

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: EXTENDED-RANGE OBOE: THE IMPACT OF TECHNICAL AND MUSICAL ADVANCEMENTS IN 19th-CENTURY AND CONTEMPORARY OBOE REPERTOIRE

Alison Kathryn Lowell, Doctor of Musical Arts, 2016

Dissertation directed by: Oboe Professor, Mark Hill, Wind and Percussion Division

I believe that the purpose of expanding the oboe's repertoire is to not only create original compositions, but to also utilize technical advancements in order to achieve access to a wider range of repertoire through the art of transcription. This paper examines the various paths to achieving such expansion, including utilizing unique performer skills, use of auxiliary instruments, advancements in the instrument itself and musical developments that challenge the perception of the oboe's solo role in a particular era of music history. The oboe need not be relegated to the confines of a compositionally limited stereotype. The goal of my "extended-range" dissertation project is to expand the "range" of programmable repertoire, with a focus on music in both the 19th and 21st-centuries, while simultaneously expanding the technical capabilities and expectations of the modern oboe—in part by exploiting the new possibilities of the recently invented low-A extension key.

EXTENDED-RANGE OBOE: THE IMPACT OF TECHNICAL AND MUSICAL
ADVANCEMENTS IN 19th-CENTURY AND CONTEMPORARY OBOE
REPERTOIRE

by

Alison Kathryn Lowell

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Musical Arts
2016

Advisory Committee:
Mark Hill, Chair
Adriane Fang
Robert DiLutis
Edward Maclary
Kathleen Trahan

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Dedication

I dedicate this paper to my husband, composer David Plylar, who lives every day in the service of musical scholarship.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the following composers who contributed original transcriptions and compositions for inclusion in this dissertation project; Paul Coleman, Alexandra Fol, Cameron Harris, Hannah Lash, Clare Loveday, David Plylar and Devon Tipp. I would also like to extend my gratitude to Mark Hill and the following musicians for their artistic contributions; Laura Brisson, Wen-Yin Chan, Nina Elhassan, Laura Kaufman, Peter Leonard, Sally Livingston and Eddie Rumzis.

Recital Program Content

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THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND SCHOOL OF MUSIC
presents

Alison Lowell

Oboe

Sally Livingston and David Plylar, piano

Laura Kaufman, flute

Nina Elhassan, clarinet

Eddie Rumzsis, bassoon

NOVEMBER 15, 2015. 12:00PM

SMITH RECITAL HALL

PROGRAM

This recital is being presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Doctorate of Music degree.

Alison Lowell is a student of Mark Hill.

Thank you to all of the wonderful musicians to whom I have had the privilege to collaborate with on this recital: to Sally Livingston for all of her assistance, to the members of District5 for their endless enthusiasm and to my husband David Plylar, who serves as a constant source of inspiration and support.

As always, thank you to Mark Hill and the amazing UMD oboe studio and to all of the colleagues, friends and family in attendance this evening!

Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849)
Mazurka in C# minor, Op. 50 no. 3 (trans. Damjan Rakonjac, 2010)

Members of District5
Laura Kaufman, flute
Nina Elhassan, clarinet
Eddie Rumzsis, bassoon

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)
Arpeggione Sonata, D. 821 (trans. Alison Lowell, 2015)
I. Allegro moderato
II. Adagio
III. Allegretto

Sally Livingston, piano

INTERMISSION

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)
Der Hirt auf dem Felsen, D. 965 (trans. David Plylar, 2008)

David Plylar, piano

Johann Nepomuk Hummel (1778-1837)
Introduction, Theme and Variations, op. 102

Sally Livingston, piano

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THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND SCHOOL OF MUSIC
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Alison Lowell

Oboe

Wen-Yin Chan and David Plylar, piano

Laura Brisson, horn

JANUARY 28, 2016. 8:00PM

GILDENHORN RECITAL HALL

THE CLARICE

PROGRAM

Robert Schumann (1810-1856)
Three Romances for Oboe and Piano, op. 94
III. *Nicht schnell*

David Plylar, piano

Violin Sonata No. 1, op. 105 (trans. Alison Lowell, 2015)
I. *Mit leidenschaftlichem Ausdruck*
II. *Allegretto*
III. *Lebhaft*

Wen-Yin Chan, piano

Franz Liszt (1811-1886)
Mephisto Waltz no. 2 (trans. David Plylar, 2008)

Wen-Yin Chan, piano

INTERMISSION

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)
Symphony no. 3, op. 90 (trans. David Plylar, 2009)
III. *Poco allegretto*

Laura Brisson, horn & David Plylar, piano

Four Pieces for Piano, op. 119 (trans. David Plylar, 2008)
I. *Intermezzo*

David Plylar, piano

Richard Wagner (1813-1883)
"Elsa's Procession to the Cathedral" from *Lohengrin* (trans. Liszt/Plylar, 2016)

Wesendonck Lieder (trans. David Plylar, 2015)
III. "Im Treibhaus"

David Plylar, piano

This recital is being presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Doctorate of Music degree.

Alison Lowell is a student of Mark Hill.

Thank you to all of the wonderful musicians to whom I have had the privilege to collaborate with on this recital: to Wen-Yin Chan and Laura Brisson for their artistry and to my husband David Plylar, whose passion and respect for this repertoire serves as a constant inspiration.

As always, thank you to Mark Hill and the amazing UMD oboe studio and to all of the colleagues, friends and family in attendance this evening!

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THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND SCHOOL OF MUSIC
presents

Alison Lowell

Oboe

Peter Leonard, electronics

David Plylar, piano

MARCH 3, 2016. 8PM

GILDENHORN RECITAL HALL

THE CLARICE

PROGRAM

This recital is being presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Doctorate of Music.

Alison Lowell is a student of Mark Hill.

As tonight marks my final dissertation recital, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to all of the family, friends and committee members in attendance. Thank you to Peter Leonard for your incredible expertise and to all of the wonderful Lobe composers that I have had the privilege of working with over the years. As always, thank you to Mark Hill and the fantastic UMD Oboe studio!

Finally, thank you to David Plylar for creating so many beautiful works for the Lobe, for performing on stage with me and for providing constant inspiration and encouragement.

Clare Loveday (1967-)
South View, for solo oboe (2012)

Paul Coleman
Coupling (2010)
David Plylar, piano

Alexandra Fol (1981-)
Mon âme fut à sa merci (2014)
David Plylar, piano

Hannah Lash (1981-)
Silvers, for solo oboe (2010)

INTERMISSION

Devon Tipp (1991-)
Augury I, for solo oboe and sine waves (2016)
Peter Leonard, electronics

Cameron Harris (1975)
Lullabies for Philomel, for oboe and electronics (2012)

- I. Prelude: Inside a metal cage, a solitary lovebird laments and dwells on the time when there were two
- II. Philomel's cry
- III. A serpentine question
- IV. Metamorphosis: bells and birds

Peter Leonard, electronics

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Chapter 1: Early 19th-Century Repertoire

Section 1- Introduction

A work by Schubert provided my first exposure to the world of the extended-range oboe. As a Chicago native, I had the good fortune to hear the Chicago Symphony Orchestra many times during the tenure of then-principal oboist, Alex Klein. In 2000, Klein released his ground-breaking CD, *The Greatest Works Schubert Ever Wrote for the Oboe (Why Not?)*, which consisted of an all-Schubert transcription program. Klein created this unique program through the use of an extended-range oboe, the result of a special collaboration between him and the F. Lorée factory in Paris, France in the mid-1990s.¹ The Lorée oboe descending to low-A (A3) has specific key work fully designed and patented by Lorée and was first sold in 1995. The model was viewed as a technical achievement with the inspiration to enlarge the oboe's repertoire, particularly for transcriptions.² Klein would continue to record on this instrument, taking full advantage of the expanded range in his CD *Oboe Concertos of the Classical Era*. According to the CD's liner notes, Klein utilizes both the A3, and at the opposite end of the spectrum, G6, to wonderful effect, adding that Klein "believes that if those notes had been available to performers of the time, they would have used them in their own interpolations of the basic scores."³

¹ Geoffrey Burgess and Bruce Haynes, *The Oboe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 343.

² Marie-Léa de Gourdon, E-mail message to author from F. Lorée factory, October 17, 2015.

³ Andrea Lamoreaux, liner notes to *Oboe Concertos of the Classical Era*, Alex Klein, Cedille Records, 9000045, CD, 1998.

Taking inspiration from this recording, I waited patiently until 2009 at which time I received a grant from the Center for Cultural Innovation for my own extended-range oboe. Thus, the Lobo Project was launched as a series of commissions and collaborations to celebrate the compositional possibilities of this instrument. My career thus far has in part been built upon the promotion of original transcriptions and works that frequently take advantage of the low-A key. The low-A oboe allows better access to Romantic era music that previously seemed out of reach due to logistical and technical hurdles. A significant factor in the creation of these works has been the collaboration between my husband and me, composer/pianist David Plylar. His expertise and passion for transcriptions has resulted in a continually growing collection of works that we perform on a regular basis. Being able to personally work with a composer has helped me to explore the true range of technical and musical possibilities of the instrument.

The use of the term “extended-range oboe” is intended to have multiple implications. All of the works presented over the course of my three dissertation recitals utilize some combination of extended-techniques (such as multiphonics, glissandi, flutter tongue, etc.) and/or use of extended- range (notes in the extreme upper and lower registers, such as those requiring the low-A extension key). Additionally, all works collectively contribute to the expansion of the oboe solo repertoire, particularly that of the Romantic era (with a focus on works composed between the 1820s and 1890s). While composers bequeathed incredible orchestral parts for oboists during this period, their contributions to the oboe solo and chamber music repertoire were not as generous; this period in Western European music produced far fewer solo works for the oboe than the previous baroque and classical

eras, or the 20th and 21st centuries. In consideration of the relative dearth of solo works from the Romantic era, the pieces from this collection are either “reinterpreted classics;” utilize extended- range; or expand the Romantic repertoire through the form of transcription. The “reinterpreted classics” are defined as works written originally for the oboe but can now be elevated to a new level of performance through the use of technical advances not previously available, though without threatening the integrity of the original work. Ever since my first exposure to the world of extended-range oboe, I have strived to present works that celebrate the wealth of musical possibilities created by technical advances and transcriptions; the works should feel right at home alongside our established repertoire. These pieces allow for more cohesive programming and offer oboists an opportunity to perform a genre of solo music that is often represented as a mere sampling of works in a given recital. The goal of my “extended-range” dissertation is to expand the very concept of “extended-range” and its importance in the development of oboe solo and chamber repertoire.

