



Clarinet & Saxophone

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Dexter Gordon
JAZZ SAX SHOWMAN

Art of the arrangers
MUSIC'S UNSUNG HEROES

**JULIAN
BLISS**
Coming of age



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PHOTO: BEN WRIGHT

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Julian Bliss

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Dexter Gordon



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New Leblanc Serenade clarinet launched

Leblanc, part of the Conn-Selmer corporation since 2004, has launched the Serenade, a new intermediate level clarinet for the advancing student. The instrument is made of unstained Grenadilla wood and features silver keywork with an optional left-hand A/E flat.

The history of Leblanc dates back to 1750 when Noblet was established in France to make instruments for the court of Louis XV. In 1904, with no heir to the family business, Noblet was sold to Georges Leblanc. Leblanc began distribution in the US in 1921 but struggled to combine doing business with weeks of sea travel to and from France. For this reason, Vito Pascucci, a repairman with the Glenn Miller band, founded Leblanc USA in Wisconsin in 1946 and took over the distribution of Leblanc France products. In 1960, the Vito brand was created, offering a complete line of student clarinets.

In 1989, Vito purchased 65% of the Leblanc France Company. As Leblanc France was considered a National Treasure by the French government, it was difficult to process an entire purchase agreement with an American company, meaning that it wasn't until 1993 that the remaining 35% was acquired by Vito. In 2004, Leblanc was acquired by Conn-Selmer, and in 2009, Leblanc released the Bliss line of clarinets in partnership with Julian Bliss. All production for Leblanc Vito and Bliss clarinets now takes place in Elkhart, Indiana. See page 12 for an interview with Julian Bliss.

www.conn-selmer.com



ABRSM announces new woodwind syllabus

ABRSM will publish a new woodwind syllabus in July, together with a range of supporting resources that will include books of saxophone exam pieces for the first time. The syllabus will feature revised sight-reading and scales as well as refreshed repertoire for all instruments, including clarinet and saxophone.

According to ABRSM, the new sight-reading and scale requirements have been 'designed to ensure that they support and encourage progression, while reflecting the needs and everyday experiences of teachers and students.' The number of scales and arpeggios from Grade 3 upwards has also been reduced. Other changes include the use of the 'to a 12th' range at Grade 2 for all instruments. Changes to sight-reading include shorter tests at the early grades and descriptive titles at Grades 6 to 8.

The new repertoire lists are aiming to offer 'a wider choice than ever before', with 'syllabus favourites alongside famous classical tunes, music from the world of film, TV and musicals, and much more.' The new syllabus, books and resources will be available in July for use in exams from 1 January 2018.

www.abrsm.org/woodwind

BBC Proms: single reed highlights

The saxophonist and BBC Young Musician finalist Jess Gillam is to appear as a soloist at this year's BBC Proms in two performances on 23 July. She will play the first movement of *Island Songs* by Peter Sculthorpe as part of the BBC Ten Pieces Prom (matinee and evening performances) at London's Royal Albert Hall. The programme, which is aimed at younger audiences, families and schools, will also include music by Beethoven, Copland, Elgar, Mozart, Respighi and Ravi Shankar.

Also at this year's Proms season, the saxophonist Shabaka Hutchings will perform on 24 August in a celebration of the jazz legend Charles Mingus (1922–79), again at the Royal Albert Hall. This large-scale event will feature Mingus favourites including 'Better Git It in Your Soul', 'Moanin'' and 'Goodbye Pork Pie Hat', performed by an all-star line-up of artists. Clarinetists can enjoy the Mozart Clarinet Quintet on 24 July, this time at London's Cadogan Hall, performed by Annelien Van Wauwe with the Van Kuijk Quartet.

www.bbc.co.uk



Shabaka Hutchings, 24 August

New Saxophone Concerto from Jeffery Wilson

The composer Jeffery Wilson has announced that he is to write a new Saxophone Concerto for the saxophonist Rob Buckland. 'The soloist in this new music will be the individual dealing with life and society, and the ensemble will be that very society,' said Wilson. 'We are all touched by the highs and lows of our existence and the impact we have

on others. Some of us suffer the lows privately and without notice and others react in a myriad of ways.'

