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Artie Shaw's Concerto for Clarinet: A Lecture Recital

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ARTIE SHAW'S *CONCERTO FOR CLARINET*: A LECTURE RECITAL

A Capstone Experience/ Thesis Project

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Bachelor of Arts in Music with

Honors College Graduate Distinction at Western Kentucky University

By

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ABSTRACT

The ultimate goal of my project will be a performance of Artie Shaw's *Concerto for Clarinet*, accompanied by a brief lecture centered around attitudes toward jazz, Shaw himself, and the *Concerto*. I aim to draw conclusions about how Shaw's experiences and reactions to the perception of jazz may have influenced his composition. Also, I will provide a musical analysis of the *Concerto for Clarinet* and will compare its form with that of a traditional concerto from the Classical period. During the performance and presentation, I will play excerpts and explain different techniques found throughout the piece, focusing on the rhythmic nuances of swing. As a result of my presentation and performance, I hope to instill in attendees an appreciation for Shaw's composition while providing them with new insights into the complexity of jazz music.

Keywords: Music, Jazz, Clarinet, Artie Shaw

Dedicated to my loving family

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Big band swing music was in its heyday in the 1930s and '40s. Music was a central form of entertainment for Americans in the first half of the twentieth century, and it could be experienced and accessed in a variety of ways. The radio was a prominent component of households, and many people engaged in playing the piano for amusement. These forms of common entertainment enabled Americans of all classes to participate in and appreciate big band jazz. It was also common for Americans to visit jazz clubs to experience live performances. Big band musicians, and particularly bandleaders, are comparable to today's most popular celebrities.

At this time, the professional music business proved to be lucrative for the more popular bandleaders including Artie Shaw, an immensely creative and virtuosic clarinetist. He had a multitude of chart-topping tunes, one of which was the *Concerto for Clarinet*. This composition is energizing and intriguing, as it is fast-paced and employs a wide array of compositional and jazz techniques that add an element of interest to the piece. As a clarinetist and fan of big band jazz, Shaw's *Concerto* became a personal passion and will serve as the focus of my Capstone Experience project. To further understand the piece, it was necessary to delve into the history of American culture and attitudes toward jazz, Artie Shaw's upbringing and life experiences, as well as learning to perform a variety of jazz techniques. My project culminated in a performance of the

Concerto for Clarinet accompanied by a brief lecture that explored and aimed to answer questions regarding the composition's key characteristics. Why did Shaw give the piece the title of *Concerto*? Why is this relevant? How can this piece be compared to a classical concerto? What are the main performance features that make this piece so electric and unique? These questions encompass a variety of subtopics that will be more thoroughly discussed in the presentation given before my performance, as well as in the following pages.

Through my project, I aim to provide my audience with a deeper understanding of the complexities of Shaw's composition. On the surface, the *Concerto for Clarinet* seems to be nothing more than a piece played for entertainment purposes. However, a closer look reveals that the piece is reflective of Shaw's attitudes and experiences. I intend to instill an appreciation for Shaw and his *Concerto* by conveying these ideas to an audience of my peers.

CHAPTER 2

AMERICAN ATTITUDES TOWARD JAZZ IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

Early twentieth century America can be characterized by dramatic changes brought on by the Industrial Revolution. Every aspect of American life began to change, and the “old world” standards and ideas of the nineteenth century were challenged by more progressive thinking.¹ Nothing was untouched by the changing nation, music included. The early twentieth century marks a transition from favoring the classical composers of Europe to establishing a genre of music that was distinctly American: jazz.

At the turn of the century, jazz arose out of New Orleans and was derivative of ragtime, an intricate style saturated with syncopated rhythms.² Jazz, however, introduced a new rhythmic element: swing. While the concept of swing is abstract, it can be described as “a special kind of rhythmic excitement based on the opposition between the regular beat of the rhythm section and the syncopated lines of the horn players who improvised over the beat.”³

This new musical style gradually spread throughout the nation, and when a group of musicians called the Original Dixieland Jazz Band made the first jazz recording, the nation was swept up in the new trend. Because jazz is a generally upbeat and

¹ Lawrence W. Levine, “Jazz and American Culture”, *The Journal of American Folklore*, 102, no.43 (1989), 8.

² *Ibid.*, 67.

