

## ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation:                   INSPIRATIONS AND INFLUENCES: POPULAR  
COMPOSITION TRENDS IN THE  
CONTEMPORARY CLARINET REPERTOIRE  
(1996-2010)

Emily Marie Robinson, Doctor of Musical Arts,  
2015

Directed by:                               Associate Professor Robert DiLutis  
School of Music

Clarinetists have seen a large increase in the diversity of styles and influences available for performance in the concert hall since 1996. Being an instrument that easily adapts to a wide range of musical styles, the clarinet is ideal for composers to utilize as they explore exciting new ways to create unique programmable works. From the incorporation of the more traditional folk sounds found in Jewish folk music to the assimilation of electronic distortion and classic rock, new repertoire for the clarinet showcases the instrument's great range, flexibility, and versatility. The future can only hold more opportunities for fantastic new compositions in the same vein as composers become even more familiar with the possibilities available when writing for the clarinet.

This dissertation explores popular composition trends in the contemporary clarinet repertoire through three thematic recital programs. The first contains works that integrate the Jewish folk music style of Klezmer; the second consists of programmatic works that all seek to represent a specific source of inspiration; and the third showcases works that integrate a variety of styles of American popular music.

The works performed and discussed in this dissertation are the following: Samuel Adler - *Cantos XIV – A Klezmer Fantasy*; Ronn Yedidia - *Impromptu, Nocturne, and World Dance*; Ruth Schonthal - *Bells of Sarajevo*; Dana Wilson - *Liquid Ebony*; Christopher Rouse - *Compline*; Richard Toensing - *Children of Light*; Paul Moravec - *Tempest Fantasy*; John Adams - *Gnarly Buttons*; Anna Clyne - *Rapture*; and Scott McAllister - *Black Dog*.

INSPIRATIONS AND INFLUENCES: POPULAR COMPOSITION TRENDS IN THE  
CONTEMPORARY CLARINET REPERTOIRE (1996-2010)

by

Emily Marie Robinson

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2015

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## **Introduction**

The contemporary clarinet repertoire has blossomed with new works in recent years that stand out in the concert hall and are rapidly becoming standard repertoire in the literature. This dissertation seeks to discuss some of these stand out compositions and the ways composers are utilizing personal sources of inspiration and musical influence to create compelling works for the modern concert hall. Being an instrument that easily adapts to a wide range of musical styles, the clarinet is ideal for composers to use to push the stylistic boundaries of more traditional forms. From the incorporation of the more traditional folk sounds found in Jewish folk and liturgical music to the assimilation of electronic distortion and classic rock, new repertoire for the clarinet showcases the instrument's great range, flexibility, and versatility. This dissertation explores popular composition trends in the contemporary clarinet repertoire through three thematic recital programs.

The first program contains works that integrate the Jewish folk music style of Klezmer. The four works on this program all incorporate the same folk music source material, but each composer combines this inspirational material with his own musical style, creating four distinct styles of composition. From Samuel Adler's improvisational portrait of a Klezmer to the intense prepared piano of Ruth Schonthal's atmosphere of war, each piece stands out equally and would make a fantastic addition to recital programs.

The second recital consists of programmatic works that all seek to represent a specific source of inspiration. An incredibly popular style of composition, representational pieces aren't a new trend in music, but composers are consistently finding new ways to use their specific musical style to bring the extra-musical alive in the concert hall. The pieces on this program are no different, with the three works representing the atmosphere and sounds of a place, religious events, and literary characters.

The third program showcases works that integrate a variety of styles of American popular music. From a concerto dipped in bluegrass to a Jimi Hendrix-inspired rock classic, composers are doing their best to bring the sounds of American popular music

into the concert halls around the world. These works are just the beginning of exciting new possibilities for the clarinet repertoire. As more composers and audiences become familiar with these works, I predict we will see even more innovative and exciting pieces appearing on concert programs everywhere.

## Chapter 1: Dissertation Recital #1 – Klezmer Traditions

Emily Robinson, clarinet  
AnnaMaria Mottola, piano

December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2014

8:00 p.m.

Ulrich Recital Hall

Inspirations and Influences: Popular Composition Trends in the Contemporary Clarinet  
Repertoire (1996-2010)

Klezmer Traditions

Canto XIV – A Klezmer Fantasy for Solo Clarinet (1998)	Samuel Adler (b. 1928)
Slowly	
Dance	

Three Pieces for Clarinet and Piano (2010)	Ronn Yedidia (b. 1960)
Impromptu	
Nocturne	
World Dance	

INTERMISSION

Bells of Sarajevo for Clarinet and Piano (1997)	Ruth Schonthal (1924-2006)
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Liquid Ebony for Clarinet and Piano (2002)	Dana Wilson (b. 1946)
Call	
Prayer	
dance of not pretending	

Recent renewed interest in Eastern European folk music traditions in works for the concert hall is an area in which the clarinet truly shines. Commonly used in Klezmer and Jewish music groups as a lead instrument, the clarinet has long been an important instrument in this genre. Consequently, many composers have begun incorporating this vocal, flexible style of playing in their new works for the clarinet. All of the works on this program feature elements of the sound world of Klezmer. Each of the following four composers draws inspiration from a common music source, but these elements are implemented in different ways, creating a variety of new and interesting repertoire for the clarinet.

