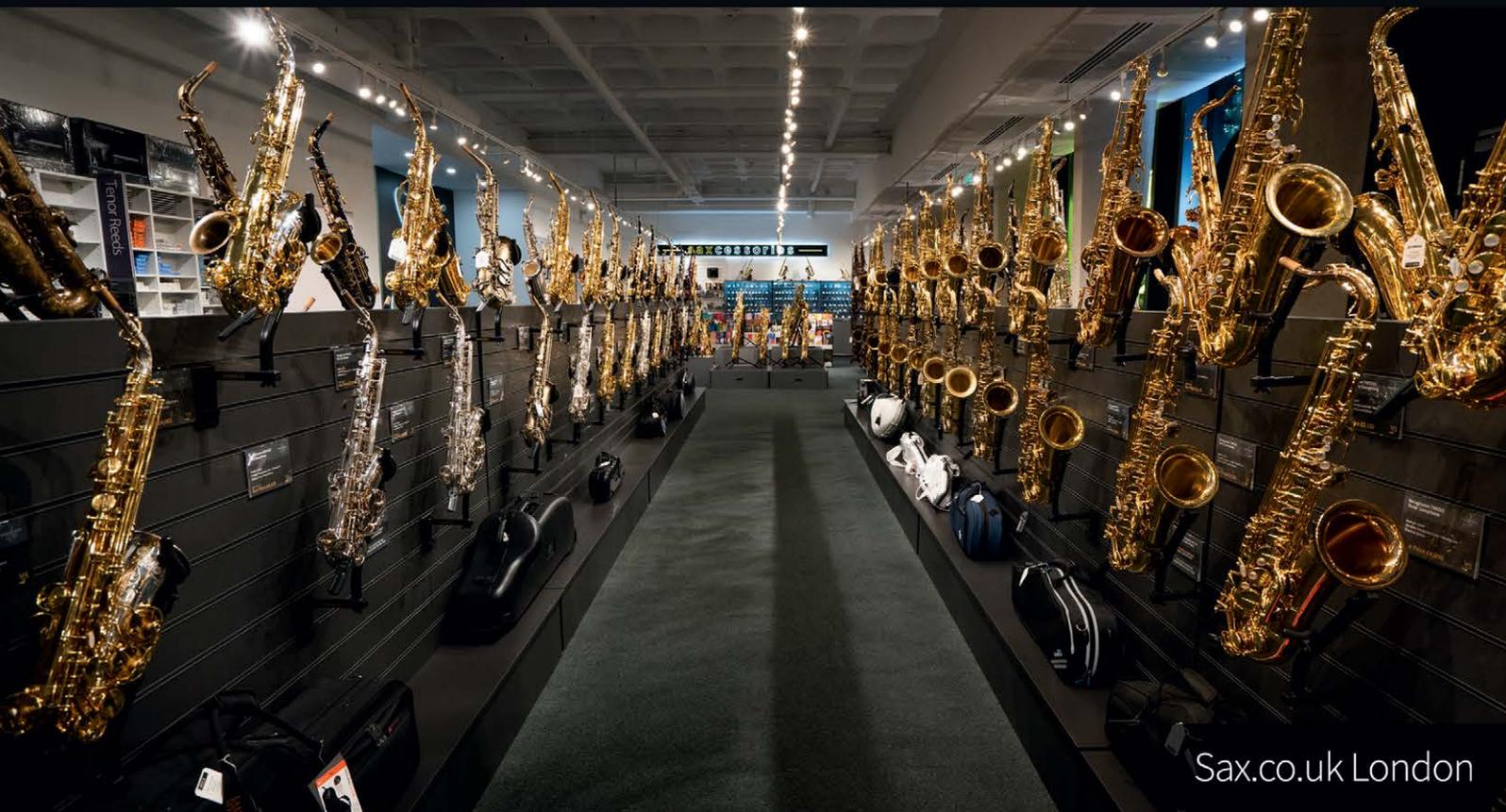


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## CASSGB Young Saxophone Soloist Competition

CASSGB is running a Young Saxophone Soloist Competition for entrants who will be aged 19 or under on 12 January 2020. The competition is open to UK nationals or non-UK students in full-time education and resident in the UK.

