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# Problems in preparation of a solo recital

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PROBLEMS IN PREPARATION OF A SOLO RECITAL

by

JOHN PHILLIPS VARNUM

B.M. Montana State University, 1958

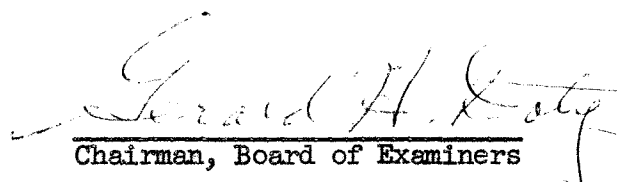
Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Music

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY

1959

Approved by:

  
Chairman, Board of Examiners

  
Dean, Graduate School

MAY 27 1959

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Date

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## DEDICATION

The author is indebted to William Manning, Instructor of Woodwinds at Montana State University, for his help and ever-present counsel in preparing this solo recital. The author would like to thank Sylvia Eversole for her willingness to rehearse at odd hours and for her work in preparing the accompaniments for the recital.

Finally the author would like to dedicate this paper to his wife, Alice, and thank her for her understanding and patience during the preparation of the recital.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This paper is written in the hope that it may help the solo recitalist to avoid some of the errors committed by the author in the preparation of his solo recital given April 21, 1959.

The author feels that a paper of this type may be of some value because of the very scarcity of such a work. At the present time there is only one work known to the author that is devoted to the preparation of recitals.<sup>1</sup> As this particular work is devoted to the solo recital from the viewpoint of a vocalist and over half of the book is devoted to sample programs, the author feels that the book is of use to the wind instrumentalist only in the general comments that would serve any musical presentation.

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<sup>1</sup>John W. Peirce, The Art of Program Making (Boston: E.C. Schirmer Company, 1951) PP 204

## CHAPTER II

### CHOICE OF LITERATURE

The biggest problem in the choice of recital literature for a wind instrumentalist is the comparative lack of good, representative literature. Pianists, vocalists and string players have an enormous amount of literature from every musical era from which to choose a solo program. Clarinetists are limited to selections from the Romantic era, the Viennese Classics, the French school of Impressionism and the contemporary composers. A large percentage of clarinet literature is of a style that is no longer popular in the United States. Clarinet literature of this type, such as Erwinn Fantasie by Meister and Variations on a theme by Bellini by Bassi, may be roughly compared to the Herbert L. Clarke solos for the cornet. The Viennese Classic school is almost limited to the compositions of Mozart with the Quintet, Trio and Clarinet Concerto. Johann Stamitz composed about a dozen different concerti, but they are of doubtful listener interest because of their "clarino" style of writing. The Romantic era is almost entirely represented in the works of Weber and Brahms, with the exception of works by a few minor composers. The French school of clarinet literature, being mainly Impressionistic, is of a readily recognizable style, following in the style of Debussy's Premiere Rhapsody. The contemporary composers have done much for the clarinetists'

repertory and this may explain to some extent why wind instrumentalists must, of necessity, rely upon contemporary composers for literature.

In the recital presented by the author, he previously decided to present examples from the outstanding sources of clarinet literature. A sonata recital was considered but was finally discarded because of a desire to present a more varied type of program. An important factor in programming is audience interest and the performer must do all he can to keep the interest level high.

In selecting the music for the solo recital several factors were kept in mind. Length of numbers, overall length of the program, sequence of the works and the type of music selected were all factors that the author considered to be extremely important to a successful recital.

As it is somewhat traditional to open a program with the oldest piece of music, chronologically, the author looked into the music of the composers for the Viennese Classic school, the first composers for the clarinet. The author had decided beforehand that the opening number should be an ensemble work. This was made because the author felt that an ensemble composition would ease him into the program and would give him a chance to check the acoustics of the room before appearing in a solo role. This placement also avoided the annoyance of interrupting the program to set up the stage for an ensemble number. One requirement of the opening ensemble work was that it should be of a light nature and still prepare the mood



for the more serious works to follow. The author had considered doing a composition that would have required thirteen performers on stage, but finally discarded the idea when the problems of stage management and securing adequate rehearsal time became insurmountable.