He added: 'Having played the saxophone myself for over 45 years it seems timely to pen a concerto for this most iconic instrument and to combine elements of improvisation with more formal compositional techniques. This

is a musical language that has been forming over the years and now, I feel, is coming to fruition. I can think of no better player than Rob Buckland to animate my music.' The concerto will be premiered by Buckland with the RAF Central Band in 2018.

www.jefferywilson.co.uk

Pure Bliss

Once known as a child prodigy, solo clarinettist Julian Bliss is now a regular fixture on the international concert circuit. He tells Chris Walters about current projects, the wisdom of his teachers and how playing the clarinet has never felt like a job

Julian Bliss is known for his virtuosic and charming performances as a child. YouTube videos show him playing confidently from the age of four and, famously, aged 12 at the Queen's Golden Jubilee concert to an audience of thousands. Today he is carving out a successful international career as a soloist, championing new and unfamiliar repertoire and stepping comfortably into the world of jazz from his established base in classical music. When we speak, I'm curious to find out what it was like to travel the path from young prodigy to serious adult soloist.

'While I was doing it, I didn't know any different,' he tells me. The only reason I played was for my own enjoyment. I was surprised that people were asking me to play – I never really considered the enormity of some of the concerts I was doing. My first time playing for the royal family was two years after I started playing. I should have been nervous, but I wasn't. It paved the way for my life – performing has always been an enjoyment thing.'

It's funny to think that I've been playing for 23 years – in many respects it feels like I'm just getting started

Bliss credits some influential teachers with helping him on his way. 'My first teacher was David Johnston, who runs the Musicale music school in Harpenden. My mum took me there to try every single instrument. It was there that I discovered the clarinet and realised it was the instrument I wanted to play. I was only four, but I'd decided in my mind that I was going to do it. I was adamant. There were challenges of course, like my first set of teeth falling out. But somehow I managed to find a way through it, and I wasn't going to listen anyone who told me otherwise!

'Then I studied with Paul Harris for about five years. That's really when I started to explore the repertoire for the clarinet. Paul is a fantastic teacher and also a good teacher for other teachers. He helped me hone my skills in theory and sight reading – he's a master of those things. Studying with him was multi-faceted.' ➡

Myriad mouthpieces

Choosing a mouthpiece for a student is no easy task. **Chuck Currie** offers some personal recommendations for both clarinet and saxophone from the many models produced by leading manufacturers

With mouthpieces, as with all wind instruments and accessories, 'student models' are not necessarily more appropriate for students or easier to play – they are just less expensive. In many cases the more pejorative term 'cheap' would be appropriate, and in a few cases student mouthpieces might best be described as mouthpiece-shaped objects, or MSOs! The only demonstrable purpose of MSOs is to ensure that students grow to hate playing. Luckily there are professional-quality intermediate instruments and mouthpieces of great value that make it possible for a beginner to achieve a beautiful sound, good articulation and easy response.

There seem to be almost as many mouthpiece models as there are players in today's clarinet and saxophone world. While this is probably an exaggeration, it would be appropriate if it were true, as each person's oral make-up, embouchure and air support is unique. I own 175 mouthpieces for all sizes of clarinet and saxophone, which is only a fraction of those that I have used. I could happily play any of them, and I simply choose the ones that make it easiest to achieve the tone colour I hear in my imagination. I keep these mouthpieces available for extended trials by students in rehearsals, and I also carry every premium brand of reed and ligature in the studio. Once students have a firm idea of the sound they are trying to produce, they will pick the set-up that makes this easiest.

The mouthpieces I've selected for review here are widely available and of great value. They range from \$35 (£27) for student plastic mouthpieces to \$150 (£115) for great-value hard rubber professional mouthpieces that give a mature sound early on and are easy for a beginner to control. Some 'stock' professional mouthpieces and many 'custom' mouthpieces can cost up to \$600 (£465). These can be excellent, but are obviously inappropriate for a student budget. Almost all mouthpieces supplied with student instruments are MSOs – the only exceptions I know of are Selmer and Yamaha.

VANDOREN

No single company makes all the best mouthpieces, but no company makes a larger variety of mouthpieces with superb quality control and terrific value than Vandoren. Here is a selection of some of their best-selling mouthpieces for clarinet and saxophone.

