



Clarinet & Saxophone

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RUTH GIPPS

An overdue spotlight

Free sheet music

A SAX DUET AND SOLO BY JAMES RAE

Reed gadgets

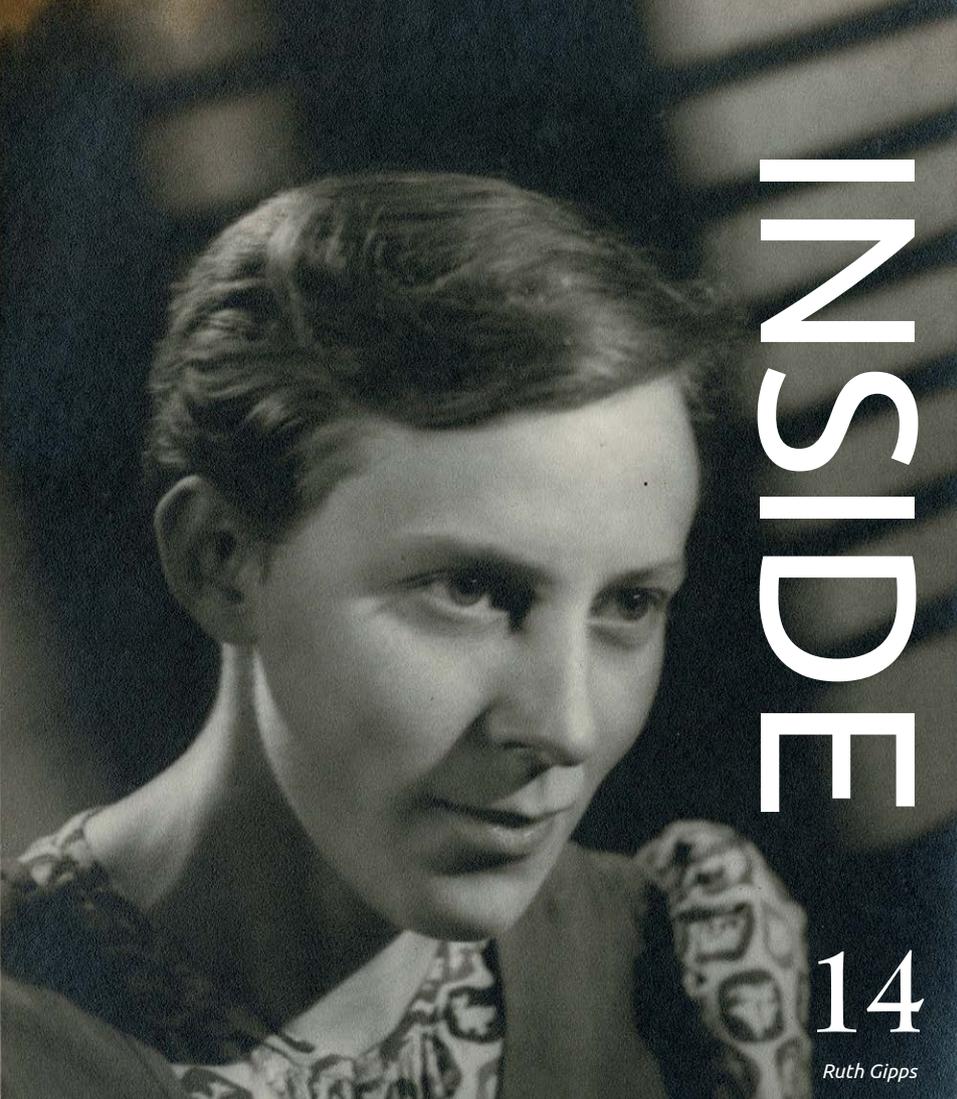
SURVEYING THE MARKET

Hawaii Hawaii Hawaii

JOE CUTLER AND TRISH CLOWES COLLABORATE



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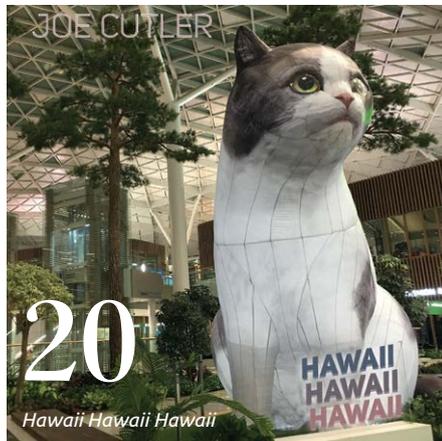
From May to December 2020, Andrew Michael Simon hosted over 50 hours of online interviews with leading clarinet players as part of 'Andy's Licorice Talk'. He shares some of the highlights and common themes that emerged from the series

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Roland launches Aerophone Pro

Roland has launched a new 'Pro' version of its Aerophone digital wind instrument. Priced around £1,400, it features a refined design, more responsive breath and bite sensors, and an advanced sound engine with over 300 acoustic and electronic sounds.

