



# Clarinet & Saxophone

Autumn 2016 Volume 41, No 3

## SAX TALK

Quartets up close

**Emma Johnson**  
NEW DISCS AND MORE

**Mouth health**  
TIPS FOR SORE LIPS

**40**  
years of

**Clarinet &  
Saxophone**

SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN

1976 - 2016

see page 4





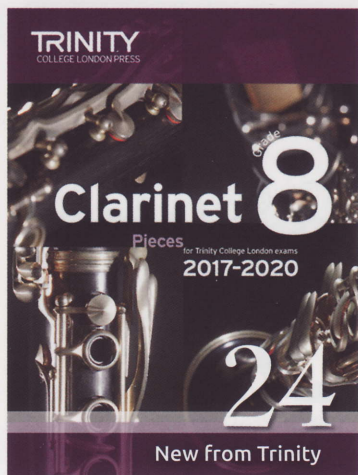
Emma Johnson

PHOTOGRAPH: ANDREW PENNILL



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Saxophone quartets in rehearsal



New from Trinity

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# Special reports

## NIELSEN CLARINET CONCERTO

19 May 2016, Royal Festival Hall, London  
Mark van de Wiel (clarinet), Paavo Järvi (conductor),  
Philharmonia Orchestra

by Peter Fielding

Receiving an email from CASSGB on 1 May took me on a very special journey. CASSGB was offering discounted tickets to the Royal Festival Hall concert on 19 May. This concert by the Philharmonia Orchestra included a performance of the Clarinet Concerto by Carl Nielsen, given by the Orchestra's principal clarinet Mark van de Wiel.

The concert began with a fine performance of Joseph Haydn's Symphony No 83, *La Poule*. Next was the Clarinet Concerto, which is not an easy piece to understand. I know

the piece well on disc and have heard it played live before. This performance was exceptional.

Mark van de Wiel came on to the Royal Festival Hall stage and took total command of the space. With great maturity and intellect he delivered *the* performance of Nielsen's concerto: a wonderful 23 minutes of music making. For the first time I began to comprehend this piece. The power and aggression in the exchanges of clarinet and side drum contrasted admirably with the purity of tone in the high register. Fine *cantabile* and whispered *pianissimo* – delicious!

I thank the soloist and conductor Paavo Järvi for an evening I will never forget. The orchestra rounded off the evening with a stunning performance of Nielsen's 3rd Symphony.

## 04:06:16 SAXOPHONE FESTIVAL

4 June 2016, St John's Notting Hill

by Stephanie Reeve

The 'festival in a day' is becoming a popular venture: easy to organise a venue, more chance of performers being available for the duration and the audience more likely to attend earlier or later performances. A whole day of saxophone music at St John's Notting Hill attracted a good-sized audience, and despite almost all the repertoire being unknown to me, the sheer depth and variety of Ian Stewart's programming – alongside some brilliant performances – left me wanting more, even after six hours!

The aim of festival organisers composer Ian Stewart and saxophonist Kyle Horch was to bring together new works and new combinations involving the saxophone. Four of the six concerts featured one of Stewart's own works, demonstrating his versatility and understanding of the saxophone. Surrounding the central recital given by Flotilla, an ensemble made up of saxophones and keyboards, each saxophonist member of Flotilla gave a recital, with sax soloist Hayley Lambert giving the sixth recital of the day.

Most of the composers featured were in attendance, and special mention should go to accompanists Yshani Perinpanayagam and Pavel Timofeyevsky who performed difficult, new repertoire with considerable assuredness. While this report can only give a brief summary, readers are encouraged to look up composers and works performed which all deserve to make it into the wider repertoire.

Kyle Horch opened with a stunning set on alto and soprano saxes. His programme included two works originally for double reed instruments, one by Joseph Jongen (and dating from 1901, the earliest piece on the day's programme) and one by John Carmichael. New works were by Ian Stewart and Timothy Salter.

Naomi Sullivan performed an equally demanding programme including two UK premieres, *Transit of Venus* by Ian Stewart and *TV Nation* by Christian Biegai, both with tape. The *Two Rhapsodies* for sax, viola and piano by Loeffler with violist Katya Lazareva provided a superb example of the saxophone working in a very different combination.