In going through the earliest available literature for the clarinet the author found ensemble material from this era to be very scarce. The choice of literature was finally narrowed to two works, the Mozart "Kegelstatt" trio (K.V. 498) for piano, viola and clarinet, and the Mozart "Stadler" Quintet (K. 581.), for string quartet and clarinet. The quintet is a beautiful piece of music but presented the problem of securing a string quartet and rehearsing it. The Trio is not quite as serious as the quintet and has the added advantage of requiring the addition of only one member, a violist, to the performing group, rather than a quartet of performers. The Trio was selected to be the opening work for the recital.

The author felt that the high point of the program should be the performance of a major clarinet concerto or sonata. The Mozart Clarinet Concerto (K. 622) was eliminated because of the fact that the opening number of the program was a Mozart composition. The author also felt that the Mozart Concerto had been performed too often at the School of Music. The author felt that the major work to be performed should provide a definite contrast in style to the Mozart Trio but should not be a contemporary piece. This decision narrowed the field to the Romantic composers because of the fact that the

French composers did not write any movement pieces of sonata length. Of the Romantic composers, only two major composers wrote outstanding works for solo clarinet, these being Brahms (two sonatas for clarinet and piano) and Weber (two concertos and the Concertino). Weber's style of writing for the clarinet is in the classical concerto style similar to Mozart's and the concerti are fairly stereotyped in their composition. The author finally chose the Sonata in E flat Major, Opus 120 No. 2, by Brahms for the performance. Several factors contributed to this choice. The F Minor Sonata (Opus 120 No. 1) had been performed only a year earlier and the author felt that another performance of that work would have been an unnecessary duplication. In addition, the author felt that the Sonata in E flat Major was written in a more melodious vein and would provide a more effective contrast to the fragmentary Mozart Trio.

The Brahms sonata, because of its serious nature, was placed at the end of the first half of the program because the author felt that both the performer and the audience would need a short rest before the performance of the remainder of the program. The author also felt that the listener interest is at its highest peak just prior to the usual intermission time.

The choice of the Brahms sonata completed the selection of music for the first half of the recital program. The sonata and the Mozart Trio totaled approximately thirty minutes of music and the author felt that this amount of music was sufficient for the first

half of the program. The comparative lack of variety in the single tone color of a solo instrument such as a clarinet makes an extended program inadvisable. Another reason for the intermission at this point was the author's feeling that after the emotional drain of such a long, taxing number as the Brahms sonata, the performer would need the relaxation of an intermission.

The second half of the program was to be of a much lighter nature than the first half. This half of the program presented many more problems than did the first half. The author had in his repertoire several numbers that he wished to present. The task at hand was to select the numbers that would be appropriate for the remaining portion of the program and still keep within the self-imposed rule that the program represent the major schools of clarinet literature. The author also felt that the last half of the program should provide a greater variety of compositional style than did the first half. The choice of literature was finally narrowed to the Sonatine by A. Honegger, Lamento et Tarentelle by Gabriel Grovlez and the Sonatina for Clarinet and Piano by Clyde Duncan. The two French pieces were chosen to represent the wide variety of style within the Impressionistic French school of clarinet literature. The Lamento et Tarentelle was chosen to be the required memory piece because it was the only piece that was not a sonata or a sonatine. The Honegger Sonatine is of an unusual nature, being a composition in the style commonly known as "ragtime". At the time of its

composition Honegger had been experimenting with ragtime rhythms and the Sonatine was one of the results. The Clyde Duncan Sonatina for Clarinet and Piano was chosen because it is a contemporary American work and somewhat representative of the style now in favor with American composers for solo instruments.

The problem of order in the pieces for the second half of the program was a comparatively simple one because of the fact that the Sonatine by Honegger was written for A clarinet and required being placed at the opening so that the performer would have a chance to warm up the instrument. The author took the intermission as an opportunity to warm up the A clarinet and prepare the instrument for playing. The B flat instrument used for the first half of the program remained comparatively warm during the playing of the Honegger Sonatine.

The remaining two numbers were placed in chronological order. The Duncan Sonatina seemed to be a better concluding piece than did the Lamento et Tarentelle. The Duncan Sonatina is of an angular, rhythmic quality, and quite suitable to end a program because of its furious ending.