When developing the Aerophone Pro, Roland reached out to expert wind players around the globe for feedback, which has led to improvements that enhance the instrument's look, feel, sound, and playability. Fingering is the same as an acoustic sax, with configurable, easy-to-reach controls for both hands. The instrument features flexible audio and MIDI connections, including a headphone jack, built-in speaker and Bluetooth. It can be powered by batteries or an external supply via the AC adaptor and there is a discreet OLED screen at the back of the instrument.

The Aerophone Pro is the third digital wind instrument or saxophone to be brought to market since the onset of lockdown restrictions in 2020 – the others being the Emeo digital practice horn and the Yamaha YDS-150 Digital Saxophone. Look out for a review of these and other digital wind instruments and saxophones available in a future issue of *Clarinet & Saxophone*.



Selmer unveils Axos tenor sax

Selmer has added a tenor saxophone to its Axos range of entry-level professional saxophones. The announcement comes five years after the release of the Axos alto, and some of the upgraded features on the tenor version will also be applied to a new 'second generation' alto model.

Key features of the Axos tenor include: a lightweight socket, leather pads with metal resonators, thumb rest in synthetic material, lyre holder soldered to the body, new Axos 'S' neck key, and a gold lacquer and floral-inspired engraving specific to the Axos range.

The instrument is now available to pre-order from a number of retailers. Prices start from around £3,250.



Julian Bliss announces sheet music venture

Clarinetist Julian Bliss has announced the launch of 'Bliss Music' – a new online resource for digital clarinet sheet music. Writing on his website, the British soloist said: 'For many years I have wanted to publish my own clarinet arrangements of pieces from all sorts of composers, and in 2020 I had the chance to make it happen. I am launching with music by Rachmaninov [Sonata in G minor Op 19 and *Zdes' Khorosho*], Schubert [*Ständchen*] and a beautiful version of *Soon* by George Gershwin, which was arranged for me by my good friend Lewis Wright.' New music will be added regularly. Visit www.julianbliss.com/blissmusic

PHOTOGRAPHY: BEN WRIGHT



Free two-month trial of Primephonic for CASSGB members

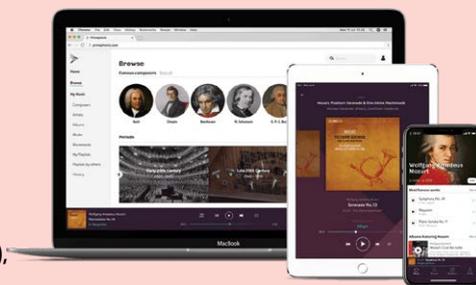
Primephonic – a streaming service created for classical music listeners – is offering CASSGB members an exclusive free two-month trial. Available on your phone, tablet or computer, the platform's audio player streams music at the highest quality possible and features an enhanced search engine built specifically for finding and exploring classical music.

In addition, the platform also offers on-demand radio by period, genre or ambience; digital album booklets (with more being added all the time); daily hand-picked album suggestions; and new playlists covering diverse topics added every week.

Unlike other streaming platforms, the platform also pays artists per second rather than per track, acknowledging the fact that many classical music tracks are often much longer than a standard three-minute pop song.

To claim the offer, visit www.primephonic.com/cassgb. After signing up with a username and password, you will automatically be enrolled in a free 14-day trial, but not the extended two-month trial. To claim the extended trial, when logged in click on 'choose plan' or 'your subscription'. Select a plan option (Platinum plan for the best audio quality), then enter your card details and the

discount code: **CASS**. Although you will be asked to enter your card details, your account will not be charged if you cancel at any time before the end of the two-month trial period.



RUTH GIPPS

If you've never heard of Ruth Gipps, you are not alone. To mark the centenary of her birth, Stephanie Reeve shines an overdue spotlight on this neglected composer's life and music – including her impressive catalogue of works for the clarinet

Around 20 years ago I played a wonderfully atmospheric piece for wind dectet called *Seascape*. I remember the first rehearsal well. The opening clarinet and flute cascades created a vivid picture of rolling waves, and as these lines rolled up and down, a cor anglais entered on a note far removed from the pentatonic harmony laid out – a distant ship's siren. As the heavier sounds of the horns and bassoons launched, the music swirled and developed, then moving into a central section lifted from a 1950s high seas adventure epic before returning to calm waters and fading.

