



# Clarinet & Saxophone

Summer 2023 Volume 48, No 2

**Huw Wiggin**  
ON *RHAPSODY*, HIS  
NEW ALBUM WITH  
PIANIST NORIKO OGAWA

**Creating  
a concerto**  
GILLIAN BLAIR AND  
LUCY ARMSTRONG PREP  
FOR A PREMIERE

**Bass  
friends**  
SARAH WATTS'  
FULLY INCLUSIVE BASS  
CLARINET COURSE

**Ian  
Mitchell**  
REFLECTIONS  
ON A LIFETIME  
OF CLARINET  
PLAYING

**SUSI  
EVANS**

Queen of klezmer clarinet

**PLUS:** FREE CLARINET SHEET MUSIC BY ALFIE PUGH | MAKING MUSIC IN SEN SCHOOLS  
SWEDISH SAXOPHONE MUSIC | SAXOPHONE-ACCORDION DUOS | NEWS AND REVIEWS



COVER FEATURE  
page  
**16**  
Susie Evans

## Regulars

- 4 **News**
- 7 **Gear News**
- 26 **Free Sheet Music**  
Alfie Pugh's piece for four clarinets,  
The Mountain Shepherdess
- 36 **Reviews**
  - 36 Gear
  - 41 CDs
  - 46 Sheet Music
- 49 **Diary**
- 54 **Classifieds**
- 55 **Membership Update**



**22**  
Emily Plumb



**32**  
Mikeleiz-  
Zucchi  
Duo



**44**  
Sarah Watts

## Features

- 8 **Music for all**  
Rania van den Ouweland on introducing the saxophone to children with special educational needs
- 10 **Commissioning a concerto**  
Gillian Blair and Lucy Armstrong on the piece that premieres in June
- 13 **Rhapsody by Huw**  
Alastair Penman interviews Huw Wiggin about his new disc
- 16 **Cover: Susi Evans**  
How the discovery of ancient manuscripts led to her latest klezmer recording
- 22 **To Sweden, with love**  
Emily Plumb looks back on her Erasmus year and the innovative concert it inspired
- 32 **Dream Team**  
David Zucchi shares the story of commissioning two new pieces for saxophone and accordion duo
- 38 **Looking back**  
Margaret Archibald and Ian Mitchell invite CASSGB to listen as they reminisce on his clarinet career
- 44 **It's ace for bass**  
Kat Browning reports from Sarah Watts' Sheffield course for bass clarinet and bassoon players
- 56 **Scaling the heights**  
Editor Catherine Smith shares her saxophone progress, several months on

## Naomi Sullivan joins CASSGB as Chair of the Board of Directors

Saxophonist Naomi Sullivan, head of saxophone at the Royal Birmingham Conservatoire (RBC), has joined CASSGB as the Chair of the Board of Directors. Naomi said: "I'm very happy and grateful to have been asked. I'm looking forward to being part of a team and learning about how the society works. There are already plans for another CASSGB event in 2023, which is very positive. I'd like to listen and help implement any new or existing projects. I'd also love to write more articles for the magazine, as I have done before, as it's always interesting to have to commit words and thoughts to paper." Naomi has been teaching at the RBC since 2007 and has been leading the saxophone department since 2008. In 2001, she began teaching at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. As an orchestral musician she has worked for the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Halle Orchestra and Birmingham Royal Ballet, among others. She is currently performing as resident artist for the Illuminate Series with the Laefer Quartet and with Sounding Cities. To find out more about Naomi visit [naomisullivan.co.uk](http://naomisullivan.co.uk) or [laeferquartet.com](http://laeferquartet.com)



### Next live CASSGB playday: 1 October 2023

Save the date

The CASSGB committee can confirm that they are working hard on the next live playday! Details are still to be confirmed but the date will be Sunday 1st October 2023. Do keep an eye on our website [www.cassgb.org](http://www.cassgb.org) or twitter account @CASSGB for more details as they arrive.

### YolanDa Brown's new music venue and restaurant

Saxophonist YolanDa Brown and music manager and promoter T Oyelola have launched a Kickstarter campaign to fund their plans for a live music venue and restaurant, Soul Mama. By the time this magazine is in your hands there will be only days left of their campaign and their aim is raise £500,000 in just 50 days.

The plan is for the Islington venue to be a hub for soul, jazz, reggae and gospel music, a place for both established musicians to play and emerging artists to be discovered – as well as place where the food is delicious. Some funds are already in place but more is needed for soundproofing, technology and lighting.