³ *Ibid.*, 68.

enthusiastic style, it was prominently used as dance music and was not regarded as artistic.⁴ This perception of jazz proved to be frustrating for many musicians who viewed themselves as artists first and entertainers second.⁵ While some musicians resigned to their role as entertainers, others fought to be respected for their artistic merit.

The view that jazz served only entertainment purposes was further propelled by those who deemed that the genre should not be included as a part of high culture. Prior to the emergence of jazz, a distinctly American musical style had not been developed. Instead, Americans looked to Europe for artistic standards, and the classical music that was rampant in the nineteenth century became the standard of high musical culture for Americans. The introduction of jazz challenged the old ideas of culture, and signified a movement toward new contemporary standards.

The differing ideas of culture added to a growing wedge between the class distinctions of American citizens. Citizens fell into one of two categories: “high-brow” or “low-brow”.⁶ As can be inferred from the title, members of the “high-brow” distinction favored the classical musical standards of Europe. To these “high-brow” Americans, jazz was an “atrocious in polite society”, it was “retrogression”, and it was “a savage clash and bang”.⁷

Perhaps those with this opinion were uncomfortable with the differences between jazz and classical music. Classical music was a part of an “exclusive” culture, meaning that it was not easily accessible to the general public.⁸ In addition, classical music often

⁴ Ibid., 68.

⁵ Ibid., 68.

⁶ Lawrence W. Levine, "Jazz and American Culture," *The Journal of American Folklore*, 102, no. 403 (1989), 10.

⁷ Ibid., 11.

⁸ Ibid., 7.

contained a division between the performers and audience, as the audience had no interactions with or influence on the performance.⁹ In contrast, jazz was more “inclusive” as it blurred the line of separation between performers and audience members.¹⁰ Instead of having to be still and quiet when attending a classical performance, those that attended jazz performances were free to dance, clap, or stomp their feet.¹¹ The way in which audiences reacted to jazz music likely fueled the belief that jazz did not belong to high culture.

The reasons jazz was not respected by “high-brow” Americans, made it more appealing to those considered to be “low-brow”. In particular, American youths felt more connected to the new genre because they felt as if they were alienated from the standards of high culture.¹² American youths were likely inspired and energized by the changing standards of culture because it meant that they could be more involved with and have a voice in society. In addition, younger people were attracted to the levels of creative freedom and expressivity that came with jazz. The new wave of music reflected a move from rigid traditions to more flexible and innovative ideas of culture.

Jazz musicians fought to diminish the idea that their craft was not important culturally. In fact, many jazz musicians had an appreciation for and played classical music, but for the sake of career stability, they typically had to give the audience what it wanted. This often meant that artists had to limit creative exploration to maintain audiences’ approval, thus perpetuating the division between artist and entertainer.

⁹ Ibid., 7.

¹⁰ Ibid., 7.

¹¹ Ibid., 7.

¹² Ibid., 13.

This division diminished slightly as the genre evolved and took a different shape in the 1920s. For example, bandleader Paul Whiteman was able to get his group to produce a sound reminiscent of a symphonic ensemble while integrating qualities of jazz music.¹³ George Gershwin's famous *Rhapsody in Blue* was originally performed by the Paul Whiteman orchestra, which was met with high favor by the public.¹⁴ The orchestral presence found in *Rhapsody* likely enhanced the public's reception of the composition because its style was more familiar. Whiteman's performance expanded audiences' perception of jazz by showing that it was a respectable artistic outlet.

In the 1930s, jazz music took a transformation. America's population was booming with youth as the children born after World War I were entering young adulthood, and these adolescents were searching for a type of music that would be representative of their generation.¹⁵ Benny Goodman is often cited as the instigator of the new type of jazz which came to be known as swing.¹⁶

Swing bands were not an entirely new idea as they were "more polished version[s] of the big band style".¹⁷ Goodman made the style popular, and although he was a skilled classical musician, his music was still ubiquitous with dance.¹⁸ Swing was frequently broadcast on the radio, and phonograph record sales skyrocketed, thus increasing the popularization of the style. However, with such popularization, many artists found themselves further pigeonholed into the role of entertainer. Keeping up with audiences' demands proved to be frustrating for many artists, in particular Artie Shaw.

¹³ Terry Teachout, *Jazz*, 69.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 70.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 70.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 71.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 71.