**Samuel Adler (b. 1928) - *Canto XIV – A Klezmer Fantasy for Solo Clarinet (1998)***

Samuel Adler was born in Germany into a family of musicians. His father was both a Cantor and composer of Jewish liturgical music. After his family moved to the United States in 1939, Adler completed his musical education at Boston University and Harvard University studying composition with Aaron Copland, Paul Fromm, Paul Hindemith, Hugo Norden, Walter Piston, and Randall Thompson<sup>1</sup>.

Adler composed his *Canto XIV (A Klezmer Fantasy)* as part of his *Canto* titled series of unaccompanied works for various instruments. Inspired by his former teacher, Paul Hindemith, Adler wished to create a series of concert solo works exploring the distinct personality of each individual instrument. For his work for the clarinet he embraced creating a portrait of a Klezmer. As a member of the Klezmerim, a group of musicians known for being active in the Jewish ghettos of Eastern Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the

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<sup>1</sup> Marie Rolf, "Adler, Samuel," *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, Web, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/00206> (accessed December 2014).

Klezmer would have performed for all the important occasions in Jewish daily life. They were self-trained virtuosic musicians who took the music of the world around them, frequently that of those who oppressed them, and the vocal music of their synagogue and liturgical life, and improvised it into a soundtrack of Jewish life.<sup>2</sup>

It is easy to hear this influence in the composition of Adler's virtuosic work for the clarinet. It showcases glissandi and slides as well as a strong Chasidic folk song character to all of the melodies. Adler's melodic writing in the first movement embraces Klezmer's characteristic vocal style with long, lyrical lines and imitations of laughing and weeping heard in the downward glissandi and slides.

The second movement brings to life the dance and merrymaking of a Jewish wedding or celebration, with lots of virtuosity and a wild improvisatory style. The entire piece takes advantage of the entire range of the clarinet and its ability to capture a variety of musical timbres to express both the bittersweet and joyous aspects of Jewish life.

The composer describes the work:

“If one expects a happy kind of semi-pop piece one will be very disappointed for this is a rather serious, “bitter-sweet” fantasy on the figure of a Klezmer. The clarinet was almost always in every Klezmer ensemble and so I used this instrument to create a work which is to picture the Klezmer as a terrific musician possessing an incredible technique improvising his oppressed life in all its bitter-sweet aspects. A clown making merriment through his tears.”<sup>3</sup>

*Canto XIV* was written for and is dedicated to Franklin Cohen, retired principal clarinetist of the Cleveland Orchestra.

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<sup>2</sup> Henry Sapoznik, "Klezmer," *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, Web, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/A2224694> (accessed December 2014).

<sup>3</sup> Samuel Adler, "Biography," *Canto XIV (A Klezmer Fantasy for Clarinet Solo)*, Cleveland, OH: Ludwig Music, 1998.

**Ronn Yedidia (b. 1960) – *Impromptu, Nocturne, and World Dance* (2010)**

Israeli composer and pianist, Ronn Yedidia, composed his work *Impromptu, Nocturne, and World Dance* using the same inspirational elements as Adler, but he implements them in a less overt stylistic way. This work embraces the more simplistic side to the sound world of Klezmer with Yedidia's melodies more songlike and his harmonies more straightforward.

The piece was commissioned in 2010 by the Weller family of the United Kingdom to honor the birth of the family's newborn twins. Yedidia sets three different musical contexts within the piece, with each movement embracing a distinct character and musical inspiration all while incorporating the characteristic musical language found in Klezmer.<sup>4</sup>

The first movement, "Impromptu" is a lyrical movement that clearly draws inspiration from Chopin's famous *Impromptus*. The melodic writing is lyrical and develops with an improvisatory style as the movement progresses. "Nocturne" is a meditative movement, its bittersweet harmonies and vocally inspired thoughtful melodic material bringing to the mind of the listener the searching atmosphere of Jewish prayer.

The final movement, "World Dance" is exactly as the title describes. Yedidia creates a joyful, positive dance that explores elements of theme and variation as he transforms the main thematic material by manipulating it into a variety of styles. In addition to a large 'Jewish' style cadenza, he also creates variations utilizing Arabic, Spanish, Bavarian, and Balkan influences. "World Dance" is a movement that celebrates the universal joys to be found in life.

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<sup>4</sup> Meira Silverstein, "Liner Notes," *Yedidia: Impromptu, Nocturne, and World Dance*, performed by Alexander Fiterstein, Ronn Yedidia, and others, Naxos American Classics 8.559699: 2012.

### **Ruth Schonthal (1924-2006) – *Bells of Sarajevo* (1997)**

Jewish composer, Ruth Schonthal, was born in Hamburg, Germany and studied music in Berlin until her family fled the Nazi regime in 1935. Her history is one lived in constant turmoil as she moved all over the world as an exile. She was eventually invited to Yale University by Hindemith to study composition in 1946.<sup>5</sup> Her composition style is intense and expressionist, and doesn't shy away from political themes. *Bells of Sarajevo* is not an exception to this. Utilizing prepared piano, extended techniques, and elements of improvisation, she explores the ideas of a war-torn landscape and uses elements of folk-song to capture the spirit of war and the people who suffer its consequences. You can hear the influence of the sound of Klezmer in the clarinet part, which, while virtuosic, is filled with long, lyrical melodic lines.