You can keep up with the project's progress by following @soulmamalondon on social media, and support it by pre-booking a meal, becoming a lifetime member, or simply donating to the campaign by visiting [kickstarter.com/projects/soulmama/soul-mama-london-music-venue-and-restaurant](http://kickstarter.com/projects/soulmama/soul-mama-london-music-venue-and-restaurant)

### Hacha Duo crowdfunder: new music from women and minority gender composers

The Hacha Duo – made up of clarinet and bass clarinet player Hannah Shilvock and oboe and cor anglais player Catherine Underhill – are crowdfunding a project to create new music for their unique combination of instruments, written by women and minority-gender composers, on the theme of climate change. They need to raise £5,000 for their project to ensure that all composers and artists are paid fairly at MU rates. Alea Publishing is collaborating with the Duo to publish this repertoire for other musicians to access. To find out more or support the project, visit [crowdfunder.co.uk/p/hacha-duo-music-for-a-changing-climate](http://crowdfunder.co.uk/p/hacha-duo-music-for-a-changing-climate)



### Gathering of bass saxophones for world record attempt

This Spring in Philadelphia, players of the bass saxophone gathered at Independence Mall to attempt to break a Guinness world record for the most bass saxophones performing in one place. Christian Halpin, a mummer from the Ferko String Band, organised the event, bringing together 17 bass saxophonists and two contrabassists.

Philadelphia could be said to be the home of the bass saxophone. Only 1,000 were ever produced and 100 of them are in the greater Philly area. Saxophonists travelled from all over the US and even from the UK to help attempt the feat.



### Saxophone scholarship student

American high school student Dylan Mazzanti, 18, has earned himself a full scholarship to Casper College on the strength of his musical talent on the saxophone. He learned the tenor saxophone to a high enough standard to win him a scholarship over the course of just 12 months. Before this he had never had a music lesson or picked up an instrument. Dylan said: "I had always had somewhat of an interest in music, but never really acted on it." Most young people with musical potential start at a much younger age. "I'm a clear example that it's never really too late to try something you're interested in," said Dylan. "If something interests you, then you should really take the time to try and find something you like." Dylan is due to study computer science but will study music as a minor subject.

# A safe SPACE

*Rania van den Ouweland tells us how a grant from CASSGB is helping fund her project for children with special educational needs at the Swan centre in Brighton*



This is a space where we make music collaboratively, and I invite the young people to explore music through the lens of their own creativity

Music has always been a central aspect of my life, my main instrument being the saxophone. I followed quite a typical musical journey, studying classical saxophone in different municipal conservatoires in Paris until I obtained my certificate of musical studies in saxophone. As I grew older and went to University in Brighton to study Sociology, I started to feel quite conflicted towards my music playing. I didn't know if I was genuinely enjoying playing and performing on the saxophone, or if the main incentive for me to keep playing was simply to get better technically and musically. I felt more and more disconnected from it until lockdown happened and I completely stopped, even though I had so much time on my hands. At the same time, I was in my final year of studying Sociology and I had always wanted to do something in the line of social work, although I wasn't sure in which capacity. I stumbled across a video from EL Sistema, an orchestra for vulnerable young people living in precarious conditions in Venezuela. Feeling particularly drawn to this project, I read two books about it to learn more. I started to look around for musical NGOs working with vulnerable groups such as Musicians Without Borders, Sounds of Change and other more local ones in England. I felt inspired by the work of all these organisations using music as a tool for hope, change and inspiration, and hoped that one day I would be able to work in similar settings.

I've always loved the thought of working with young people, so I found a job as a teaching assistant at Brighton Aldridge Community Academy (BACA). I worked with children and young people with various learning disabilities, such as autism, ADHD, and mental health struggles. It was a very interesting experience and I learnt so much by working with some very experienced colleagues. I thoroughly enjoyed going to music classes with some of the students. One autistic child I was working with always found it very difficult to cope in a class environment and would often either disrupt the class by shouting or would leave the classroom after a couple of minutes. During the music class, the children were sent into small groups to practise a song. This child was put on the drum. My first thought was that he would play it very loudly and use it as a way to release his frustrations. However, he deeply listened to what the other student was playing on the piano and adjusted his timing to fit in with the piano. What they managed to do was beautiful and this really ignited the idea of running music provision for children with special needs in small groups.

I signed up to a foundation course in music therapy at Roehampton University and approached the Swan centre, which is the specialist centre based within BACA,

# Old manuscripts, new listeners

*Susi Evans tells Berdel Efe Gulsen about her classical training, how she stumbled into klezmer and the story of her new album with accordionist partner Szilvia Csaranko, which arose from the discovery of manuscripts that hadn't been seen for 100 years*

Known for her captivating performances, Susi Evans has become a respected figure in the global klezmer music scene, earning critical acclaim for her virtuosic playing, creative arrangements, and deep understanding of the rich cultural traditions of Jewish music.

Born and raised in Hemel Hempstead, Susi grew up in a musical family and followed a traditional route, attending the Purcell School of Music and the Royal Academy of Music, during which she discovered her passion for klezmer. She is now an in-demand klezmer clarinetist, playing in her band She'Koyokh and with duo partner Szilvia Csaranko. Susi is also head of faculty at Klezfest London and has taught at all the major international klezmer festivals including Yiddish New York, KlezKanada and Yiddish Summer Weimar. I met Susi whilst she was in London on a rainy day to talk about the world of klezmer and an exciting new project she had recently completed.

