



Clarinet & Saxophone

Summer 2022 Volume 47, No 2

Floor pegs

NEW OPTIONS FOR
LOW CLARINETS

Indie sax

BON IVER'S
SOUNDSCAPES

Balancing act

CLARINET EMOUCHURE
EXAMINED

Brussels connection

EARLY SAX REPERTOIRE

Jazz and
beyond

TONY COE

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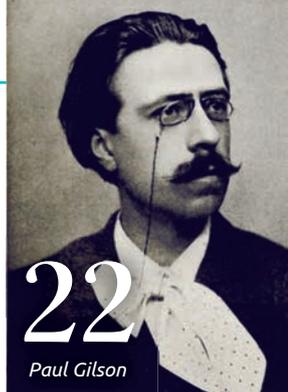
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Tymon Zgorzelski

awards round-up

Nielsen Clarinet Competition



Oleg Shebeta-Dragan

After a break during the pandemic, the Carl Nielsen International Competition returned at the beginning of April, held as normal in Odense, Denmark. Previously, the competition's three categories (clarinet, flute and violin – the three instruments for which Nielsen wrote concertos) took place on a rotational basis. However, this time around, all three instrument competitions took place simultaneously.

24 candidates for each instrument were selected by a pre-jury panel and invited to attend the live competition. After several rounds, the three finalists in the clarinet final were required to perform the first movement of Mozart's Clarinet Concerto and the complete Nielsen Clarinet Concerto, performed live with the Copenhagen Philharmonic.

Ultimately, it would be the 27-year-old Ukrainian clarinetist Oleg Shebeta-Dragan who took home the top clarinet prize, with his healthy prize package including €12,000 prize money and a recording deal with Orchid Classics and the Odense Symphony Orchestra valued at €13,000.

Already a multiple competition winner, Oleg has occupied principal clarinet positions in the National Presidential Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine and the I Culture Orchestra in Poland. He studied at the National Music Academy of Ukraine with Roman Vovk, and at the Musikhochschule Lübeck in Germany with Reiner Wehle and Jens Thoben.

At the time of writing, livestreams of both the clarinet semi-final and grand final are available at youtube.com/odensesymfoni

Steven Banks wins Avery Fischer Grant

In the US, rising star saxophonist Steven Banks has been named one of five recipients of the 2022 Avery Fisher Career Grants, each receiving an award of \$25,000 (c.£20,000) to help advance their careers.

The announcement ceremony was livestreamed from American classical radio station WQXR's performance space in New York, featuring Banks performing two movements from his own original composition *Come As You Are* with pianist Xak Bjerken followed by a short interview with WQXR host Jeff Spurgeon. You can rewatch the ceremony on YouTube by searching '2022 Avery Fisher Career Grants Live'.

Aside from Banks' busy schedule of solo performances, which recently included John Adams' Saxophone Concerto with the Colorado Symphony, he holds the post of assistant professor of saxophone at Ithaca College, New York, and is also co-creator of the *Learning to Listen* roundtable discussions on the nuances of the Black experience in classical music.

In 2019, he was also awarded a place on the prestigious Young Concert Artists roster – a New York City-based non-profit organisation dedicated to promoting the careers of talented young classical musicians worldwide – becoming the first saxophonist in the competition's 59-year history to do so.



Steven Banks



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Tony Coe

Ian Mitchell profiles Tony Coe – the British jazzier who has caught the attention of stars across the musical landscape for seven decades

Most people reading this article will know *The Pink Panther* tune. Most will know it in its original form played on tenor saxophone. But perhaps fewer will know it was the British clarinettist and saxophonist Tony Coe who recorded the original iconic tune for Henry Mancini. Did you know that Tony was also invited to join the Count Basie Band, but in those days found the challenge of being allowed to work in the USA just too much of a challenge, essentially having to prove that you were as good as, if not better than, US musicians? Did you know that Duke Ellington – who Tony describes as ‘a charming man with wonderful presence’ – said to him, ‘When are you going to join us?’ Tony didn’t realise it was a genuine offer until much later, when clarinettist Ruben Greenberg, a mutual friend, told him that The Duke really did mean it. If TC had known he was serious, he would have somehow got around the Green Card and other admin issues to be able to sit next to Johnny Hodges and cover the seat of Paul Gonsalves, who was so often absent. There is much about Tony that many people may not know, so I decided to chat with him and fill in some of the blanks.

Tony Coe, Brecon Jazz Festival, Powys, Wales, August 2009



PHOTOGRAPHY: ALAMY/BRIAN O'CONNOR.

Brussels CONNECTION

Kurt Bertels outlines his research into early Belgian saxophone music, including the world's first saxophone concerto composed by Paul Gilson



Paul Gilson

Scattered in the libraries of Paris, Ghent, Brussels and Antwerp, I discovered unknown compositions written by Beeckman and Poncelet for the Brussels saxophone class

During the first period of the pandemic in 2020, I released two CDs that are dear to my heart – *Works for Saxophone and Orchestra by Paul Gilson*, which includes performances of the world's first saxophone concertos, and *The Saxophone in 19th-Century Brussels*, which brings together Brussels chamber music for saxophone and piano. For both projects, I was inspired by the world's first saxophone concerto by the Belgian composer, Paul Gilson. I already had a passion for the early saxophone period – the first decades after the official presentation of the saxophone in 1841 by Adolphe Sax – and Gilson's composition from 1902 encouraged me to dig deeper into Belgium's saxophone history. I was also intrigued by the concept of historically informed performance, which, in comparison to other instruments, is less common in the saxophone field. I hoped that these historically informed performances would allow me to shed new lights, both historical and artistic, on the saxophone's early history.