The composer writes in the score of the piece:

“As beautiful a place as Sarajevo is, the name conjures up the most horrific visions and associations: starting with the First World War and the terrible Civil War that killed, maimed and destroyed so many and so much in our own time. The opening piano part creates the war almost literally, as if the keyboard was being bombed, with additional inside noises made on the strings. It is meant as an expressive virtuoso piece... the virtuosic passages express the anguish of the people caught in this horrible conflict, running from it, as if to seek shelter. This is often interrupted by mournful passages and nostalgic remembrances.

Toward the end fragments of an especially moving Yugoslav Folksong “The Water-chain” make their appearance, first in a dissonant setting in the low register of the piano, then like a beautiful remembrance in an almost music-box-like setting in the very high register and finally performed by the clarinet with piano accompaniment. After a last brief mournful gesture the piece ends with a metal bell ringing, calling for Church Service.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Catherine Parsons Smith, " Ruth Schonthal," *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, Web, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/47049> (accessed December 2014).

<sup>6</sup> Ruth Schonthal, *Bells of Sarajevo: For Clarinet and Piano*, Kas: Furore Verlag: 1997.

**Dana Wilson (b. 1946) – *Liquid Ebony* (2002)**

American composer Dana Wilson was born in Ohio and studied composition at Bowdoin College, the University of Connecticut, and the Eastman School of Music. He is currently composition faculty at Ithaca College.<sup>7</sup> His work, *Liquid Ebony*, for clarinet and piano clearly incorporates the sounds of Klezmer and showcases the virtuosity of both clarinetist and pianist. The first movement, “Call,” features glissandi and ornamentation in a Klezmer style, while the second movement, “Prayer,” strikes the somber, contemplative tone found in Jewish liturgical music. The third movement opens with a full Klezmer clarinet cadenza before finishing the piece with a whirlwind dance.

Wilson writes:

“Many instruments can express both exuberant joy and dark pathos, but the clarinet has the ability to express both almost at once, moving instantly with liquid grace from one to the other. It seems that is why it is such a perfect choice for Eastern European folk traditions, including well known Klezmer music: it implores, not to forget about or deny life’s difficulty, but to sing and dance joyously and defiantly in its midst.

It is this sense of the clarinet that informed the composition of this piece. On the surface, each movement is rather different in nature, but the tenacious reinterpretation of the same material in each is intended to reinforce the overlaying of contrasting emotions. The first is exuberant yet uncertain, the second introspective yet purposeful, the third a Bulgarian romp amidst an ominous reality.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Donald Hunsberger, "Wilson, Dana Richard," *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, Web, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/A2087770> (accessed December 2014).

<sup>8</sup> Wilson, Dana, “Composer Note,” *Liquid Ebony*. Ithaca, NY: Dana Wilson, 2002.

## Chapter 2: Dissertation Recital #2 – The Representational

Emily Robinson, clarinet

May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2015

8:00 p.m.

Ulrich Recital Hall

Inspirations and Influences: Popular Composition Trends in the Contemporary Clarinet  
Repertoire (1996-2010)

The Representational

Compline (1996)

Christopher Rouse (b. 1949)

Meghan Shanley, flute; Paul Bagley and Kristin Bakkegard, violin; Shabria Ray, viola;  
Jessica Albrecht, cello; Stephanie Gustafson, harp

Children of Light (2002)

Richard Toensing (1940-2014)

Dawn Processional  
Song of the Morning Stars  
Robe of Light  
Silver Lightning/Golden Rain  
“Phos Hilarion”, O Gladsome Light

Meghan Shanley, flute; Thomas Hunter, piano

INTERMISSION

Tempest Fantasy (2004)

Paul Moravec (b. 1957)

Ariel  
Prospero  
Caliban  
Sweet Airs  
Fantasy

Jennifer Lee, violin; Christina Gullans, cello; Alexei Ulitin, piano

Grove Music defines programme music as “Music of a narrative or descriptive kind; ...often extended to all music that attempts to represent extra-musical concepts without resort to sung words.”<sup>9</sup> While the works on this program don’t fit the specific narrative style of programme music found in the works of composers like Liszt, Berlioz, or Strauss, they do fall into a looser, more representational style as they are all inspired by ‘extra-musical concepts’. From representations of famous characters in literature to the atmosphere of specific locations, today’s composers find inspiration all around them and meld those influences into their works to create unique representational compositions that are compelling additions to modern programs.

### **Christopher Rouse (b. 1949) – *Compline* (1996)**

Pulitzer Prize winning composer Christopher Rouse (b. 1949) was born in Baltimore, Maryland, and began composing at the early age of seven in addition to studying the guitar and drums. He studied composition at the Oberlin Conservatory and Cornell University with Richard Koffman, Karl Husa, and George Crumb. He became known for his compositions infused with the style of rock music early on and is best known today for his orchestral writing.<sup>10</sup>

Rouse currently serves as Composer-in-Residence with the New York Philharmonic and has served as composer in residence for the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra (1986–89), the Santa Cecilia and Schleswig-Holstein festivals (1989), the

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<sup>9</sup> Roger Scruton, "Programme music," *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, Web. <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/22394> (accessed May 2015).

<sup>10</sup> Ann McCutchen, “Christopher Rouse,” *The Muse That Sings: Composers Speak about the Creative Process*, New York : Oxford University Press, 1999, 123.