Prizes are as follows:

- 1st prize: £1,500 plus an invitation to perform at CASSGB's 2020 Single Reed Day
- 2nd prize: £1,000
- 3rd prize: £500

Round 1 is a recorded submission (closing date: 15 October) which must include a new specially commissioned work that can be found on the centre pages of this issue. Round 2, the final, will feature a maximum of six players selected

from first-round entrants. It will take place on 12 January 2020 in London (venue to be confirmed).

The competition is open to CASSGB members and non-members. For non-members there is a fee of £10 which includes a one-year subscription to CASSGB (the normal cost of student membership is £12).

Application forms for the competition can be downloaded from [www.cassgb.org](http://www.cassgb.org) and completed forms should be emailed to [membership@cassgb.org](mailto:membership@cassgb.org). Turn to page 25 for more information.

**Clarinet & Saxophone**  
SOCIETY OF GREAT BRITAIN



## Blaz Sparovec wins Nielsen Competition

The 24-year-old Slovenian clarinetist Blaz Sparovec has won the 2019 International Nielsen Clarinet Competition. Second prize was awarded to Aron Chiesa (22, Italy) and 3rd prize to Victor Diaz (22, Spain).

Following a pre-selection video round, 24 players aged 19 to 27 from 15 countries were invited to attend the live finals in Odense, Denmark on 20-30 March. After three rounds, three finalists were selected for the grand final and tasked with performing the first movement of Mozart's Clarinet Concerto and Nielsen's Clarinet Concerto with the Copenhagen Philharmonic. This year's clarinet jury comprised Paul Meyer (chair), Michael Collins, Svante Wik, Michel Portal, Boris Allakhverdyan, Yehuda Gilad, Claudio Bohóquez, Mats Engström and Marco Feklistoff. Social media commentators criticised the appointment an all-male jury, to which the competition responded that female jurors had been invited but none had accepted.

Sparovec receives €12,000, a solo CD recording with the Odense Symphony Orchestra and performance opportunities with up to 10 orchestras worldwide. He studied in Ljubljana with Andrej Zupan before completing his studies with François Benda at the University of Arts in Berlin. As a soloist, he has appeared with the Düsseldorfer Symphoniker, Slovenian National Philharmonic, Slovenian National Radio Orchestra and Göttinger Symphonieorchester. Since 2015, he has occupied the principal clarinet chair at the Cologne Gürzenich Orchestra and is associate clarinet professor at the University of Arts in Berlin.

High definition videos of performances from every round of the competition are available to watch for free on Medici TV ([www.medici.tv/en](http://www.medici.tv/en)).

[carlnielsencompetition.com](http://carlnielsencompetition.com)

## 35 rare saxophones stolen from Italian collector

Thieves in Rome have stolen 35 rare saxophones from the Italian saxophone collector Attilio Berni. Speaking to Agence France-Presse (AFP), Berni estimated the total value of the stolen instruments to be around €300,000 but noted that many would be difficult to sell. Eight of the stolen instruments were found abandoned in a local neighbourhood, while the majority remain missing. Among the instruments stolen were some made in the 19th century and others belonging to celebrated saxophonists. Berni commented: 'They did not touch the Sonny Rollins saxophone ... which suggests [the thieves] did not know what they were doing!'

Over 25 years Berni has built up a collection of over 600 saxophones. He plans to open what he claims will be the world's first saxophone museum this September in Maccarese, near Rome, saying, 'This setback makes me even more determined to open the museum.' Details of all the stolen instruments are available on his website.

[www.attilioberni.com](http://www.attilioberni.com)



Saxophones from the Attilio Berni collection

**CW:** I'm sensing that you're finding this work extremely rewarding.

**JB:** Yes, especially working with people in leadership roles who are holding so much influence. There's lots of talk of mental health issues both at work and in the student community – the pressures are everywhere. This kind of work can help. It gives people a place to talk – a sounding board – and it's a confidential space.

**CW:** Could you say something about your orchestral career, which I know has been hugely varied?

**JB:** When I was at college my focus was on chamber music and exploring music that people weren't playing. I did a lot of digging in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris and I sometimes found some real gems. There was plenty too in the British Library, music that really shows the clarinet as an instrument that partners the voice incredibly well, that can mirror and reflect it.



silkeness and shimmer of the French instruments was a very exciting moment – a feeling that the impact of the practice you had put in to change from a French system to a German system had been worth it.