Following a chronological trajectory, the first recital focused on works of the early Romantic era; this recital combined transcriptions for oboe/piano and wind quartet as well as an original work reinterpreted through extended-range. All works were originally composed between 1823 and 1842 and included pieces by Chopin, Hummel and Schubert. While the initial motivation for programming these works was to help overcome the limited amount of existing oboe solo and chamber repertoire of the Romantic period, I also wanted to be able to tap into the passionate string, voice and piano repertoire of some of the major composers of this time.

It is important to note that some works written originally for oboe do exist in both solo and chamber form during the Romantic period. Salon pieces and operatic fantasies by composers such as Kalliwoda, Molique and Pasculli offer a rich sampling of technical displays.⁴ Furthermore the oboe is hardly neglected by composers when it comes to substantial orchestral roles as the number of orchestras in Europe during the early 19th century saw a steady increase. But major composers associated with this early period, such as Beethoven, Berlioz, Chopin, Hummel and Schubert, among many others, devoted their solo efforts either to the piano or other orchestral instruments. The 19th century saw the oboe developing in design and construction in a number of concurrent but independent strains in various European countries. As a solo instrument, the oboe was quickly falling out of favor with composers.

...as the nineteenth century progressed, the oboe was increasingly under-represented as a solo instrument and increasingly ignored by major composers. In general, much more chamber and solo music was composed in the nineteenth century for strings and piano than for wind instruments, and of the wind instruments the oboe was far from the Romantic's favourite. It lost ground to the flute and, to an even greater extent, the clarinet...alongside the clarinet, the oboe was something of an ugly duckling... Deemed too delicate for military music, too difficult for the amateur player and too brash for the domestic salon, the oboe ceased to have a prominent solo existence and, with the waning popularity of the woodwind concerto, the travelling virtuoso oboist became all but extinct.⁵

Section 2 - Frédéric Chopin – Mazurka in C# minor, Op. 50, no. 3

The name of Chopin is ubiquitously associated with the piano. Indeed, Chopin's massive contribution to the solo piano literature was not only influential in his own time, but

⁴ Burgess, 129.

⁵ Ibid, 128-130.

retains a strong presence in the piano repertoire to this day. His total output of orchestral and piano works includes a handful of Polish songs, the Trio for Violin, Cello and Piano, Op. 8 and three works for cello and piano. Alas, Chopin's venture into the world of wind writing was limited to his two piano concertos (composed between 1829-1830) and a few other piano/orchestral works, and even then the orchestral accompaniment is mostly utilitarian.

The Mazurka is a dance traditionally composed in 3/4 time and Chopin drew heavily on Polish folk-music for inspiration in these miniature works.⁶ In Chopin's Mazurka Op. 50, no. 3, one is struck by the peaceful atmosphere that is created through the use of rubato and repeating melodies. The transcriber of this work for wind quartet, Damjan Rakonjac, addresses the challenge of combining four very different wind voices into a sonic blend comparable to that of the solo piano. The opening line, played here by the clarinet, is able to extend the phrase in a way quite different from that of a single struck note on the piano (the inevitable result being that all notes immediately begin to die away on the piano). The work is transcribed with the extended-range oboe in mind and utilizes its lowest note several times so that the oboe's A3 actually serves as the bass voice of the ensemble, albeit briefly.

The plaintive melody is a far cry from the virtuosic displays of certain iconic Chopin works; it instead employs a sophisticated range of lyrical phrases. This particular mazurka left a favorable impression on Chopin's friend and writer Wilhelm von Lenz, who had the

⁶ Neicks, Frederick, *Chopin as a Man and Musician* (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., 1973), 231-34.

following reflections about it; “It begins as though written for organ, and ends in an exclusive *salon*; it does him credit, and is worked out more fully than the others.”⁷

Section 3- Franz Schubert – Arpeggione Sonata, D. 821

There are no original solo works for the oboe by Schubert. For a composer whose output extended to nearly 1000 works, Schubert’s output of wind chamber music is staggeringly small. Composed between 1811-13, his early wind works include a set of six Minuets for Winds, D.2d1-6, a wind nonet *Eine kleine Trauermusik*, D. 79, and the Octet in F, D. 72. The latter should not be confused with his well-known and much later work, the Octet in F major, D. 803.⁸ These early chamber works are mostly of interest in terms of their role in Schubert’s compositional development and are rarely performed. In the monumental 10-year project called ‘Schubertiade,’ in which baritone Hermann Prey and colleagues presented the complete works of Schubert in a series of events in New York, reviewer Donal Henahan noted in the *New York Times* on January 28th, 1988 that even with the highest-level performers, the early wind works were a difficult sell;

The sense of a talented student struggling with his materials also pervaded six Minuets for Winds (D.2d), a drab experiment in funerary keening entitled “Eine Kleine Trauermusik” (D.79) and the Octet in F for Winds (D. 72). The last named work typified the built-in problem with a chronological survey such as this; its inane, going-nowhere jauntiness only reminded one that Schubert’s masterpiece in the wind octet idiom, also in F (D. 803), was still 11 years in the distance.

The Octet of 1824 holds a revered and established place in the chamber music repertoire; this 40- minute masterpiece reflects the kind of sensitive clarinet, bassoon and horn lines

⁷ Jonson, G. C. Ashton, *A Handbook to Chopin’s Works*, 2d (Bremen: William Reeves Bookseller Ltd., 1905), 237.

⁸ Hefling, Stephen E., ed, *Nineteenth-Century Chamber Music* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 40.

that are so prominent in his symphonies. Schubert was in fact very generous to the oboe in terms of his symphonic works, with excerpts from his later symphonies frequently included in major orchestral auditions (such as Symphony no. 5 in B-flat major, Symphony no. 8 in B minor and Symphony 9 in C major). There are a handful of non-orchestral works that include the addition of wind instruments such as *Totus in corde languet* D. 136, for soprano or tenor, flute, clarinet, horns and strings; Introduction and Variations, D. 802, for flute and piano, *Hymnus an den heiligen Geist*, D. 948, for male choir and pairs of oboes, clarinets, bassoons, horns, trumpets and three trombones, and *Der Hirt auf dem Felsen*, D. 965, for soprano, clarinet and piano (this work will be addressed later in the notes). During Schubert's tragically short life, he produced an astounding wealth of music but his significant contributions to the solo and chamber music world left much to be desired for oboists.

Having always loved the solo and chamber music of Schubert, I wanted to capture the passionate beauty that his music exudes. Franz Schubert's Arpeggione Sonata, one of the few substantial works for its originally intended instrument, the arpeggione (a type of bowed guitar), is a fitting choice for the extended-range oboe; this work was originally written only one year after the arpeggione's creation. The most significant contributor to the design of the arpeggione was J. G. Stauffer around 1823; the arpeggione originally had 24 frets and 6 strings tuned like those of a guitar (E, A, d, g, b, e'). It was of greater size than a guitar but fell short of the bulk of a cello. It was played between the knees, much like a viola da gamba. The instrument was championed by guitarist Vincenz Schuster and the cellist H. A. Birnbach who worked tirelessly to promote the instrument. However,

within a decade, the instrument fell into musical obscurity.⁹

The Arpeggione Sonata survives as the instrument's most significant work. Schubert thought carefully about his solo instruments of choice, reflecting on the particular technical attributes and sonic possibilities. He frequently wrote for the pianoforte, violin, viola and string chamber groups.¹⁰ The Arpeggione Sonata, composed in 1824, was not relegated to a specialist's territory. In the first edition of the score, it was listed as a sonata for either arpeggione or cello and was offered in a violin version as well.¹¹ Today, we see the sonata frequently performed on cello, viola and flute; the fortunate key signature of A minor means that the work is also an excellent fit for the extended-range oboe.

Divided into three movements, with the second and third movements played *attacca*, the Arpeggione Sonata demands much from its performers, regardless of the solo instrument of choice. Stamina is a crucial factor for wind players when attempting a work originally for a string instrument. While passages occasionally require adjusting, shortening or reworking, the ultimate goal is for the listener to perceive the piece as though originally conceived for the oboe while still honoring the integrity of the work. Certain musical decisions also have to be made to accommodate remaining range issues. The entire work is performed an octave higher than originally written; however, there are brief moments when the music extends beyond the oboe's low-A extension or its highest tessitura. These are instances where the performer must make informed decisions about the kinds phrase

⁹ Karl Geiringer, "Schubert's Arpeggione Sonata and the 'Super Arpeggio,'" *The Musical Quarterly* 65 (October 1979): 516-517.

¹⁰ David Montgomery, *Franz Schubert's Music in Performance* (Hillsdale: Pendragon Press, 1944), 3.

¹¹ Geiringer, 522.

changes that will best honor the style and essence of the original work, keeping in mind that the goal is to create a version that sounds like it was written for the instrument of choice. This is a perception that Klein reinforced in his recording *Concertos of the Classical Era*. In respect to his own ornament choices, Klein states that the “ornaments must fit the style of the music, but as long as an artist keeps the style of the composer’s time in mind, he should feel free to play the music in the way he thinks it sounds best.”¹²

Section 4 - Franz Schubert – Der Hirt auf dem Felsen, D. 965

Originally for voice, clarinet and piano, Schubert’s *Der Hirt auf dem Felsen* (The Shepherd on the Rock) is a lovely piece that showcases his thoughtful vocal writing; this transcription combines the original clarinet and piano writing into a single piano part and is a natural companion piece for this recital’s early-Romantic theme. While it does not utilize A3, (as it was transcribed before I received the extended-range oboe), it is a fascinating version as the reimagined oboe part takes the work from a trio to a duo.

