vividly—it was really a defining moment for me. As he played the various themes you could just hear the different personalities, it was so imaginative, it elevated and gave new meaning to the piece. Also when I watched him in performances I could often see that he was thinking subdivisions, you could see his mouth marking the subdivisions—that was basically
another Hasty principle, subdividing for accuracy of rhythm and also to make ritards and accelerations more gradual and natural.

Mr. Serkin was just such a great musician and you could just hear the greatness whenever he played, but he was equally a wonderful person. That really made a great impression on me. Pablo Casals was also at Marlboro during those years too but I was a bit put off by the fact that Casals seemed to love all the adulation he received and sort of insisted on it—in fact, you had to stand up when he walked into the room. Mr. Serkin was not like that and was just as nice as he could be to me. An example: I had played second clarinet in the Rochester Philharmonic when he played the Brahms Second Piano Concerto, the one that has the two clarinet solos in the middle with the piano doing a sort of Alberti Bass. Two summers later I was coming in new to Marlboro that year and the first day I was there, he came over to say hello and said, “We played together in Rochester.” I thought, how remarkable that he would remember an insignificant second clarinet player—maybe he looked up and read the resumes of all the new people each summer, but the fact that he was decent enough to put that together and come speak to me, that meant a lot. And another example—one still often used hairspray in those days. One morning I had sprayed hairspray into one eye so my whole eye was red. I went to breakfast and he saw me, stopped me, and wanted to know if everything was OK, had I been crying and could he help. And I thought, no matter how great a musician one is, it is equally important to be a great person as well, not only a great musician. So I have to say he influenced me a lot musically and personally.

Speaking of Buddy Wright, because of him I came to Marlboro so he influenced my life in that way also. I was one of twenty five who had auditioned to play second clarinet next to him in the National Symphony. Pete Hadcock and I drove down in Pete’s Porsche to DC to audition. I came in second for that position, not first, but because Buddy heard me at that, he recommended me for Marlboro. That was a great thing and lucky too because the Marlboro experience was fantastic and a big influence in my life. To be with all those incredible musicians and to try to reach their level, that was a real challenge and great experience. I think I was twenty four or when I first went and it was sort of a finishing school for me.

DEES: This brings me to my next question. How would you describe the atmosphere of your studio and what do you do to create it?

VERDEHR: I hate to say it but the first thing that comes to mind is fun loving [laughs]! But it’s not totally true—they are a really serious bunch of people but they are all really nice people and I have to say I really do pick them for both talent and personality. Most of all I want a student who really wants to work. I want to be able to have a good time working with them as well and I want to feel I can make a difference for them. And I have at times picked people who are somewhat inside themselves, who perhaps really need to be brought out of themselves, who I feel need the acceptance and the camaraderie of my class. But then there are usually some extroverts in the class also [laughs]. Basically, I do try to select what I think will be a harmonious group of people who will help each other and enjoy each other and who come from a variety of different teachers with different ideas and approaches. And sometimes, as I said, I select students
who might need help from the rest of such a group. They become, they are always a homogeneous group. Someone wrote a letter about camaraderie of the festival. [MSU’s Fourth Contemporary Clarinet Festival, April 2004] There were people in attendance from my very first class here and from classes since then and they all had a great time together. Also many of my students who weren’t studying here at the same time have become good friends over the years so it is very satisfying to me that they all get along so well.

Mostly, though, they must be serious students and if they aren’t, actually, I either make them into serious students or I don’t continue to teach them. There have been some who were very talented, and I thought I could motivate them, but I couldn’t. Those are really disappointing. Sometimes the students who are natively a little less talented but work really hard are often the biggest successes because they really want to learn. Give me someone who will work, I can do something with them. I can’t necessarily make them into total silk purses but I can do a lot with them. It really is fun and challenging. And, as I said earlier, I feel like the most important thing that I can do as a teacher is to teach the students well enough so they can teach themselves. And secondly, so they can go out and get a job and make a contribution because I made them into the best clarinet player I could. Over time they will continue to get better, hopefully partially because of the way I taught them. I feel I can give them a satisfying and meaningful life if I do it right and I really try hard to do this with each student. So, basically, I really resent it if they don’t work hard but am delighted when they do.

They are very serious students, but they like to have fun, and they have fun with each other and we have fun in the lessons yet we accomplish a lot. I just love working with them and I just can’t imagine not teaching. I have cut down to nine students now—I like that. Perhaps I will cut down to five or six someday, I don’t know.

DEES: What are the most important things for your students to learn and how do you facilitate that learning?

VERDEHR: I approach my teaching from two standpoints. First, I want them to understand the total picture of the physical side of playing the clarinet and I try to explain this to them the best way I can. We have a studio class every Monday night and during the first class of the year I give a sort of lecture demonstration about the hand position, use of the fingers and exercises—a lot of hand outs as my students will attest! Then the next class I talk about tone exercises with specific objectives in mind—working on the sound, variety of dynamics, production, breathing, legato fingers, use of the air, etc. Then a class on tonguing with exercises, then on acoustics with discussion of tuning and the half-hole technique and so on. What I’m trying to do is introduce in the first several weeks all the component parts of the physical aspects of playing. Then after I discuss these principles in class we work on them in the following lesson. So, largely I lecture and discuss during those classes for the first six to eight weeks, we work on these principles in the lessons of those weeks, and then after that, the students start to perform in class, the new students’ études at first, the others their recital, concerto audition and jury pieces, etc. I try to make it very clear to each student during each lesson, how and what to practice during the next week, divided into a three-prong practice plan of technique, études and solos, and to practice three times a day to be most efficient and
effective. I suggest they take enough breaks and to be sure they really carefully develop the new principles I have introduced. I hope that by the time the semester is over even though they haven’t mastered all these ideas, they understand what they are all about and how they can continue to work on their own, given the ideas and handouts I have introduced to them.