**CW:** At one point you must have had a whole house full of instruments. Have you still got them all, and how many?

**JB:** I haven't counted for a while, probably about 60-something. But some of them are quite tiny. Chalumeaux – I've got lots of those. My real nerdiness is on the chalumeau.

**CW:** Why are you nerdy about the chalumeau?

**JB:** They're unexpected and unusual, and the characteristics of the sounds are wonderful. The benefit is also the downside because you have so little repertoire for each one that they don't really earn their keep, but who's to say my instruments have to earn their keep? There's the bass chalumeau which looks a bit like a dulcian, which I'm still looking to take into a baroque orchestra and masquerade as a bassoon player.

People assume that the chalumeau was the precursor to the clarinet. Actually it wasn't. It was in existence alongside the clarinet through most of the 18th century, and that happened because of the qualities and colours of the sound. But it's also impracticable.

If you're just on tour with your soprano

chalumeau that's not too bad. You put in your pocket and off you go. But in terms of putting together a body of repertoire to play it's not so easy! ■

*Jane's five-volume edition of Baermann's transcriptions of Schubert Lieder for clarinet and piano is published by Fountayne Editions ([www.fountayneeditions.co.uk](http://www.fountayneeditions.co.uk)).*

*Jane has made many recordings, recently with the label Devine Music ([www.devinemusic.co.uk](http://www.devinemusic.co.uk)). These include two volumes of Mozart chamber music with Ensemble DeNOTE and two volumes of Danzi's music for piano and winds with ensemble F2.*

*Jane's forthcoming concerts, featuring repertoire by Telemann, Mozart, Danzi, and Schubert, include appearances at the Deal Festival (3 July), Sundays at Six (Cardiff, 31 July), Suffolk Villages Festival (25 August) and the Manoel Theatre in Valletta with Ensemble DeNOTE (13 November). She is presently one of Making Music's Selected Artists for 2019-20.*

*For more information about coaching and mentoring training please write to ([coachingandmentoring@gsm.ac.uk](mailto:coachingandmentoring@gsm.ac.uk)).*

If I were to sum up where my passion lies, it is in making effective communication. This idea somehow encapsulates the kinds of repertoires and pedagogy that have interested me since my student days

But it was also the time when orchestras were furiously recording and they were moving through the 18th century. In complete recordings of, say, Haydn symphonies, where all of a sudden you actually get a piece with clarinets in it, I was fortunate enough to be invited to play for various recordings that were coming up. One important step was being invited to join Sigiswald Kuijken's orchestra La Petite Bande for their recordings of Mozart operas, which put me into contact with people who worked with Philippe Herreweghe. I was then invited to be principal clarinet with his orchestra, the Orchestre des Champs-Élysées, which I did for 15 years. We started off with largely classical repertoire, so I was on the instruments I was comfortable with, but then we started to push right into the 19th century and play the works of Berlioz, so I needed a whole new set of clarinets.

A big highlight for me was performing *Symphonie Fantastique*. All the wind players were on French instruments and there was a very distinctive sound that we built up, working with that repertoire and performing it every night. We then went away for a period and came back to play the Brahms Requiem. All of the woodwind and brass players had changed instruments to German-style ones. The contrast in sound when we first started to play was absolutely remarkable. The rich, chocolatey sound we got from the German instruments set against the brilliance,

♩. = 72 Winding up accel.

24

*pp cresc.*

♩. = 96 Sparky

27

*f ff fp*

30

*f*

32

*mf p mf p f p*

35

*f*

molto rall. . .

38

*p*

(Either play held note as written, or optional short cadenza based on the suggested scale)

40

*ff*

♩. = 96 (a tempo)

42

*mf f*

Consequently, through the popularity of both the CBO and these 'guests', over 100 different albums (across nearly a score of different labels, garnering no less than 17 Grammy Awards), exposed millions of punters to Basie's reeds-men such as Paul Gonsalves, Lucky Thompson, Wardell Gray, Frank Foster, Marshall Royal and Frank Wess. Still going strong, the CBO must still be of considerable influence on saxophonists – budding and actual.