Aspen Music Festival (1990), the Tanglewood Music Center (1997), Helsinki Biennale (1997), and Pacific Music Festival (1998). He has received commissions from the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra and the Houston Symphony Orchestra.<sup>11</sup>

His chamber work, *Compline*, for septet of flute, clarinet, harp, and string quartet was composed in 1996 for the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. The composer writes of the piece:

“The title refers to the seventh (and final) canonical hour in the Catholic church. As a result, some may conclude that it is a religious work. However...for me, *Compline* is first and foremost a souvenir of my 1989 trip to Rome, a city I fell in love with instantly and that is, of course, dominated by the twin cultures of the ancient Roman Empire and the Roman Catholic church. In *Compline*, as in Rome itself, the sound of bells is never far away.”<sup>12</sup>

*Compline* is a fantastic example of the sound world characteristic of Rouse’s compositions. Its distinctive and relentless motor rhythms in the driving allegro sections, and the constant juxtaposition of familiar diatonic sounds with atonality and chromaticism, create a compelling piece that is simultaneously both romantic and modern. While Rouse might not consider this work to be representational in a religious sense, I hear in this piece a representation of the sounds of the city of Rome.

“The sound of the bells is never far away...” the driving motor rhythm of the opening, with its distinctive swing, is the ever prevalent bell. It begins as a solitary cathedral bell passed between voices but later develops to the full fledged cacophony heard in a city full of bells when the call to mass is rung on a Sunday morning. While the work may not express any religiosity on the part of the composer, the end of the work

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<sup>11</sup> Christopher Rouse, “Biography,” <http://www.christopherrouse.com/biography.html> (accessed May 2015).

<sup>12</sup> Christopher Rouse, “Compline,” <http://www.christopherrouse.com/complinepress.html> (accessed May 2015).

offers us a beautiful representation of the spirit of the ‘compline,’ which is the night prayer that comes at the end of the day and is a chance for worshipers to contemplate peace. After giving us the aggressive cacophony of a bustling metropolis on a busy day, Rouse offers a final unison prayer in the ensemble, followed by the winding down of the motive as the city quiets and people go to their rest.

**Richard Toensing (1940-2014) – *Children of Light* (2002)**

American composer Richard Toensing was born and raised in St. Paul, Minnesota. He pursued studies in both composition and choral conducting at St. Olaf College and the University of Michigan and was composition faculty at the College of Music at the University of Colorado in Boulder, Colorado until his retirement in 2005<sup>13</sup>. Toensing composed both choral and instrumental works that were infused with his deep religious faith. Many of his pieces explore elements of the sacred musical tradition of the Orthodox Church and draw on its theology for inspiration.

His chamber work, *Children of Light* for flute, clarinet, and piano, is a five movement work that pulls from Toensing’s connections to the Orthodox Church for much of its inspiration. Four of the five movements represent and refer to specific aspects of liturgical life. The first and fifth movements, “Dawn Processional” and “Phos Hilarion (O Gladsome Light),” both contain hymns within them and seem to be a direct representation of the atmosphere of the worship services they represent, dawn on Easter morning and vespers. As one might guess from the title, the first movement begins with a hushed processional with the statement of the hymn, and as time progresses the birds

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<sup>13</sup> Richard Toensing, “Biography,” <http://www.richardtoensing.com/wordpress/biography/> (accessed May 2015).

awaken, heard in the bird calls played in the flute and clarinet, as the sun rises bringing with it the joy of the resurrection.

The second movement, “Song of the Morning Stars” is inspired by the passage in the Book of Job, “when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy.”<sup>14</sup> It is a joyful duet between clarinet and piano where exultant virtuosic figures are traded back and forth in episodes before coming together. “Robe of Light,” the third movement is a duet between flute and clarinet and is a representation of baptism. The robe of light symbolizes the descent of the Holy Spirit, and the music evokes a delicate and sweet character. Tremolos and soft dynamics embellish short statements of the troparion hymn, “Vouchsafe unto me a robe of light,”<sup>15</sup> which flows back and forth between clarinet and flute.

The fourth movement, “Silver Lightning/Golden Rain,” is for solo flute and is the only movement that doesn’t have a direct relationship to the Orthodox liturgy. A short virtuosic episode, it is filled with rapidly repeated notes and long technical sweeps and flourishes. “Phos Hilarion” (O Gladsome Light),” is the final movement of the piece and depicts vespers, the sunset worship service. Titled for the Kievan chant of the same name, the movement is peaceful and serene, creating an atmosphere that depicts the restful environment of evening prayer service.<sup>16</sup> The flute and clarinet sing out the chant in joyful octaves while the piano embellishes in twinkling episodes that could represent the return of the stars as the sun sets.

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<sup>14</sup>Richard Toensing, in “Program Notes.”

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

**Paul Moravec (b. 1957) – *Tempest Fantasy* (2004)**

American composer Paul Moravec was born in Buffalo, New York, and studied composition at Harvard and Columbia Universities. He is currently faculty at Adelphi University. A prolific composer, his works embrace elements of neoclassicism, fully embracing traditional forms and structures while still being infused with his own individuality.<sup>17</sup> His works are always dynamic, with driving rhythms, virtuosic writing, and emotional melodic material. The composer has this to say about his works:

“I try always to make beautiful things, and I use whatever techniques and materials are useful for the particular composition at hand[.] Some of those materials are atonal or nontonal, but the overall harmonic context of my music derives from the tonal tradition, which after all is the lingua franca of Western music — essentially, Monteverdi to the Beatles and beyond.”<sup>18</sup>

His 2004 Pulitzer Prize winning composition, *Tempest Fantasy* for clarinet, violin, cello, and piano, is his most well-known work. The piece is inspired by William Shakespeare’s last play *The Tempest*. The composer’s note on the work is as follows:

“*Tempest Fantasy* is a musical meditation on various characters, moods, situations, and lines of text from my favorite Shakespeare play, *The Tempest*. Rather than trying to depict these elements in programmatic terms, the music simply uses them as points of departure for flights of purely musical fancy.

