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# Stories and Personalities: Program Notes for Graduate Recital

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STORIES AND PERSONALITIES: PROGRAM NOTES FOR GRADUATE RECITAL

by

Erinn Komschlies

B.M., St. Olaf College, 2015

A Research Paper

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
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Erinn Komschlies

A Research Paper Submitted in Partial

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for the Degree of

Master of Music

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Approved by:

Eric Mandat, Chair

Graduate School  
Southern Illinois University Carbondale  
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## AN ABSTRACT OF THE RESEARCH PAPER OF

ERINN KOMSCHLIES, for the Master of Music degree in MUSIC, presented on April 12, 2019, at Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

TITLE: STORIES AND PERSONALITIES: PROGRAM NOTES FOR GRADUATE RECITAL

MAJOR PROFESSOR: Dr. Eric Mandat

The purpose of this research paper is to provide composer biographical information and musical analysis for each work programmed on a graduate clarinet recital. The following pieces will be examined in the form of extended program notes: *Rowzer!* by Eric Mandat, *Tema Con Variazioni Pour Clarinette En La Et Piano* by Jean Francaix, *Moon and Moss* by Chelsea Komschlies, *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra* by Carl Nielsen, and *Der Heyser Bulgar*, *Doina*, and *Odessa Bulgar*, three traditional Klezmer pieces.

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## CHAPTER 1

### ***RROWZER! BY ERIC MANDAT***

Composer, clarinetist, and professor Eric Mandat was born in 1957 in Colorado. Mandat developed an interest in clarinet from the age of three, after he and his brother listened to a recording called “Instruments of the Orchestra”. He began private lessons with the principal clarinet of the Denver Symphony, Richard Joiner, at age eight.<sup>1</sup> Joiner’s joyful and passionate approach to teaching would greatly inspire Mandat to pass along his love of the clarinet to his own future students.

Mandat completed his Bachelor’s degree at the University of North Texas, studying clarinet with Lee Gibson. His interest in new music blossomed when he volunteered to perform several students’ new compositions. He discovered his love of multiphonics and other extended techniques when he learned contemporary pieces such as Bill Smith’s *Variants*. He later found he also enjoyed experimenting on his own, which was the early start to his career as a composer.<sup>2</sup>

Mandat earned his Master’s degree from Yale, where he studied with Keith Wilson. During his Master’s, he completed his first full-fledged composition for clarinet, *Tricolor Capers*. After graduating, he accepted the position of assistant professor at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, where he continues to teach today as a full professor and distinguished scholar. During the summers and one year of residency, he completed his Doctoral degree at Eastman School of Music under the tutelage of Stanley Hasty and Charles Neidich.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Rebecca Tout d’Alessio, “Eric Mandat (B. 1957): A Multiphonic Meditation on a Composer, Clarinetist and Teacher,” Doctoral Thesis, Arizona State University, 2012, pp. 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>3</sup> Amanda R. Morrison, “Eric Mandat: His Musical Life, a Performer’s Perspective of “Preludes, Book 1” and “Rrowzer!”, and a Descriptive Catalog of His Published Works (1980-2010),” Doctoral Thesis, Florida

Mandat's compositional voice is strikingly unique. He draws influences from both jazz and non-Western folk music. He tends to adopt standard forms for his pieces, such as those used in classical and romantic music. This creates a sense of familiarity in the listeners' ears and contrasts with newer techniques such as quarter tones and multiphonics.<sup>4</sup> Many of Mandat's compositions began as ideas sprouting from improvisation. He describes, "'Sometimes, I have a specific idea in mind based on a concept or a title. I try to follow that thread. Sometimes, it's just a sonic pattern or even finger pattern that feels or sounds kind of fun as a result of just improvising. I'll try to write that down and build around it. Those are the two main generators of compositional material.'"<sup>5</sup>

Mandat composed *Rrowzer!* in 2005 as an attention-grabbing recital opener, premiering the work at the Oklahoma Clarinet Symposium on June 16, 2005.<sup>6</sup> The form and intervallic content were inspired by two different pieces: *Prelude in E Major*, Op. 28, #9 by Chopin and Debussy's *Premiere Rhapsody* for clarinet.<sup>7</sup>

The Chopin prelude consists of three phrases with two interruptions. Mandat structured *Rrowzer* after this one-part form. *Rrowzer!* has three sections that expand the same thematic material, followed by a coda. He includes interruptions after the first two sections, but the third statement is interrupted twice.<sup>8</sup> There are two multiphonic chorale interludes that precede the

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State University, 2011, pp. 4, 55.

<sup>4</sup> Jonathan Micheal Goodman, "Echoes in Clarinet Repertoire: Program Notes for Graduate Recital," Masters Dissertation, Southern Illinois University Carbondale, 2011, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Gregory Oakes, "Eric Mandat's Style and Compositional Process for Solo Clarinet Music," Doctoral Thesis, University of Colorado, 2004, p. 15.

<sup>6</sup> Morrison, p. 38.

<sup>7</sup> Eric Mandat, interview with the author.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.



first two interruptions. The structure of *Rrowzer!* can be laid out as follows: Measures 1 through 26 is section A. The first chorale interlude is from measures 22 through 26, followed by the first interruption. A' is from 27 to 49, and the second chorale comes at 42 through 49. A'' lasts from 50 through 70. The two interruptions occur after measures 62 and 70. Measure 71 to the end of the piece can be thought of as a long coda.<sup>9</sup> While the work incorporates a variety of extended techniques and difficult technical passages, the simple structure and return of thematic material makes the piece accessible to the audience.

What makes *Rrowzer!* especially unique is its aim to enable performers to make the piece their own. Each of the three large sections is made up of cells that can be repeated as many times as the performer chooses. In addition, some measures include optional substitutions for certain notes or rhythmic patterns. For example, in measure 10, the performer may choose to substitute the third written note grouping, three sixteenths, with the rhythm of eighth note followed by two sixteenths. The performer may alternate between the two options or only choose one. Mandat writes in the performance considerations for the score, “Experiment with a wide variety of repetition lengths – it’s your opportunity to build unique structures.”<sup>10</sup>

Many of Mandat’s compositions go along with a visual image. For example, his “...Illinois Central” was inspired by the Illinois Central train that runs beside Southern Illinois University.<sup>11</sup> *Rrowzer!* is a play on words; it is meant to get a crowd riled up for a performance, but it also refers to the noises made by an old dog.<sup>12</sup> He notes in the score for *Rrowzer!* that his

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<sup>9</sup> Eric P. Mandat, *Rrowzer!* (Carbondale, Illinois: Cirrus Music, 2005).