Hayley Lambert performed with singer Aileen Thompson and pianist Paul Turner in Ian Stewart's *Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis*, originally written for Flotilla and rearranged for Lambert. Their programme also featured works by Frank Ticheli, Graham Redwood Carl Smith and Ed Puddick.

Flotilla provided their usual excellent blend of sound and control. Works by Biegai, Stewart, Timothy Blinko, Edward McGuire and a London Premiere of *Sea Changes* by John Carmichael made up the programme.

Alastair Parnell gave his recital on the EW1, an instrument on which he is a leading exponent. The apparent ease with which Parnell moves around registers must be misleading as I am sure there is considerable technique required. Parnell is appearing across the country at the moment, so do look out for these performances. *Tinto* by Charlotte Harding was the premiere here.

As if that wasn't variety enough, the evening was finished off with Andy Tweed and Karen Street, giving a brilliant final hour of tenor/soprano and accordion, including several of Karen's own works and a mixture of south American numbers including Piazzolla. A great way to end a fascinating day. ■



Ian Stewart and Kyle Horch, organisers of the 04:06:16 Saxophone Festival



# Saxophone quartets in rehearsal: *The art*

I feel like it's a good idea to give a strong lead and then follow everyone else

Anyone who has ever been part of an ensemble knows the joy and satisfaction it can bring. The feeling of joining with others to make music is truly an enriching one for many of us. However, that feeling of being really connected can be transient and hard to reproduce to order, especially in performance. So what are some of the ingredients for great communication in a small ensemble? And can they be developed and practised?

This is a large topic and one that has been the subject of much reflection and study by musicians and researchers. In this article I will approach it by considering some of the ways that interactions occur in the saxophone quartet, touching on topics of leadership, listening, and the balance of talk and play in rehearsal. I have drawn on the experiences of leading professional players and teachers Kyle Horch, Alistair Parnell, Naomi Sullivan and Richard Ingham. Each has generously shared their reflections on this subject and suggested ways in which communication, especially non-verbal communication, can be worked on.

## SHARING LEADERSHIP

A good place to start is with the question of leadership. In a group of four people, who leads? There are many ways of looking at this tricky question. As well as seeking the views of experienced sax quartet players, I'll refer to some of the literature on the string quartet, with which of course the saxophone quartet has many parallels. Traditionally, the soprano player in a saxophone quartet (or the first violin in a string quartet) might be considered the *de facto* leader, but the evidence is that in successful groups leadership tends to be shared. Many experienced players would say that leadership is embedded in the musical score, and that the roles of each player at any given moment derive from an understanding of the musical content.

In her book *Beyond the Notes*, pianist and chamber musician Susan Tomes makes the case for leadership as something that everyone takes responsibility for. She endorses a comment made by David Waterman, cellist of the Endellion Quartet, who takes the view that it is easier for the group if everyone plays with 'the confidence of his own momentum' and takes confident charge of a phrase or section. Arnold Steinhardt, first violin player of the Guarneri String Quartet, attributes their long and successful career to sharing leadership. He puts it very simply, saying, 'I feel like it's a good idea to give a strong lead and then follow everyone else.'

This last comment captures some of the subtle contradictions at work, which are also borne out by research into successful groups. These insights tell us that success lies in the negotiating and balancing of leading and following, listening and playing, and embracing and reconciling differences.

Flotilla performing in the Old Royal Naval Chapel, Greenwich at the British Saxophone Congress.  
Photo: Peter Thompson



# EMMA JOHNSON

*Still a busy performer 32 years after winning the BBC Young Musician competition, Emma Johnson talks career highlights and current projects with Chris Walters*

Ask the man or woman on the street to name a clarinetist, at least in the UK, and the names Acker Bilk and Emma Johnson are probably most likely to come up. While Bilk's legend rests mainly on 'Stranger on the Shore', Johnson's is based on her 1984 winning performance in the BBC Young Musician competition. Watched by 12 million viewers, this triumphant moment established her alongside Bilk as a household name. She has maintained a busy solo career ever since.