The entire program was to be approximately one hour long. The author felt that this amount of music was sufficient for a varied and interesting program.

## CHAPTER III

### REHEARSAL PROBLEMS

This chapter will deal primarily with general rehearsal problems that would occur in the preparation of any recital. The following paragraphs do not contain a step-by-step analysis of each measure of the music performed. A discussion of this type would be of little use to the reader, unless the reader were to present exactly the same program.

Ideally, a rehearsal schedule should be set up several months prior to the actual recital and strictly followed. The author was unable to do this due to various interruptions such as band tours, orchestra tours and spring vacation. In not having a comparatively rigid rehearsal schedule, the author feels that he was unable to perfect his recital as much as was possible. Another disrupting factor was that the author's accompanist was extremely busy throughout the entire year both accompanying and teaching.

The actual procedure in rehearsing was as follows: the first few rehearsals with piano consisted mainly of becoming familiar with the general outline of the works by reading through them completely. The great majority of rehearsals were devoted to work on difficult passages. The last rehearsals were spent in polishing and again playing the entire works to renew the overall picture of the music.

The rigid schedule would be especially important in any ensemble

works. The greatest difficulty was found in perfecting the ensemble playing the Mozart Trio.

The Brahms Sonata in E flat Major presented many problems in ensemble playing in that the melodic line constantly shifted between the piano and clarinet. The Grovlez Lamento et Tarentelle and the Honegger Sonatine presented few problems in ensemble playing. The Duncan Sonatine for Clarinet and Piano was quite difficult in ensemble perfection because of the difficult rhythm patterns and rapid dialogue between the solo instrument and the piano.

The Duncan Sonatina was finally worked out through slow rehearsal, that is, taking the number at an extremely slow tempo until the performers had memorized the outline of each instrumental part. This was essential because the rapid pace of the work eliminated any possibility of accurate counting. Parts of the Brahms Sonata in E flat Major presented the same problems because of the rapidly shifting cross accents and hemiola. These problems were solved in the same manner used for the Duncan piece.

The author discovered that without regular rehearsal time, much time was wasted during the available rehearsal time. The most productive rehearsals were held during the week preceding the actual performance, this being due to the fact that the rehearsals were held every day. Prior to that week rehearsals had been held sporadically, and the author found that many parts had to be done over and over again because of the differences in interpretation and in tempi between the

soloist and the accompanist. With regular rehearsals these differences were rapidly ironed out and ceased to be a problem.

The Lamento et Tarentelle by Grovlez was chosen to be the required memory piece because of its being the only piece on the program that was not a sonata or sonatine.

The author found that a combination of part and whole memorization worked best for him. The part method of memorization is to memorize by phrase or measure until the whole work is memorized. The whole method of memorization is to work upon the entire piece over and over again rather than to break the piece into segments. As an aid to memorization the author wrote the piece several times in manuscript from memory and also fingered the piece on the instrument without actually playing. This consisted of mentally playing the solo while fingering the clarinet at the same time. The author did all of the ensemble rehearsals from memory. Rehearsing a memory piece in this fashion is an important point and cannot be over-emphasized. The memory piece should be played as often as possible from memory.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout the period of rehearsals before the presentation of his recital the author made the following observations.

First and foremost in a successful program is the choice of literature. This point cannot receive too much emphasis. Much care must be given to the variety and style of the music to be performed, particularly with a single voice instrument such as the clarinet. The single tone color of a solo instrument can become monotonous in an extended program. The author suggests that the program be limited in length to not over an hour, including intermission time. In a longer program it would be extremely difficult to maintain audience interest.

A rigid rehearsal schedule should be planned and followed. The schedule need not necessarily be over a long period of time. An amazing amount of work can be done in two weeks if the rehearsals are held regularly and time is not wasted. The author personally preferred two hour rehearsal periods. A single hour was not sufficient to cover a great amount of work, yet in any period of rehearsal of more than two hours the concentration necessary for good ensemble was lacking. The two hour rehearsal periods did not include warming up. Warming up should be done prior to rehearsal with piano. All of the rehearsal time should be devoted to problems of ensemble, not to



individual problems of technique. All technical problems should be solved in individual practice prior to the rehearsal.