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Morrison, p. 15.

<sup>12</sup> Mandat, interview with the author.

“concept of the piece is for the performer to take noticeable, interruptive breaths throughout, like an old grouchy dog snarling at passers-by.”<sup>13</sup> Mandat composed the piece while in residence with his experimental sextet, the Tone Road Ramblers, at the Ragdale Foundation Artist Colony. He “wanted to capture the energy that he experienced improvising with the Ramblers in a piece that could grow wild with sound to the point of a growl.”<sup>14</sup> The tempo marking is very specific, eighth note equals 100, and must not be played faster. The tempo marking includes the word “heavily,”<sup>15</sup> which aids the visual image of a large grumpy dog. The opening measure brings to mind the dog’s heavy footing or noisy rhythmic breathing.

Mandat says the idea for the grouchy old dog came as “more of an afterthought than a starting thought.”<sup>16</sup> Even so, many of the extended techniques in *Rowzer!* contribute to the dog visual. Several instances of multiphonics can be interpreted as bark-like or snarling sounds. For example, in measure five, the given fingering for the quarter tone below B produces an unusual rasping sound, and a similar happening occurs in measure 29.

Figure 1: Mandat, *Rowzer!*, m. 5<sup>17</sup>



The use of wide vibrato, which Mandat uses similarly to an articulation marking, mimics howling, especially at climactic moments such as measure 40. Additionally, the multiphonics at

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<sup>13</sup> Mandat, *Rowzer!*.

<sup>14</sup> Tout d’Alessio, p. 64.

<sup>15</sup> Mandat, *Rowzer!*.

<sup>16</sup> Mandat, interview with the author.

<sup>17</sup> Mandat, *Rowzer!*.

the ends of measures 40 and 41 sound like an interruptive, throaty bark.<sup>18</sup> Moving between the low E to middle B in measure 55 can sometimes produce a bark-like squeak, which Mandat says is “okay, because this is a piece about a dog.”<sup>19</sup>

Mandat says that *Rrowzer!* is about “going through the motions with the different ways of moving from the basic theme material to the climax point”<sup>20</sup> This “basic theme material” starts in measure one with the notes D, E, and B, which contain the intervals of a major second and minor third.

Figure 2: Mandat, *Rrowzer!*, m. 1<sup>21</sup>



These intervals come from the opening measures of Debussy’s *Premiere Rhapsody* and continue to be important throughout the whole piece. For example, the repeated cell in measure 8 contains two major seconds: B flat to A flat and D to E. The following measure is about the minor thirds found between A and C, F sharp and A, and E flat to F sharp. At measure 19, the major third multiphonic comes as a bit of a surprise. The next two measures alternate between major and minor third multiphonics, followed by the chorale section that uses only major thirds. The second chorale section uses both major and minor thirds. Two more important examples of the major second/minor third motive occur at measures 50 and 66. In measure 50, Mandat inserts

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<sup>18</sup> Goodman, p. 6.

<sup>19</sup> Mandat, interview with the author.

<sup>20</sup> Morrison, p. 39.

<sup>21</sup> Mandat, *Rrowzer!*.

four sixteenth notes, which contain two minor thirds, after the major second motive from measure 1. In measure 66, the nine-note figure contains two minor thirds and two major seconds.

The first measure's heavy, pulsing rhythm combined with its alternating *forte* and *piano* dynamics make this motive very recognizable when it returns in each of the three main sections. Mandat decorates and expands this motive with quarter tones and additive rhythms. For example, the first statement of the main motive in measure 1 only contains nine notes, whereas the second statement in measure 5 contains eleven. Likewise, the connecting material in measures 6 and 7 add three sixteenth notes as compared to its previous statement in measures 2 and 3. Mandat uses this additive technique in other locations of the work as well, such as in measures 40 and 41, as well as 84-88.

*Rowzer!* finishes with a coda that features wide intervals that “gradually coalesce to the center point,”<sup>22</sup> which occurs with the A in measure 93. Measures 99-100 contain the piece's primary notes, D, E, and B, now in a frenzied rush to the finish.

Figure 3: Mandat, *Rowzer!*, mm. 100-101<sup>23</sup>



<sup>22</sup> Mandat, interview with the author.

<sup>23</sup> Mandat, *Rowzer!*.

## CHAPTER 2

### *TEMA CON VARIAZIONI* BY JEAN FRANCAIX

French composer and pianist Jean Francaix's musical talents began in childhood. Born in 1912 to Jeanne, a singer, and Alfred Francaix, a music director, Francaix's early life boasted a strong music education.<sup>24</sup> He could read music before he learned to read words. Jeanne Francaix sang Bach, Handel, Schumann, and Ravel, which would influence her son's musical tastes. Francaix was also inspired by his grandfather, an amateur but passionate cellist who could sing any part of Beethoven's trios and quartets from memory. Francaix spent his childhood attending concerts, having conversations with performers, practicing piano, and even creating compositions of his own.<sup>25</sup> His musical talents did not go unnoticed. Even the well-known composer Maurice Ravel commented on the child's ability, praising his curiosity as the "most fruitful" gift an artist can possess.<sup>26</sup> Francaix later studied with Nadia Boulanger, who premiered many of his first compositions. At twelve years old, he was a published composer.<sup>27</sup>

By 1934, Boulanger felt she could no longer teach Francaix, but she continued to support him through his adulthood, paving the way for a successful career. His over two hundred compositions show his abilities in multiple genres, from operas to works for solo instruments.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Muriel Bellier, "Jean Francaix: the Music and the Musicians," *Foundation Singer-Polignac*, Trans. Beryl Sedivka, ed. Abby Fraser, Tasmania, 2011, pp. 2-3.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>26</sup> Qtd. In Justin Harbaugh, "The Clarinet B.C.: Program Notes for a Masters Clarinet Recital of Works of Brahms' Clarinet Trio, Francaix's *Tema Con Variazioni*, Muczynski's *Time Pieces*, and Carter's *Gra* and *Hiyoku*," Masters Dissertation, Kansas State University, 2009, p. 48.