Next up in this tour of BBs contributing to the advancement of single-reed activity is **Woody Herman**, not exactly a monster musician of the alto sax and clarinet but a great talent spotter and leader who was not afraid to innovate after taking over Isham Jones's band around 1936 and creating The Band that Plays the Blues. 'Woodchopper's Ball' became their first record hit in 1939, eventually selling more than five million copies. Further wartime hits were in part supported by the saxophonist and arranger Deane Kincaide. It was in 1944 that Woody assembled his First Herd, which lasted for two years, embraced the bop revolution (courtesy of arrangements initially from Dizzy Gillespie and subsequently from Ralph Burns) and, in 1945, added Flip Phillips on tenor. This was the time of Herman's rabble-rousing hit record 'Caldonia', which a year later was joined by Igor Stravinsky's *Ebony Concerto*, written exclusively for Herman's solo clarinet work. Even though Woody was quite successful with 1946 band activity, his personal life was less so, and it was not until December 1947 that the

Four Brothers Band (or the Second Herd) recorded Jimmy Giuffre's chart based on the chord sequence of 'Jeepers Creepers', featuring the three-tenor-and-one-bari sax section containing Zoot Sims, Herbie Steward, Stan Getz and Serge Chaloff. Perhaps one of the most beautiful tenor solos in modern jazz, the exquisite Stan Getz break on Burns's 'Early Autumn' extract from his *Summer Sequence*, was a product of the Second Herd's accomplishments, which in its three-year life also employed two more super saxophonists, Al Cohn and Gene Ammons. Later 'Herds' (1950-80s) continued to display the talents of more reeds-men of note, specifically Sal Nistico and the baritonist Nick Brignola. (It is hopefully relevant at this juncture to let the *New Grove Dictionary of Jazz* explain the sometimes-confusing names Nestico and Nistico. Sammy (Sal) Nestico, born Nistico in Pittsburgh in 1924, was the arranger, while Salvatore (also Sal) Nistico, born in Syracuse in 1941, was the saxophonist. They were cousins.)

Fully aware that several critics and biographers have noted that few of **Stan Kenton's** orchestras have ever 'swung', they did successfully coexist with genuine swingers and at the same time engaged many of the truly magnificent saxophone artists of the 20th century between 1941 and 1990. Starting with the fairly muscular duo of soloists Vido Musso (tenor) and Boots Mussulli (alto), and strongly influenced by Jimmie Lunceford's charts, his *Rendezvous Ballroom* (Balboa Beach,

first instrumental track to enter a Billboard Top 20 chart position. Thereafter, his various modern jazz orchestra formats consistently won awards or high chart positions (but were not necessarily commercially remunerative) for his many singles and albums, including three Grammys. Possibly his most reed-oriented achievements stem from a deliberate policy to move 'orchestral jazz' forward by

- presenting each new band to university and college audiences and maintaining close cooperation with their departments of music education. This was coupled with a release to publishers of selected key charts for college and school use and the creation of Kenton Band Clinics to further promote his 'progressive jazz' style to up-coming generations
- regularly hiring new blood into his line-ups, often from new-graduate streams
- hiring some of the most creative BB arrangers available: Manny Albam, Dee Barton, Ralph Carmichael, Frank Comstock, Bob Curnow, Bob Graettinger, Ken Hanna, Neal Hefti, Bill Holman, Hank Levy, Willie Maiden, Marty Paich, Johnny Richards, Shorty Rogers, Pete Rugolo and Bill Russo – all of whom were competent writers for saxophone. Apparently, Stan was not a fan of the clarinet – a situation that made no difference to his commissioning of a splendid military-style but clarinet-free arrangement of our National Anthem for a Croydon concert on his final UK visit
- ensuring that his best soloists were given plenty of elbow room
- giving the oxygen of publicity to at least 10 of the finest saxophonists of the period: Stan Getz (a very short spell), Pepper Adams, Bob Cooper, Sam Donahue (who delivers an astonishingly high altissimo ending to his 'Body and Soul' solo feature), Bob Gioga, Richie Kamuca, Lee Konitz, Lennie Niehaus (also a good arranger), Bud Shank and Zoot Sims.