The second “big thing”: I want them to understand the musical aspects of playing music and to be able to take a piece of music and make musical sense of it, to interpret it in a meaningful way with an audience in mind. That is more difficult but much more interesting and important to me. There are certain etudes I use with all of my new students—all of whom are graduate students—but the same can be done with undergraduates using Rose 32 and 40 Etudes, Cavallini 30 Caprices and the David Hite books which contain those books and many other excellent etudes. With my students I use three Jeanjean books—the 25 Etudes Progressive and Melodiques, the 18 Etudes de Perfectionnement and the 16 Etudes Modernes. I feel with certain etudes I can get across in a short amount of time a lot of ideas of what is important in musical playing and how these principles can be transferred to the solo repertoire—first we learn the ideas and principles in the etudes and then transfer this way of analyzing to solo repertoire. So, both with the first and second standpoints, the idea is always to analyze and think about and do what is logical and sensible and natural in playing the clarinet and interpreting music.

From the Jeanjean 25 Etudes I use certain etudes (2, 6, 20, 21, 5, 8, 1) to show forms—ABA, variation form, smaller forms within each section, then the phrases, their length, their shape, the focal point, and how the phrases relate to each other, higher, lower, shorter, longer, etc. and also how the harmonies, the non harmonic tones, the articulations—basically everything on the page—affect and shape one’s interpretation. In other words we try together to see how a composer has put together the piece but equally important what his every indication is telling us about how to interpret it—from the words like Presto, Andante, to the above relationships, to what he has implied, to the implications of different articulation styles. Etc. how all of these contribute to understanding the basic character of the piece of etude or of the different sections and influence what you are trying to express. Then I use some etudes in Jeanjean 18 Etudes (1, 3, 4, 8), also mostly ABA forms but much bigger pieces, and finally in the Jeanjean 16 Etudes (5, 7, 3 and 16), ones which are more free and more loosely organized to see how one makes musical sense out of pieces which don’t have such a clearly defined formal structure and where colors and atmosphere become more necessary and important. (Jeanjean 16 Etudes also contain wonderful technique exercises employing arpeggios and the whole tone idiom (2, 4, 6, 14)). Then we try to do the same sort of analysis with the solo repertoire.

DEES: How do you motivate your students?

VERDEHR: I feel that most students who are serious at all are able to be motivated and most are somewhat self-motivated. If I have made it really clear what they have to do in their practice time, so they know exactly what to practice and how to go to a practice room and fix things themselves, it will help to motivate them. If they don’t know specifically what to do, if they don’t know how and what exactly to practice, that’s not
going to help in motivation. I try to be very specific in the assignments I give so they know what pieces that I am expecting, what etudes and what they should do in the practice room. I try to be very clear and I want them to use their own brains, imaginations and ears when they practice. They have to try to figure out what I meant in our discussions in the lessons, the things I pointed out on the page which tell one what to do interpretively and listen and think about it and come up with a musical concept of the etude or piece by thinking about what is written on the page or what is implied interpretively. If I’m really clear about what they need to do musically, physically or technically, plus if they know exactly what the assignment is and I give them enough material so they know they have to go and practice to be able to accomplish the assignment, and then I think they become self-motivated!

DEES: Is there anything you would care to add?

VERDEHR: Well, let’s see: it was really interesting that you asked how my teaching has evolved because as I think about it, it really has evolved. We have a good friend in Germany -- Ulf Hoescher; he is a renowned violin teacher at the Conservatory in Karlsruhe. He was telling us about how many hours he taught a day and that sometimes he went from eight a.m. to ten p.m. and I asked, “How can you do that?” He said, “You know when I was a student there were so many things I didn’t understand or know and now there’s so much I know!” and I feel that way too to a certain extent. There’s so much I know now—well, there is a lot I don’t know also-- but there’s so much I know now, it would be nice to pass it on. If I can make what I know clear to my students, then, first of all, maybe they won’t have the problems that I had, and second, they will just understand things better sooner. For example, I understand so much better now the Brahms Sonatas than when I started to teach. That doesn’t mean I have the ultimate understanding of these, but I just understand a lot better than I ever did. Or, for that matter, so many other pieces, they “make sense” to me, I know what I think about them and how I want to play them and what I think the composer had in mind. There’s still a lot more there than just my point of view, but at least it’s a definite point of view based on what I see and think the music does and says. I’d like to think that my teaching helps make it possible for my students to play better and with more insight into the music they play. So my teaching certainly has come a long way from where I started—when I came back to Mr. Hasty after that first weekend of teaching at Ithaca and said, “They are all about my same age and I feel I have to prove myself to them.” He said,” you don’t have to prove yourself to them, they have to prove themselves to you.” As I think about that statement, I think I now believe that both the teacher and the student have to prove themselves to each other.
JOHN WEIGAND

John Weigand is Professor of Clarinet at West Virginia University in Morgantown, WV. He holds a BM from Oberlin, MM from Northwestern University, and a DM from Florida State University. Dr. Weigand studied with Robert Marcellus, Fred Ormand, and Lawrence McDonald. In addition to his performance and teaching schedule, he also works on mouthpieces and makes his own reeds. He is a member of the West Virginia Symphony, the Seneca Chamber Orchestra, the Laureate Quintet, and frequently performs with the Baltimore Symphony. 11 Professor Weigand team teaches with Professor Jeanne Frieben.

Beginning with the second lesson of their freshman year, all of Professor Weigand’s students keep a lesson notebook. Instructions they receive from Professor Weigand, plus all comments from the student, are kept in this notebook. The notebook serves as both a record for the student and the teacher. Upon graduation the students have their own personal instruction book. In addition, when the student moves from one teacher to the other at WVU, the teacher knows exactly what the student has been working on. Professor Weigand commented also that when some of the younger students say “I didn’t know I had to do that,” it doesn’t work as an excuse for not practicing correctly.