<sup>27</sup> Bellier, pp. 5-7.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

His music has been described as light, witty, and humorous - both familiar and refreshing. Though many other composers from the time were using new techniques such as atonality, Francaix's style was neoclassical with an eclectic French flair.<sup>29</sup>

Francaix composed music for nearly all the orchestral instruments. Works featuring the clarinet include a concerto, as well as *Tema con Variazioni* for clarinet and piano.<sup>30</sup>

Francaix composed *Tema con Variazioni* in 1974. He dedicated the piece to his grandson Olivier, writing *pour mon petit-fils Olivier* in the score.<sup>31</sup> This work is written in a typical theme and variations format. The theme is followed by six variations for clarinet and piano, and there is also a clarinet solo cadenza between variations five and six. The piece is written in a neoclassical style with influences from jazz and modernism, making it accessible to the audience yet challenging to the clarinetist.<sup>32</sup> Francaix's compositional voice shines through in the light, jovial feel, the witty rhythms, the virtuosity of the clarinet lines, and the sudden changes of dynamics.

The D-major theme introduces the primary motive that will shape the rest of the variations. The word *O-livier* appears in brackets above the first utterance of the motive in the two-measure piano introduction, as well as above the first statement by the clarinet in measure 3. This "Olivier" motive starts with three notes – an upward leap followed by a downward one. In the slow, 4/4 measure 1, the piano leaps up an octave and descends by a perfect fourth. The three notes correspond to the three syllables of the name Olivier. The time signature quickly changes

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<sup>29</sup> Hyunjo Christiana Byun, "Selected French and American Clarinet Repertoire Composed after 1920," Doctoral Dissertation, University of Maryland, 2008, p. 16.

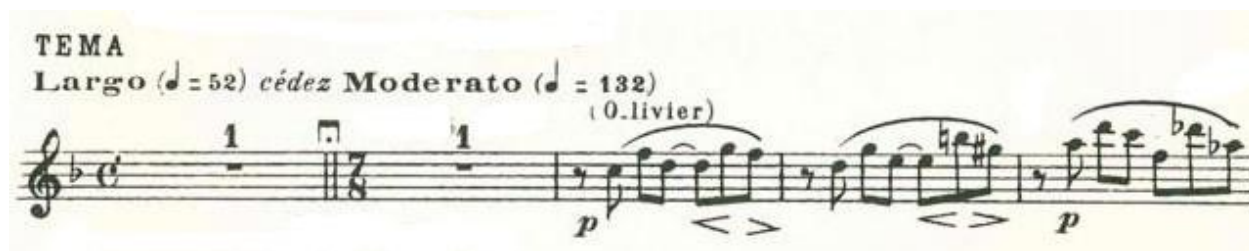
<sup>30</sup> Harbaugh, p. 49.

<sup>31</sup> Jean Francaix, *Tema Con Variazioni Pour Clarinette En La Et Piano* (Paris: M. Eschig, 2001).

<sup>32</sup> Angela Rojnoveanu, "Specific Features of the Variational Form in the Theme with Variations for Clarinet and Piano by Jean Francaix." *Studiul Artelor Și Culturologie: Istorie, Teorie, Practică 2* (2016): 31.

to a faster 7/8 in bar 2, leading to the clarinet's entrance in measure 3. Here, the clarinet's statement of the motive leaps up a perfect fourth and down a minor third. This creates a sing-song effect, how a grandfather might call to his grandson. A short tag after the three syllables contains another upward perfect fourth followed by a descending major second, creating a five-note motive upon which the variations are based.

Figure 4: Francaix, *Tema Con Variazioni Pour Clarinette En La Et Piano*, mm. 1-5<sup>33</sup>



The theme follows the form A-A'-Coda.<sup>34</sup> The A section is from measure 3 to measure 10; the A' is from measure 11 to 16, and the coda occurs in measures 17 through 21. The piano plays constant eighth note block chords with an interplay between the right and left hands until measure nineteen, where the piano and clarinet playfully echo each other, bringing to mind a childish game.

The first variation is in B-flat major and  $\frac{3}{4}$  time. The tempo marking is *larghetto*, *misterioso*, giving the variation the aura of a slow waltz.<sup>35</sup> The first period maintains the same structure as the first period of the theme: eight measures, broken into two groups of four, a very straightforward neoclassical technique. The three-note Olivier motive keeps the same intervals as

<sup>33</sup> Francaix.

<sup>34</sup> Harbaugh, p. 52.

<sup>35</sup> Rojnoveanu, p. 32.

the clarinet's opening statement, but the use of lower register, *pianissimo* dynamic, and slower tempo give it a sleepy, dreamlike quality. The fourth and fifth notes of the motive rise instead of fall, as if Olivier is struggling to stay awake. The variation ends with one final statement of the motive, followed by a gradual descent in both the piano and clarinet parts, finishing with a cadence that does not feel completely settled, due to chromatics in the piano and the clarinet's landing on the third in the final chord.

The *presto* second variation takes off abruptly, as if Olivier has awoken with a start. The overall key is G-major, but the variation is a display of fast chromatic virtuosity for the clarinet. After a four-measure introduction, the variation follows an A-B-A' form.<sup>36</sup> Staccato eighth notes on each beat in the piano propel the music forward while the clarinet plays mostly quick triplet rhythms. The first three notes in the clarinet come from the theme. Instead of following the five-note pattern, however, the clarinet continues upwards in a frenzied ascent. The motive reappears in measure 7, now in short breathless bursts.

The third variation is brief, just twelve measures with a two-bar introduction. It contains three four-measure phrases in the clarinet. Within the four-measure phrases, the melodic and rhythmic structure is unique. For example, the phrase tends to end on a weak beat, such as in measure 6. Francaix combined short, choppy melodic ideas, such as in measures 7 through 10, to create phrases that are neoclassical with a modern twist. He also employs abrupt changes of dynamics to give the variation a very playful feel.