Composed for soprano Anna Milder-Hauptmann in 1828, the work sets the scene of a picturesque landscape; a shepherd sits on a rock and lovingly longs for his beloved while gazing into a valley.¹³ Composed during the final months of Schubert’s life, there is a palpable feeling of longing. While opening in B-flat major, its middle section in G minor reveals a darker turn of character. Interestingly, Schubert was far more than a passive admirer of the soprano Anna Milder-Hauptmann. In the memoirs of Schubert’s friend Josef von Spaun, he recalls the very moment upon which Schubert heard Anna for the

¹² Lamoreaux, liner notes.

¹³ Montgomery, 202.

first time during her performance in the Weigl opera “Die Schweizerfamilie,”

He said that Milder’s voice pierced his heart... while we were still there reveling loudly in the enjoyment of what he had heard, a University professor at the next table made fun of our enthusiasm and said that Milder had crowed like a cock, that she could not sing...and that it was a disgrace to engage her as leading singer... Schubert sprang up in a rage and, in doing so... knocked over his glass, which was full of beer, and there was the most violent exchange of words, which, because of the opponent’s obstinacy, would have turned to blows if some calming voices, which came in on our side, had not appeased us.¹⁴

Schubert clearly gave much thought to the musicians for whom he wrote his works.

Though most composers optimistically envision that their creations will be performed at the highest level, it is not so often that they can actually count on this happening. Schubert felt his works deserved the best performers he could find and was actively in search of kindred musicians. Music historian David Montgomery states the following in regards to Schubert’s performance desires:

It was not Schubert’s wish to create works for a small isolated public, or particularly for the future. Schubert actively sought performances by the leading virtuosos, and he wanted them to happen while he lived. This is why, for example, the last three sonatas—now treasured as great spiritual documents by Schubert lovers—were meant to be dedicated to the popular virtuoso pianist Johann Nepomuk Hummel. Schubert wanted Hummel to play and promote them... he had no intention of writing works specifically for the common taste. He wrote, simply, what he had to write, most of it beyond the musical grasp of garden-variety virtuosos in the first place.¹⁵

Section 5 - Johann Nepomuk Hummel – Introduction, Theme and Variations, op. 102

The “reinterpreted classic” work on this program, through the use of the low-A key, is Hummel’s Introduction, Theme and Variations, op. 102, from 1824. This work is not a

¹⁴ Otto Erich Deutsch, ed. *Schubert; Memoirs by his Friends* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1958), 129.

¹⁵ Montgomery, 202.

transcription but rather benefits from the use of modern technical advances as a way to present a fresh interpretation. The performance practice of adding ornamentation on the repeats of variations allows an opportunity to make use of the extended-range oboe.

Hummel arranged this piece from his piano four-hand work *Nocturne*, op. 99.

Interestingly, Chopin held this piece in high regard, especially as a teaching tool. It is well-documented that Chopin often used Hummel's works with his own students and in fact once programmed the *Nocturne*, along with a work of his own, in a recital given by a pair of sisters he was then instructing.¹⁶

Hummel made a respectable amount of contributions to the wind literature in both solo and chamber form during his lifetime. Amongst the most well-known are the Septet no. 1, op. 74, for flute, oboe, horn, viola, cello and piano, the Septet no. 2, op. 114, known as the "Military Septet" for flute, clarinet, trumpet, violin, cello, double bass and piano; and the Grand Concerto for Bassoon and Orchestra in F Major, S. 63. He wrote for wind-heavy ensembles that ranged from quartet to octet, including the Partita, S. 48, for pairs of oboes, clarinets, horns and bassoons, and the Serenade no. 2, op. 66, for clarinet or flute, bassoon or cello, guitar, violin, viola and piano. Though very much grounded in Classical-era sentiments, his interest in orchestration took him beyond the standard wind octet formations that were a staple of the time.

Upon studying the score to Hummel's *Nocturne*, one can quickly see the effortless translation of themes to the oboe. I have taken inspiration from the original version in

¹⁶ Mark Kroll, *Johann Nepomuk Hummel; A Musician's Life and World* (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2007), 311-12.

terms of the ornaments used but also utilize A3 through the low-A extension key. With no ornamentation indicated by the composer, the performer is invited to bring the work to life through their own interpretation of the repeated passages. The opening of the work begins in a poignant F minor but quickly transitions into a bright, uplifting F major at the start of the variations. While not in the key of A major or A minor, the key of F major still allows for many natural instances of A3 within the tonic triad without drawing attention to the added note.

The reasoning behind Hummel's decision to arrange his piano four-hand work for oboe and orchestra remains unclear, as does the identity of the oboist who premiered it. However, the work was quite popular during the 1820s and managed to establish a place in the oboe repertoire. A documented concert in 1827 featured the German oboist Friedrich Wilhelm Rose performing this work along with a concerto by Maurer.¹⁷ There is also documentation that a concert took place on April 29th, 1827 in Paris while Hummel was working to establish his own concert series with the Erard piano company that included this work. The concert also included the Septet no. 1 and featured the oboist Henri Brod.¹⁸ Part of the long legacy of oboists associated with the Paris Conservatory during the 19th-century, Brod (1799-1839) was a virtuoso performer whose concert tours resulted in his sharing the stage with major figures such as Chopin and Liszt. Most importantly, Brod contributed significantly as an instrument maker to the design of the French oboe and his craftsmanship played a large role in the development of landmark technical innovations. Among many achievements, Brod extended the range of the oboe to

¹⁷ Burgess, 151.

¹⁸ Joel Sachs, *Kapellmeister Hummel in England and France* (Detroit: Information Coordinators, Inc., 1977), 21-22.

B-flat 3 and most likely helped to invent the modern half-hole key. During his short life, he composed many works for the oboe, including a ground-breaking method book in 1830 (still in use today).¹⁹ Brod's ability to collaborate with instrument designers and to apply technical advances directly to repertoire and method book material opened up a considerable amount of musical opportunities for oboists during this period.

This particular collection of works display additional musical possibilities for the oboe drawn from early Romantic literature. By embracing new methods to extend the repertoire, a broader spectrum of programming possibilities is suddenly at the performer's disposal. Taking inspiration from oboists such as Henri Brod and Alex Klein, who extended the oboe's range and introduced technical advancements on the instrument, oboists can adapt and incorporate entirely new areas of fine repertoire that were previously considered out of reach.

¹⁹ Burgess, p. 134.

Chapter 2: Mid-Late 19th-Century Repertoire

Section 1- The Art of Transcription

*An exhaustive aesthetic portrayal of an author such as [Schumann] would require more than several pages—it would require an entire book. Therefore, today we do not attempt to underscore the complete significance of an artistic career, of a name that assumes such a secure position among the most honorable and honored of our time...so as to render the full recognition due this spirit, which has productively aspired upward, with the noblest energy.*²⁰

~ Franz Liszt

Franz Liszt wrote these heart-felt words in tribute to Robert Schumann, but the sentiment is fitting for all of the composers represented in the second collection of dissertation works: Robert Schumann, Franz Liszt, Johannes Brahms and Richard Wagner. All four composers dominated their musical worlds and their influences still resonate today. Their unique personalities were periodically at odds with one another, but ultimately there was an acknowledgement by posterity of the contributions each artist brought to the field. Their collective careers spanned the better part of the nineteenth century, and their professional and personal lives intersected in many ways, with the art of transcription serving as a common link between them all. Their relationships with one another ranged from strictly professional to incredibly complicated and emotional. Each of these composers has been exhaustively written about in biographies and articles, and countless analyses have been made of their important works and essays. As Liszt so elegantly referenced, one could easily dedicate many pages simply outlining their importance as

²⁰ R. Larry Todd, *Schumann and his World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 339.

composers. The repertoire of the second dissertation recital all stem from the art of transcription, a widely employed practice of the period.

All of the works in this collection are new transcriptions of late-nineteenth-century works and fall perfectly in line with the Romantic tradition of transcription. The original mediums include solo piano, lieder and violin and piano, as well as full orchestral and operatic works; they have been transcribed for oboe and piano and in the case of the Brahms symphonic movement, a trio for oboe, horn and piano. The successful transcription is one that both honors the integrity of the original work while allowing strategic alterations to be made to better fit the new instrumentation. By tapping into some of the great repertoire of the period, the oboe's own solo and chamber possibilities can be greatly expanded by employing English horn and using both extended-techniques and the extended-range oboe.

The power of transcription served to not only disseminate practically accessible music at a time when full scores could be difficult to obtain, but also, in certain hands, to reinvent the works through new mediums. This was not a practice that began in the nineteenth-century, but rather a time-honored tradition that took on a new level of complexity in the nineteenth century. One can learn much from studying a score and attempting to transform that material to a new instrumentation, a common practice for composers such as Bach and Telemann.

A classic example of reinvention through transcription is Franz Liszt's version of Hector

Berlioz's monumental *Symphonie fantastique* for solo piano. Additional winds and brass, new percussion instruments and expanded string sections allowed composers such as Berlioz to drastically expand their own orchestrational palette, thus greatly intensifying the challenge of creating a successful transcription, especially in terms of reduction. Berlioz embraced large-scale orchestral projects with, *Symphonie fantastique* standing as one of his most famous works. Written in 1830, only six years after Beethoven's Symphony no. 9, this work is known for its five-movement structure, unusual programmatic content and use of auxiliary instruments. All of these factors contribute to the seeming to exist on a large scale, which makes the fact that it received such a favorable review from Robert Schumann all the more incredible. His famous review in the *Neue Zeitschrift fur Musik* was not based upon studying the score of the massive orchestral work, but rather a study of Liszt's piano transcription.²¹ While Liszt would famously transcribe such epic works as all nine Beethoven symphonies, among countless others, Liszt also continued to promote Berlioz's works; he transcribed *Harold in Italy* and the overtures to *Les France-juges* and *King Lear* as well.²² For as daunting a challenge as transcribing Berlioz's thickly-orchestrated *Symphonie fantastique* for solo piano must have been for Liszt, his musical decisions were ultimately extremely convincing and the piece stands on its own in the piano repertoire. The same principles have been applied to all of the transcriptions for this evening's program with the goal of creating a cohesive recital of works that sound as though they were originally intended for oboe as the lead voice.

²¹ David Cairns *Berlioz*, Vol. 1 of *The Making of an Artist* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 427.

²² Jonathan Kregor, "Collaboration and Content in the *Symphonie fantastique* Transcription," *The Journal of Musicology* 24 (Spring 2007): 201.