**BEG:** Most of the klezmer players I have met have discovered it by accident. They studied their instrument through school, doing grades and youth orchestras, then went to university or college and discovered klezmer through a random encounter. How did you discover klezmer?

**SE:** Exactly like that. Next question! Well, I went down the classical route and started clarinet at school. My friend was in the Hertfordshire youth orchestra, and I wanted to get into it because of her. I was very determined and nobody ever had to persuade me to practise as I wanted to do this. I progressed very well as I was captivated by the clarinet. For sixth form, I went to the Purcell School of Music, as my brother had gone there. I then went to the Royal Academy of Music and

studied with Nick Rodwell for the first two years. On the first day, he said "We need to change your embouchure, so you are only going to play long notes for three months – and no concerts!" And I was thinking, "Oh... I've got to play Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time* next week...." So that was really hard, but I am very grateful for this privileged education. In the following years I studied with Angela Malsbury and Mark van de Wiel, and Classical clarinet with Keith Puddy, which prepared me for the German system. I also had several lessons with Andrew Marriner, so my education followed a typical Classical route.

My first exposure to klezmer came just before I went to the academy. I went on a clarinet course in Hungary with József Balogh and Robert Spring. The course was actually promoted by CASSGB and I saw a klezmer band while I was there, but that was it. It wasn't until few years later, in the summer of 2001, while I was at the academy, that I saw this flyer for Klezfest in my pigeonhole and thought, "Oh, I know what klezmer is, I am going to go."

It was the first ever Klezfest, with an amazing faculty; trumpeter Frank London, fiddler Deborah Strauss (big names from America) and clarinetist Merlin Shepherd. I was worried that I was the only person not part of the Jewish community here, but soon realised there were plenty of people who weren't and hadn't played klezmer music before. When I got there, there were around a hundred people just jamming on the grass outside SOAS. I thought "How do you know what to play?" Everything was done by ear, and I did the session with Merlin and would learn all these tunes and then nip back up to the academy to practise them so I could come back the next day and play it.

The thing about learning a style like this is that you have to start again sound-wise. I don't ➡

# gear

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## GEAR REVIEWS

### BG ZEN NECK STRAPS

Alto saxophone €98

Clarinet €49.30

Available from [www.bgfranckbichon.com](http://www.bgfranckbichon.com)

There's been a recent trend in the development of saxophone neck straps as manufacturers seem to be trying to find ways of making the saxophone more comfortable to play. Gone are the days of a simple length of webbing with a plastic adjuster and hook. Now a dizzying array of harnesses, supports, sax holders, braces and yokes are available at all sorts of prices from around £10 to over £100 and all seem to have a range of options of hooks and adjusters. Additionally, it appears that neck straps are now a thing for clarinetists too (yes normal Bb clarinets, not just bass clarinets!).

In 2021 BG music sent me a prototype S20YMSH Zen neck strap to try. I was very impressed with the concept as the Y-shaped adjuster took the pressure away from my neck and helped with comfort and breathing. It was well-made and I loved using it. However, the strap fixings felt quite heavy. To my delight, BG also make a Yoke version, with a comfortable, wide neckband that helps make the saxophone feel lighter by spreading the weight; and also three different options for hooking the strap to the saxophone - the metal snap hook (robust but heavy) the metal hook (light and strong) and the ABS snap hook (lighter still).

Recently BG sent me a couple of new straps to try that are much improved. The brass adjuster has given way to a stylish black metal Y adjuster that is hollowed out, meaning it is now 30g

lighter – it has shed nearly a quarter of its weight! That doesn't sound much, but as far as I'm concerned, the lighter the better.

So how do they perform? On alto saxophone I've been using the BG S20YBM (normal neck, black Zen adjuster with metal snap hook, pictured right) since January and I love it. It takes the weight of the alto away from the neck and is so comfortable. On tenor and baritone saxophones, I have been using the S73YBSH yoke strap (XL) with metal snap hook. This is a great strap with all of the features of the S20YBM but with the extra length needed because of my height. The cotton lined yoke is incredibly comfortable and spreads the weight well across my shoulders, meaning that whilst my neck helps to support the saxophone, it's not bearing too much of the load.

I must confess that I'd never used a neck strap with clarinet, but BG sent me a C23YLP Zen clarinet strap with plastic adjuster (above) and I have enjoyed testing it, particularly during practice sessions. For people playing clarinet for long periods, this is a marvellous piece of kit and it is something that I'm

recommending to pupils. It does take a bit of getting used to, but your right-hand thumb will really thank you for it! Just a little word of advice – whilst these are lighter than the metal-adjusted saxophone straps, they really don't work with saxophone. I tried mine with alto and broke the adjuster! Luckily the nice guys at BG replaced it.

All BG's straps, whether leather or webbing, have a thick cotton interior that absorbs perspiration (if needed!) and is incredibly comfortable around the neck, even resting on skin. The Zen adjuster is the easiest I've ever used for quick and efficient

The cotton-lined yoke is incredibly comfortable and spreads the weight well across my shoulders