Variation four is the only variation in the minor mode. The "Olivier" motive from the theme is now transformed into a sad, lyrical song. The rhythmic difference between the piano's triplets against the clarinet's straight eighth notes creates a dialogue of two voices.

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<sup>36</sup> Harbaugh, p. 54.



The fifth variation is the longest of the six. The piano plays an elegant waltz rhythm while the clarinet plays a disjunct, fragmented melody built around the perfect fourth from the main theme. Now, the fourth is descending rather than ascending and is displayed in a sequence.<sup>37</sup> Francaix's light style is prominent in this variation; even though the clarinet has numerous leaps and passages in the altissimo register, it is imperative to play this variation with a light staccato and to take note of the dynamic changes.

A fourteen-measure cadenza follows the fifth variation. The Olivier motive is juxtaposed against rapid bursts of chromaticism, or in the case of measure six, a frantic descent of tritones that mock the theme. The opening interval of the Olivier motive becomes ever wider in measures 1, 3, 5, and 7, until it reaches the full octave that opened the entire piece. This leads into the final variation, a joyful celebration in D-major. Here the main motive returns triumphantly, now in the rhythmic pattern of two sixteenths followed by one eighth note. This variation follows an ABA' form. The B section starts at measure fourteen, where the piano takes over the melody, featuring the Olivier motive, while the clarinet plays a decorative accompaniment including slap tonguing and flutter tonguing. The A section returns at measure twenty-four, leading to a dazzling finale with quick dynamic changes and virtuosic chromatic lines.

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

### CHAPTER 3

#### *MOON AND MOSS BY CHELSEA KOMSCHLIES*

Composer Chelsea Komschlies, sister of the author, was born in 1991 in Wisconsin. Her gift for music became apparent early on; as a child, Komschlies was able to remember musical themes from obscure movies and play them by ear on the piano. She took a few years of piano lessons but at age 12 decided to pursue the flute instead. As a high school student, Komschlies took special interest in Celtic folk music and started an Irish band for which she arranged the music. This helped her realize she enjoyed putting musical ideas down on paper. She began composing music of her own around this time, including a piece for band that was premiered by her high school, as well as a choir piece performed by the Green Bay Symphony Chorus.

Komschlies earned her Bachelor's degree in flute performance from Wartburg College in 2013. While her degree was in flute, her true passion was writing music, and she spent much of her time focusing on composition. She went on to receive her Master's degree in music composition from the University of Colorado Boulder, where she studied with Daniel Kellogg and Carter Pann. Honing her skills at prestigious summer programs such as the Fontainebleau School, she was accepted into the Curtis Institute of Music in 2016. She graduated with a post-graduate Artist Diploma in 2018 and received the Alfredo Casella composition award.<sup>38</sup> Komschlies describes nonmusical association as the most important influence for her compositional process. As a synesthete, her brain constantly makes connections between her

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<sup>38</sup> Chelsea Komschlies, "About," *Komschlies.com*, <https://www.komschlies.com/about> (accessed February 10, 2019).

senses.<sup>39</sup> For example, every letter is associated with a color for Komschlies. She writes,

Much of the time, my senses are so overloaded or used to a routine that they become numb and don't make strong associative connections. But sometimes, the connection between two things "works" so well that it produces a third "ghost" item or thing – a fleeting, elusive, but extremely powerful idea that would be impossible to think of on its own. These kinds of associations are a rare but wonderful experience in which I seem to see the tiniest glimpse of the mysteries of existence that lie underneath the surface of ordinary life.<sup>40</sup>

Komschlies' first step in composition is thinking of some sort of visual, be it concrete or abstract. This visual may remind her of something else that is not obviously related, but through association "enhances" the first image. For example, ideas for her piece called *Teratoma*, *Odradek*, combined abstract images associated with the human body with an eerily purposeless creature from a Kafka short story – an unusual spool of old bits of thread that lurked about a house. "Teratoma" and "Odradek" separately have their own distinct meanings associated with them, but together, they create a new "ghost" of a thought.<sup>41</sup>

*Moon and Moss* is a piece for tenor, clarinet, and piano commissioned by the author in 2019. Komschlies' original idea for the piece's text was a story of her own creation about a prince who is building a giant palace near a forest. He becomes entranced with a woman he meets in the forest. What he does not realize is that as he builds his castle, both the woman and the forest slowly die. This story inspired Komschlies to write another shorter text, which is as follows.

At the juncture of moon and moss,  
The elms are slick with dew;

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<sup>39</sup> -----, "Guided Tour," *Komschlies.com*, <https://www.komschlies.com/guided-tour> (accessed February 10, 2019).

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

The morels thick with spores.  
Ferns bow to twilight,  
Heavy with snails.

The earth beneath me is violet-black.  
Blue earthworms writhe in mud;  
The writhing tadpoles wait.  
The lungs of the elms  
Howl open and closed.

A rabbit lies dead in Warbler Swamp.  
A desiccated king  
Mycelium hoary crowns.  
Slowly an earthworm  
Glides through its eye.

But now the forest is flat and gone,  
The snails are only shells.  
The shells are only dust.  
I place my hands on my ribs,  
Feel my lungs howl  
Open and closed,  
Open and closed.<sup>42</sup>

The first two verses portray a dreamlike forest at twilight, and the imagery shows the interconnectedness of plant and animal. In verse three, death and decay, which both tend to have negative connotations, are used as positive signs that the forest is actually thriving; decay is a necessary part of the broader life cycle. Komschlies says she wanted to use “macabre decay images as symbols of the beauty of the living forest.”<sup>43</sup> This verse is the climax of the piece. In verse four, the narrator seems to be observing a complete lack of nature, such as a bleak concrete slab, where there is no life, death, or decay. The narrator contrasts his life with the utter nothingness before him and regrets the role he has played in the destruction of the forest.

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<sup>42</sup> -----, *Moon and Moss* (Calgary: Nauticus Publishing, 2019).

<sup>43</sup> -----, Email message to author, 22 February 2019.