The first three movements spring from the nature and selected speeches of the three eponymous individuals. The fourth movement begins from Caliban’s uncharacteristically elegant speech from Act III, scene 2:

‘Be not afeard: the isle is full of noises, Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight, and hurt not.’

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<sup>17</sup> Tim Page and Alan Shockley. "Moravec, Paul," *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, Web, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/subscriber/article/grove/music/A2257699> (accessed May 2015).

<sup>18</sup> Paul Moravec from Kathryn Shattuck’s interview on 4/22/2007, "A Composer Who’s Weathered Some Tempests of His Own", *New York Times*, [http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/22/nyregion/nyregionspecial2/22peoplelect.html?ei=5070&en=217e8154f8231d13&ex=1183348800&pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/22/nyregion/nyregionspecial2/22peoplelect.html?ei=5070&en=217e8154f8231d13&ex=1183348800&pagewanted=all&_r=0) (accessed May 2015).

The fifth movement is the most ‘fantastic’ flight of all, elaborating on the numerous musical strands of the previous movements and drawing them all together into a convivial finale.”<sup>19</sup>

For those unfamiliar with Shakespeare’s play, the characters that serve as the inspiration for the movements are Prospero, the overthrown Duke of Milan who claims to be a great sorcerer; Ariel, an air spirit who serves Prospero; and Caliban, the deformed son of a sorceress who ruled the island before Prospero arrived. Caliban also serves Prospero, but he despises him and plots against him throughout the play.<sup>20</sup>

In the first movement, “Ariel,” Moravec creates a wild, impulsive movement with virtuosic flourishes in all of the quartet parts. One could easily imagine the air spirit flying around the island to interact with all of the play’s characters and do Prospero’s bidding. “Prospero,” by contrast, is filled with the gravity of the character. The music is thoughtful and somber, opening with the cello and clarinet in the low register in duet. As the duet continues the music becomes more and more complex reflecting Prospero’s struggle to enact revenge on those he blames for his expropriation from his home. The movement ends much as it begins, coming to a resigned close, much like Prospero does when he renounces his magic in order to return home.

The third movement, “Caliban,” reflects the dark and grotesque nature of the character and his hatred of Prospero. Here Moravec utilizes the bass clarinet to create a darker timbre and constantly shifting meters to create a grotesque and suspenseful mood.

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<sup>19</sup> Paul Moravec, “Composer Note,” *Tempest Fantasy: For Clarinet, Violin, Violoncello & Piano*, United States: Subito Music, 2004.

<sup>20</sup> William Shakespeare, *The tempest. By Mr. William Shakespear*, London, MDCCXXXIV [1734], Eighteenth Century Collections Online. Gale, University of Maryland College Park, [http://find.galegroup.com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=umd\\_um&tabID=T001&docId=CW114016804&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE](http://find.galegroup.com.proxy-um.researchport.umd.edu/ecco/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=ECCO&userGroupName=umd_um&tabID=T001&docId=CW114016804&type=multipage&contentSet=ECCOArticles&version=1.0&docLevel=FASCIMILE) (accessed May 2015).

The movement builds to a wild cacophony with stormy virtuosic sweeps in all the parts before a gradual unwinding to a quiet finish.

“Sweet Airs,” the fourth movement, is beautiful and melodic, evoking the beauty and romance of the story and its setting. It opens with a beautiful violin solo that is accompanied by piano before the addition of clarinet and cello fill out the harmonies in a lush melodic landscape. Movement five, the “Fantasia” finishes the piece in a grand finale that pulls together the spirit and character of the elements found in previous movements in addition to new material. The entire piece, but especially the final movement, is a virtuosic tour-de-force in all four parts and creates a fantastic representation of Shakespeare’s iconic work.

### Chapter 3: Dissertation Recital #3 – American Popular Music

Emily Robinson, clarinet

Dr. Michael Votta, conductor

Paul Bagley and Jennifer Lee, violin; Emily Kurlinski, viola; Christina Gullans, cello;  
Cassidy Morgan, bass; Emily Tsai, English horn; Ronn Hall, bassoon; Zenas Kim-  
Banthner; Benjamin Altman, banjo/mandolin/guitar; Alex Chan and Alexei Ulitin,  
piano/keyboard/sampler

Inspirations and Influences: Popular Composition Trends in the Contemporary Clarinet  
Repertoire (1996-2010)

American Popular Music

Gnarly Buttons for Clarinet and Small Orchestra (1996)

The Perilous Shore

Hoedown (Mad Cow)

Put Your Loving Arms Around Me

John Adams (b. 1947)

INTERMISSION

Rapture for Clarinet and Tape (2005)

Anna Clyne (b. 1980)

Black Dog, Rhapsody for Clarinet and Orchestra (2001)

Scott McAllister (b. 1969)

The final recital features works inspired by American styles of popular music. As the pervasiveness of American music spreads throughout the world, it is not surprising that these elements would easily blend into contemporary compositions found in the concert hall. With the clarinet's great range, versatility, and flexibility in performance style, composers are constantly finding new ways to use the instrument to maximum stylistic effect.