In addition to weekly studio class, Professor Weigand also has a weekly reed class. Students learn to make blanks from tube cane, then reeds from these blanks using a ReeDuAl. After they have mastered the basic skills they are required to play on their own reeds. They spend some lesson time working on reeds in their lessons if necessary.

Lesson Observation

The first lesson I observed was a sophomore on March 11, 2004. The lesson began with a discussion between Professor Weigand and the student about what she was

working on. Professor Weigand then said, “OK, show me what you have been doing to practice the relaxing.” The student began by playing exercise number one of the Opperman *Advanced Velocity Studies* which focused on long legato articulation. She played the entire exercise, stopping only for breaths. When she finished playing Professor Weigand asked her questions about whether or not her tongue was relaxed, and what it should have been doing, and how long it had been relaxed. He then confirmed the student’s observations of her own playing by saying, “That’s what I noticed too.” He asked her how she had practiced it, and let her know, “I don’t want you to play it unless you are one hundred percent relaxed.” He suggested that she stop playing when she felt tension creeping in and reset her embouchure. He had her play a small section at the end of the piece with a relaxed tongue and when she finished said, “Do you hear how much better that sounded? Don’t be hesitant about stopping, even in here, if you feel tension creeping in.”

Professor Weigand then asked if her fingers felt relaxed too, and pointed out that relaxing one part of her body transfers over into other areas. “Even though we are working on tonguing and fingers both, and they are somewhat unrelated, the aspect of what we are working on, relaxing, is similar.” He then asked what they could do to make the etude more difficult, the student suggested speeding it up. Professor Weigand then sang the opening passage of the exercise at a new tempo for her to play. The student began playing at the new tempo. He asked her about how relaxed it was and said he thought it was much better and also, “I liked how you left out notes to breathe that time instead of stopping the music to breathe.”

He then turned on the metronome and had her play it again at a faster tempo. When she was finished playing he asked her what she thought. Professor Weigand asked questions to get her engaged and thinking about her playing before he made suggestions for change. “What do you think the next step is? Should we go back and practice it slowly, or should we play it again at this speed and try to relax it?” When the student responded incorrectly he gave her an analogy to think about;

Think about weightlifting. You don’t pick up the heavy weight and keep trying to lift it and hurt yourself, right? Start with medium weights, do repetitions every day, then add more. That was about one hundred [tempo: quarter note equals] maybe ninety two or something like that. I
would insist on one hundred percent relaxation. Some things are more important than other things [wrote in students notebook]. Right now for you it is more important to worry about speed than going through a whole page...Endurance is not a major factor, it will come with time and practice. You don’t need to practice endurance now. In order to have one hundred percent relaxation all the time we have to do this [music] in sections. Don’t worry about playing it all the way through. Right now that would be destructive. Start out slower then add the speed gradually. The fastest you are allowed to go is as fast as you can play it with one hundred percent relaxation. The shorter the section you play, the faster you can go. Let’s try it at this tempo [turned on metronome].

The student played again at the new tempo, her fingers becoming tense again. Professor Weigand had her play it slurred so she could focus on finger relaxation.

That was way better. Did your fingers grab the clarinet over the break? [The student said yes.] Yes, they did! Can you do that slurred without grabbing on? No death grip. If a note doesn’t come out, or you squeak, that’s fine, just don’t squeeze. [The student played again.] That was way better, but not one hundred percent. Let’s do it again until the end is just as relaxed as the beginning.

Professor Weigand continued to have her play, and then asked her questions about her playing. After her fingers were more relaxed he had her play it with articulation, but only the first measure, and sped up the metronome as she was able to play it correctly. When the tempo got too fast for her to tongue clearly, he had her tongue the pattern on one note. Then she added the finger movement. “When you are practicing, keep it slow, keep it medium, and play it in small sections.” The student moved on to exercise number four, and they worked on this etude in the same manner.

Professor Weigand then introduced her to her piece for this semester’s jury, the Françaix Theme and Variations. He told her, “Your ability to play that fast is going to be determined by the quality of the slower and medium speed relaxed practicing that you do. This is a really fun piece to play.” Professor Weigand has his students listen to pieces in styles related to what they are working on. After introducing the Françaix he said, “I want you to go to the music library and check out the Barber of Seville [Rossini]. That’s going to give you your style.”

In this lesson he asked such questions as, “Where’s the problem? Show me.” They would then discuss where she was having difficulty, and he would suggest that she
play it again, “Really slowly, with soft, flexible fingers.” The student played again and he said, “I’m suspicious of one of your fingers.” The student agreed and he said,

How little pressure can you use? Show me what too little pressure sounds like. Soft fingers. [The student played again.] That’s getting better. Now, when I say soft that doesn’t mean slow and lazy. They need to be light and snappy. Think about something that is moving fast, but is lightweight, like a ping-pong ball. That’s not really the best analogy, but it needs to be a light mechanical action, not squeezing, and not hard, no tension.”

He then showed her proper finger technique, utilizing motion from the first knuckle (where the fingers join the hand) keeping the fingers curved. They then practiced hand relaxation techniques away from the instrument. Professor Weigand had the student drop her hand at her side and let it completely relax. The student then played back and forth, over the break, slowly, with relaxed fingers. At the end of the lesson he reminded her about correct practice habits and practicing with a purpose.

The second lesson was a freshman who has two thirty-minute lessons each week. This lesson was two days before spring break. The student stood for her lesson. Professor Weigand told her she can decide when to play seated by demonstrating that her seated playing sounds as good as when she stands. The student started her lesson by playing minor scales. If Professor Weigand’s students are unable to play their scales from memory to his satisfaction, they have to come in at seven a.m. Monday morning for scale class. Professor Weigand had her play sitting and standing to compare her posture and tone quality.