Shaw saw himself as an artist first and entertainer second. As one of the major leaders of the swing era, Shaw helped to form the parameters of the style. Throughout his career, he made several attempts to show the public that he could perform classically, but much to his chagrin these attempts were not well received. Some artists were able to accept their primary role as entertainer, but Artie Shaw was not willing to rid himself of artistic creativity to appease public opinion. Shaw's career, as will be explored in the following chapter, is reflective of the dichotomy between artist and entertainer. The internal conflict this instilled in Shaw proved to be a heavy influence on his career and artistic decisions.

CHAPTER 3

AN OVERVIEW OF SHAW'S LIFE AND CAREER

Despite having a wildly successful career as a swing band leader in the 1930s and '40s, Artie Shaw was never truly satisfied with his time in the spotlight. Shaw was faced with the internal conflict of pleasing audiences and record companies instead of performing the way he so desired. Though many of his techniques and ideas were well received almost instantly by audiences, Shaw experienced a number of failures in which he faced ridicule from audience members and the press alike. As a bandleader, Shaw had a deep influence on the Swing Era, and his music is still praised by listeners the world over.

Born in 1910 in New York City, Shaw was the son of Jewish immigrants.¹⁹ His given name was Avraham Ben-Yitzhak Arshawsky, and although he was referred to as Arthur, the name was a dead giveaway of his Jewish heritage.²⁰ In order to escape discrimination in his career, he shortened his name to Artie Shaw and found that music could serve as an “alternative to his parents’ Jewish identity”.²¹ This idea of distinguishing himself from his heritage and upbringing is evident throughout his career, compositions, and extraneous hobbies.

¹⁹ Tim Nolan, *Three Chords for Beauty's Sake*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2010), 1.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 29.

At the age of thirteen, Shaw saw a performance on the saxophone and was so inspired that he worked and saved money to purchase his own saxophone, thus beginning his transformation into becoming a professional musician.²² Shaw began frequenting amateur nights in an effort to expand his talents and gain performance experience.²³ This proved to be a valuable use of his time, as Shaw earned his first steady professional job in 1924 as a member of Johnny Cavallaro's "New Haven dance band".²⁴ After being with the orchestra for a few years, Cavallaro requested that Shaw learn to play the clarinet.²⁵ Unbeknownst to Shaw or Cavallaro, this decision would ultimately lead to Shaw's vast success as a swing band leader.

In 1935, Shaw took a brief respite from music, and in his time off, Shaw enrolled in classes at Columbia University, attempted to write a novel, and bought a farm.²⁶ Shaw's forays into different professions, specifically his time spent at Columbia and writing, are indicative of his ongoing quest to find and establish an identity separate from his upbringing.

Shaw returned to his music career in 1936 and composed tunes for clarinet, string quartet, and percussion.²⁷ While this unique instrumentation received mixed reviews, his *Interlude in B Flat* was an instant hit with listeners.²⁸ After a performance at the Imperial Theater, a booking agent suggested that Shaw form his own group.²⁹ Shaw formed his first orchestra later that year, which "consisted of two trumpets, a trombone, tenor

²² Ibid., 45.

²³ Ibid., 46.

²⁴ Ibid., 46-47.

²⁵ Ibid., 48.

²⁶ Ibid., 52-53.

²⁷ Ibid., 54.

²⁸ Ibid., 54.

²⁹ Ibid., 55.

saxophone, clarinet, conventional rhythm section...two violins, a viola, and a cello.”³⁰

The orchestra received mixed reviews from music critics, but audiences did not find the instrumentation favorable.³¹

After a number of disappointing performances, Shaw decided to form a new orchestra, which had fourteen members and proved to be more successful.³² It was with this second orchestra that Shaw recorded his first signature tune entitled *Nightmare*.³³ The band went on tour and had several successful performances, and it was later in 1938 that Shaw recorded a tune that catapulted him to stardom.

This hit was called *Begin the Beguine*, a song originally recorded by Cole Porter. Shaw’s recording sold over one million copies, and the immense success proved to be a key turning point in Shaw’s career as he signed a deal with RCA records that guaranteed a minimum salary of \$100,000 for two years.³⁴

Shaw and his orchestra experienced astronomical levels of fame, which proved to be taxing on Shaw’s relationships with his musicians and the public.³⁵ Fans were open with their adulation, and Shaw had a few experiences in which mobs of fans ripped his clothes and nearly knocked out his teeth.³⁶ Shaw was not accustomed to such attention and found it off-putting.