**John Adams (b. 1947) – *Gnarly Buttons for clarinet and small orchestra* (1996)**

John Adams is one of the more popular composers currently living and is frequently programmed in concert halls across the globe. He identified as a composer very early in life, stating in interviews that the first composition he remembers writing was a minuet for a family friend when he was nine or ten. His first composition to be performed was a suite for string orchestra when he was thirteen. Mozart's works and career were an early inspiration for Adams after a teacher read him a biography of the composer, and his parents acquired a record player and Mozart albums.<sup>21</sup>

Adams is often categorized as a minimalist or post-minimalist composer, although he doesn't use these labels himself.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, he employs many compositional techniques popular with composers of these styles in his works. In *Gnarly Buttons* we can find the consistent use of a steady pulse, which can occur continuously throughout movements; the use of diatonic pitch language which creates the effect of tonality but

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<sup>21</sup> Thomas May, "John Adams Reflects on His Career," *The John Adams Reader : Essential Writings on an American Compose*, Pomptoins, N.J.: Amadeus, 2006, pp. 2-5.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas May, "Introduction," *The John Adams Reader : Essential Writings on an American Compose*, Pomptoins, N.J.: Amadeus, 2006, xiv-xv.

also avoids the use of functional tonality; a general evenness of dynamics with a lack of nuanced emotionalism; and an avoidance of obvious linear or formal design.<sup>23</sup>

While these elements can be found in various places throughout the work, Adams does not restrict himself solely to this style of writing. So while repeating patterns are an important part of his style, he does not restrict himself to the mechanistic style of repetition often found in other minimalist works. This work shows more a compositional attraction to pulsating repetition and diatonic sounds which provide the framework he develops upon.

Adams often writes extensively regarding his compositional process and the inspiration for his works on his website and blog, [www.earbox.com](http://www.earbox.com). The program notes on *Gnarly Buttons* are no different. The description he provides of his inspiration for the piece is deeply personal, as it surrounds the circumstances of his father's death in the early 1990s.

“The clarinet was my first instrument. I learned it from my father, who played it in small swing bands in New England during the Depression era. He was my first and most important teacher, sitting in the front room with me, patiently counting out rhythms and checking my embouchure and fingering. Benny Goodman was a role model, and several of his recordings—in particular the 1938 Carnegie Hall jazz concert and a Mozart album with the Boston Symphony Orchestra—were played so often in the house that they almost became part of the furniture.

Later, as a teenager, I played in a local marching band with my father, and I also began to perform the other clarinet classics by Brahms, von Weber, Bartók, Stravinsky, and Copland. During my high school years I played the instrument alongside him in a small community orchestra that gave concerts before an audience of mental patients at the New Hampshire State Hospital.

But strangely enough, I never composed for the instrument until I was almost fifty. By that time my father had died, and the set of instruments I had played

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<sup>23</sup> Keith Potter, "Minimalism," *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/40603> (accessed May 2015).

as a boy, a Selmer A and B-flat pair, had traveled back and forth across the country from me to my father (who played them until he fell victim to Alzheimer's disease) and ultimately back to me. During the latter stages of my father's illness, the clarinets became an obsession for him, and this gentle, infinitely patient man grew more and more convinced that someone was intent upon breaking into his New Hampshire house and stealing them. Finally, one day, my mother found the disassembled instruments hidden in a hamper of laundry. It was the end of my father's life with the instrument. The horns were sent to me in California where they grew dusty and stiff, sitting in a closet. But I brought them out again when I began to compose *Gnarly Buttons*, and the intimate history they embodied, stretching from Benny Goodman through Mozart, the marching band, the State Hospital to my father's final illness, became deeply embedded in the piece."<sup>24</sup>

Of note when discussing *Gnarly Buttons* is Adams' concept of 'The Imagined Musical Model,' an idea that he uses to describe his entire layout of the work and its ever changing moods. The most important movement to discuss in regards to this model is the first, "The Perilous Shore." Adams notes:

"The three movements are each based on a "forgery" or imagined musical model. The idea for this goes back to the imagined "foxtrot" of my 1986 piece, *The Chairman Dances*, music to which Madame and Chairman Mao dance and make love, believing my foxtrot to be the genuine article. In this spirit we may believe the genuine articles of *Gnarly Buttons* to be:

I. "The Perilous Shore": a trope on a Protestant shape-note hymn found in a 19<sup>th</sup> century volume, *The Footsteps of Jesus*, the first lines of which are:

O Lord steer me from that Perilous Shore  
Ease my soul through tempest's roar.  
Satan's leering help me firmly turn away  
Hurl me singing into that tremulous day!"<sup>25</sup>

This movement has the most literal appearance of the 'Imagined Musical Model,' the 19<sup>th</sup> century shape note hymn that exists only in the imagination of the composer. Somehow, the description and idea of this shape note hymn tune seems almost perfectly

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<sup>24</sup> John Adams, "Gnarly Buttons," <http://www.earbox.com/chamber-music/gnarly-buttons> (accessed May 2015).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

apt to the listener even though the actual inspiration for this movement was something quite different. Adams lists his major influence in the composition of the material for this movement as the first movement of Stravinsky's *Three Pieces* for solo clarinet:

“I got this crazy idea of it being some kind of folk melody.... And when I hear it, I realized that ... in retrospect... it might have been subconsciously suggested by the first of the Stravinsky *Three Pieces* which I used to play as a kid. But you know, it begins down low, and it has grace notes, and mine are not grace notes, but they are 32<sup>nd</sup> notes, and there is a sort of Russian chant-like quality to the Stravinsky....”<sup>26</sup>

This idea of an ‘Imagined Musical Model’ is incredibly apt in describing what so many composers do when they compose works that meld the multiple musical traditions of the past and the present. It creates a new world of sound and style that is reminiscent and yet independent in style. It keeps the listener inside the world that is influential in its compositional style all while keeping them embedded in the composer’s individual character. Adams’ 19<sup>th</sup> century shape note hymn is a great example. Composed with no particular defining genre in mind, but discovering as he composed the work the influences that permeate the movement. It is the definitive melting pot of American music – multiple folk influences, the influence of a Russian composer, and a young man learning the clarinet at the knee of his father that emerges into a sound that is a folk inspired reminiscence of another composer’s reminiscence on the folksong of his homeland.

The second movement: “Hoedown (Mad Cow)” is titled after the mad cow disease scare that was happening in England at the time of *Gnarly Buttons*’ composition, and Adams, in his typical light and witty fashion, says that since the work was

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

commissioned for an English clarinetist, Michael Collins, and American hoedowns are normally for horses, he thought it would be appropriate to describe this movement as a hoedown for cows. A movement that is somewhat stodgy and off-kilter rather than fleet and graceful, like the music of hoedowns classical music lovers know so well.

As might be expected, this movement explores a well known folk music tradition in America, bluegrass. The composer utilizes the role of the mandolin and its style of playing in traditional bluegrass in an important way in this movement, adding a distinctive layer of character to draw the listener into the sound-world of a bluegrass band. The strong verse/chorus structure of traditional bluegrass provides many opportunities for the mandolin to ‘fill in’ silences that happen in the transitions and Adams writes the mandolin part with a ‘lick’ for these pauses and turnarounds as they appear throughout the movement.

Another technique Adams writes in the mandolin part is the tremolo. A technique for creating a sustained sound on a single pitch, the tremolo is used frequently in bluegrass music, sometimes with every note of a melody played with the tremolo affect. When this appears in the mandolin part, its distinctive timbre draws the listener's ears to a sound that people are familiar with in bluegrass.

The third movement, “Put Your Loving Arms Around Me,” is essentially lyrical, an interesting choice for the final movement of a concerto. Clearly autobiographical, the movement seems to be a blend of Adams’s affection for his father with a musical depiction of the agitation and delusion associated with Alzheimer’s disease, which his

father suffered from between the late 1980s and his death in the early 1990s.<sup>27</sup>

It opens as a simple diatonic melody over a strummed rhythmic setting of chords. This melody could be considered a syllabic setting of the title of the movement, and it is this simple setting that sets the framework for the increasing complexity of the movement. As time progresses throughout the movement so does the increasingly non-diatonic harmony that provides the structural framework for the melodic material. The calm melodic line becomes more and more agitated and reaches a feverish climax before once again lingering on a simple melodic line, fading out to a conclusion over the same strummed chords that opened the movement. The movement clearly traces the progression of his father's final days in illness, from loving and gentle simplicity, to increasing confusion and distress, and then the simple fading of his final passing.

What Sarah Cahill says of Adams works in general holds true of Adams' *Buttons*:

“Behind the mischief of the ‘trickster’ pieces is his characteristic celebration of American vernacular music – the fox-trots, marches and big band music of his youth. In this regard, Ives and Copland are his predecessors. Like them, he manages to dissolve boundaries between ‘high’ and ‘low’ art by drawing freely on the vast and fertile American tradition.”<sup>28</sup>

*Gnarly Buttons* was commissioned by the London Sinfonietta and Present Music, Milwaukee, Wisconsin and premiered in 1996 in London.

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<sup>27</sup> Anthony Gordon Taylor, “John Adams’s *Gnarly Buttons*: Issues of History, Performance and Style,” DMA diss., University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, 2007, In *OhioLINK Electronic Theses and Dissertations Center*, [http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc\\_num=ucin1185548983](http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=ucin1185548983) (accessed May 2015).

<sup>28</sup> Sarah Cahill, “Adams, John,” *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/42479> (accessed May 2015).

**Anna Clyne (b. 1980) – *Rapture, for clarinet and tape* (2005)**

British composer Anna Clyne is currently Composer-in-Residence for the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra's 2015-2016 season and recently completed a residency with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra as a Mead Composer-in-Residence from 2010-2015. Clyne is known for her acoustic and electro-acoustic works that contain inventive collaborations with other artistic mediums such as visual artists, choreographers, and film-makers. Her work is described as a combination of "resonant soundscapes with propelling textures that weave, morph, and collide in dramatic explosions."<sup>29</sup> Her composition for solo clarinet and tape, *Rapture* (2005), is no exception to this description.

*Rapture* was commissioned by Australian clarinetist Eileen Mack, who premiered the piece at Symphony Space in New York City. During the premiere live visuals were created by Joshue Ott and his custom program, superDraw. The piece calls for a live clarinetist to be amplified and processed in real time by a combination of effects often used with electric guitars, namely distortion, reverb, and delay. This sound is then performed with what the composer describes as an "...intense tape part that comprises vocal recordings and recordings of Mack playing sounds, which range from sustained tones to multiphonics. In a similar process to painting, these recordings were then spliced, manipulated, and layered to create the music of the tape part."<sup>30</sup>

The combined overall effect of the piece transforms the clarinetist into a rock guitarist, with markings like 'demented, squealing,' 'harsh and gritty,' 'skittish,'

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<sup>29</sup> Anna Clyne, "Artistic Statement," <http://www.annaclayne.com/about/> (accessed September 2015).