After her scales Professor Weigand said, “Show me what you have been practicing with your breathing since Monday.” He has his students practice breathing techniques with a breathing bag. A “breathing bag” is a plastic grocery bag taped to a piece of plastic tubing, about an inch in diameter. He has them alternate inhaling and exhaling on the bag with playing on their clarinets. The result is more relaxed, natural breathing. The student used her breathing bag and then played an etude.

The student played the etude with incorrect rhythms and notes. Professor Weigand had her practice the section slowly and said, “Good!” when she played it correctly. He then had her gradually play it faster and later said, “You are playing the right notes, your fingers are just a little uncoordinated. What do you think you should do
to fix that?” The student wasn’t sure. Professor Weigand said,

I can think of two things you can do to help with this passage. We are working on your pride in what you are doing. Believe it or not that has a lot to do with posture and breathing. If you don’t think that the rhythm is right, or that you aren’t playing the notes right, you aren’t going to be confident. And when you aren’t confident and you are tentative it causes your breathing to go bad. This is all connected. Now, you are playing all the right notes and you are now playing the rhythm. What two methods have we already covered, that I’m sure are in your lesson journal, will help with this?

The student suggested using different rhythms and practicing slowly. Professor Weigand acknowledged her correct answer then had her play it slowly and with different rhythms. He then discussed the tendency of the ring finger to be weaker, and thus tend to move slower in relationship to the other fingers. He had her practice with a dotted rhythm to move the slowest finger faster, in front of a mirror, so she could see the finger movement. He ended the lesson by saying,

I know this sounds like a lot of work for a little detail, but you’ll play the first measure better if you are well prepared in the entire piece. You can lie to me and to the audience but you can’t lie to yourself. It will affect the way you walk out on stage, the way you feel. The week before a performance even, you have to feel totally secure and confident about the way you play everything. That’s why we are working on this. See you after Spring Break.

Interview

Morgantown, WV
March 12, 2004

DEES: Discuss your early musical or non-musical experiences and how they have shaped your career.

WEIGAND: Well I started in band in the sixth grade. My mother wanted me to play piano starting in about fourth grade, I took a few lessons and hated it, then she threatened me with the accordion [laughs] and that would have been even worse. And finally I said [to my mother], “Well, they are starting band. Let me start in band and then forget the piano.” The teacher, Kent Krive, came in and played all the instruments. I didn’t know it at the time but he had a Master’s degree in clarinet from Michigan State and he was a student of Keith Stein’s. He played all the instruments, he was a good woodwind doubler too, and he was obviously better on clarinet. I thought, that must be the easiest one, so I’ll try that one [laughs]! Not as dramatic a story as some, but that’s why I picked clarinet. Clarinet was a fun thing to do, and I was into sports and into a
bunch of things. As I got into high school the sports and music started to pull both ways. Baseball was pulling one way.

DEES: This was in Michigan, right?

WEIGAND: Yeah. We had the same director, I had no idea at the time how good he was, but he was my clarinet teacher up until Junior year of high school when I studied with Keith Stein. He was a really good band director, Kent Krive. The other band director I had for a while was Carl Bjerregard. He was my High School band director for awhile too. So, I had two really good ones; it was one of the top programs in the nation. They would play at the Mid-West conference very often. My Junior year we played at the Mid-West conference and we were one of the big evening concerts. They took us to a Chicago Symphony concert. I remember sitting up in the balcony and they played Enigma Variations and Beethoven’s Fifth. I knew of orchestras and stuff but I didn’t know people would do that full time for a living. I thought that was so awesome. I went back and talked to Keith Stein about it. I asked, “Is that what people do for a living?” So, that’s what I wanted to do from that time on, I wanted to play. I wasn’t really too hot on being a public school music teacher ever. I just didn’t really want to do that. I was thinking about being a policeman, or being a fighter pilot. That was the most common thing I was thinking about.

DEES: Being a fighter pilot?

WEIGAND: Yeah, I was a pilot when I was in high school. I liked to fly. But that concert gave me focus as to what I wanted to do. So I auditioned at schools that were going to point me in that direction. That Chicago Symphony concert was a major pivot point in my life. I drove around to some schools, and even though the clarinet teacher was retiring, I really liked Oberlin; there was just something about the place. They were getting a new teacher. I didn’t even know who that teacher was. I don’t think they even knew at the time. It ended up to be Lauren Kitt for a year and then he left and went to the National Symphony and they hired Larry McDonald. He was a great teacher, he was the perfect teacher for me. I think he is one of the great teachers. If I had a kid and wanted to send him to some teacher someplace, that’s where I’d send him. He was wonderful, not just me, other people from Oberlin, by the time they would go study with Marcellus, he would hardly have to fix anything. Marcellus said he liked Larry McDonald’s students better than any grad students he would get from anywhere because they had the fewest problems.

But anyway, one of the things Oberlin had was free tickets for students. You could go once a semester, or whatever, to the Symphony for free, they didn’t tell you what the orchestra was playing, just the composers, and you just signed up on the board for tickets.

DEES: That was for Cleveland, right?