While I made a mental note of the composer, Ruth Gipps, I didn't consider exploring any further works. Was this because I didn't spot anything in the library? Was I too fixated on my favourite composers at the time? Or was it, with hindsight and some regret, that I'd noticed she was female, so perhaps I assumed there would be nothing more to explore? While not overtly aware of stereotypes, deep down perhaps my 20-something self just thought female composers were still an exception.

I feel uncomfortable thinking about this now, and times have changed, but it was a culture that Ruth Gipps endured throughout much of her life. From her education, through to the Second World War and after, attitudes to girls and women were still deeply entrenched, and prejudices against her were all the more difficult due to her unwillingness to conform. However, she was determined and strong-willed, finding ways to make opportunities for herself. As a child prodigy pianist and composer, she developed parallel careers as a concert pianist, orchestral oboist, composer and later as a conductor. She was a complex character and endured extremes of emotion, resulting in a fascinating life.

At her side was her husband Robert Baker, a fine and much-loved clarinetist, and the inspiration for her clarinet works. These works are being rediscovered, republished and featured in performances with special attention throughout 2021, her centenary year. While this feature seeks to understand more about Ruth Gipps through her own life, to understand her clarinet works we also need to learn more about her relationship with Robert.

Life and career

Born into a musical household in 1921, Ruth Gipps had adequate nurture to support her natural musical ability. Her father, Bryan, was a violinist, and her mother, Hélène, was a fine pianist and teacher, serving as principal of the family-run Bexhill School of Music. Hélène was Swiss and a strong-willed character, as her daughter would later become. Ruth gave her first concert at the piano at the age of four, and her two siblings, Laura and Ernest, were also musicians.

Her first composition, *The Fairy Shoemaker*, was written in 1929 and won a local

REED GADGETS

To get the most out of your reeds, subtle adjustment and correct storage can make all the difference. Canadian clarinetist and saxophonist **Chuck Currie** road tests a selection of gadgets on the market to help get your reeds in tip-top shape

After the sound we hear in our imagination, the reed and mouthpiece have the most significant impact on our tonal palette. For those of us who adjust and care for our reeds diligently, the different gadgets we choose can affect the results dramatically. For information on how to use many of these products, refer to my article *Reed Seasoning and Adjusting* in the Autumn 2018 issue of *Clarinet & Saxophone* (a PDF of the article is available on request from the membership secretary – email membership@cassgb.org)

This article is divided into four sections: reed knives, scrapers and products with grit; reed trimmers; reed storage; and other 'wild card' options to consider. Please note, prices given are an approximate average cost calculated from a selection of retailers. All prices in British pound sterling (GBP).

Reed knives, scrapers and products with grit

ANDO REED KNIFE £135



For reed knives, one would be remiss not to consult double-reed players. I estimate only 20% of single-reed players seriously study reed adjustments and apply themselves to it, but when it comes to double-reed players it is more like 110%! It was my oboe and bassoon colleagues who helped me choose this ultimate reed knife years ago.

This heavyweight, single-bevelled knife is the right-handed version made by Ando in Shinjuku, Japan. It is made of laminated steel, which allows an extremely high carbon content in the steel alloy at the edge (high carbon steel takes and holds an edge far better than other alloys). In the words of fellow players who have tried my knife, it's 'wicked sharp'.

NANIWA SUPER STONE £50

Your reed knife will only stay sharp if you use a water stone to hone it, and the Naniwa 5,000 grit Super Stone is the ultimate option.

Japanese water stones are known for their superior sharpening performance. The loosely bonded abrasive grit washes out very quickly, as it blunts during the sharpening process. This exposes new, sharp particles that can get to work on the blade. Water stones are lubricated only with water – never use oil!

I always kept my water stones soaking in water as was then the norm, but Naniwa's 'splash and go' technology changes that. The stone's resin bonding creates a more abrasive surface, which allows you to sharpen quickly. It also frees us from the burden of having to soak the stone in water before using it. Instead, you only need a modest splash, and then you're all set to hone.



REEDGEEK BULLET £80

This incredible product is a work of sheer genius from Mauro Di Gioia. I have owned every iteration of this marvellous product, and this latest one is the most amazing. Not only does it have double the density of the previous models, thus maintaining an incredibly sharp and sure 90 degree scraping edge, the handle also has little grooves that replicate the incredibly fine sanding ability of 6,000 grade Micro-Mesh. If you can have only one tool for all your reed work, this is the one.

I hasten to add I keep most of my reed scrapers and sanding tools in my studio and in my gig bag (which is a medium-sized suitcase on wheels), but this ReedGeek is the only one that I keep in my little on-stage bag.