In regard to his relationships with fellow musicians, Shaw stated that they “began to treat me as more of an employer than a friend” and that those “who might show any

³⁰ Ibid., 55.

³¹ Ibid., 56.

³² Ibid., 57.

³³ Ibid., 57.

³⁴ Ibid., 77.

³⁵ Ibid., 84.

³⁶ Ibid., 84.

intimacy with me began to be regarded with suspicion by the rest.”³⁷ Shaw became frustrated and disillusioned with his role in the music business, leading him to take a hiatus in Mexico after failing to attend a scheduled performance in 1938.³⁸

After his time in Mexico, Shaw returned to music with the desire to create a sixty-five piece orchestra.³⁹ Although he did not form an orchestra of that magnitude, Shaw employed several studio musicians for the recording of *Frenesi*, a hit tune based on a folk song Shaw heard during his travels in Mexico.⁴⁰ The success of *Frenesi* inspired Shaw to form a new band in 1941 that included a string section, and with this band he recorded the massive hit *Stardust*.⁴¹

Using the members of this orchestra, Shaw created a group called the Gramercy Five, a smaller ensemble that rotated performing as quartets, quintets, and septets.⁴² Shaw’s idea of using chamber-sized ensembles was a response to the similar actions of band leaders such as Tommy Dorsey and Benny Goodman.⁴³

While the Gramercy Five was taking shape and delivering well received performances, the Shaw orchestra was working to prepare music for the movie *Second Chorus*, a Hollywood flop featuring Fred Astaire.⁴⁴ One of the compositions for the movie, *Swing Concerto*, was later expanded to become the *Concerto for Clarinet*.⁴⁵

Shaw’s virtuosic *Concerto* was met with differing reviews. Some critics lauded

³⁷ Ibid., 84.

³⁸ Ibid., 92.

³⁹ Ibid., 94.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 94.

⁴¹ Ibid., 95.

⁴² Ibid., 97.

⁴³ Ibid., 97.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 100-101.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 101.

the performance while others found it to be haphazardly thrown together.⁴⁶ Despite any negative remarks, the *Concerto* proved to be an exciting tune that thrilled audiences.

The onslaught of World War II put Shaw's career on pause as he went on overseas tours. Shaw returned to the U.S. in 1943, and in 1944, he formed a new orchestra that, according to critic Whitney Balliett, was "the closest Shaw came to an out-and-out jazz group."⁴⁷ It was with this group that Shaw recorded a number of hits including '*S Wonderful* and *Time is All You've Got*.⁴⁸

In 1945, Shaw took yet another hiatus from his career, and when he returned, he began to focus his attention on classical music.⁴⁹ He took a year off from playing jazz, and delved into music by classical composers such as Mozart.⁵⁰ In 1949, he brought a forty piece symphony to a newly opened jazz club in New York and performed works by a number of composers including Prokofiev and Debussy.⁵¹ Shaw served as the conductor, and his performance was not well received.⁵²

Shaw's conducting career was short lived, and when he refocused his attention to jazz, Shaw openly expressed discontent at the direction jazz was taking. A new style called "be-bop" emerged, and Shaw stated that he was "against the cultist idea that the old jazz is no good."⁵³ Eventually, his distaste for the new style dissipated. Shaw even expressed an appreciation for bop musicians like Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie

⁴⁶ Ibid., 102-103.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 122.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 123.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 127-128.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 128.

⁵¹ Ibid., 129.

⁵² Ibid., 129-130.

⁵³ Ibid., 132.

because they allowed Shaw to expand his performances in ways that previous audiences would not have appreciated.⁵⁴

Shaw began to incorporate the new jazz style in the arrangements his 1945 orchestra played, but audiences were unenthused by the new sound.⁵⁵ In response to the Shaw orchestra's 1950 performance at Bop City, one music critic characterized the performance as "a sorry exhibition from a man who has apparently given up."⁵⁶

In 1950, Shaw took a two-year retirement in which he dabbled in a variety of hobbies, including farming and writing.⁵⁷ During this time off, Shaw coined an autobiography entitled *The Trouble with Cinderella: An Outline of Identity*.⁵⁸ Shaw's objective was to chronicle his experiences as a jazz musician in the 1920s and '30s, but the book was poorly written.⁵⁹ Critics were puzzled in response to Shaw's novelistic venture, some deeming it a noteworthy read while others were more dissenting.⁶⁰ A critic for the *San Francisco Chronicle* stated that the "book deserves to be read-- if only because he wrote it."⁶¹

Although he was fully immersed in his writing endeavors, Shaw did not fully disband from the music scene. He played with the Gramercy Five regularly at a restaurant called The Iceland in 1951 to make extra money.⁶² Shaw expressed frustration with the audiences who were more interested in their meals than the music.⁶³

⁵⁴ Ibid., 133-134.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 135.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 135.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 141-142.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 142.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 142.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 145-146.