WEIGAND: Yeah, that was Cleveland Orchestra concerts. Szell was still alive, this was Fall of 1969. This senior had befriended me and he said “do you want to go to a
concert?” and I said sure. So we went and signed up for a program, there was one that said Mozart and Strauss, so we signed up for that one. We get there and the first half of the concert was this string piece. And I thought Severance Hall was cool and everything, but I’m bored cause where’s the wind players? The second half was the Mozart Bb Serenade, and I heard Marcellus for the first time, and Mack and all those people. And I had no idea that wind instruments could sound like that. That was a total eye opener to hear, in Severance Hall, with Szell, live. After that night I was hooked. I went every time I possibly could go. Sometimes, like when he did Shepherd on the Rock, I went to all three concerts. When there was something big I would always try to go twice. Not just him of course, but the whole orchestra. And even after Szell died the orchestra was still great for a while. But that experience, hearing Marcellus and Mack, Mack had just as much influence on me, hearing that kind of oboe playing. I remember hearing Mahler Nine and some other stuff, it was all great, it hugely impressed me. So those were probably the two biggest things to me, hearing those two concerts [Chicago Symphony and Cleveland Orchestra].

DEES: This really leads into the next question. Who influenced you and how is this reflected in your teaching and playing?

WEIGAND: There are so many, I don’t even know where to start.

DEES: Right, that’s the tricky part.

WEIGAND: I can’t imagine that I could have had any better teaching if I went back and lived my life again now. Starting with Kent Krive, who started me in sixth grade, and then Keith Stein, and then Larry McDonald and then Robert Marcellus and then Fred Ormand. Every one was influential in [his] own way, I’d lump them all together into great clarinet teachers.

DEES: Who was Larry McDonald’s teacher?

WEIGAND: Robert Marcellus and Jerry Stowell, those two. If you put a Roman numeral one in that line of fantastic teachers, and then the whole Roman numeral two was the great schools I went to Oberlin when it was truly a great school. Having Kenneth Moore as the conductor of what they called Wind Ensemble, which was more like chamber winds and then going to the Cleveland Institute and having Marcellus there. Then going to Blossom a few years and working with Myron Bloom, and especially John Mack, John Mack gets a star. And Bernie Goldschmidt, who was the principal second violinist in Cleveland, he was a fantastic coach. Then there were people at Northwestern, Kujalla and Ray Still. All those chamber music coaches and conductors, both, I really can’t pick out one, from an aural standpoint, from hearing, of course Marcellus was the most influential, clearly. But, it all forms together, I don’t know that there’s one person who has been influential as far as teaching, because I’ve taken a piece from all those people.

DEES: What are the main things you got from them all?
WEIGAND: There’s a couple of obvious things. With those really good clarinet teachers, I got a really good understanding of how the thing works. And having Ormand at the end was perfect, because I learned more about clarinet teaching from him. Not necessarily about playing the clarinet, he certainly helped me a lot, but at that level, by the time I got to study with him, I could already play pretty well. But I learned a lot about teaching from him. There was a space between Marcellus and Ormand. There were seven years in there; I had already been out teaching.

DEES: Why did you go to Florida State?

WEIGAND: I was at UNC Greensboro: that job just fell in my lap, they were looking for somebody, somebody called me in for an interview and they gave me the job. It was a good job, it was a decent teaching job and I played assistant principal and E-flat in the North Carolina Symphony, which was a pretty good orchestra. I got to play there ten or twelve weeks a year, which was all I could do and keep my other job. The school was going down hill, partly, and it was made clear to me that they wouldn’t give me tenure without a doctorate, and they wouldn’t give me a year off to go get a doctorate. It was screwed up. So, I can see the handwriting on the wall, it’s time to get out of here. I decided, well, maybe I’m interested in a doctorate, who can I go and study with that I can actually learn something? I checked with Marcellus first, he said sure, great, come on back.

DEES: Was he at Northwestern then?

WEIGAND: Yeah, I actually did my master’s at Northwestern, although I started at Cleveland. The doctoral program at NU was a year and seven summers, with no financial aid in the summer. I know I could have played extra in the Chicago Symphony, I know I could do teaching, it would have been a nice set up, but, I can’t go seven summers with no financial aid.

DEES: Not at NU.

WEIGAND: I had a baby at that time and everything; I said “Forget that.” Who with a reasonable program could I learn something from, I didn’t want to go somewhere where I played better than the teacher. Fred Ormand’s name kept coming up, I called him on the phone and I met him, he was at Michigan State. I went one summer and I took a couple of classes at MSU, I liked him a lot, school was fine, and I quit and decided to do my DM at MSU. I had the van ready, the moving truck, everything was ready to go. About two weeks before I was ready to move, I got a call from Bob Glidden [then Dean of the School of Music at Florida State University]. He said, “We offered the clarinet position at Florida State to Fred Ormand but he can’t come for another year because it’s too late. Do you want to come down here and teach for a year and then do your doctorate at FSU?” It took me about a half a second, Michigan or Florida,

DEES: I can picture you thinking, where can I play golf more?
WEIGAND: I said, I’ll be right there. I did do an actual interview at FSU, but it was a formality. So I went down to FSU and taught for a year. That was wonderful for several reasons. There were some great faculty, Bill Winstead, Peter Spencer, John Bode, Clifford Madsen, people I really learned a lot from. But also, I knew the ins and outs of the school before I was a student. The faculty thought of me as an adult, I had chops of my own, they knew that I wasn’t a total moron when I started my degree. They didn’t cut me any breaks per se; there weren’t classes I was excused from or anything like that. I did have a faculty parking sticker, I got it ahead of time while I still had the valid faculty ID. But I got the student rates at the golf course [laughs]!

How did we get off on that topic? Well, back to my influences, from the clarinet standpoint, I had all those great teachers. From a musicianship standpoint, I think that is even more important, I got to hear the Cleveland Orchestra live all the time. I got to work with John Mack all the time, and Myron Bloom at Blossom, Bernie Goldschmidt and Ken Moore at Oberlin, he was the conductor, he was a great musician, I was around these people and learned how to be a musician from these people. That was probably even more important than just having good clarinet teachers.

DEES: How do you try to share these experiences with your students?