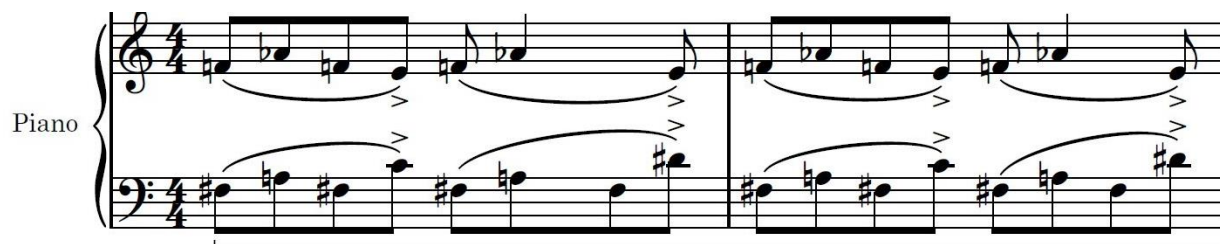
When asked about the inspiration for this concept, Komschlies first pointed to visual artist Lauren Marx. Marx creates images of animals that are decayed or desiccated but still somehow appear stately and serene. These dead animals contribute to the lives of other creatures that thrive in and around them. Marx says in her artist statement, “Animal symbolism, biology, mythology, and cosmology have always been intriguing to me. My attraction to these topics have [sic] compelled me to find a way to create images that combine elements from these dissimilar fields to shape a universe that reflects my unique understanding of the interconnectivity of life.”<sup>44</sup> This statement relates to both Komschlies’ nonmusical association ideas and her concept for the meaning of the text.

The piece follows a modified strophic form. The opening motive in the piano, which recurs several times throughout, consists of minor seconds clashing against each other while maintaining a simplistic rhythm. Komschlies states that she was inspired by gamelan in a second-hand sort of way, as how Debussy used gamelan motifs through a Western lens. Komschlies uses dissonance to create a new timbral sound that recalls the intonation system of gamelan music. Because of her synesthesia, she connects the opening motive in the piano to the colors blue, gray, purple, and black, which come out in the text’s imagery.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Lauren Marx, “About,” LaurenMarx.com, <http://laurenmarx.com/about/> (accessed February 10, 2019).

<sup>45</sup> Komschlies, Email message to author.

Figure 5: Komschlies, *Moon and Moss*, mm. 1-2<sup>46</sup>

The tempo marking at the start of the piece says “hypnotic.”<sup>47</sup> The tenor melody is very simple, somewhat like a children’s song. The piano’s constant moving rhythms, including frequent steady eighth notes, create a trance-like feel. The clarinet part, however, bursts out of this hypnotic texture. The instrument is often used as means of special effects such as glissandos, double trills, multiphonics, and quarter tones. For example, in measures 14-15, the clarinet plays quintuplet and sextuplet runs as the piano continues its steady eighth notes. In measure 16, the clarinet lands on a loud multiphonic, the first of many multiphonics to follow. Komschlies says, “I was trying to have lines that were sort of startling within a framework that was over-the-top simple.”<sup>48</sup>

In the first three verses, Komschlies pictured a writhing fantasy forest, full of slimy, wet life and decay. Several musical and textual effects contribute to this idea. For example, the text frequently uses ‘l’ and ‘s’ sounds to enhance the wet, slimy imagery. In addition, Komschlies makes heavy use of the piano pedal to create a “blurry dreamscape.”<sup>49</sup> At measures 20-25, the

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<sup>46</sup> -----, *Moon and Moss*.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> -----, Email message to author.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

piano plays sequenced descending sextuplets with pedal to portray the text, “ferns bow to twilight, heavy with snails.” Also, the cluster chords at measures 39-41, as well as the clarinet’s downward glissando at measure 38, help create the visual of a blurry, slippery dreamland.

In the interlude before verse three, Komschlies inserts what she calls “Appalachian folk hoedown music.”<sup>50</sup> In measures 75-87, the right hand of the piano plays a pentatonic folk melody in C major, but the left hand plays chromatic dissonance in D flat. Meanwhile, the clarinet plays mostly short off-beats in quarter tones. The climax of the piece occurs in verse three, measure 91. Here, both hands of the piano, as well as the tenor, are clearly in E flat major, but now the clarinet plays the folk melody in A major, a tritone away.

Figure 6: Komschlies, *Moon and Moss*, mm. 91-92<sup>51</sup>

The concept of the folk music intertwined with the dissonant dreamlike music of the forest was inspired by “Area X” in Jeff Vandermeer’s Southern Reach Trilogy.<sup>52</sup> In the books,

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> -----, *Moon and Moss*.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

anything that enters Area X is either devoured by the strange biology into rich, rapidly decomposed matter or changed into something new.<sup>53</sup> Komschlies writes, “I was imagining the idea of something like the Appalachian hoedown music being devoured by the spores and microorganisms in the forest itself and rebuilt into this stranger version of itself that still maintains the outlines of what it used to be.”<sup>54</sup>

In verse four, the forest is gone, as is the blurry, wet music. The overall texture is more sparse, and there is less use of the piano pedal. Glissandos in the piano, tenor, and clarinet at measures 132-143 portray the text “feel my lungs howl open and closed.” After the final iteration of the text, the piano and clarinet fade away. Komschlies says she hopes that the audience feels as though they’ve “lost something.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Jeff VanderMeer, *Annihilation* (Toronto: Harper Collins Publishers Ltd, 2014).

<sup>54</sup> Komschlies, Email message to the author.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.



## CHAPTER 4

### *CONCERTO FOR CLARINET AND ORCHESTRA BY CARL NIELSEN*

Carl Nielsen, composer of the famous *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra*, had a humble beginning on Denmark's small island of Fyn. Born in 1865 to a house-painter and a town musician, Nielsen experienced a rustic country upbringing.<sup>56</sup> His first impressions of music were his father's violin playing and his mother's casual singing. The young Nielsen also discovered that his family's kitchen table was actually a broken-down harpsichord and became fascinated with its twanging keys. Intrigued by the variety of sounds around him, Nielsen started learning violin, trumpet and trombone.<sup>57</sup> These seeds of music would later sprout into Nielsen's earthy and sometimes archaic compositional style, as seen in his clarinet concerto.