The first concerto

My search for early 19th-century Belgian saxophone music began with the Concerto No 1 for alto saxophone and orchestra by the Brussels composer, Paul Gilson (1865-1942). I simply wondered why a composer like Gilson fostered the idea to compose a saxophone concerto. We can consider his concerto from 1902 as the world's first saxophone concerto as it follows the conventional structure of a classical concerto: the work consists of three movements and includes a soloist accompanied by a symphonic orchestra. In the same year, Gilson also wrote a second saxophone concerto.

The first concerto is much discussed. Gilson dedicated his autograph to Elizabeth Boyer Swett Coolidge, better known as Elise Boyer Hall (1853-1924), an American amateur saxophonist. The well-known anecdote is that Gilson created the concerto at Hall's request. Born in France, she was nicknamed the 'Saxophone Lady' by Claude Debussy, and learned to play the saxophone on doctor's advice to counteract her increasing deafness. At the end of the 19th century, she suffered from typhoid fever, which caused her to lose her hearing. In Santa Barbara, California, she was introduced to the saxophone by accident, through a worker who happened to play the young instrument.

Hall immediately set out to be ambitious. Under the guidance of her private teacher Georges Longy, she mastered the saxophone passionately and founded the Boston Orchestral Club – an orchestral club for amateur musicians. Due to the lack of repertoire for saxophone and orchestra, Hall planned to commission new music for the instrument from contemporary composers.

gear

GEAR REVIEWS



WoodWindDesign
peg at different heights

WoodWindDesign
€90 (+ shipping, VAT and import fees)
woodwinddesign.nl

WoodWindDesign is a company based in the Netherlands which has been successful in recent years by offering extremely lightweight, compact and transportable carbon fibre instrument stands (carbon fibre is a very strong yet light material). But recently, the company's founder and designer Gijs van Leeuwen introduced a new product: the carbon fibre standing bass clarinet peg.

This peg is made of three extendable telescoping carbon fibre parts – the 7mm diameter attachment rod (39mm long) and a 16mm and an 18mm diameter tube (each 33mm long). There are two small screws to hold the attachment rod in place and one large screw on a carbon fibre clamp to hold the larger tubes at the desired length. A rubber stopper covers the end of the bottom tube to prevent slippage on the floor. In total, the peg weighs a mere 104 grams.

The WoodWindDesign peg can extend to a total length of 1 metre, which is more than is necessary for even the tallest of bass clarinetists. This excessive length makes this peg also useful for very tall basset horn or alto clarinet players. The shortest length the peg collapses to is 40cm (about the length of my bass clarinet upper joint), but when you factor in the attachment rod, it is actually 36cm from the bottom of the peg receiver on the bell. This is still too long to be used by most bass clarinetists while sitting in standard chairs. However, removing the

FLOOR PEGS FOR LOW CLARINETS

As the bass clarinet is finally getting the recognition it has long deserved as a solo instrument, many players are wanting to stand up while performing. Since it is too large and heavy to hold on its own (especially low C models), either some sort of strap or peg is needed to carry the weight. The problem with pegs is that the standard diameter of the receiver on the instrument is 7mm (or 8mm on the new Royal Global bass clarinets), but at the length needed for standing, this is not thick enough to be stable without flexing and wobbling. Anyone that has ever played a Leblanc 'paperclip' contrabass clarinet will also certainly have encountered this same problem, as a two-foot peg is needed just to play this instrument in a sitting position. It is far too heavy for the long, thin rod provided, resulting in constant bouncing around while playing.

Here we have two new products to mitigate this problem from WoodWindDesign and Andrew Roberts Clarinet Service. Each has a short 7mm rod to attach to the instrument (both companies have told me that an 8mm attachment rod for Royal Global owners is possible by special order) that widens to a much larger diameter base pole to increase stability. Each peg has its own unique features, as we'll see.

bottom tube reveals that the attachment rod has its own rubber stopper. The rod can be completely detached from the larger tubes, enabling you to use it on its own as a normal sitting peg.

For the greatest stability, the attachment rod should only be extended as far as is necessary to insert into the peg receiver, leaving as much of the height adjustment to the larger tubes as possible. When used like this, the peg was very stable while standing with my bass clarinet. I normally use a harness myself, as I find long 7mm diameter pegs too wobbly to feel secure while playing, but I was very pleased with the steadiness of the WoodWindDesign peg, plus it was nice to get the weight off my shoulders for longer gigs. The large clamp screw is easy to turn, making adjusting the height effortless, and the clamp is strong enough that it doesn't slip under the weight of the instrument.

It was an enormous improvement for my paperclip contrabass clarinet while sitting. For standing with the paperclip, I had to extend the attachment rod much further, which meant there was a greater length of thin peg. This was quite a bit wobblier but still much better than if it was a 7mm peg for the entire length. When standing with a Selmer contrabass clarinet, I was able to use just the large tubes for the height adjustment, so there was no wobble. However, due to the huge size and weight of the instrument, I did feel just a

bit of flex, but I still would feel perfectly comfortable using the WoodWindDesign peg in a performance. With my alto and Selmer contra-alto clarinets, it was just as steady as with the bass clarinet.

The fact that the WoodWindDesign peg collapses down to a manageable size and weighs next to nothing makes this a great travelling option. The wide range of lengths from 0 to 100mm results in a flexible product that can be used on any low clarinet.



Left: WWD peg on bass clarinet at standing height
Right: WWD peg on paperclip contra at standing height