WEIGAND: In the same way as I described it to you. It’s two separate things. Playing the instrument, the mechanical skills, the embouchure, breathing, making reeds, then the musicianship stuff also. For every student I divide a semester roughly in half. We do half a semester on skills, breathing, tonguing, and then the second part of the semester we gradually shift over and do some kind of repertoire. Well, a first semester freshman typically does more skills and less repertoire. A grad student will do more repertoire. The musicianship stuff is reflected in this part of the curriculum when they are doing their repertoire, whether it’s Finzi, Weber, Mozart, Debussy. According to the student, I try to not be a clarinet teacher at some point and just be a coach.

DEES: Do you encourage them to listen?

WEIGAND: This is something I wanted to say: I am a very strong believer in this. For instance, if someone is working on a Brahms Sonata, I ask them to not listen to any recordings of that particular piece. I have them listen to Brahms Third Symphony, Brahms Violin Concerto. If somebody is doing Debussy I have a really great old record with Pierre Boulez and Cleveland doing L’Images then the Danses sacré et profane with harp and the students just need to listen and listen and listen to that, then they know what Debussy sounds like. Then they are ready to do the Premiere Rhapsody, not copying somebody else’s recording. If they are learning Mozart, I don’t even like them to listen to Marcellus’ recording that much. I have them listen to piano concertos and serenades, other pieces, that way they learn Mozart’s style. They are able to separate the clarinet skills from the music making.
DEES: How would you describe the atmosphere of your studio and what do you do to create it?

WEIGAND: Atmosphere of the studio changes just about every semester. One or two people can influence that a lot. I had a pretty negative student the last three semesters, when she finally dropped; it was like a cloud was removed from the room, everybody was happier.

DEES: How do you deal with that, the one person who poisons the studio?

WEIGAND: Politely, but very straightforward, I would address it just as if this girl’s mother was in the room. I talked to her Dad about it, he knew exactly what I was talking about. I asked her “Why are you so negative all the time?” I asked her politely, but hit her right between the eyes with it, did not beat around the bush. She at least didn’t hate me, she was just negative all the time, a storm cloud was over her head. I believe in teaching everybody as a total individual. If you have fifteen students, you have fifteen different grading scales, but I believe in treating everybody the same: with courtesy and respect. If they get out of line, I zap them, I just let them know they are out of line, I don’t get mad. I let them know where the line is that they can’t cross. Obviously, don’t get too close to them. Older students with more experience, I can talk to them differently than somebody who’s twenty. That’s about all you can do, it’s up to them. I allow them to be themselves, and encourage them to be happy, and to work hard, but it’s up to them ultimately. The other thing that we do in studio class is when they are playing, everybody is supportive of each other. If they are making comments, we make sure the comments are constructive, so they learn how to do that, learn how to be constructive.

DEES: What are the most important things for your students to learn and how do you facilitate that learning?

WEIGAND: There’s really only one most important thing for them to learn, and that is: to teach them how to teach themselves to play through effective practice. That’s one huge thing, now there are roman numerals under that of course, that would all be skills. Rhythm is the most important skill obviously. If you are out of rhythm nothing else matters, you can have a beautiful sound, beautiful musicianship, but if you are out of rhythm nobody wants you. And then there’s the other things on down the list, yes you have to have a sound, yes you have to have technique and expression, all that. The way I teach is to teach them how to do it themselves. It’s very much like if I am conducting and there’s a balance problem, only as a last resort will I tell someone they are too loud. I will tell them what the problem is: “I don’t hear all six of you equally, listen to the people around you and fix it.” It might take a little longer, but it is a more permanent solution than to say “first trumpet you are too loud” He’ll play softer, but it still probably won’t be right, and then he won’t be listening, the next time he will just play soft. If you tell him what the problem is, he will learn to listen and fix it himself. Teach people to do it themselves. That’s sort of an all-encompassing thing. It’s what we were talking about before, about raising children. You don’t raise children, you raise adults. You give them the freedom that they show they deserve. If my daughter is home when she says she is
home, she does have a cell phone, she likes it when I check up on her. Where are you, what are you doing? If she is out doing something this afternoon and I come home and she is not there, I am not worried, there will either be a written message or a voice mail message telling me where she is. She has earned my trust and I will go away for three days and leave her here alone in the house with the car and she’s not going to get into trouble.

DEES: Has your teaching changed over the years, if so, how?

WEIGAND: I don’t know, there’s two good parts of teaching, really. There’s the instructional part, this is how you do an embouchure, this is how you breathe. That really hasn’t changed so much. I have picked up a few little tips here and there, just from experience you get a little bit better, if you pay attention. Basically when I first started out as a college teacher, I knew how to teach already. I had done it and had all that fabulous instruction. I was pretty good at the skill part for my age. The area we all change, if you pay attention, is where you are the psychologist, and you learn about people. You learn how to deal with them. Where I continue to grow is figuring out people quicker, learning how to deal with their emotional issues more effectively, that sort of thing. In a way I feel like you have to teach ten years or so before you begin to figure that out. That’s the more difficult side, but also rewarding. When you take somebody who has no confidence, but who plays pretty well, and they improve steadily, not just the playing, that’s part of it, but how they carry themselves, you can then hear it in their playing. That’s really the most rewarding, when I help a student change, so they can change their life for the better. Or students who are really nervous, I can’t help them not be nervous, but I can help them figure it out and deal with it. They have to do it, we can show them how.

DEES: How do you motivate your students?

WEIGAND: You can’t motivate them, they have to motivate themselves. You can threaten them, that will work for a week or two [laughs]. The threat helps, for a very short time. The only way to help them motivate themselves, this only works with true honesty. If you aren’t honest with them, they know. They have to recognize that they are improving. It doesn’t matter how bad they suck or how great they are. If they think that they are getting better, and if other people tell them they are getting better, then they are going to want to keep practicing, they are going to want to get better, that will inspire them. That’s all there is too it. Help them realize they are getting better. If somebody has no confidence you have to find something they can do better, even if it’s just playing louder. Do something just to start the process, put it together, one piece at a time. I don’t think negativism works for anybody. That’s it.