Nielsen graduated from the Royal Conservatory in 1886 as a violin student. He then began a career of violin performance, conducting, and composing.<sup>58</sup> In 1921 Nielsen happened upon the Copenhagen Wind Quintet by accident; he heard its members rehearsing in the background of a telephone call to a friend. Immediately intrigued, Nielsen set out to write his *Wind Quintet* for the esteemed group. In this composition he exemplified not only the unique voices of each instrument, but also the personalities of the performers themselves. Nielsen then promised to write a concerto for each member of the quintet. He only finished the flute and clarinet concertos before his death in 1931.<sup>59</sup> As one of the last pieces Nielsen ever wrote, the

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<sup>56</sup> Eric Nelson, "The Danish Performance Tradition in Carl Nielsen's *Koncert for Klarinet og Orkester*, Opus 57 (1928)," *The Clarinet* 14 (1987): 30.

<sup>57</sup> Jack Lawson, *Carl Nielsen* (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 1997), 19-26.

<sup>58</sup> Nelson, "The Danish Performance Tradition," p. 31.

<sup>59</sup> Lawson, pp. 174-175.

*Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra* was a culmination of his compositional abilities and musical style.<sup>60</sup>

The clarinetist of the Copenhagen Wind Quintet was Aage Oxenvad. Like Nielsen, Oxenvad grew up in a small country village in Denmark; his father was both a farmer and a musician. While both Nielsen and Oxenvad left the countryside to pursue greater music-making, both had rugged nature engrained into their personalities. Tage Scharff, a former clarinet student of Oxenvad, said of the pair, “Even in urbane or royal company, Nielsen and Oxenvad both had mud on their boots.”<sup>61</sup> Oxenvad was manic-depressive, alternating between clinical depression and elation. He was described as having “a temper with a bit of blue-eyed Danish amenity.” Friends called him tough, temperamental, and “rough around the edges.”<sup>62</sup> Nielsen knew he wanted to capture the personalities of both the clarinet and Oxenvad in his *Concerto*. He described the clarinet as “wild and troll-like,” and “at once warm-hearted, and completely hysterical, gentle as balm and screaming as a streetcar on poorly lubricated rails.”<sup>63</sup> He connected these bipolar sounds of the instrument with Oxenvad's broad spectrum of personality traits. The *Concerto* thus features competing key areas, prominent melodies, and contrasting rhythms. Svend Christian Felumb, oboist of the Quintet, said of the *Concerto*, “No verbal characterization could be more vivid than Carl Nielsen's musical one.”<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Eric Nelson, “Carl Nielsen's *Koncert for Klarinet og Orkester*, Opus 57 (1928): Historical Background and Analysis,” Masters dissertation, North Texas State University, 1977.

<sup>61</sup> Qtd. in Gregory Barrett, “Aage Oxenvad: Works Inspired by Denmark's Historic Clarinetist,” *The Clarinet* 37 (2010): 52.

<sup>62</sup> Nelson, “The Danish Performance Tradition,” p. 31.

<sup>63</sup> Lawson, p. 205.

<sup>64</sup> Qtd. in Barrett, p. 53.

The *Concerto for Clarinet* was written as one continuous, twenty-five minute work. However, scholars have divided it into four “movements,” which are as follows.

- I. Allegretto un poco (mm. 1-218)
- II. Poco adagio (mm. 219-313)
- III. Allegro non troppo (mm. 314-546)
- IV. Allegro vivace (mm. 547-728)<sup>65</sup>

In regards to orchestration, the Concerto is primitive. In contrast to the gargantuan orchestras of the late Romantic composers,<sup>66</sup> such as Mahler's *Symphony No. 8*, often called the “Symphony of a Thousand,” Nielsen included only the instruments he thought necessary. This harkens back to both Nielsen's and Oxenvad's childhoods of bare essentials. The Concerto requires just strings, two bassoons, two horns, and a snare drum. The snare drum adds a unique contribution to the work. Often playing opposing rhythms with the clarinet, the drum may remind listeners of aggressive cognitive dissonance. For example, in measures 128-130, the clarinet plays swooping gestures of sixteenth and thirty-second notes while the snare drum insistently hammers out eighth note triplets.<sup>67</sup> Perhaps the addition of the snare drum gives listeners a look into Oxenvad's personal psyche.

Melody is of utmost importance in this work; melodic motives, rather than harmony, are what create unity.<sup>68</sup> The clarinet's melodies offer huge contrasts that may have related to Oxenvad's personality traits. Some are folk-like; others are livid. Certain passages may remind the listener of lyrical jazz; others, of “intense hysteria.”<sup>69</sup> Inside these melodies, Nielsen paid

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<sup>65</sup> Carl Nielsen, *Koncert for Klarinet og Orkester* (Copenhagen: Edition Wilhelm Hansen, 2003).

<sup>66</sup> Nelson, “Carl Nielsen's *Koncert for Klarinet og Orkester*,” p.14.

<sup>67</sup> Nielsen.

<sup>68</sup> Nelson, “The Danish Performance Tradition,” p. 32.

<sup>69</sup> Patrick Hanudel, “Violin, Flute, Clarinet Concertos,” *American Record Guide* 78, no. 6 (2015): 129, <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com.proxy.lib.siu.edu/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=1&sid=7704235c-d13d-4969-8e61->

great thought to specific melodic intervals. He once stated, "...A melodic third is a gift of God, a fourth is an experience, and a fifth is the greatest joy."<sup>70</sup> It is this "greatest joy" that opens the piece and recurs many times in variation.

Figure 7: Nielsen, *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra*, mm. 17-18<sup>71</sup>



However, this interval does not always sound joyful to the listener's ear. For example, in measures 173-181, the clarinet plays the familiar motive seven times in succession, now leaping up into the altissimo register. The orchestra pounds fortissimo and accented descending scales that are constantly harmonically clashing.<sup>72</sup> The result is unnerving; what once was a frolicking, jaunty perfect fifth now resembles a frantic cry for help.

