

Evgeni Orkin

**A METHODICAL
APPROACH**

**to learning
and playing
the historical clarinet**

History

Practical experience

Fingering charts

Daily exercises and studies

Repertoire and literature guide

2nd edition



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Autor / Translation / Linguistic assistance

Imprint

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Evgeni Orkin

A methodical approach

**to learning and playing the historical clarinet and its
usage in historically informed performance.**

2. Edition

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Preface

This practice-oriented book is aimed at musicians who are interested in playing the historical clarinet but have so far set or had to set other professional priorities.

It contains - without any scientific claim - an overview of historical developments of the instrument as well as considerations on the choice of the instrument in the context of historically informed performance (HIP).

Fingering charts for the individual categories of historical clarinet instruments are presented graphically, as is customary today.

Finger exercises and studies are specially developed and designed to the fingering problems of historical instruments.

Information and tips from practice are intended to be a guide for those interested and to help answering questions.

A repertoire excerpt and references to further specialist literature are intended to stimulate the deepening of already acquired knowledge.

Introduction

The increasing interest in HIP in recent years makes more and more musicians, whether students or established professional colleagues, want to expand their knowledge and skills in this direction as well. New courses being offered at conservatories, and seminars and master classes delight in growing enrolment figures. Scientific literature brings interesting findings to light. Long-forgotten composers whose works deserve to be performed again and included in the concert repertoire are being rediscovered. Even the music of the late 19th and early 20th centuries enables the engagement with new aspects in a historical orientation.

The clarinet, a latecomer to the classical orchestra, has also become a fixture in the field of historically informed performance practice. In the period from about 1700 to the present day, it has experienced a rapid and turbulent development, both in terms of instrument construction and playing technique. This development has frequently inspired composers and gave rise to some of the most interesting musical masterpieces and treasures.

Despite the greater complexity of finger movements in forked fingerings and the different acoustic properties compared to the modern clarinet, the historical clarinet along with its family members is relatively easy to learn for experienced musicians. However, it is not so easy to get a good overview of the origins of the different systems as well as the types of instruments and their respective use within HIP. This book aims to support this endeavor and provides clarinetists of all skill levels with an initial outline of the historical clarinet in theory and practice. It is intended to arouse curiosity and encourage closer studies of clarinet instruments and their interesting history.

Historical categories of clarinet instruments

Chalumeau



Although the chalumeau counts as the predecessor of the clarinet, it is not considerably older than the latter and was verified only at the end of the 17th century.

It probably originated from the "mock trumpet," which had also been popular in England since the end of the 17th century - a recorder-like instrument in which the sound-producing reed was cut out of the tube by a downward cut, but not separated from the instrument (idioglot). The "mock trumpet" (literally: false, imitation trumpet) had only finger holes and no keys yet. However, these were added to the chalumeau: first the a' and bb' keys for the index finger and thumb of the upper hand. Later, more keys were added, which made it possible to extend the range from a major ninth to the undecime. Also, the reed was no longer part of the body as on the "mock trumpet" but was made separately (heteroglot) from a different material, usually from pile cane (arundo donax). It was attached to the mouthpiece with a string, with the reed facing the upper side, i.e. held with the upper lip.

Since the bb' key, with its tone hole position at the time, was hardly suitable for overblowing, the upper register suffered from tonal weaknesses and intonation problems as well as generally poor response. The semitones were played with fork fingerings as on a recorder. The chalumeau family included soprano, alto, tenor and bass chalumeau as well as

the bassoon de chalumeau, in C and F pitch as known from the recorder.



Baroque clarinet with first two, later three keys



Around 1700, the Nuremberg instrument maker Johann Christoph Denner (1655-1707) succeeded in developing a new type of instrument. Denner dislocated the tone hole of the chalumeau thumb key for bb' about one centimeter towards the mouthpiece. This allowed clean and stable playing in the second register. A metal sleeve inserted into the tone hole ensured relatively clean intonation of the bb' . Thus, the range was extended upward by about an octave.

Whether Denner's "clarinet" was conceived as a further development of the chalumeau or as a completely new instrument is unclear, however. Above all, it is irritating that Denner continued to work on improvements to the chalumeau even after his invention. Nevertheless, he was eager to experiment and applied his experience to the construction of the new instrument, which differed significantly from the Chalumeau.