Section 2 - Robert Schumann – *Three Romances* for Oboe and Piano, op. 94 – III. *Nicht schnell*

Originally conceived as a Christmas present for his wife Clara in 1849, Robert Schumann's *Three Romances* would eventually take its place as one of the gems of the oboe repertoire. It is significant to note that this relatively short work for oboe and piano is one of the only examples of oboe solo repertoire composed by a major 19th-century composer. While oboists might wish that the work was exclusively for their instrument, Schumann actually constructed this work to be adaptable for violin and clarinet as well. In fact, the first read-through of this work was most likely by Clara and the concertmaster of the Dresden Kapelle at the time. The first oboist to work with Schumann on the piece was Friedrich Rougier from Dusseldorf, which perhaps was a direct cause of his alteration of the title page for the Romances, giving priority first to the oboe with alternate versions for violin and clarinet. Documentation of actual recital programs began to surface starting in the 1860s, including concerts given by oboists Christian Schiemann and Emil Lund (Sweden) and Uschmann (Germany) and A. L. de Ribas (USA), with the alternate versions receiving acclaim in England.²³

During this period in Schumann's creative output, he frequently wrote solo works suitable for multiple instruments, such as the *Adagio and Allegro* for piano and horn, op. 70 (which could adapted easily for cello, violin, viola, oboe, etc.), the *Fünf Stücke im Volkston*, op. 102 for cello (violin or clarinet) and the *Phantasiestücke* for clarinet (violin and cello).²⁴ In these works, there tended to be a lack of technique-specific elements

²³ Burgess, 151.

²⁴ John Worthen, *Robert Schumann: Life and Death of a Musician* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 295.

such as *pizzicato* or double stops that would have made transference to another instrument more difficult.

The *Three Romances* take full use of the oboe's chromatic range and do not pose significant technical challenges, especially for a modern instrument. However, the work inspires both adoration and fear in the performer. The longing phrases and seemingly endless melodic material take a toll on the oboist's endurance very quickly. It was reported in 1897 that the acclaimed Belgian oboist Eugene Dubrucq simply would not perform the second movement "as it was quite impossible to play."²⁵ Indeed, the subtle musical choices one makes in performing this work can be overshadowed by the oboist's growing dependence on the few rests of each movement (if one includes the repeat in Mvt. II, the oboist plays continuously save two quarter rests for 87 measures).

When comparing the three versions of the first movement, the differences Schumann provided are subtle but significant. The violin version includes the use of an E6 in the first movement, m. 20 but is written an octave lower for both the oboe and clarinet. While all instruments would have been capable of achieving this note, my estimation is that this was a choice of orchestral color for Schumann as opposed to performer ability. Range becomes a major factor in regards to phrasing however in the third movement. While the movement is constructed in a typical ABA/Coda format, it is the oboe version that must make a musical sacrifice due to limitations in the lowest register. In the example below, one sees that Schumann moves his thematic material down a third from a descending

²⁵ Burgess, 151.

octave C to A; however, the standard oboe cannot produce the lowest A required.

Example 1: Robert Schumann: *Three Romances: III. mm. 20-22*

(oboe version with alternate violin notes)

Oboe

zurückhaltend Im Tempo

fp *f* *fp* *fp*

The passage returns again before the coda and while the alternation is minimal, I feel this adaptation takes away from the overall symmetry of the movement. The oboe is forced to alter the melodic material while transposed and deprives the performer the opportunity to articulate the distinctive octave drop. The creation of the extended-range oboe and its extension to A3 allows this movement to be heard as Schumann musically intended it to be heard (he uses the descending octaves for the violin and clarinet versions). This work is traditionally performed as a complete set but as part of the dissertation collection, only the third movement was performed. Its purpose in the recital was two-fold: to demonstrate the effect of the A3 in the original motivic context and its ability to function as a stand-alone work, much like the single movements featured in the recital's second half.

Section 3 - Robert Schumann – Violin Sonata no. 1 in A minor, op. 105

Written originally for violin and piano, this work is in three movements and was

composed in 1851. This period of creativity preceded his tragic mental breakdown and suicide attempt in 1854 and stands in stark contradiction to the notion that he had begun

to lose his compositional prowess. Regarding the violin sonata, music theorist Peter Smith wrote that:

Schumann... clearly was not interested in a slavish perpetuation of an older style of composition... he did not misunderstand sonata form. Rather he, like Schubert and Brahms, reimagined it on his own terms.²⁶

A direct communication from the Gewandhaus concertmaster Ferdinand David in 1850 outlined his desire for Schumann to compose a work for violin and piano, having been inspired by his *Fantasy Pieces* for clarinet and piano. In David's view, there were simply not enough new works for violin and piano; as he wrote: "There is such a shortage of well-written new works and I can't think of anybody who could do it better than you."²⁷ One wonders if an oboist had written the same letter what the result might have been...

The fact that this work is in the fortunate key of A minor lends itself excellently to an adaptation for the extended-range oboe. There are only brief instances where the range delves below A3 and it never extends above F6. This preference for the violin's middle range allows for the extended-range oboe to convincingly play the musical material without spending lengthy amounts of time in the highest or lowest register—though the first movement certainly explores the lowest range through a series of passionate and longing themes. While there are a few instances of double and triple stops, they are minimally used and more for a climactic effect to mark the ends of structural sections; the integrity of the line is not disrupted by making musical adjustments for the oboe.

²⁶ Peter Smith, "Harmonies from Afar: Tonal Pairing, Formal Design, and Cyclical Integration in Schumann's A-minor Violin Sonata, op. 105," *Theory and Practice* 34 (2009): 48.

²⁷ Robert Schumann, *Sonatas for Violin and Piano*, vol. 1, part 1, ed. By Ute Bar (Wiener Urtext Edition, 2003), IX.

The second movement is both structurally and musically reminiscent of the third movement of Schumann's *Three Romances*. Both movements begin with an oscillation of short phrases (1.5-2.5 measures in length) that conclude with a fermata and a contrasting, longer phrase that is strictly in tempo. In both works there is a key change for the B section where new material is introduced followed by a return of the oscillating fermata/in tempo phrases. The sonata's finale departs from the elegiac mood of the previous movements and embarks on a raucous journey of running 16th notes. Performed together, the Violin Sonata no. 1 and the final *Romance* feel very cohesive. The beautifully written material lends itself incredibly well to a multitude of instruments, something that certainly helped to disseminate Schumann's work during his life-time. The example of his clarinet music inspiring Ferdinand David to ask for a violin piece illustrates how Schumann's music transcended traditional orchestrational barriers. Some of the issues that my transcription addresses in order to make a convincing oboe rendition include octave displacements, use of double-stops and the need for additional slurs.

Section 4 - Franz Liszt – Mephisto Waltz no. 2

Audiences are likely most familiar with Liszt's *Mephisto Waltz* no. 1 in its orchestral and solo piano forms but Liszt in fact composed four of these diabolical waltzes.

Mephistopheles, or Mephisto, is the Devil figure in the legend of Faust, an evil figure but also quick-witted and at times even humorous.²⁸ The second of these waltzes (Liszt wrote versions for solo piano and orchestra) has been transcribed for oboe and piano by David Plylar. Standing as a highly virtuosic and daring set of works, the first waltz was

²⁸ *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, s.v. "Mephistopheles," accessed January 5, 2016.

originally the second of *Two Episodes from Lenau's Faust*, inspired by Nikolaus Lenau's *Faust*.²⁹ At the time of its completion, Liszt had transitioned from a life of a touring virtuoso to one more focused on his own compositions. The fascination with Faust pervaded the Romantic period, inspiring masterpieces by composers such as Berlioz, Gounod and Schubert, as well as Liszt.³⁰ Perhaps the most famous of Liszt's works inspired by the legend is his monumental *Faust Symphony*, S. 208 (1854, revised 1857-61, 1880).

Portraying the Devil and his unearthly powers was not confined to Liszt's compositions alone, as comparisons had been made regarding his performances as well. As a concert pianist, his incredible prowess was likened to that of Paganini, who was rumored by some to have received his ability from the Devil himself. Both Robert and Clara Schumann took note of the phenomenon during a live performance they witnessed. Robert reported upon watching Liszt perform in 1840:

He first played with the public as if to try it, then gave it something more profound, until every single member was enveloped in his art; and then the whole mass began to rise and fall precisely as he willed it. I have never found any artist, except Paganini, to possess in so high a degree as Liszt the power of subjugating, elevating, and leading the public.³¹

Clara also took notice of Liszt's uncanny ability to transfix the audience through his compelling performances. In 1851 she reflected the following: "He played, as always,

²⁹ Franz Liszt, *Franz Liszt: The complete music for solo piano, Vol. 1 – Waltzes*, Leslie Howard, Hyperion Records, CD, 1986.

³⁰ Dennis Bade, Program notes to Franz Liszt, *Mephisto Waltz* no. 1, performed by the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra (2015).

³¹ David Larkin, "Dancing to the Devil's Tune; Liszt's *Mephisto Waltz* and the Encounter with Virtuosity," *19th-century Music* 38 (Spring 2015), 195.

with a truly demonic bravura. He lorded it over the piano like a devil (I cannot express it differently).”³²

The *Mephisto Waltz* no. 2 has been brilliantly transcribed for oboe and piano. The work begins and ends with the B-F tritone, an interval historically associated with the Devil.³³ Far from Johann Strauss’s elegant waltzes of the same time period, Liszt presents a waltz full of rustic mystique through the use of duple meter; the opening time signature of the work is in 6/8 but in parenthesis, it lists 2/4. Reflecting the technical virtuosity that was so seemingly effortless for Liszt as a performer, this transcription pushes the performer to tackle a non-stop trajectory of runs and building motives. Due to the level of difficulty and large interval leaps, this work would have been most likely very difficult to perform on oboes of the original time period. Extended techniques are employed as well, include brief moments of flutter tongue and the use of harmonic fingerings - their use is to bring out different orchestrational colors. This transcription fits the spirit of the period and thoughtfully honors the integrity of Liszt’s original composition. After all, Liszt himself composed his first two *Mephisto Waltz* no. 1 for both solo piano and full orchestra, and both versions are extremely compelling.