Nielsen also employed sudden register changes that related to Oxenvad's spontaneous shifts of mood. These are most evident in the second cadenza, at measure 528.<sup>73</sup> Here, the chalumeau register abruptly interjects into the upper clarion register's more fluent phrasing. These interruptions become faster and more frequent as the passage continues, until finally the two conversations converge at the end of the cadenza. The listener hears an argument of some

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<sup>70</sup> Qtd. in Nelson, "Carl Nielsen's *Koncert for Klarinet og Orkester*," p.15.

<sup>71</sup> Nielsen.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

sort; knowledge of Oxenvad's mental illness likens the second cadenza to the dueling sides of Oxenvad's mind.

Nielsen rejected the atonality of his contemporaries; instead, he achieved a new form of tonality that suggested a key without strictly adhering to it. For instance, the opening melody consists of almost all twelve tones but gravitates toward F.<sup>74</sup> Melody was much more important to Nielsen than harmony.<sup>75</sup> The harmony in the *Concerto* is often non-functional, taking its roots in the notes of the melody. Nielsen said of his clarinet concerto, "...I have employed such a free voice leading that I really have no idea how it will sound. Maybe it will not sound well, but I get no enjoyment out of composing music in the same old way."<sup>76</sup> The keys of E major and F major compete for dominance throughout the work. Viewing these keys through the lens of a late-romanticist, one might realize that the key of E has been associated with loud feelings of joy, and F major was thought of as calm and mellow.<sup>77</sup> Notably, these key characteristics fit the definition of bipolar disorder, or manic depression.

Today, Nielsen's *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra* is regarded as one of the most important pieces in the clarinet repertoire. Knowledge of both Nielsen's biographical information and Oxenvad's personality traits lends itself to an informed, successful performance of the work.

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<sup>74</sup> Nelson, "Carl Nielsen's *Koncert for Klarinet og Orkester*," p. 21.

<sup>75</sup> Herbert McCartney, "A Style Analysis of the Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra, Opus 57, by Carl August Nielsen," Masters dissertation, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, 1976.

<sup>76</sup> Nelson, "Carl Nielsen's *Koncert for Klarinet og Orkester*," p. 9.

<sup>77</sup> "Affective Musical Key Characteristics," *Western Michigan University*, <http://www.wmich.edu/mus-theo/courses/keys.html> (accessed September 23, 2017).

## CHAPTER 5

### *DOINA, ODESSA BULGAR, AND DER HEYSER BULGAR: THREE TRADITIONAL KLEZMER TUNES*

Klezmer music has played an important role in the history of the clarinet. The clarinet has been one of the leading instruments in klezmer bands since the mid 1800's.<sup>78</sup> Studying and performing klezmer music is a valuable experience because it opens up different a different style of playing that goes beyond the classical tradition.

The word “klezmer,” stems from two Hebrew words: *kley* and *zemer*. *Kley* means “vessel” and *zemer* means “melody.” The words *kley zemer* were used as early as Biblical times in reference to physical musical instruments. The term *klezmer* started to be used around the 17<sup>th</sup> century in eastern Europe, referencing Jewish instrumentalists who played folk dance music for a living.<sup>79</sup>

The Hebrew traditions of chanting the Torah and singing embellished prayer melodies, dating back to Biblical times,<sup>80</sup> were key origins of the distinctively Jewish sound heard in klezmer music.<sup>81</sup> Special modes were used for specific parts of the Torah reading or for prayers. These modes would later form the basis for instrumental klezmer music.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Seth Rogovoy, *The Essential Klezmer: A Music Lover's Guide to Jewish Roots and Soul Music, from the Old World to the Jazz Age to the Downtown Avant-Garde* (Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2000), p. 31.

<sup>79</sup> Yale Strom, *The Book of Klezmer: the History, the Music, the Folklore* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2002), p. 1.

<sup>80</sup> Jonathan L. Friedmann, *Music in the Hebrew Bible: Understanding References in the Torah, Nevi'im and Ketuvim* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc. Publishers), pp. 33-34.

<sup>81</sup> Rogovoy, p. 11.

<sup>82</sup> Henry Sapoznik and Pete Solokow, *The Compleat Klezmer* (Cedarhurst: Tara Publications, 1987): pp. 21-22.

After the destruction of the Jews' second temple in 70 CE, an official period of mourning began that forbade instrumental music. The Jews wandered to other lands in search of better lives. The group that became known as the Ashkenazi Jews formed around the Rhine river in northern France and western Germany. By the 11<sup>th</sup> century they faced antisemitism and gradually fled eastward, picking up musical influences from the cultures they came across. They settled in an area called the Pale of Settlement, which includes parts of present-day Poland, Romania, Ukraine, Belarus, and Lithuania. Authorities in Eastern Europe were more tolerant, but life was still not easy.<sup>83</sup>

In the 1700s, a new way of thinking called the Hasidic movement was started by a Polish preacher known as the Ba'al Shem Tov. The movement emphasized joyfulness and prayer. Restrictions from the Temple mourning period were eased, and song and dance were encouraged. Songs with religious lyrics, called *nigunim*, were abundant. According to Jewish folklore, the melodies of the *nigunim* were so entrancing that poor men would rather pay a musician to teach them their melodies than spend that money on needed food. Instrumental musicians took these beautiful religious melodies, set them to faster tempos, and turned what were prayerful songs into joyful dances. It was around this time that these instrumentalists became known as klezmerim.<sup>84</sup>

The biggest job for these musicians was the Jewish wedding. They formed ensembles called *kapelye*, which the wedding couple would hire. A wedding without klezmer was considered shameful. Even very poor weddings had musicians - they were simply payed less or offered food instead of money. Musicians were traditionally involved in almost all parts of the

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<sup>83</sup> Rogovoy, pp. 21-26.