⁶¹ Ibid., 146.

⁶² Ibid., 147.

⁶³ Ibid., 147.

In 1953, Shaw had to form an orchestra and set out on tour as a means to pay off \$80,000 of back taxes.⁶⁴ Audiences wanted to hear the old standards, and Shaw conceded, making the tour an immense success.⁶⁵ To continue this success, Shaw took a new Gramercy Five group to the Embers Club in New York, and the performance was met with remarkable praise.⁶⁶ Critics hailed the performance, saying the group was “belting out the kind of rhythm that hasn’t been heard...for some time.”⁶⁷ This performance at the Embers Club would be Shaw’s last appearance as a band leader.⁶⁸

Shaw spent the next chapter of his life living in a variety of locations and exploring other areas of interest. He first travelled to Spain, where he lived for five years, and began writing short stories.⁶⁹ Upon returning to the United States, Shaw moved to Connecticut, where he delved into marksmanship, opened a shooting range, formed a film company, and taught music classes at Yale.⁷⁰ In 1973, Shaw relocated to California, where he continued to write, give seminars at universities, play for movie soundtracks, and appear on TV and radio shows.⁷¹

At the age of seventy-four, he oversaw the forming of a new Shaw orchestra, which was to be led by clarinetist Dick Johnson.⁷² When asked about the music the new orchestra would play, Shaw stated that he wanted the group to play the orchestrations of Shaw’s previous bands but with a contemporary twist: he did not want to replicate the

⁶⁴ Ibid., 152.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 153.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 154-155.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 156.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 158.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 158-159.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 160.

⁷¹ Ibid., 161.

⁷² Ibid., 164.

early sound. Under the guidance of its founding father, the new orchestra brought a joyful rejuvenation to swing music.⁷³

Shaw's career choices and alternative creative pursuits are indicative of the struggle of finding the balance between artist and entertainer. It is clear that Shaw was uncomfortable with being cast solely as an entertainer, and his other ventures signify his desire to be regarded as an intellectual and respectable artist. Although he achieved astronomical levels of fame and overcame the stigmas placed against immigrants, Shaw did not appear to be content.

Shaw's many career changes and pursuits initially make him seem unsettled and scatter-brained. Another interpretation, though, is reflective of Shaw's immense creative energy. While his efforts did not entirely erase the division between artist and entertainer, they did help to show the public that jazz musicians were and still are capable of reaching past the realm of dance music.

⁷³ Ibid., 166.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF THE CONCERTO FOR CLARINET

4-1 What Defines a Classical Concerto?

A concerto from the Classical period consists of three movements of varying tempos: fast, slow, fast. The first movement of a concerto is written in sonata form consisting of three subsections: exposition, development, and recapitulation. A melodic theme is introduced in the exposition and is expanded and altered in the development. The theme returns again, close to its original statement, in the recapitulation.

Harmonically speaking, the exposition begins in the tonic key and then modulates to the dominant key, which is built on the fifth note of the tonic scale. In the development, the main melodic passage travels through many modulations. To elaborate, the music moves through different keys but then returns to the tonic key for the remainder of the movement, or the recapitulation.

The second movement of a concerto is generally less involved harmonically because it does not include as many key changes and modulations as were found in the opening movement. This movement is very slow and expressive, providing contrast between the fast movements that bookend it.

At the completion of the second movement, the concerto returns to the same tonic key and quick tempo found in the first movement. This third movement is composed as a rondo, which has five main sections annotated by the letters: ABACA. Each statement of the A section is the same throughout, and the B and C sections are comprised of different musical ideas. The rondo section is often bright and jovial to give the concerto a light conclusion.

Throughout the three movements of a concerto, there exists two sub sections: solo and tutti. In a tutti section, the entire orchestra plays together to create a rich sonority of chords. Contrastingly, in the solo section, the instrumentation is significantly diminished to make the soloist the main feature. A concerto's movements typically begin with a tutti section that sets the mood of and establishes thematic material for the remainder of the movement.