It's the only tool I know that scrapes the table of the reed perfectly flat and it is fantastic for all adjustments to the face of the reed. One can also make all face adjustments with the reed still on the mouthpiece.



VANDOREN GLASS REED RESURFACER AND REED STICK £55

Both these items are sold as a set or you can buy the Reed Stick separately. They're excellent. However, the Reed Resurfacer is only large enough for clarinet reeds. Vandoren claims that it is very hard to wear out these products, but as someone who maintains 72 reeds for 12 different setups (as well as adjusting reeds for dozens of students as their skills develop) I do wear these out. A Reed Stick lasts me six months before it is too smooth. When you get good at adjusting with the Reed Stick, it's also possible to adjust the face of the reed without removing it from the mouthpiece.



concert

CONCERT REVIEWS

WEBER: CLARINET CONCERTO NO 2

**JULIAN BLISS (CLARINET),
ROYAL LIVERPOOL
PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA,
VASILY PETRENKO (CONDUCTOR)**

**Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool,
broadcast via RLPO On Demand
25 November 2020**

Online concert streaming has quickly developed into an alternative platform to live, in-house performances not currently permitted. As with other ensembles, the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra has thought hard about how it can offer audiences an experience as close to a concert hall experience as possible, through their RLPO On Demand service.

For this event in November, a pre-concert talk with a guest and post-concert interviews with conductor, soloist and orchestral members were arranged on Zoom for ticket holders, with the concert broadcast via Vimeo. In times like these, you begin to realise just how important the social aspect of concert-going is – the ritual of the journey to the concert hall, looking forward to a pre-concert drink, seeing someone you know and having that shared experience. So, I decided to 'attend' this concert with fellow CASSGB committee member Peter Fielding, chatting beforehand and watching the broadcast at the same time, but 60 miles apart.

After a welcome from RLPO executive director Millicent Jones, classical music writer and broadcaster Stephen Johnson gave an entertaining talk on the composers and works to be heard. We then all switched to the Vimeo link to watch the pre-recorded concert. A small string orchestra of single desks, spaced out on the Philharmonic Hall stage, opened the concert with Anton Arensky's Variations on a Theme by Tchaikovsky. Originally for a string quartet of violin, viola and two cellos, this version was arranged for string orchestra. It is an expressive and poignant work from a Romantic composer influenced by Tchaikovsky, and under Vasily Petrenko this was performed with warmth and feeling.

The main work was Weber's Clarinet Concerto No 2, performed by soloist Julian Bliss. The king of Bavaria heard clarinetist



Heinrich Baermann perform Weber's Concertino and then commissioned the composer to write two concertos. Both were written in 1811 and Baermann gave the first performance of the second concerto on 25 November 1811, exactly 209 years before tonight's performance.

The spacing of the small string section and woodwinds and horns created a very transparent texture. Petrenko set a strong tempo, but not too fast, and Bliss was comfortable and in command throughout. The playing was fluent, adding tasteful ornamentation as expected of a soloist in the 19th century, and observing what little there is of Weber's specific articulation. Top notes sang out clearly and there were some delicate touches of interplay between the soloist and orchestra.

Bliss took a beautifully held tempo for the Romance, which is very much an operatic aria complete with recitative and cadenza. He held a fine line over beautifully shaped phrases with a virtuoso flourish into the recitative, completing the movement with a super *pianissimo*. The cadenza was Baermann's, although in our audience chat afterwards we did wonder what Bliss might have produced had he performed one of his own.

Petrenko set a brisk tempo for the Rondo, clearly enjoyed by Bliss who was equal to the challenges demanded by

Weber. Bliss gave us lots of character, always playful in nature and all with impeccable technique. The virtuoso conclusion aims to bring the audience to its feet, and while the audience was absent, the spontaneous round of applause from the orchestra was a touching moment, and thoroughly deserved.

Haydn's *Surprise* Symphony had touches of swagger, lyricism and a fleet and light finale. We both enjoyed the spectacle of the strings halting before whipping the music for the page turn with a well-choreographed 'whoosh'. At first we assumed this was a surprise, but later realised that the effect was needed to cope with the page turns – an issue that only becomes apparent with single-desk strings. As for the main surprise, did one player twitch just before the *fortissimo* chord?

The post-concert interviews were informal, friendly and a wonderful insight into how the concert had been prepared and performed. That the focus in rehearsal had been on learning how to work with the new layout was no surprise. With soloist, orchestra and conductor looking comfortable throughout, this was a truly memorable performance.

Stephanie Reeve