<sup>84</sup> Strom, pp. 50-58.

wedding, including customs that took place in the weeks prior to and following the ceremony, starting with the engagement party. The week before the wedding, the bride and groom were not supposed to leave their homes, so the klezmerim played at both homes each night to help pass the time. They also played for the bride's *mikveh*, or ritual bath, and in the getting-ready process the day of the wedding. Solemn music was played for the wedding procession. After the ceremony, the musicians broke into lively music, leading guests to the reception site. Slower music was played during dinner, followed by more lively dances.<sup>85</sup>

From the 1600's to the 1800s, ensembles were primarily made up of more modern string instruments, the main melody instrument being the violin. Winds and brass were later added as a result of Jews' service in military bands. Czar Nicholas I, reigning from 1825 to 1855, hated the Jews. In an effort to keep them from marrying and having children, he initiated 25 years of mandatory service in the army when Jewish boys turned 18. In the army, many Jews opted to join the military band so they could avoid combat. There they were introduced to wind instruments and learned to read and arrange music. After their years of service were over, some Jews brought back their newly learned winds and brass instruments to their Klezmer ensembles.<sup>86</sup> From then on, the clarinet competed with the violin as the main melody instrument.

Klezmer music dwindled in Europe during much of the world wars. Antisemitism moved many Jews to assimilate to European culture and abandon their traditional music. During World War II, klezmer musicians had to beg in the streets with their instruments, and many were taken to concentration camps where they had to both do slave labor and perform in camp orchestras for the Nazis' dinner parties. Some even had to play in orchestras next to the gas chambers as many

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., pp. 85-89.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., pp. 98-100.



of their fellow Jews were forced inside. It is estimated about 90% of the klezmer musicians in Europe died in the Holocaust.<sup>87</sup>

While klezmer music was fading away in Europe, many Jews were finding new opportunities in the United States. Between the years 1880 and 1924, a huge number of Jews fled antisemitism in Eastern Europe. Most of them settled in New York. Life as a Jewish musician was still not easy in America, but there were more opportunities to earn a steady income. The most economic security was found in playing for catering halls, vaudeville shows, or Yiddish theaters. Klezmer ensembles began to take the shape of American bands, featuring more winds, brass, and percussion than strings. The clarinet came to the forefront of the band in America especially; many of the best-known klezmer musicians from the time were clarinetists. The rise of the recording industry in the early 1900's was also a source of income for some musicians, expanding their audience and providing us today with a taste of what traditional klezmer music actually sounded like.<sup>88</sup>

*Der Heyser Bulgar* was a traditional melody recorded and made famous by clarinetist Naftule Brandwein, who moved to America from Poland after WWI and quickly became known for his highly virtuosic clarinet playing.<sup>89</sup> He recorded the tune on his album titled *King of the Klezmer Clarinet*. A Bulgar is a dance that was popular with Jews from Romania and south Ukraine. It was typically a lively circle or line dance played at weddings after the ceremony took place.<sup>90</sup> Brandwein's recording provides clarinetists today with an excellent resource for learning

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., pp. 137-140.

<sup>88</sup> Rogovoy, pp. 51-59.

<sup>89</sup> Sapoznik, pp. 102-103.

<sup>90</sup> ----- and Sokolow, p. 19.

the specific techniques of klezmer music. Brandwein employed many different types of ornamentation that can be applied to any traditional melody.<sup>91</sup> For example, in measure 2 he used the *kekht*. Yiddish for “sob,” the *kekht* is an upper grace note that gets choked off to create a sob-like sound.<sup>92</sup> This relates to the emotionality of Jewish cantorial singing. Other techniques Brandwein used include bent pitches, such as in measure 26. He used another special klezmer technique for the C’s in measure 36, involving an abrupt loosening of the embouchure and throat. This creates the characteristic laughing or crying sound often heard in traditional klezmer playing. All these types of ornamentation stem from the vocal techniques used in Jewish cantorial singing.<sup>93</sup>

*Der Heyser Bulgar* uses a mode called *Ahava Raba*, traditionally used in Jewish prayer services. The scale associated with *Ahava Raba* is below.

Figure 8: *Ahava Raba* scale<sup>94</sup>



The piece begins and ends with concert D major harmonies and has a middle section in G minor. The form is a simple series of four repeated sections with a *D.S al Coda*. As is very typical of klezmer recordings from the time, the piece ends with a chromatic ascending flourish followed by a straightforward I – V – I.<sup>95</sup>

*Doina* and *Odessa Bulgar* are two separate pieces but are often performed together with

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<sup>91</sup> Naftule Brandwein and Sol Shulman, *King of the Klezmer Clarinet* (Cambridge: Rounder, 1997).

<sup>92</sup> Stom, p. 120.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 123.

<sup>94</sup> Sapoznik and Sokolow, p. 21.

<sup>95</sup> *Der Heyser Bulgar* (Cedarhurst: Tara Publications, 1987).

no pause in between. A doina is a rhapsodic, mostly improvised show piece for a solo instrument with sustained chords in the accompaniment. This type of music draws influences from Romanian gypsies. Doinas tended to be performed during traditional wedding dinners, followed by faster dance tunes when the guests were done eating.<sup>96</sup>

This particular doina is a transcription of the recording by clarinetist Dave Tarras, who was born in Ukraine and served in the military band for the Czar's army on clarinet. He moved to New York City in 1921. Compared to his rival Naftule Brandwein, his playing style was smoother, gentler, and more dignified.<sup>97</sup>

The piece is a show of improvisatory gestures featuring several types of klezmer ornamentation and techniques. For example, trills are used in abundance, as are grace notes and *krekhts*. Bends and the laughing/crying technique can also be added at the performer's choosing. Doinas relate to the free and embellished Jewish prayer singing, so it is important to incorporate as much emotion and personality into a performance of a doina as possible.

The doina hovers mostly around D minor, with brief lapses into A major and F major. After a pause on a D minor chord, the piece transitions to the lively *Odessa Bulgar*, a brief 34-measure dance. It uses the mode called *Mi Sheberach*, taken from a Jewish prayer for the sick.<sup>98</sup>

*Odessa Bulgar* has three repeated sections, features fast sixteenth note passages, and ends like *Der Heyser Bulgar* with a chromatic run followed by I – V – I.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Sapoznik and Sokolow, p. 20.

<sup>97</sup> Rogovoy, pp. 65-70.

<sup>98</sup> Sapoznik and Solokow, p. 21.

<sup>99</sup> Dave Tarras, *Doina* (Needham: Temple Aliyah Klezmer Band, 2016).

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