In the tutti sections, multiple instruments play the main melody while the others play accompanying figures. For example, in the opening tutti section of the first movement of Mozart's *Concerto for Clarinet*, the first and second violins play the melody along with the soloist. This, however, is markedly different in the first solo section when the clarinet is the only voice carrying the melody while the first and second violins play a simple accompaniment with the viola. The reduction in instrumentation is essential to the classical concerto because it enhances the soloist's presence throughout the composition.

Consider the excerpts from the Mozart *Concerto* shown in figures one and two:

The image shows a musical score for the Tutti section of Mozart's Concerto. It consists of ten staves. The top two staves are for the vocal line, with the word 'TUTTI' written above the first staff. The remaining eight staves are for the orchestra. The music is in A major and 3/4 time. The first staff has a 'p' (piano) dynamic marking. The second staff has a 'p' dynamic marking. The third staff has a 'p' dynamic marking. The fourth staff has a 'p' dynamic marking. The fifth staff has a 'p' dynamic marking. The sixth staff has a 'p' dynamic marking. The seventh staff has a 'p' dynamic marking. The eighth staff has a 'p' dynamic marking. The ninth staff has a 'p' dynamic marking. The tenth staff has a 'p' dynamic marking.

Figure 1 Mozart *Concerto* Tutti Section⁷⁴

The image shows a musical score for the Solo section of Mozart's Concerto. It consists of ten staves. The top two staves are for the vocal line, with the word 'SOLO' written above the first staff. The remaining eight staves are for the orchestra. The music is in A major and 3/4 time. The first staff has a 'p' (piano) dynamic marking. The second staff has a 'p' dynamic marking. The third staff has a 'p' dynamic marking. The fourth staff has a 'p' dynamic marking. The fifth staff has a 'p' dynamic marking. The sixth staff has a 'p' dynamic marking. The seventh staff has a 'p' dynamic marking. The eighth staff has a 'p' dynamic marking. The ninth staff has a 'p' dynamic marking. The tenth staff has a 'p' dynamic marking.

Figure 2 Mozart *Concerto* Solo Section⁷⁵

Another prominent component of the classical concerto is the inclusion of cadenza sections. In these sections, the orchestra generally ceases playing, and the soloist continues on playing a virtuosic flourish that was commonly improvised. Cadenzas allow the soloist to have creative freedom and add excitement to the concerto by making each performance unique.

The instrumentation of a concerto is carefully planned out so as not to overwhelm the sound of the soloist. Take, for example, the instrumentation for Mozart's *Concerto for Clarinet*. The original score calls for a total of eight different instruments: flute, bassoon, horn, clarinet, violin, viola, cello, and bass. With this instrumentation, the texture of the

⁷⁴ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart Clarinet Concerto in A Major (Paris: Heugel, 1953).

⁷⁵ Ibid.

orchestra is relatively thin, which aids in the soloist's projection over the orchestra. This instrumentation is reflective of the late classical period and is not as prominent as today's full orchestra, which typically makes use of every available instrument.

4-2 Comparisons to the Classical Concerto

While it is not a concerto in the typical sense, Shaw's composition does contain some similarities to its classical namesake. There are not three individual movements, but Shaw makes use of varying tempos to create contrast between the sections of his piece. The opening of the *Concerto for Clarinet* is full of rubato as it is slow and expressive. The piece then moves into an upbeat "boogie-woogie" section followed by a dramatic cadenza. This pattern is repeated as the piece returns to an upbeat tempo and concludes with another cadenza.

Shaw's *Concerto* is not as compositionally complex as the classical concerto. There is no harmonic progression as in the sonata form first movement, and there is no hint of the third movement rondo. Despite this, Shaw makes use of the classical concerto's development of melodic ideas. This is done by expanding and adding slight alterations to melodic passages much in same way as the first movement of a classical concerto. To further elaborate, consider the following examples:



Figure 3 Main Theme from Mozart's *Clarinet Concerto in A Major*⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Ibid.



Figure 4 Expansion and Development of Mozart's Main Theme⁷⁷

The melodic idea from the first example is still present but has been altered slightly to expound upon the preceding melody.



