

Synopsis

Contemporary literature on the clarinet focuses mostly on the following issues: playing techniques, analysis of selected pieces, clarinet teaching methods, acoustic properties and history of the clarinet, as well as on great artists who contributed to the development and popularization of this musical instrument. Taken together, it constitutes vast knowledge about the contexts of clarinet use in music. The available literature documents detailed fingering charts, describes new technical solutions applied for clarinet construction, provides instructions on how to perform and teach new playing techniques, such as multiphonics, circular breathing, triple staccato, etc. From the perspective of clarinet teaching, new and more efficient teaching methods are also very important. This wide range of topics to be researched by musicians, musicologists, instrument makers and teachers shows that clarinet has become a scientific domain with its own peculiarities and sub-domains, which require separate studies. Nevertheless, according to the author, the available publications do not provide clear data on the performing style and performing practice. In particular, authors of the available sources fail to discuss the issue of baroque music interpretation. In that period clarinet was already in use, but it was not commonly perceived as a solo instrument, and often was not even seen as an equal orchestra member.

The aim of this paper is **to present and discuss the canons of performing music in the baroque era (defined as lasting between 1600 and 1750) in the context of the clarinet performing practice.**

In order to discuss the problems analyzed in this paper in a broader context, it should be noted that the majority of clarinet music has been composed after the death of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Although clarinet was included in a classical orchestra already by Johann Christian Bach, it is definitely Mozart's Clarinet concerto KV 622 that displayed the solo potential of this instrument. According to the author, this classical piece is the reason why so many clarinetists share a characteristic, "post-baroque" way of thinking. This means that they are usually only interested in performing works that are not earlier than classical, as if seeing the introduction of their instrument into music literature as the beginning of music literature as such.

Indeed, baroque composers were not eager to dedicate sophisticated solo parts to the clarinet. The reason for this reluctance was the issue of intonation and tonal limitations: in fact only B flat major, E flat major, F major and G major were the basic keys, in which clarinetists were able to play skillfully and in tune. It should be emphasized that Ivan Muller proposed a model of clarinet that made it possible to play with agility in all keys as late as in 1811. Moreover, due to poor level of the 17th century clarinet making technology, this instrument was only used for fanfare parts. This was because clarinet is more complicated in terms of tuning than traverso flutes, which enables virtuoso parts without any pads. Clarinet parts were introduced interchangeably with trumpet parts and any cantilena passages were avoided¹. A long time passed before the potential for virtuoso or cantilena performance of clarinet, so obvious in our times, could be explored.

Therefore pre-classical repertoire of works that include clarinet parts is limited. In addition, there is hardly any tradition of clarinet improvisation in the renaissance, baroque or classical styles. As a side remark, it should be mentioned that this was not the case in the family of flutes with its vast repertoire (starting from the times of antiquity). Also in the groups of string, keyboard and, interestingly, brass instruments the style awareness of musicians is significantly higher.

Furthermore, even in the early classical Mannheim orchestra wind instruments were rarely involved in the musical discourse, but only supported the harmonic components of the musical piece.

The issues sketched above are significant reasons, why clarinetists cannot enjoy broad repertoire and full achievements of baroque music. They do not have any opportunity to become acquainted with a wide array of means of expression, such as:

- the art of ornaments (in Italian, German or French styles);
- ability to recognize the character of different dances, which constitute the basis of a large part of baroque and classical music (particularly instrumental);

¹ Tomasz Dobrzański, *W poszukiwaniu źródeł przelomu w budowie i możliwościach wyrazowych klarnetu w II połowie XVIII wieku*, presentation at a Polish Conference on Art and Science entitled *MIĘDZY TRAKTATEM A MOWĄ UCZUĆ W DŹWIĘKI PRZEMIENIONĄ. MUZYKA XVIII WIEKU W TEORII I PRAKTYCE* (2014) – UNPUBLISHED.

- deducing the tempo or articulation solely from the bare musical notation;
- applying the affect theory when reading the character of instrumental music.

These are key issues of baroque music, which had strong influence on music of the periods that followed. Notably, the art of oration (on which the affect theory is vastly based) was part of the *curriculum* in public schools still in the 19th century. Such composers as R. Wagner (1813 –1883), R. Schumann (1810 – 1856) or J. Brahms (1833 – 1897), whose works are filled with a plethora of extramusical content, learned this art. They used clarinet in their pieces for orchestra and chamber ensemble. They also wrote pieces for clarinet solo. *De facto* this phenomenon was not specific for baroque, but also present in the consecutive periods.

Outstanding clarinetists and clarinet pedagogues were perfectly aware that absence of baroque music in the clarinet repertoire constitutes a significant problem and left behind a number of excellent arrangements. Because the main goal of the author is to bridge the gap between a present day clarinetist and the baroque canon of performing music, these arrangements will be analyzed in the first part of this paper. It will also be necessary to elucidate the few, originally baroque compositions for clarinet from the perspective of the literature on the 18th century performing practice. With reference to the considerations presented above, the following research questions should be formulated:

- **What are the sources of information for present-day clarinetists to base their interpretations of the performed works on?**
- **What source materials and what knowledge bases should present-day clarinetists use to master the intricacies of the pre-classical style?**
- **How important is the issue of authenticity for present-day clarinetists?**

Referring to the last question, it should be stressed that not only those who study early music and play early instruments should have the knowledge on the historically informed performance and performing practice. Apparently, this knowledge may benefit all musicians who would like to understand the style of the period better. Teaching the baroque performance practice may be a practical supplementation of, as well as the core of the theoretical knowledge already mastered. This is the issue of authenticity when performing early music on contemporary instruments. If we assume that in baroque times

music was performed that had been composed earlier and that the performers used the available instruments, constructed in baroque, it transpires that the problem of authenticity may have existed throughout the history of music. Moreover, performing a work from an earlier period on a contemporary instrument is presumably more accurate than the other way round. Thus the efforts to explore the baroque style using the available contemporary instruments should not be entirely discarded or considered useless, because they enrich the knowledge of that idiom and, at the same time, the repertoire of the later periods. Indeed there is question of compromise between historically informed performance and the effect that can be achieved with a contemporary instrument. One example could be the known tendency to perform W. A. Mozart's concerto in A major (KV 622) on a present-day model of clarinet *in A* with extended range, ranging to the low c. This is not a "period instrument", it is entirely different in terms of construction and, most importantly, its sound is not even similar to that of its classical predecessor, which was *nota bene bassethorn*. Regardless of the aesthetic evaluation of such projects, it should be stated that this fashion has its role in forcing the instrumentalists to apply the means of performing the passages in this concerto – this in turns brings the interpretation closer to the idea of the composer. One could also venture a statement that to preserve authenticity and to perform works of music only on instruments available at the time of composing those works, 21st century clarinetists should limit themselves to music written after 1950, when Richard Caree presented the model of clarinet, on which the majority of present day instruments is based. With this assumption, present day clarinetists would be left with a rather poor choice of repertoire. Therefore, contemporary clarinetists, who would like to explore baroque music, but have not been trained in performing early music on the copies of the original instruments, should place emphasis on the baroque idiom and on the available theories on performing techniques in use between 1600 and 1750. Learning about the performing practice of the early music, even without a period instrument, will definitely allow for a better understanding of baroque music and, consequently, music of the later periods.