The performer should be extremely careful that during the rehearsal schedule he does not neglect regular practice. The author found, through experience, that if regular individual practice was neglected the technical skill level declined rapidly.

If an ensemble number is to be used in a program it should not be a large ensemble. Trios are about ideal because they present the least amount of ensemble problems. With the addition of each member of an ensemble the chance for performance error becomes greater. This statement should not be taken to rule out performances of larger ensembles if the rehearsal time necessary for such a performance is available.

If any of the pieces are to be done for memory, all rehearsals of those pieces should be done from memory. The author feels that consistent playing from memory will reduce the chance of a memory lapse during the recital. The performer should know the piece well enough to write it in manuscript if asked to do so. The author firmly believes that it would be impossible to know a memory piece too well.

Works from the recital should be presented in public as much as possible before the actual recital. If possible the recitalist should travel to a different town and present the entire recital. The author had the good fortune to present two of his recital numbers,

the Brahms Sonata and the Duncan Sonatina, on a radio program a week before the recital. This performance aided materially in setting him at ease in the recital, at least for the two numbers performed for the radio program.

The practice of presenting a recital to an outlying town is not an unknown practice, being done almost constantly by both musicians and actors. This practice has one main advantage in that it shows up weaknesses in the works while the performer is under pressure. This enables the performer to identify sections needing further work before the presentation of his recital.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Peirce, John W. The Art of Program Making. Boston: E.C. Schirmer Company, 1951. 204pp.

## APPENDIX A

The following is a representative list of examples of clarinet literature from the four great schools of literature. The examples cited are considered by the author to be the finest literature available for the clarinet.

### CLASSIC ERA

Composer	Title
W.A. Mozart	Clarinet Concerto (K. 622)
J. Stamitz	Concerto in C Major
W.A. Mozart	Kegelstatt Trio (K.V. 498)
W.A. Mozart	Stadler Quintet (K. 581)

### ROMANTIC ERA

J. Brahms	Sonatas (Op. 120, No 1 & 2)
Spohr	Concerti (Op. 26 & 57)
Schumann	Fantasy Pieces
Weber	Concertino (Op. 26)
Weber	Concerti (Op. 73 & 74)
J. Brahms	Quintet
Reger	Quintet
Weber	Quintet

### FRENCH SCHOOL

Debussy	Premier Rhapsody
Honegger	Sonatine

Grovez	Lamento et Tarentelle
Rabaud	Solo de Concours
Gaubert	Fantasie
Delmas	Fantasie Italianne
Guilhaud	Concertino

## CONTEMPORARY COMPOSERS

Tuthill	Fantasie Sonata
Tuthill	Concerto
Hindemith	Sonata
Bernstein	Sonata
Duncan	Sonatina
Stravinsky	Three Pieces
Arnold	Sonatina
Hovhaness	Divertimento
Milhaud	Scaramouche
Koepke	Scherzo in C minor

APPENDIX B

MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS  
SCHOOL OF MUSIC

presents

JOHN VARNUM, Clarinetist

in

GRADUATE RECITAL

assisted by

Sylvia Eversole, pianist

and

Robert Crebo, violist

Tuesday, April 21, 1959

8:15 P.M.

Kegelstatt Trio (K.V. 498) . . . . .	<i>Mozart</i>
Andante	1786
Menuetto	
Rondo	
Sonata for Clarinet and Piano Op. 120, No. 2 . . . . .	<i>Brahms</i>
Allegro Amabile	1894
Allegro Appassionato	
Andante con Moto—Allegro	
— <i>Intermission</i> —	
Sonatine . . . . .	<i>Honegger</i>
Modere	1925
Lent et soutenu	
Vif et rythmique	
Lamento et Tarentelle . . . . .	<i>Gabriel Grovlez</i>
	1923
Sonatina for Clarinet and Piano . . . . .	<i>Clyde Duncan</i>
With Energy and Drive	1954
Slowly, meditatively	
Very Fast	

(This recital fulfills partial requirements for the Master's Degree in Applied Music)