Figure 5 Eighth-note Figure from Shaw's *Concerto for Clarinet*⁷⁸



Figure 6 Expanded and Ornamented Eighth-note Figure⁷⁹

As previously described, the initial melodic statement has been slightly altered to develop the initial melodic statement

In addition to the development of thematic material, the inclusion of solo and tutti sections is present throughout Shaw's *Concerto*. The opening rubato section of Shaw's work includes the lush full sounds of the orchestra playing together. This first tutti

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Artie Shaw, *Concerto for Clarinet* (New York: Consolidated Music Publishers, 1942).

⁷⁹ Ibid.

section is very brief, as the solo line soon takes precedence and is accompanied by a small string section. After this rubato opening, another tutti section takes place in which the piano and drums are featured. The piano then begins to play a repetitive rhythmic chord progression, marking the beginning of another tutti section that is followed by a solo section. This pattern continues throughout the piece, with the largest solo section accompanied only by a drum.

There are two cadenzas in Shaw's *Concerto* the first of which occurring midway through the piece and the other concluding the performance. In accordance with the cadenzas of a classical concerto, these portions of Shaw's work allow for an expressive yet virtuosic display of the soloist's abilities. The cadenzas show a wide range of note register, rhythmic complexity, and other jazz techniques that will be further explained in section 4-4.

The instrumentation employed by Shaw is more reflective of a modern day full orchestra. He includes a mix of woodwinds, brass, percussion, and strings throughout the piece. One key difference present in Shaw's group is the inclusion of the saxophone, which is very rarely used in even the most modern orchestral compositions. The presence of the saxophone aids in distinguishing the piece as a member of the jazz genre. In keeping with the tradition of the classical concerto, the instrumentation is trimmed back in the solo sections as a means to feature the soloist.

4-3 Theoretical Analysis

As previously described, the classical concerto undergoes a great deal of harmonic progressions and transitions. This, however, is not the case for Shaw's *Concerto for Clarinet*. As in many jazz compositions, the majority of Shaw's piece follows a standard twelve-bar blues progression. When notated, the progression appears as follows:

$$\begin{array}{cccc} I^7 & I^7 & I^7 & I^7 \\ IV^7 & IV^7 & I^7 & I^7 \\ V^7 & V^7 & I^7 & I^7 \end{array}$$

The Roman numerals represent the scale degree on which the chord is played, and the superscript seven indicates that the seventh scale degree is included in the chord. The *Concerto for Clarinet* is written in B Flat major. With this in mind, the I^7 chord is comprised of B Flat, D, F, and A. The IV^7 chord, then, contains the notes E Flat, G, B Flat, and D. Because this chord is built on E Flat, the other notes involved are taken from the E Flat Major scale, which accounts for the difference in notes of the seventh scale degree between the I^7 and IV^7 chords. With this in mind, the V^7 chord contains the notes F, A, C, E Flat. These chords are outlined in the piano part to establish a tonal center for the solo line.

Shaw does utilize some deviation in harmony as can be seen in the contrasting keys between the “boogie-woogie” and cadenza sections. The “boogie-woogie” sections are played in a major key, which keeps the mood of the piece light and upbeat. Contrastingly, the cadenzas are played in a minor key, which adds a sense of drama and intrigue to the piece.

4-4 Performance Features

Jazz music employs an entirely different set of playing techniques than does classical music. These include swing rhythm, vibrato, glissandos, and pitch bends, and together elements set jazz apart as a distinct genre of music.

In jazz, rhythmic meter and structure are shaped by the groupings of notes as well as by rests.⁸⁰ There are many instances in which jazz phrases begin with a syncopated rhythm, and this method of phrasing is prominent throughout the Shaw *Concerto*. It is often thought, or understood, that these syncopated notes are to be played as if they occur on the beat, making these notes anticipatory in nature.⁸¹ Because they are anticipating the next beat, syncopated notes “borrow” the accent that would typically be placed on the beat. This borrowing effect is made more prominent through the swinging of eighth notes.⁸² The following example illustrates this concept:



Figure 7 Accent Borrowing⁸³

As can be seen, this passage begins on a syncopated beat, but the entrance is accented as if it were played on the strong beat.

To swing the eighth-notes, the even division of the beat is adjusted by lengthening the first note in an eighth-note grouping. The second note is then played shorter and louder than the first, and it is often slurred into the following beat, to allow for smooth

⁸⁰ Stephan Love, “On Phrase Rhythm in Jazz” (PhD diss., Eastman School of Music, 2011): 6.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 48.