Section 5 - Johannes Brahms – Symphony no. 3, Mvt. III Poco allegretto

Johannes Brahms had an interesting compositional relationship with the oboe. While his symphonies provide oboists with some of their most frequently asked excerpts (the Violin Concerto and Symphonies nos. 1 and 2 particularly come to mind), the oboe was simply

³² Ibid, 195.

³³ Mark DeVoto, *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, s.v. “Tritone,” accessed January 5, 2016.

not his instrument of choice for chamber music. Clarinetist Richard Mühlfeld served as his muse; Brahms was first introduced to the talented musician in March of 1891 and by the end of the summer, had composed the Clarinet Trio, op. 114 and the Clarinet Quintet, op. 115. 1894 saw the production of the two Clarinet Sonatas, op. 120.³⁴ When one looks at the wealth of string and piano chamber music that Brahms bequeathed to the musical world, non-clarinet playing wind musicians are understandably disappointed at the lack of original material.

This is not to say that Brahms did not have an influence on the development of the oboe as an instrument. The Weinder model of oboe had a direct relationship with Brahms's compositional work in Vienna. While Brahms did not stray from the traditional orchestrational model by utilizing auxiliary instruments such as the bass clarinet or English horn, this did not stop him from writing technically challenging orchestral parts for the oboe, a departure from Brahms's German and Viennese predecessors. To address the technical challenges of his music, combined with an emphasis on a blended wind choir sound, an oboe with very stable intonation was critical and was something the Weinder model could provide. The Weinder model included advances such as a second option for pitches Eb and F, as well as a speaker key (an advance making overblowing less necessary) for stability in the upper octave.³⁵

³⁴ John Henken, Program notes to Johannes Brahms, Viola Sonata no. 1 in F minor, op. 120, no. 1, performed by members of the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, March 2014.

³⁵ Burgess, 179.

The challenge of transcribing from a full orchestral work to a trio of oboe, horn and piano is no simple feat. Pulling from the already prominent oboe and horn solos from the original version, transcriber David Plylar maintains the flowing yet epic feel of this work for three performers. The third symphony of Brahms was originally composed in 1883, when he was fifty. Literally created while overlooking the Rhine River in Weisbaden, Germany, the symphony was to be a “justification for his artistic existence.”³⁶ Having spent a life-time haunted by the well-intended words of praise from Robert Schumann as the future of German music when he was only twenty years old, Brahms constantly dealt with his own insecurities. Schumann had proclaimed that:

...one day there must suddenly emerge the one who would be chosen to express the most exalted spirit of the times in an ideal manner, one who would not bring us mastery in gradual stages but who, like Minerva, would spring fully armed from the head of Jove. And he has arrived – a youth at whose cradle the graces and heroes of old stood guard. His name is Johannes Brahms.³⁷

Interestingly, Brahms’s third symphony makes an allusion to the first movement-opening *Allegro* of Schumann’s *Rhenish Symphony*.³⁸ But the gentle flow of the Rhine River dissipates with the decidedly gloomier and more anguished start of Brahms’s third movement. In this transcription, the English horn guides the audience into the haunting theme of the movement, initially a cello line. The use of the English horn and oboe in this transcription allows for an even richer exploration of this Romantic repertoire. Though Brahms did not write for English horn, here the instrument feels perfectly natural and a

³⁶ Walter Frisch, ed. *Brahms and His World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 66.

³⁷ Anderson, Don, Program notes to Johannes Brahms, Piano Concerto no. 2 in B-flat major, op. 83. Performed by the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, 2008.

³⁸ Frisch, 66.

proper fit within the range of the melody. Not surprisingly, this passionate and beautiful third movement was originally used as an encore, as it was an immediate success with audiences.³⁹

Section 6- Johannes Brahms – Four Pieces for Piano, op. 119, I. Intermezzo in B minor

I almost require a treasure-chest to keep all the jewels I have received from you, and now comes this further exquisite addition. They are pearls. The one in B minor which I received the other day is a grey pearl.⁴⁰

~ Clara Schumann to Johannes Brahms, 1893

The complicated and intense relationship between Johannes Brahms and Clara Schumann continued to evolve over a lifetime of personal tragedies and triumphs. Though Brahms' role would transition from a live in caretaker immediately after Robert's suicide attempt and eventual death to that of a long distance confidant, the two musicians maintained a mutual respect and admiration for one another both personally and professionally. The B minor *Intermezzo* of op. 119 is the first of the set, one of many pieces he presented to her over the span of his career.⁴¹ Clara's praise of his *Intermezzo* reflects the extraordinary depths that Brahms's compositions had reached. A striking feature of this work is the opening falling thirds, a technique often associated with Debussy's use of ninth and eleventh chords, in order to develop a truly ethereal feel.⁴²

³⁹ Jan Swafford, *Johannes Brahms: A Biography* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), 489.

⁴⁰ Allen Cadwallader, "Motivic Unity and Integration of Structural Levels in Brahms's B Minor Intermezzo, op. 119, no. 1," *Theory and Practice* 2 (December 1983), 7.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴² Swafford, 585.

Brahms was no stranger to large-scale piano works, given works like his piano concertos, sonatas and variation sets. However, the late-piano works of Brahms showcase a period of creativity focused on smaller, salon-style works, though they are no less intense than the large works. Within the basic ABA forms, one finds the signature two-against-three rhythms and a heightened level of tonal and harmonic complexity. Brahms in fact worried that he had pushed the harmonic envelope too far in this work. While still falling short of the complexities of works such as Liszt's *Faust Symphony* or Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*, this *Intermezzo* displays the outer reaches of Brahms's own harmonic boundaries.⁴³

Transcribed from solo piano to oboe and piano by David Plylar, the *Intermezzo* seamlessly incorporates the addition of the oboe as the carrier of the main thematic material. Soaring effortlessly above the intricate harmonic descents, the oboe part is reminiscent of Brahms's use of sighing wind melodies in his third symphony.

Section 7 - Richard Wagner – “Elsa's Procession to the Cathedral” from Lohengrin

Prominent composers of the mid-late nineteenth century produced remarkably few solo and chamber works for oboe, as compared to the significant and challenging orchestral solos composed for it. Wagner challenged his oboists with parts that constantly wove in and out of the spotlight as opposed to extended solo passages. (A notable exception is of course found in *Tristan und Isolde*, Act III, in the extensive solo English horn passage.

The prominent oboist Charles Reynolds was known for being able to perform the

⁴³ Swafford, 587.

demanding solo “with no apparent break for breath.)”⁴⁴ Often Wagner connected female characters with the oboe line, such as in *Lohengrin*. The *leitmotiv* of Elsa is played in unison by both the oboe and English horn when she is taken before the king and learns of her brother’s death; Elsa’s grief during this revelation scene is underscored with prominent use of both instruments. The oboe appears again in pivotal scenes such as when she fantasizes about her knight, who then appears as Lohengrin.⁴⁵

Amongst the most famous parts of *Lohengrin* is “Elsa’s Procession to the Cathedral” (Act 2, Scene 4 opening). The transcription in this collection of dissertation works is based both on the original operatic version as well as Liszt’s solo piano transcription. The very simple statement of the motive begins very simply but builds to a moving moment with the entrance of the choir before once again retreating. David Plylar achieves a natural transition between the operatic works of Wagner and the medium of oboe and piano.

Section 8 - Richard Wagner – Wesendonck Lieder, III. “Im Treibhaus”

The creation of the *Wesendonck Lieder* was the result of a complicated series of relationships between Wagner, his wife Christine “Minne” Planer, his mistress Mathilde Wesendonck and her husband, Otto Wesendonck. While Wagner suffered through a tumultuous marriage with Minne, he had been developing an infatuation with the dilettante Mathilde. Wagner found her an intellectual equal and would eventually set her poetry for the *Wesendonck Lieder*. In 1857, Otto rented the adjoining cottage of his home in Zurich to the Wagners. Matilde’s husband was a staunch supporter of Wagner’s music

⁴⁴ Burgess, 255.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 225-226.

and ambition and was aware of the relationship between his wife and Wagner. Though bothered by it, he allowed the affair to continue on his own property since Mathilde remained open about the situation. Minne, however, was not made aware of the scenario and their already troubled marriage reached a boiling point after she confronted Mathilde in regards to an intercepted letter. The marriage would completely dissolve by 1862 and though he remained friends with Mathilde, Wagner eventually wed Liszt's daughter, Cosima, in 1870. This was Cosima's second marriage, the first being to the acclaimed pianist and conductor Hans von Bülow.⁴⁶

Unlike the previous Wagner transcription, this work depicts an actual song, though the oboe part is not entirely a literal translation of the vocal line. The setting of "Im Treibhaus" begins with the tempo marking of *Langsam und schwer*, meaning "slow and heavy." Mathilde's poem reflects upon the idea of life as a cycle through analogies to nature. The poem explores feelings of emptiness, and a sense of expanding into the void occurs in the opening ascent in the piano introduction.⁴⁷ Wagner used material from this work in the Prelude to Act III of *Tristan und Isolde*, a haunting introduction before his epic English horn solo.

This collection of dissertation works began with an original work for oboe and piano that was composed with multiple instruments in mind. It set the tone for a program that traversed solo piano repertoire through full orchestral scores with ease, with the aid of the

⁴⁶ Nicholas Brown, Program notes to Richard Wagner, *Wesendonck Lieder*, Performed by Margaret Lattimore at the Library of Congress, November 2013, 8.

⁴⁷ Brown, 9.

expanded range, extended techniques and the use of an auxiliary instrument such as the English horn. By disseminating the music of Schumann, Liszt, Brahms and Wagner to audiences through new contexts, transcription allows the oboe to dramatically expand its own repertoire and access some of the most powerful music of the nineteenth century—much in the same fashion that the composers themselves accomplished this in their transcriptions. These four influential composers of the nineteenth century utilized the oboe's natural lyrical abilities countless times in their orchestral and operatic works. The fact that they did not choose to transfer their understanding of the oboe as an orchestral color into other mediums does not mean that the instrument is an inappropriate choice to honor their music. Schumann anticipated various instruments performing his chamber works. While the other composers may not have originally conceived these particular works for oboe, one might be convinced that oboe was indeed the intended solo voice in these transcriptions. A world of musical possibilities becomes possible through the art of transcription.