DEES: Is there anything you care to add?

WEIGAND: I have alluded several times to the excellent education I received, not only on the clarinet, but especially musically. It is of the utmost importance to me to be able to perform as much as I can, within the constraints of a full-time university
position. I am very fortunate to be able to play regularly as a substitute in the Baltimore Symphony, mostly as second clarinetist, but including playing E-Flat, and principal on occasion on some pretty important parts like Ginastera’s Variations and Rhapsody in Blue. As a result, I know what it takes to play in an excellent professional orchestra, and I know I am capable of making a good contribution. Add to that a lot of performing around the state and at WVU, I keep quite busy. This makes me a much better teacher by staying current on the instrument, and gives me a great deal of credibility with my students.
CONCLUSION

While the intention of my study was not to compare or contrast these professors, some similarities were apparent. Every professor in this study demonstrated techniques for their students, either by playing musical examples on clarinet, or singing and also conducted as their students played. All professors worked on the student’s tone quality in the lesson, which suggests the importance of producing a good sound. A majority of professors used vocal syllables to indicate correct articulation, or shape of oral cavity for tone production. Many referred to their former teachers or colleagues when passing on specific information to students.

Professors often recommended a variety of practice techniques for their students and stressed the importance of practicing correctly to reinforce good habits. In addition, many professors suggested that muscular changes in these practice sessions take time and the students should be patient; muscular practice is cumulative.

Phrasing was another topic the majority of professors touched upon in their lessons. Many professors taught phrasing by including theoretical analysis. When coaching solos with piano accompaniment all professors stressed the importance of knowing the accompaniment as well as the clarinet part. When the student was preparing for a performance, the professors all worked on stage presence, and the interaction between clarinetist and accompaniment.

Articulation was another frequent concept worked on in the lessons. The teachers had a variety of ways of teaching articulation: modeling, using syllables, and compulsory exercises. All encouraged the students to use more or faster air as they articulated. The majority of professors taught the tip of the tongue on the tip of the reed. Robert Spring had a student work on double tonguing for a brief time in a lesson.

The way lesson time is handled varied only slightly. Seven out of eight participants gave one one-hour private lesson to students each week. John Weigand’s younger students instead receive two thirty-minute lessons each week. Howard Klug sets
up his studio in a completely different manner: all of his students get one thirty-minute private lesson and one two-hour group lesson weekly. All professors give a weekly studio or master class in which a variety of topics are discussed and students have the opportunity to perform.

The variables in the applied studio are so numerous as to preclude any accurate general representation of applied study. The professors’ approach to lesson content varies depending on the student’s level, time in the semester, and what the student is preparing for. The lessons observed occurred at a variety of times during the school year, and with a wide variety of students of different ages, levels and abilities.

In the interviews, all of the teachers attributed their initial interest and later success to teachers and colleagues, and a love for playing the instrument. Many teachers commented that students are much busier now than they used to be. The student’s don’t have as much free time to attend concerts, listen to recordings and study scores. Professors said that listening to recordings is essential in developing tone production, phrasing and overall musicianship. They also commented that it doesn’t matter how talented a student is unless he or she also practices. Most professors would rather have an average student who worked hard than a talented student who didn’t practice. They commented that most good students were able to motivate themselves, and having success in the practice room or lesson was great motivation. Professors also mentioned how motivating competition or peer interaction can be to students.

Many professors, when discussing how their teaching has changed over the years, talked about becoming stricter about some things (usually fundamentals) and more lenient about others (knowing that some aspects of a student’s playing will evolve naturally over time). Many also commented that they are more confident in their knowledge and understand concepts better now than when they began teaching. Ultimately, teachers wanted their students to gain tools necessary to teach themselves.

This study can serve as a tool for both students and teachers. It provides a bank of pedagogical approaches to the clarinet from a variety of college professors, at various schools, having taught over many years. Students may increase their knowledge and understanding of clarinet playing and performance by applying concepts learned from this study. Inexperienced teachers, while forming their own teaching style and
environment, might do well to emulate a more experienced teacher. Finally, more experienced teachers might broaden and enhance their own lesson content and style.
APPENDIX

Office of the Vice President
For Research
Tallahassee, Florida 32306-2763
(850) 644-8673 · FAX (850) 644-4392

APPROVAL MEMORANDUM
Human Subjects Committee

Date: 12/18/2003

Margaret Dees
P. O. Box 85475
Seattle, WA 98145

Dept.: Music

From: David Quadagno, Chair

Re: Use of Human Subjects in Research

A review of ten university clarinet studies: An observational study of pedagogical style, content and philosophy

The forms that you submitted to this office in regard to the use of human subjects in the proposal referenced above have been reviewed by the Secretary, the Chair, and two members of the Human Subjects Committee. Your project is determined to be exempt per 45 CFR § 46.101(b) 2 and has been approved by an accelerated review process.

The Human Subjects Committee has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk to the human participants and the aspects of the proposal related to potential risk and benefit. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals, which may be required.

If the project has not been completed by 12/17/2004 you must request renewed approval for continuation of the project.

You are advised that any change in protocol in this project must be approved by resubmission of the project to the Committee for approval. Also, the principal investigator must promptly report, in writing, any unexpected problems causing risk to research subjects or others.

By copy of this memorandum, the chairman of your department and/or your major professor is reminded that he/she is responsible for being informed concerning research projects involving human subjects in the department, and should review protocols of such investigations as often as needed to insure that the project is being conducted in compliance with our institution and with DHHS regulations.

This institution has an Assurance on file with the Office for Protection from Research Risks. The Assurance Number is IRB00000466.