Having just watched yet another BBC Young Musician competition unfold, memories of this initial springboard are still vivid for Johnson. But she believes that the competition is less well promoted today. 'BBC Young Musician has less exposure now,' she says. 'Now it is just on BBC Four, although it's brilliant that they have kept it going. It's still a very exciting thing to see people at the beginning of their careers, but it's a shame the BBC hides it away.'

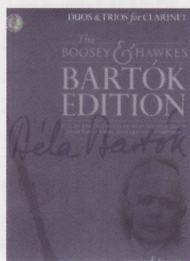
It's part of my mission  
to expand the clarinet  
repertoire in all directions





# music

## MUSIC REVIEWS



### DUOS & TRIOS FOR CLARINET

Bela Bartók arr Hywel Davies  
Boosey & Hawkes

This is a very classy edition, beautifully laid out with an excellent biography about Bartók, and useful and interesting notes on the pieces throughout the book. It has a second part, an exact duplication but with a soft cover, which is very helpful for playing the duets and

essential for the trios.

I played through all the duets and there were a few that were quite good fun to play. These were mainly the faster, more rhythmic ones like 'Wooden shoes' and 'Where are your Geese?' The duets range in standard from about Grade 2 to Grade 5. A lot of the pieces are arranged from *For Children*, a collection of folksong transcriptions and arrangements Bartók created for piano teaching. I'm not sure if this collection of clarinet pieces is directly aimed at children (I should say not) but I found quite a lot of the duets rather unsatisfying to play.

The trios on the other hand were really enjoyable and definitely benefited from having an extra line of music in the texture. The harmonies are much less stark and more easily understandable. Interestingly, the tune is given a lot to the third player and is often a lot higher than the other two parts. Hywel Davies tends to put melody in one part; it depends what your preference is but I prefer to see the tune spread around a little more. It was good to see the 'Sash Dance' from the *Romanian Folk Dances* included.

There's an excellent CD which gives all combinations of parts on the tracks. I think at £12.99 this is good value for a substantial volume (14 Duets, 10 trios) of two books and a CD. I'll definitely be using the trios with my pupils.

Viv Halton



### MUSIQUE DES BALKANS FOR CLARINET

Gjovalin Nonaj  
Lemoine Edition

For advanced players only! On opening the book you are faced with

page after page of black dots – this book certainly gives value for money within its 34 pages. The composer is an Albanian musician who has put together a collection of ten original pieces in a variety of styles which are typical of music from the Balkan regions.

A characteristic of much Balkan music is its driving irregular time signatures such as 5/8, 7/8, 9/8 etc. Chord symbols are provided throughout although no articulation is given. It is up to the player how they choose to interpret the articulations. As with the irregular rhythms, much of the character of Balkan music is taken from accentuation within the articulation of the music. These pieces would work well with an accordion, although one of the items is actually a duet for two clarinets.

Andrew Smith



### ON SAFARI AGAIN

Paul Harris  
Queen's Temple  
Publications

I really liked these pieces, six short programmatic duets which are fun to play and easily accessible to both players and audience. I particularly like the way Paul Harris uses articulation – it's always sensible but adds an enormous amount of colour and interest to his pieces.

From a teaching point of view he never fails to give us something really constructive to work on with our pupils, and this volume is no different. The pieces are all in easy keys but there's technical material in each one to get your teeth into. 'Zebra' has liberal use of side key F sharp. 'Crocodile' has some interesting use of dotted figures and accents. 'Ostrich' utilises different time signatures. 'Monkeys' is a compound rhythm piece and is really good fun to play and definitely 'cheeky'. 'Giraffe'

utilises slurring across the registers in large leaps, and finally 'Cheetah' bounds along in a 6/8 arpeggiated finale.

The cover is lovely, an attractive watercolour which is very child friendly. There are directions throughout the book and a section at the back to compose your own animal duet which is also aimed at children. I'm not sure your average junior school clarinet pupil would manage these duets, though they are definitely worth using with more able younger pupils and intermediate players as they are sight-reading standard Grade 5. An excellent addition to the duet repertoire.

Viv Halton