Clarinet: Black Diamond BD5

This recent model is my favourite of all of Vandoren's clarinet mouthpieces. It has the prettiest tone colours of any mouthpiece anywhere, especially in the altissimo. It is free blowing, round, sweet and has a velvety ring, with liquid legatos and clear articulation. It makes me want to play French chamber music all day long – although of course I always want to do that! It is not the most powerful mouthpiece available but has a great focus that projects well. It works well with the new Vandoren V21 reeds.



Clarinet: B45

From one of the most recent Vandoren mouthpieces to perhaps the most popular of their older models. The B45 features a moderately open tip and a medium-long facing. This mouthpiece is powerful and brilliant and is fairly resistant.



Clarinet: SRV Lyre

From possibly the highest-selling Vandoren mouthpiece to a very worthy model that is criminally overlooked in my opinion! The SRV Lyre's longer facing makes it possible to play softer reeds and obtain a richer tonal quality (darker in certain cases), more volume and, above all, greater ease and comfort. It is responsive and easy to control in all registers and makes an excellent choice for the advancing student. It has a wonderful ring from the top to the bottom of the instrument.



Chuck Currie's mouthpiece collection



music

MUSIC REVIEWS

Clarinet



**FILM MUSIC
FOR CLARINET
AND PIANO
VOL 1**
Wojciech Kilar
Clarinet and piano
PWM
£11

This volume (one of two) of themes from well-known films by the award-winning Polish composer Wojciech Kilar (1932-2013) was edited into these arrangements by Michał Jakub Papara. Kilar worked with directors including Roman Polanski, Francis Ford Coppola and Krzysztof Zanussi, and his film scores include Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, *The Pianist*, *The Ninth Gate* and *The Shadow Line*.

The clarinet mainly plays the melodic line. Apart from the 'Waltz' from *The Land of Promise*, the solo part is in two sharps (three in the 'Waltz'), so things are a bit fiddly in places. It is worth noting also that the clarinet rarely plays in the chalumeau register.

On the whole, the pieces are quite straightforward to play, mostly slow and lyrical, if a little repetitive. They are useful for developing stamina in sustained playing and confidence in the upper register – though 'The Music of the Cruise' from *The Shadow Line* could get a little scary when you are suddenly faced with a high altissimo F sharp. Perhaps with some judicious transposition the pieces would be more accessible, and I found that the piano accompaniments did not always lie comfortably under the fingers.

Carol Taylor



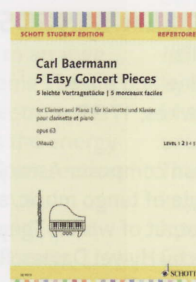
FESTIVAL LATINO
Rudolf Mauz
£9.50

Clarinet and piano,
Schott Student Edition

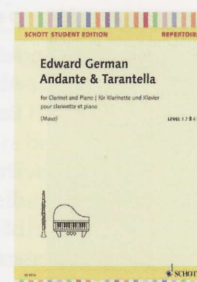
This new series, edited by Rudolf Mauz, is designed for use in instrumental teaching and contains material ranging from easy pieces to demanding repertoire for advanced students. The main focus is on original works, but some very popular arrangements have also been included. As well as information about each composer, useful advice on learning to play the pieces, performance practice and interpretation is given. General information is available online, and MP3 playalongs are available at www.schott-student-edition.com.

At Grade 1-2 level is *Festival Latino* by Rudolf Mauz. This comprises three attractive pieces, 'Samba', 'Rumba' and 'Mambo', with technical challenges across both registers.

5 Easy Concert Pieces by Carl Baermann, edited by Mauz at Grade 3-4 level, are taken from the *Clarinet Method Op 63*. Those readers familiar with the study



**5 EASY CONCERT
PIECES**
Carl Baermann
£10.50



**ANDANTE AND
TARANTELLA**
Edward German
£9.50

collections of Pamela Weston, John Davies and Paul Harris will already know of these pieces, but here they are presented in their original form as salon pieces with piano accompaniment. This edition includes detailed teaching notes.

Edward German's *Andante and Tarantella*, composed in 1892, was dedicated to Henry Lazarus (1815-1895). The piece complements the composer's *Romance* and is in the late-19th-century salon style, with effective melodies in the *Andante* and lively agile rhythmic writing in the *Tarantella*. At Grade 5-6 level this is an ideal piece for recitals and perhaps GCSE music performance.

All the pieces are published with high-quality print and suitable page turns for both clarinettist and pianist. Highly recommended.

John MacKenzie