Chapter 3: Contemporary Music for Extended-Range Oboe

Section 1- Performer/Composer Collaboration

My first two dissertation recitals focused on the musical possibilities of the extended-range oboe within the medium of early and late-Romantic transcriptions and original works. Through the use of the low-A extension key and extended-techniques, original compositions took on a new interpretation by utilizing modern advancements while still honoring the integrity of the works. The original compositions of the final dissertation recital showcase the full potential of the extended-range oboe and the musical impact technical advances can have on an instrument.

I founded the Lobe Project in 2009 as a means to promote new works and transcriptions for the extended-range oboe. While not every work in the dissertation recital series requires an extension key, a unifying factor is that all of the transcriptions were done by me or in close partnership with composers; all of the works presented on this recital are the product of collaborative efforts between myself and six composers of five different nationalities. The approaches each composer took to celebrating the unique qualities of the Lobe differ drastically. In terms of using the low-A extension key, some composers chose to briefly highlight the note while others made it a core feature of the work. The sonic range of the oboe is expanded still further through the use of the oboe in both an acoustic and electronic context. The incredible diversity of styles showcases the musical and technical possibilities that exist for contemporary oboe.

As detailed in previous program notes, the 19th century saw a rise in significant orchestral oboe solos by established composers but a decline in terms of oboe solo and chamber works. In short, this lack of solo repertoire was impacted by several factors including competing schools of instrument development in Europe, a lack of solo opportunities with orchestras and the growing lure of stable orchestral positions as composers began to write for larger forces. A notable exception from the late 19th century was Antonino Pasculli (1842-1924), a formidable oboist and conductor based in Palermo, Italy. Known as the ‘Paganini of the oboe’ due to his incredible technical virtuosity, Pasculli quickly rose to fame as a soloist in his teenage years. After being appointed an oboe professor in 1860, his vision began to deteriorate which greatly impacted how much he could perform. Pasculli embodied the Romantic-era enthusiasm for transcription by programming his own arrangements of works by composers such as Beethoven, Debussy and Wagner for a wind band he conducted. However, it is significant to note that Pasculli did not seek out composers to write works for him; his own compositions of solo oboe works reveal the level of technical ability he had as a performer and were catered to best utilize the specific Triebert model of oboe he played. His works were largely lost until the 1970s when they were rediscovered, and they now hold a coveted place amongst the oboe’s handful of original and quality Romantic era compositions.⁴⁸

Léon Goossens

After the classical era, it was not until the 1920s that a significant oboist/composer

⁴⁸ Burgess, Geoffrey and Bruce Haynes, *The Oboe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 154.

collaboration began to take place. Of the many celebrated oboists of the 20th century, Léon Goossens stood as one of the most significant contributors to the instrument's repertoire. His prowess as a performer, coupled with his ambition to seek out new commissions and dedicate performance time to works dedicated to him, collectively contributed to his incredible legacy. His early success as principal oboist of the Queen's Hall Orchestra in 1914 (at the age of 17) led to his eventual appointment as principal oboist of the London Philharmonic Orchestra. He was famous for his beautiful sound; eventually he was able to focus his career solely on solo performances following World War II. His rise to fame marked a turning of the tides for solo oboe works; the consensus of music reviewers of the time was that Goossens "transformed the oboe from a necessary, but often unpleasant, bleating noise into the instrument capable of producing unimagined refinement and beauty of tone."⁴⁹ A writer in the *London Observer* noted that:

There is no musician of our time whose genius has had so radical an effect upon the status and fortunes of his chosen instrument.⁵⁰

Suddenly, composers were taking notice of the oboe again. Goossens's first venture into the solo spotlight was, appropriately enough, through a transcription. He performed a Bach suite for oboe, organ and strings in 1921; he continued his early solo run with performances of works by composers such as Bliss, Bax, Holst and even his own brother, Eugene Goossens (1929).⁵¹ This last work was a direct result of a close collaboration

⁴⁹ Burgess, 197.

⁵⁰ Marian Wilson, "Léon Goossens, Oboist," *The Double Reed* 9 (1986): 10.

⁵¹ Burgess, 198.

between the two siblings and is often referred to as “the first true oboe concerto of the twentieth century.”⁵²

In search of companion pieces to play alongside Mozart’s Oboe Quartet KV370, Léon’s commitment to performing new works resulted in many composers jumping at the opportunity to write for him. Two quintets (by Sir Arthur Bliss and Sir Arnold Bax) and oboe quartets were written by Benjamin Britten, Gerald Finzi, E. J. Moeran and Gordon Jacob. Composers also took to the genre of the concerto; major works were written for oboe and orchestra by Gordon Jacob, Rutland Boughton and Ralph Vaughan Williams, who provided one of the most significant works of the 20th-century oboe repertoire. Other composers who wrote for Léon included Arnold Cooke, Cyril Scott, Malcolm Arnold, Herbert Howells, Walter Stanton, Sir George Henschel, John Addison, Dame Ethel Smyth, Franz Reizenstein and Alec Templeton, among many others.⁵³

Léon Goossens’s success marked the return of the career oboe soloist in the 20th century. His enthusiasm and dedication to new solo and chamber oboe works inspired a compositional following that had not been seen historically for many decades. While Goossens was the first oboist of the 20th century to embark upon such a journey, his efforts likely inspired, and continue to inspire, many other musicians to take ownership of the oboe’s compositional future.⁵⁴

⁵² Burgess, 209.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 209.

⁵⁴ In the early 1980s, oboist Christopher Redgate emerged as an important musician who inspired a new generation of composers to write virtuosic oboe works specifically for him. Redgate’s artistic trajectory remains entrenched in the composer/performer dynamic; he is recognized as one of the leading authorities of his credit. His success follows closely in the footsteps of Léon Goossens and Heinz Holliger. Source: James Weeks, “Review,” *Tempo* 62, no. 243 (January, 2008): 81.

Heinz Holliger

Appearing later in the 20th century is Swiss oboist Heinz Holliger, who stands as an equally accomplished performer, composer and conductor (and he remains very much active in all categories). Starting oboe at the age of eleven, Holliger was influenced by the instrument's similarities to the human voice, specifically that of a soprano. To date, he has over sixty recordings, ranging from traditional baroque works to transcriptions, contemporary pieces and his own compositions. Holliger recognizes the importance of creating new works for the oboe and states the following on the topic:

Very little was written for the oboe in the 19th century and we are pretty much restricted to the Baroque and contemporary eras. It is astonishing, though, how composers today are eager to provide music for the instrument. I think the oboe repertory of new music is now far more important than that for the violin or other 'traditional' solo instruments. Berio, Henze, Lutoslawski, Martin, Krenek, Stockhausen, Penderecki and many other composers have dedicated works to me—quite a glittering pantheon.⁵⁵

Holliger's incredible career is fueled by his passion to champion his chosen instrument.

His respect for Goossens' commissioning legacy is clear:

For us in Europe, the British oboist Léon Goossens was the great pioneer and father figure... Nearly every prominent composer of a generation ago wrote music for Goossens—he was to the oboe what Pablo Casals was to the cello.⁵⁶

For my own contribution to the oboe's repertoire, the desire to launch a series of commissions dedicated to the promotion of the extended-range oboe was first triggered

⁵⁵ Peter G. David, "Heinz Holliger Refutes Thesis That the Oboe is an Ill Wind," *New York Times*, April 10, 1981, Accessed February 28, 2016. <http://www.nytimes.com/1981/04/10/arts/heinz-holliger-refutes-thesis-that-the-oboe-is-an-ill-wind.html>.

⁵⁶ Ibid, Holliger.

by reading the following line in the book *The Oboe* by Geoffrey Burgess and Bruce Haynes:

Around 1995 *Lorée* produced a small number of oboes extending to low A. This was on the recommendation of Alex Klein, who sought an instrument that would allow oboists to play Schubert's 'Arpeggione' Sonata, but as yet it does not appear to have been scored for by any composers.⁵⁷

When I first read this book in 2005, I knew immediately that I would someday make this sentence obsolete. In 2009, I received a grant from the Center for Cultural Innovation towards the purchase of an extended-range oboe and the Lobo Project was officially launched. I have had the privilege to work closely with many composers and each collaboration has led to new discoveries about what the oboe is capable of. As a musician, I feel a certain responsibility to follow Léon Goossens's and Heinz Holliger's example and contribute in my own way to the expansion of the oboe's repertoire.

Section 2- Clare Loveday – South View, for solo oboe

Two works in this collection of dissertation pieces are the result of my time spent living in Durban, South Africa while working for the KwaZulu-Natal Philharmonic Orchestra (KZNPO). Though the new music community of South Africa may be small, it is comprised of passionate, dedicated musicians who continually bring their talents to the forefront of the national scene and abroad. I was very fortunate to collaborate with composers Clare Loveday and Cameron Harris (whose work is discussed later) during my time there.

⁵⁷ Burgess, 343.

I was first introduced to Clare Loveday’s music through a composer reading session that was organized by the KZNPO. Her enthusiasm for new music became apparent as I discovered the magnitude of chamber compositions to her credit; she not only wrote works for woodwinds but she embraced the challenge whole-heartedly! Having, in fact, completed a doctorate specifically focusing on the classical saxophone, Loveday already had a wealth of wind works to her credit; it was not long before a Lobo Project commission was in the works in 2012. Regarding the Lobo Project, Loveday wrote:

There is so much repertoire for the standard instruments, for violin, clarinet, trumpet etc. Introducing a new instrument to the concert-going public is so exciting. The more repertoire that is available, the more the new instrument will have for concert programmes, for playing with ensembles, the more opportunities there are for adding colour to the instrumental palette. As a composer, a new instrument is like being given a new toy box with which to play—there are new sounds to explore, new combinations to try, new ways to stretch old thoughts. It's irresistible.⁵⁸

Because I met Loveday towards the end of my tenure with the orchestra, our collaboration on the solo oboe work was mostly through online communications. Despite the distance, Loveday produced a fantastic addition to the Lobo Project: *South View*. The title refers to her home studio atop a ridge in Johannesburg. While her house overlooks the city and the Magaliesberg cliffs, her studio faces south, providing a view of the neighborhood rooftops and the SABC (South African Broadcasting Corporation). But the studio view also provides a window to the constantly shifting display of incoming storms, birds, helicopters, etc. The piece is both a response to these views as well as a reference to the “global south.” After my departure from Durban, the extended-range oboe could no longer be found in South Africa and Loveday tried to envision the many

⁵⁸ Clare Loveday, email message to author, February 5th, 2016.

scenarios in which it would be performed in the “global north.” She felt the work was a combination of her many studio window views, her gazing north and myself looking south back to my time in South Africa.⁵⁹ This piece was premiered at the 2012 International Double Reed Society Conference in Redlands, CA.