The conical widening of the bell, as on the oboe, gave more volume and stability to the low notes around g and f , but also to the c'' . Above all, the high register, henceforth called the "clarino register", was convincing in its clarity and assertiveness and at the same time, although tonally very trumpet-like, in its great flexibility. However, the lack of balance in intonation between the high and low (chalumeau) registers remained problematic. As a result, the high registers in the orchestra were played by clarinetists while the low registers still were executed by chalumeau players

until about the mid of the 18th century. Similar to the chalumeau, it was not yet possible to play a defined b'-natural on the clarinet. This was solved around 1730 with the addition of a third key. For this purpose, the instrument was lengthened below the hitherto lowest note f. The e note thus obtained could now be played and overblown to the b'-natural'. In the beginning, the new tone hole and its key were placed on the backside of the instrument and operated by the thumb. Since the clarinet at that time still had two symmetrical holes on both sides for the tone f, it was convenient to use for both left- or right-handed people. The hole not needed was closed with wax or with a small wooden plug. Later on, the bb'-natural key moved to the left, within reach of the little finger of the left hand.

The baroque clarinet of the time consisted of three parts:

MThe mouthpiece and the today's barrel were still built in one piece.

The middle section had two keys and seven tone holes, some of which were double holes for semitones, as on the chalumeau.

The lower section with the f-hole and later the e/h' key also formed one piece together with the bell.



The reed tied to the mouthpiece was still positioned to the upper side of the instrument.

The Classical clarinet with five or six keys



Around 1760, the so-called classical clarinet came into being.

However, it took another three decades for its final development. Although this new and more practical type of clarinet displaced the baroque clarinet, the latter was still produced occasionally until the early 19th century and used mainly in military music.

Clarinets with four keys (either for f#/c# or ab/eb), in which the middle section was also separated into two parts, are considered transitional instruments and were only made for a short period of time. The classical clarinet found its final design with five keys and a body in six parts:



Mouthpiece (usually made of ebony);

Barrel;

Upper joint with four finger holes (c' rarely made as a double hole) and two keys for a' and b' (this is also called the overblowing key);

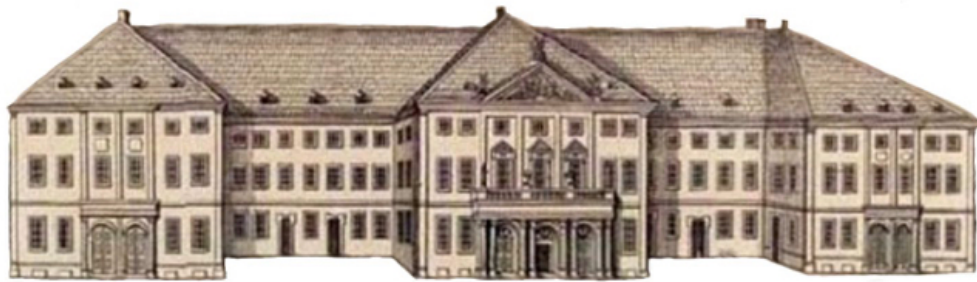
Middle joint with three finger holes;

Foot joint with fingerhole for f and three keys for e/b'-natural, f#/c# or ab/eb;

Bell.

English instrument makers added an a'-b'-natural trill as a sixth key to the clarinet from the late 18th century, while on the continent the c'#/g''# key for the left little finger was usually added as a sixth key.





Theater Mannheim um 1800

From 1752 the clarinet was included in the woodwind section of the Symphony Orchestra in Cologne. Somewhat later, around 1758, it found its way into the Symphony Orchestra in Mannheim and became an integral part of that ensemble as well. Several others followed this example. For use in the orchestra of the time, clarinets in C, in B-flat and in A were used as standard. With these types, all keys were covered, and clarinetists switched between instruments to avoid unclear and tricky sequences of notes, depending on the required key. The small difference in size between B-flat and A clarinets made it possible to continue using the mouthpiece, barrel, foot joint and bell of one instrument and only to exchange the upper and middle piece joints for other keys (corps de rechange) - similar in function to the