Cc: Frank Kowalsky
HSC No. 2003.665

119
INFORMED CONSENT FORM
Student

I freely and voluntarily and without element of force or coercion, consent to be a participant in the research project entitled “A Review of Ten University Clarinet Studios: An Observational Study of Pedagogical Style, Structure and Philosophy.”

This research is being conducted by Margaret (Peggy) Dees who is a doctoral candidate under the direction of Dr. Frank Kowalsky in the School of Music at Florida State University. I understand the purpose of her research is to better understand clarinet teaching at the university level.

As a student of a participating professor I understand that my clarinet lesson will be observed and recorded on a mini-disc recorder by the researcher. The purpose of recording is for the researcher to clarify ideas expressed in the lesson. These mini-discs will be kept by the researcher in a locked filing cabinet. I understand that only the researcher will have access to these discs and that they will be destroyed by August 8, 2010.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts if I agree to participate in this study. I understand that my name will not appear on the results. My participation will remain confidential to the extent allowed by law. I understand there will be no financial compensation for my participation.

I understand that by participating in this research project there may be no direct benefit to me, but there may be benefits to the community at large. I will be providing musicians with valuable insight into college clarinet teaching. This information can assist them in educating themselves and others.

I understand my participation is totally voluntary. I understand that this consent may be withdrawn at any time without prejudice, penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. I have been given the right to ask and have answered any inquiry concerning the study. Questions, if any, have been answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that I may contact Margaret (Peggy) Dees at (206) 718-4998, or email her at peggydees@yahoo.com (or Dr. Frank Kowalsky (850) 644-5813, kowalsky@mailer.fsu.edu) for answers to questions about this research or my rights. Results will be sent to me upon my request.

I have read and understand this consent form.

Subject _______________________________ Date _______________________________

Witness _______________________________ Date _______________________________
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Professor

I freely and voluntarily and without element of force or coercion, consent to be a participant in the research project entitled “A Review of Ten University Clarinet Studios: An Observational Study of Pedagogical Style, Content and Philosophy.”

This research is being conducted by Margaret (Peggy) Dees who is a doctoral candidate under the direction of Dr. Frank Kowalsky in the School of Music at Florida State University. I understand the purpose of her research is to better understand clarinet teaching at the university level. I understand if I participate in the project I will be interviewed for approximately one hour regarding my history and teaching philosophy. I will also be observed teaching two individual lessons to college clarinet students in my studio.

I understand these activities will be recorded on a mini-disc recorder by the researcher. The purpose of recording is for the researcher to clarify ideas expressed in lessons or interviews. These mini-discs will be kept by the researcher in a locked filing cabinet. I understand that only the researcher will have access to these discs and that they will be destroyed by August 8, 2010.

I understand that my name will appear in the published document as well as descriptions of my teaching, background and quotes from the interview and lessons. I understand there will be no financial compensation for my participation and that my consent to participate is voluntary.

I understand that by participating in this research project there may be no direct benefit to me, but there may be benefits to the community at large. I will be providing musicians with valuable insight into college clarinet teaching. This information can assist them in educating themselves and others. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts if I agree to participate in this study.

I understand that this consent may be withdrawn at any time without prejudice, penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled. I have been given the right to ask and have answered any inquiry concerning the study. Questions, if any, have been answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that I may contact Margaret (Peggy) Dees at (206) 718-4998, or email her at peggydees@yahoo.com (or Dr. Frank Kowalsky (850) 644-5813, kowalsky@mailer.fsu.edu) for answers to questions about this research or my rights. Results will be sent to me upon my request.

I have read and understand this consent form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Witness</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES


Klug, Howard, Clarinet Professor. Interview and observation by author, April 15-16, 2004, Bloomington, IN. Minidisc recording. Indiana University, Bloomington.

Kowalsky, Frank, Clarinet Professor. Interview and observation by author, November 20, 2003, Tallahassee, FL. Minidisc recording. Florida State University, Tallahassee.

MacDowell, Richard, Clarinet Professor. Interview and observation by author, February 18, 2004, Austin, TX. Minidisc recording. University of Texas, Austin.


Spring, Robert, Clarinet Professor. Interview and observation by author, April 12-14, 2004, Tempe, AZ. Minidisc recording. Arizona State University, Tempe.


Weigand, John, Clarinet Professor. Interview and observation by author, March 11-12, 2004, Morgantown, WV. Minidisc recording. West Virginia University, Morgantown.

SECONDARY SOURCES


Siebenaler, Dennis J. “Analysis of Teacher-Student Interactions in the Piano Lessons of Adults and Children.” Journal of Research in Music Education. 45/1 6-20.


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Margaret (Peggy) Dees
December, 2005

Clarinetist Peggy Dees is active as a performer and clinician throughout the United States. A champion of new music, she commissioned David Maslanka’s *Desert Roads* and premiered it with the Dallas Wind Symphony. During the academic year 2002-03 she was the clarinet instructor at Illinois State University and member of the Peoria Symphony Orchestra. As a member and frequent soloist with the United States Navy Band in Washington, D.C. (1992-98), her most notable solo appearances include concerts at the United States Capitol, Congressional Medal of Honor Society Convention and the 1997 Florida Music Educators Conference. A graduate of Interlochen Arts Academy, she holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Excelsior College, a Master of Music degree from West Virginia University and a Doctor of Music in Clarinet Performance from Florida State University. Her primary teachers include Frank Kowalsky, Richard MacDowell, Robert Marcellus, and John Weigand. In the summer months, Ms. Dees lives in Glacier National Park, Montana where she enjoys leading backpacking trips for Glacier Wilderness Guides. Currently she lives in the Seattle area and teaches at Cascadia Community College and North Seattle Community College.