The work is divided into five short and distinct sections or movements, each marked with a brief pause. It begins with a declaratory statement, followed by short, articulated points, much like the effect of a drop of water. A slight *ritard* is the first indication that a new section approaches. The second section immediately begins in a new tempo and style. Drawing from a style of African singing which uses no vibrato at all, the oboe does not fully imitate the style but certainly alludes to it. There is a feeling of joy and energy to the whole section.⁶⁰ Use of the low-A occurs from mm. 44-48 as a natural extension of the melodic material, as opposed to a purposefully featured pitch.

Example 2: Clare Loveday – *South View* mm. 44-49



The third section has the feel of a lament and utilizes alternate fingerings. Oscillation between a pure tone and added tonal color allows this movement to contrast drastically with the two previous movements. There is a subtle allusion to traditional South African funerals in the references to wailing and the intensity of the services.⁶¹ Only occasionally are specific harmonics indicated. The decision of which alternate fingering to use in order to create multiple tone colors from a single pitch is generally left to the performer. While

⁵⁹ Clare Loveday, email message to author, February 5th, 2016.

⁶⁰ Clare Loveday, email message to author, December 19th, 2012.

⁶¹ Clare Loveday, email message to author, December 19th, 2012.

strikingly different in mood, the fourth section strives to keep forward momentum without feeling frantic. It is characterized by constant meter shifts over the course of six continuous melodic phrases. The work concludes with a return of the opening material, though significantly higher in range and shorter in duration.

Section 3- Paul Coleman – *Coupling, for oboe and piano*

While *Coupling* is a fragment of an anticipated larger work, it stands as the first solo work that was commissioned through the Lobo Project. Written for a special joint-chamber music tour with the ensembles Out of Context and Proper Glue Percussion Duo in 2010, *Coupling* is a brief but poignant glimpse into the sonic beauty of the extended-range oboe. It was composed by Paul Coleman and written for myself and pianist David Plylar. Regarding the origins of the title, Coleman wrote the following:

Coupling, as in linking together, refers not only to [Alison] and David, but also to the process of chaining material together. Sometimes I linked the horizontal pitch material to spin into a larger collection, and sometimes coupled vertical collections in a way to help with voice leading. There is the more obvious moment in this short piece where timbre is varied by coupling the notes in a very one-dimensional way as a unison line, but most of the piece is presented from perspectives that are "slanted," so that the material generates canons and other distortions of time.⁶²

Just under two minutes in duration, the work plays with moments of unison lines and melodic textures under held notes, both in the oboe part and through the use of pedaling in the piano part. A sense of timelessness is created through the omission of a time signature and tempo marking. The oboe line is frequently underneath pedal tones in the piano, whose quiet dynamics only once reach *mf*. Though short in total length, *Coupling*

⁶² Paul Coleman, email message to the author, February 24th, 2016.

manages to explore a great deal of sonic territory, concluding with a series of long tones at the end of the work.

Section 4- Alexandra Fol - Mon âme fut à sa merci, for oboe and piano

My first encounter with composer Alexandra Fol was in 2002 in Rochester, NY. We were both students at the Eastman School of Music, and I took notice of her work as that of an exceptionally talented organist and composer. Her enthusiasm for new projects, whether it was in conducting a fellow student's work-in-progress, organizing a concert or writing progressive church anthems, eventually led to my contacting her about writing for the Lobe Project. She is now an established figure in the Montreal music scene, and she had the following to say regarding her Lobe work *Mon âme fut à sa merci* for oboe and piano:

"My soul was at his mercy" are words by poet Charles Cros that I learned by singing Chausson's *Chanson perpetuelle* for mezzo and orchestra. The words resonated with me, though not for romantic, nor love-related reasons. When I was planning the work I had lived through an event that illuminated for me the fragile beauty of a second chance. This event inspired the composition.⁶³

The first half of the work features pedaled block chords in the piano which creates a wash of sound. Distinct rhythmic patterns emerge as the intensity of the piano chords begin to increase. The oboe enters ten bars before this moment but its presence is marked with a soft arrival that slowly decrescendos back into the piano sound. Measure 32 marks the first use of non-pedal in the piano, but only for this brief instance. This section introduces an oboe part that is characterized by the use of trills, runs and generally faster harmonic motion.

⁶³ Alexandra Fol, email message to author, February 5th, 2016.

Example 3: Alexandra Fol – *Mon âme fut à sa merci* mm. 32-35

The musical score for Example 3, measures 32-35, is presented in two systems. The top system is for the Oboe (Lob.) and the bottom system is for the Piano (Pno.). The Oboe part begins at measure 32 with a rest, then enters with a melodic line marked *mf* and a trill. The Piano part consists of two staves, with dynamics ranging from *p* to *f*. A pedal point is indicated at the bottom of the piano part.

By measure 62, the piano ceases to use any syncopation in the accompaniment; this moment is marked by three bars of Bb3 marked *fff* in the oboe line. Starting in m. 67, the piano line transforms into a succession of repeating half note chords as the oboe continues to explore the extreme ends of its registers. A distinctly new section begins at m. 115 as the piano presents a series of octave E repetitions for nearly forty measures. The first feature moment for the oboe's Low-A pitch (A3) occurs at m. 145 and is marked *fff*. Here the oboe line begins to build to a climax; the oboe intensifies its rhythmic complexity against the steadfast piano line and ultimately clashes against the accompaniment's pedal E's with its own E-flat6, followed by two bars of silence. The work concludes with a series of five ethereal pedaled chords in the piano; the oboe's sound carries over to each chord, creating a timeless effect as the music halts towards its conclusion. Fittingly, the work ends on A3, marked *ffff*.

This piece utilizes the full range of the extended-range oboe and is characterized by its unabashed use of the oboe's lowest register, extreme dynamics, rhythmic complexity and

bursts of cascading runs. All uses of A3 are thoughtfully treated and Fol offers *ossia*, or alternative, passages for performance on the standard oboe. Fol writes:

An instrument with limited repertoire cannot become popular unless its repertoire is widely known. The way to accomplish this is to play works that are written for other instruments, but playable on the new instrument, and to gradually build a library or original works... Hence I carefully crafted the work to be performable not only on a Lobo, but to have a version for regular oboe, for clarinet in B-flat and for clarinet in A. The versatility of the piece would help it being well-known among musicians other than highly specialized players and will, consequently, popularize the instrument.⁶⁴

Section 5- Hannah Lash – *Silvers*, for solo oboe

As a classically trained harpist, composer Hannah Lash has a unique understanding of writing for solo instruments beyond those deemed as “standard.” As students at the Eastman School of Music, I had the opportunity to take part in a series of student composition reading sessions, in which Lash’s work was featured. I was immediately taken with her clear skill and artistry. She is now a Yale composition faculty member and the recipient of commissions from major ensembles around the world, and it is a true honor to include *Silvers* for solo oboe as part of the Lobo Project. When asked about her thoughts regarding writing for the extended-range oboe, Lash wrote:

I myself play an instrument (harp) with a rather limited repertoire, for which I am constantly composing, so it is tremendously personal to me to feel that I can contribute something to an underused instrument. The Lobo is such a beautiful instrument [and] it should be much more common and widely available and used. I think the best way to get the ball rolling in that direction is to write music for it!⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Alexandra Fol, email message to author, February 5th, 2016.

⁶⁵ Hannah Lash, email message to author, February 16th, 2016.

Written in 2012, this work continuously makes use of A3, from the first run to the final pitch. According to Lash, the title *Silvers* is a “visual description of the sound palette... which seems to me rather bright and yet soft and varied.”⁶⁶ The opening tempo is quite slow, allowing the performer to highlight the subtle rhythmic complexities. A great deal of content is packed into this work as tension builds through rapid runs and use of the highest and lowest registers. Lash allows the performer many opportunities to explore the sonic possibilities of A3 as the pitch is featured in a variety of dynamics, durations and phrase locations.

A new style is introduced at m. 30 through a series of slightly syncopated triplet eighth notes. Rhapsodic in feel, two more of these episodes appear throughout the work, though at faster tempi. This pseudo-gigue impression is reminiscent of Heinz Holliger’s *Sonata* for solo oboe which also utilizes frequent use of running triplets.

Example 4: Hannah Lash – *Silvers* for solo oboe (2012), mm. 44-53

Example 5: Heinz Holliger – *Sonata* for solo oboe (1957), mm. 1- 7

⁶⁶ Hannah Lash, email message to author, February 16th, 2016.

Special attention is given to the unique traits of the oboe, such as making full use of the oboe's expressive mid-upper register. Regarding this choice, Lash writes:

One thing I really love about the oboe is its dynamic curve, which is different from other woodwind instruments, like the flute or clarinet. I like thinking about the mid-upper register of the oboe as a very intimate and expressive area, which I wouldn't tend to do with the flute or clarinet, where that mid-high register is very bright and naturally a bit louder than the low register.⁶⁷

The technical demands in this work are considerable, as it requires extreme control in all registers of the instrument as well as complicated interval leaps. However, it is a true showpiece of what the extended-range oboe is capable of achieving in the solo oboe genre.

Section 6- Devon Tipp – Augury I, for solo oboe and sine waves

I met bassoonist/composer Devon Tipp at the 2015 International Double Reed Society Conference where he performed two of his own compositions. The first was for solo bassoon and the second was a duo for bassoon and hichiriki, a traditional Japanese double reed instrument. His ability to see beyond the traditional uses of this “specialist” instrument resulted in a sonically fascinating work and it was not long after this performance that discussions of a Lobo work began. Tonight is the world premiere of Tipp's Lobo Project commission, a work for oboe and sine waves. Perhaps more than any of the works in this dissertation collection, *Augury I* truly embraces A3 by making the most dynamic and timbral demands of this pitch. In preparing to write for the extended-range oboe, Tipp wrote the following:

⁶⁷ Hannah Lash, email message to author, February 16th, 2016.