<sup>30</sup> Anna Clyne, "Composer Note," <http://www.boosey.com/cr/music/Anna-Clyne-Rapture/53791> (accessed September 2015).

‘wailing,’ and ‘screeching,’ encouraging the clarinetist to embrace the edgy sound world of distorted electric guitar.

**Scott McAllister (b. 1969) – *Black Dog, Rhapsody for clarinet and orchestra* (2001)**

Born in Florida, Scott McAllister studied composition at Rice University and is currently faculty at Baylor University. He is particularly well-known for his compositions for clarinet that incorporate the guitar dominated styles of rock and roll. *Black Dog* is his piece inspired by the rhapsody-style hard rock classic of the same name by Led Zeppelin, but the initial inspiration for the piece came from legendary guitarist Jimi Hendrix. In an interview McAllister said:

“I saw a video of Hendrix playing some outdoor concert and I wondered: ‘Why can’t we go to a concert and see a soloist (clarinetist, pianist, somebody) playing with that passion?’ To write music that’s going to bring that out, I have to have that kind of passion while I’m composing. Seeing the vein in Jimi Hendrix’s head, and the sweat pouring everywhere – I want to see a clarinetist like that on the stage involved in my music.”<sup>31</sup>

McAllister had also always been a fan of Led Zeppelin and their call and response classic, “Black Dog”, and that format of extreme virtuosic guitar solo alternating with vocal solo became the format for the piece. In *Black Dog* the clarinet becomes both the lead singer and the guitar soloist.

The piece opens with a long solo cadenza, utilizing resonance fingerings, trills, and glissandi to emulate the style of Hendrix’s guitar playing on the clarinet. After this opening section, there is a beautiful slow melodic section that he describes as a “Stairway to Heaven” gesture. After several more alternations of the call and response form, the

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<sup>31</sup> Christopher James Money, *The clarinet as guitar hero: A study of rock music influences in Scott McAllister's "X", "X3", and "black dog,"* (DMA diss., Florida State University, 2007).

piece concludes with what McAllister describes as “a “head-banging” ostinato pattern that leads to the final fiery cadenza.”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Scott McAllister, “Black Dog,” [http://lydmusic.com/Lydmusic/Black\\_Dog.html](http://lydmusic.com/Lydmusic/Black_Dog.html) (accessed May 2015).

## **CONCLUSION**

The twenty years between 1996 and 2010 has been an exciting time for new works for clarinet. Clarinetists have seen a large increase in the diversity of styles and influences available for performance in the concert hall. The stylistic possibilities of the clarinet are seemingly endless and composers are happily using the instrument to express a huge variety of styles. From folk music to heavy metal guitars, the clarinet, along with some innovative compositions, can bring exciting variety to the standard recital hall programming. My hope is these works will continue to introduce clarinetists and audiences alike to new possibilities in the classical music world.

APPENDIX  
RECITAL CD TRACK LISTINGS

Recital 1 CD

Tracks

1-2.	Cantos XIV for Solo Clarinet Samuel Adler	
	1. Slowly.....	3:46
	2. Dance.....	7:14
3-5.	Three Pieces for Clarinet and Piano Ronn Yedidia	
	3. Impromptu.....	6:36
	4. Nocturne.....	7:09
	5. World Dance.....	10:17
6.	Bells of Sarajevo..... Ruth Schonthal	8:47
7-9.	Liquid Ebony Dana Wilson	
	7. Call.....	3:31
	8. Prayer.....	4:14
	9. dance of not pretending.....	5:55

Recorded December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2014 in Ulrich Recital Hall  
Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, University of Maryland, College Park  
Recorded and mastered by Antonino d'Urzo

Recital 2 CD

Tracks

1.	Compline.....	21:11
	Christopher Rouse	
2-6.	Children of Light	
	Richard Toensing	
	2. Dawn Processional.....	5:39
	3. Song of the Morning Stars.....	3:47
	4. Robe of Light.....	2:06
	5. Silver Lightning/Golden Rain.....	0:58
	6. “Phos Hilarion” (O Gladsome Light).....	7:22
7-11.	Tempest Fantasy	
	Paul Moravec	
	7. Ariel.....	4:43
	8. Prospero.....	5:50
	9. Caliban.....	7:31
	10. Sweet Airs.....	5:07
	11. Fantasy.....	8:37

Recorded May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2015 in Ulrich Recital Hall  
Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, University of Maryland, College Park  
Recorded and mastered by Antonino d’Urzo

Recital 3 CD

Tracks

1. Rapture.....7:08  
Anna Clyne
  
- 2-4. Gnarly Buttons  
John Adams

  2. The Perilous Shore.....10:35
  3. Hoedown (Mad Cow).....6:00
  4. Put Your Loving Arms Around Me.....10:21

  
5. Black Dog.....10:46  
Scott McAllister

Recorded September 28th, 2015 in Gildenhorn Recital Hall  
Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, University of Maryland, College Park  
Recorded and mastered by Antonino d'Urzo

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