With the benefit of hindsight it is now clear that Kenton followed closely in the footsteps of earlier BB leaders (Whiteman, Ellington, Thornhill et al) with the objective to continuously move the music forward, or to cross boundaries. Furthermore, elements of this characteristic can be detected in the works of some of Stan's contemporary BB leaders: Charlie Barnet, Don Ellis, Maynard Ferguson, Dizzy Gillespie, Thad Jones and Mel Lewis, Tom Kubis, Hank Levy, Billy May, Bob Mintzer, Boyd Raeburn, Buddy Rich,

Goodness knows how many times the charts for 'Moonlight Serenade' and 'In the Mood' have been used – it must be in the millions



Woody Herman (top left)  
Artie Shaw (above) and  
Count Basie (right)



California) BB line-up ultimately gained him a slot on Bob Hope's 1943-44 radio show and a Decca recording contract. This was closely followed by a contract with the newly formed Capitol label, which captured 'Eager Beaver' to shellac – his

by three sopranos, harpsichord, theorbo, harp and viola da gamba.

On leaving this venue we were guided across a square, through builders' hoardings and into another venue: the Eglise des Franciscains, the shell of a 13th century church awaiting restoration. Festival organiser Marc Monnet explained that we were moving from the 16th century to the 21st – although the fact that the venue had in fact taken us back several hundred years didn't go unnoticed. By this point we knew that the performers were to be the bass clarinetist Alain Billard and the Quatuor Tana, who were to give the premiere of *Shadows II* by Yann Robin. Preceding this was Mauricio Kagel's *Pas de cinq*, a theatre-piece from 1965 featuring five actor-musicians stamping around a stage adorned with various coverings to provide varieties of sound. It was bizarre and, to my mind, not complex and rather random.

frantic section, the piercing note from the opening returned before the whole ensemble went mad. Bow hair was tattered. Delicate soft sounds, almost inaudible, contrasted with fiercely intense raucous sounds, which at times felt uncomfortable. A much calmer section featured sustained notes using growling and multiphonics. From my seat I could see the second violin's tablet and a foot pedal used to change the page, which happened frequently. While the music had an improvisatory quality, it was carefully planned, and the composition was particular and exact. I felt I was ready for it to end around two-thirds of the way through its half-hour duration, but perhaps my unfamiliarity with this style of music was the reason for this. Further, the juxtaposition of a brand-new work with an incredibly old building created an extra level of tension. It was dark and cold – blankets were provided – but the

string players, also frequent collaborators with Robin, were committed, providing shape and sense to an otherwise impossibly-structured piece.

Monnet had reassured the audience by saying that throughout music's history there had always been controversy, and that even the madrigals would have been disapproved of at some point. The audience members seemed genuinely satisfied with the exception of one, who offered his sympathies to Billard, asking how on earth he could possibly play this music. Billard, graciously, said it was his job and we are all free to play the music that we are drawn to – and yes, he enjoys playing Brahms and Mozart as well. He also revealed that he had received *Shadows II* from Robin very late and had only had six weeks to work on it, concentrating on it particularly in the last two weeks.

Billard is an exceptional technician. Over 20 years as a member of Ensemble Intercontemporain must put him in prime position for performing the very latest in modern music



*Shadows II* – the main work I had come to hear – opened with a quadruple-forte high note on the bass clarinet, sustained and powering through. Rhythmic slap tonguing punctuated longer silences, creating atmosphere right away. The music developed as the strings entered with fast repetitive patterns, usually high and without any form of sustained tone, in contrast to the bass, which played patterns of slap tongue and ghost notes, all extremely rapid. After an exceptionally

heightened sense of atmosphere certainly added to the occasion.

Billard is an exceptional technician. Over 20 years as a member of Ensemble Intercontemporain must put him in prime position for performing the very latest in modern music. The extended techniques that he can now make available to composers must be enviable, and given that he has worked with Robin since 2004 there will be very few who know the capabilities of his playing better. The

Readers with an interest in contemporary music could do worse than investigate Robin's works for contrabass clarinet including *Art of Metal I* and *II*. These sonic explorations are interesting starting points for exploring the very latest in new music for clarinet, and having listened to more of Robin's music I feel I am beginning to understand it more. *Shadows II* is published by Lemoine, a pricey edition but one that nevertheless allows players to explore and experiment with this extraordinary work. Even factoring in all the seemingly random sounds, the notation is written explicitly and each sound is prescribed to be played at an exact time.

I mentioned the theatrical element in the string quartet work by Markeas. Perhaps we should not just be listening to contemporary music but also watching for those movements and connections between players – all the subtleties that emerge only after hours of ensemble rehearsal. *Shadows II* is a long work, so it probably won't make up part of my everyday playlist, but if I got the opportunity to hear it again, either with Billard or another exceptional player, then I would probably take it. ■

Stephanie Reeve