Composing for oboe did not present any problems or challenges per se; however, composing for two mediums that I am not well versed in (solo literature and electronics) was a great trial. Pre-composition for this piece was incredibly slow, but extremely rewarding. While writing this piece, I experimented extensively with processed sounds and improvisation as a compositional tool. Many parts of this piece are in fact transcribed improvisation. At the beginning, I was tempted to use prerecorded and heavily processed oboe sounds, but ultimately rejected this approach. The timbral specificity of the prerecorded oboe would convey a far different meaning, and in my mind, a less satisfying sonic unity.⁶⁸

The title of the work is a reference to the interpretation of an omen. An augury is defined as a:

...prophetic divining of the future by observation of natural phenomena—particularly the behavior of birds and animals and the examination of their entrails and other parts, but also by scrutiny of man-made objects and situations. The term derives from the official Roman augurs, whose constitutional function was not to foretell the future but to discover whether or not the gods approved of a proposed course of action, especially political or military. Two types of divinatory sign, or omen, were recognized: the most important was that deliberately watched for, such as lightning, thunder, flights and cries of birds, or the pecking behavior of sacred chickens; of less moment was that which occurred casually, such as the unexpected appearance of animals sacred to the gods... or such other mundane signs as the accidental spilling of salt, sneezing, stumbling, or the creaking of furniture.⁶⁹

The work is in one continuous movement and is played along with a series prerecorded sine waves. It is notated not through traditional measure numbers, but instead through musical indications at intervals of five seconds. In conjunction with a program Tipp designed using the software program Pure Data, the performer watches a digital clock in order to coordinate with the sounds. The sine waves are drawn from two chords and represent the augury itself. The oboe enters with long phrases that seem to implore the ever-changing sine wave, but to no avail. Tipp makes use of the very difficult technique of glissandi in the low register, giving the oboe an almost unnatural presence in its lowest range.

⁶⁸ Devon Tippet, email message to author, February 22nd, 2016.

⁶⁹ *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, s.v. "Augury," accessed February 21st, 2016.

Example 6: Devon Tipp – *Augury I*, minute 2-2:30

By minute four, the sines wave indeed shift to a new chord, making the omen a reality. The intensity and complexity of the oboe line begins to dramatically increase at this point as well. The beseeching of the oboe line transforms into quarrelling; the oboe reaches a dramatic peak through an insolent Bb5. As the sine waves continue, the oboe is once again haunted by the original omen.⁷⁰

Section 7- Cameron Harris – *Lullabies for Philomel*, for oboe and electronics

Lullabies for Philomel is a work in four movements for oboe and electronics. It is the only chamber work in the contemporary portion of the dissertation collection, though the definition of collaborative performance takes on a new meaning within this piece. Scored for solo oboe and electronics, the “triggers” of previously recorded sounds are cued by an audio engineer at specific points in the score. The electronic entrances vary from general arrival points to distinctly matched rhythms with the oboe part. Careful rehearsal is required to execute this work in the same way as any traditional chamber music score. At times, the performer seems to be accompanied by the sound of an unearthly oboe choir; Harris writes in his score notes that “all of the sounds of the piece are created from oboe samples and therefore the entire texture emanates from the sound of the instrument.”⁷¹ I

⁷⁰ Devon Tippet, email message to author, February 22nd, 2016.

⁷¹ Harris, Cameron, *Lullabies for Philomel* (Johannesburg, South Africa: Self Published, 2012).

had the privilege to collaborate directly with Cameron Harris and premiered the work at the 2012 Unyazi Festival of Electronic Music in Durban, South Africa.

This work takes its inspiration from two very different sources. The first is Milton Babbitt's ground-breaking *Philomel* (1964) for soprano, recorded soprano and synthesized sound. Through the use of an RCA synthesizer, Babbitt conveyed the raw anguish found in the story of Philomela. Based on one of Ovid's tales from *Metamorphosis*, the story of Philomela is truly fitting of a Greek tragedy. In order to conceal the atrocities that the King of Greece commits against his sister-in-law, Philomel, he cuts out her tongue. But all is not lost; she is transformed into a bird by the Gods so she can continue to sing her story. The words of *Philomel* were written by John Hollander who wrote the following regarding this passionate setting:

Long ago I had wanted to use the myth of Philomela for an elaborate aria because I had always felt that the story was quintessentially operatic, with a great transformation scene in which a soprano who has been singing nothing but... choppy syllables suddenly can break out into both sustained melody and language... The possibilities of a synthesized accompaniment for dramatic purposes seemed enormous, and when the Ford Foundation commissioned such a piece and Babbitt asked me for a text, the metamorphosis of the nightingale seemed an obvious subject.⁷²

Lullabies for Philomel is also written in homage to Milton Babbitt who died the year before the work was written.⁷³ Harris wrote the following regarding the creation of the work:

There are certain parallels between the two pieces [*Lullabies* and *Philomel*]; both works focus on *E*, the madrigalist's symbolic pitch for a cry of anguish. Also, in *Philomel*, the interplay between the live voice and its manipulated version is key

⁷² John Hollander, "Notes on the Text of *Philomel*," *Perspectives of New Music* 6, no. 1 (Autumn-Winter, 1967): 134.

⁷³ Harris, Cameron, *Lullabies for Philomel* (Johannesburg, South Africa: Self Published, 2012).

whereas in *Lullabies* I have retained this idea but have metamorphosed solo soprano voice into a solo oboist. All the sounds of the piece are created from oboe samples and therefore the entire texture emanates from the sound of the instrument. In the choice of oboe soloist I pay a further homage, this time to Benjamin Britten, whose haunting and energetic *Metamorphoses after Ovid* for unaccompanied oboe has become a central piece of repertoire for the instrument and is also a great source of inspiration for me.⁷⁴

Mvt. I: *Inside a metal cage; a solitary lovebird laments, and dwells on the time when there were two*

This movement begins with four haunting electronic gestures and establishes the otherworldly oboe sonorities that define the entire work. These gestures are metallic and mournful and fade out before the lyrical entrance of the oboe. The oboe line soars above the descending bell tones and gliding gestures of the electronics. More defined rhythmic and articulation variations begin starting at m. 15 and a classic “bird” trill gesture occurs in m. 22 of the oboe line. Both parts enter and conclude independently, with the most mournful material occurring when both lines overlap, perhaps symbolizing the lovebird’s lament.

Mvt. II *Philomel’s Cry*

A bold electronic gesture of contrary motion opens the second movement. Immediately the music has more intensity as the oboe enters with a full-range run of the instrument followed by pointed, almost declamatory articulations. The first entrance of the “oboe ensemble” sound occurs around m. 14. The actual oboe line descends on a trill into the anguished sound of the oboe.

⁷⁴ Harris, Cameron, *Lullabies for Philomel* (Johannesburg, South Africa: Self Published, 2012).

Example 7: Cameron Harris – *Lullabies for Philomel*, Mvt. II *Philomel's Cry* mm. 14-20

The image shows a musical score for two parts: Oboe (Ob.) and Recorder (Rec. sounds). The Oboe part is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It begins at measure 14 with a dynamic marking of *mp*. The melody features a series of notes with slurs and accents, reaching a dynamic of *f* and then *p*. A tempo marking of quarter note = 92 is indicated. The Recorder part is shown below the Oboe part. It starts with a thick black bar, followed by a section labeled "Oboe ensemble" with a double bar line, and then a section labeled "low vibration" with a zigzag line.

The movement ends with an unaccompanied solo oboe line consisting of five short passages between held rests. A three-note tag concludes this final section.

Mvt. III A Serpentine Question

An F “pedal tone,” combined with a high metallic sound opens the third movement.

Though the oboe line is more subdued in nature, it must overcome a series of large intervals. This movement is also marked by the use of mixed meter and bursts of “wind gushes” in the electronic part. The intensity rises as the oboe line grows in rhythmic complexity and use of syncopation. In m. 51, the distinct opening sound gestures of the first movement briefly return before returning to the mixed-meter material. The large intervals in the oboe line occur at a faster pace, but now as grace note passages, and the overall duration of the movement is longer than the previous movements. At its conclusion, the movement ends with the oboe and electronic lines questioning one another, each time waiting for the other to respond. The oboe line seems to die away, each of its responses filled with the same passionate motive but declining in strength and dynamic.

Mvt. IV Metamorphosis: Bells and Birds

Like Movement II, Movement IV opens with a distinct gliding gesture; the oboe enters as the gesture “flattens out” in sound. The final movement is nearly twice as long as the previous one and contains the longest electronic cues of the whole piece. The oboe and electronic line match up at very distinct points, requiring exact coordination between the performers. The electronic sounds vary from “stylized bird chirps/babble,” bell tones, “metallic glides” and low hums. Perhaps most distinct is the “low growl” at m. 83; this sound gesture is completely unlike anything heard in the piece previously and has an unsettling effect. This leads directly into a pseudo-duet between the “metallic melody” of the sound cues and the oboe line. The final sound cue is uninterrupted by the oboe, lasts nearly two minutes and is marked “Final Lovesong” in the score. Movement IV contains the most direct interaction between the performers, as well as overlapping lines of all of the movements, yet the work poignantly ends with each voice taking its final “swan song” independently. The oboe concludes the piece unaccompanied.

Section 8 – Summary

The six featured composers of the Lobo Project showcase an incredible diversity of style and approach, yet all are passionate about their commitment to new music. These compositions represent only one part of the ever-growing repertoire collection for the low-A oboe, and I am very proud to continuously work to champion these pieces. But regardless of one’s particular instrument, it is crucial for oboists to push the musical and technical boundaries of the instrument by creating their own works and transcriptions, from any historical period, as well as establishing performer/composer relationships.

Utilizing the many facets of the extended-range oboe, which includes everything from extended-techniques, use of auxiliary members of the oboe family or employing modern technical advancements, ultimately benefits both the individual performer and the greater musical community. Historically, the oboe has at times struggled to find its place as a solo instrument, but its unique attributes and the perseverance of its performers will help to ensure its artistically fulfilling future.

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