⁸³ Artie Shaw, *Concerto for Clarinet* (New York: Consolidated Music Publishers, 1942).

phrasing.⁸⁴ This style is prominent in jazz and is the main rhythmic style found in the *Concerto*.

Other common characteristics of jazz found in the *Concerto for Clarinet* are pitch bends and glissandos. A pitch bend is the lowering of a single note through a change in embouchure and air direction, while a glissando is the “continuous variation of pitch from one note to the next.”⁸⁵ Artie Shaw made frequent use of pitch bends throughout his *Concerto*, as evidenced in the opening section of the piece. He also makes use of the glissando technique before playing the closing cadenza. These components of jazz music add more interest and complexity to Shaw’s clarinet feature.

Pitch bends and glissandos are uniquely annotated in the music as can be seen in the following examples:

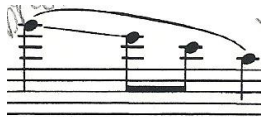


Figure 8 Pitch Bend⁸⁶



Figure 9 Glissando⁸⁷

The direction of the line indicates to the musician the type of technique to use. The descending line between notes in Figure 8 implies a pitch bend, while the ascending line in Figure 9 indicates a glissando.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 48.

⁸⁵ Jer-Ming Chen, John Smith, and Joe Wolfe, "Pitch bending and glissandi on the clarinet: Roles of the vocal tract and partial tone hole closing," *Acoustical Study of America*, 126, no. 3 (2009): 1511.

⁸⁶ Artie Shaw, *Concerto for Clarinet* (New York: Consolidated Music Publishers, 1942).

⁸⁷ Ibid.

A final prominent characteristic of jazz is the use of vibrato. Vibrato is a method of changing the tone quality of a pitch by adding a slight oscillation to the note. This technique is most noticeable on notes with a longer duration, but it is typically used throughout a piece as the musician sees fit.

In addition to the aforementioned components of jazz, Shaw employed a wide range of notes and dynamics to add character to the composition. The clarinet has a very broad range of notes, and Shaw used this to his advantage. The majority of the piece is played in the high altissimo register of the clarinet. While this adds a sense of excitement to the piece, it was also a practical compositional decision because it helped Shaw to propel his sound over his orchestra.

It is in the cadenza sections that Shaw makes use of the clarinet's low chalumeau register, and because the clarinet is the only instrument playing in this instance, the low notes are audible. It is in these cadenza sections that the soloist can experiment with dynamic contrast, which adds to the musicality and drama of the piece. The combination of these techniques sets apart the *Concerto for Clarinet* from other major works in the clarinetists' repertoire.

CHAPTER 5

RECITAL PREPARATIONS

Because the primary focus of my thesis was to present the *Concerto for Clarinet* during a recital, a significant amount of time was devoted to practicing the piece.

Learning the concerto was an enjoyable and rewarding experience, but it was not without its challenges. The previously described jazz techniques are a difficult concept to grasp for a musician that has primarily performed in the classical style. Learning how to execute these techniques proved to be the first hurdle to overcome when preparing this piece.

The first technique I attempted to incorporate was vibrato. To me, this seemed to be the easiest method to master, so it was a logical starting place. I was partially correct in my assessment, as making the oscillation in the pitch was not terribly difficult. When I use vibrato, I adjust the pressure my bottom lip has against the reed to create the vibrations in the sound.

Although the ability to make the pitch oscillate came quickly to me, controlling the speed of the oscillation proved to be a challenge. It is easier to produce a rapidly wavering sound, but increasing the space between pitch waves to control the vibrato requires a great deal of embouchure control to decrease the speed of the oscillations.

Throughout the *Concerto*, both fast and slow of vibrato are used. While it is at the

player's discretion, there are instances where one style is more appropriate than the other. The slower vibrato provides a darker and dramatic tone, which better suits the cadenzas. Accordingly, the faster vibrato better fits the fast-paced "boogie-woogie quality" sections as it provides a brighter tone quality.

After this technique was mastered, I turned my focus to the pitch bend. Instead of playing two notes in succession with a straight tone, the musician must lower the pitch center of the first note. This allows for an exciting and unique transition between notes. To play a pitch bend, the musician must make a slight adjustment in embouchure and air direction.

Embouchure is the way in which the mouth is set around the mouthpiece to produce the sound. This involves keeping the corner of the lips tight, flattening the chin, and using very little bottom lip to cover the lower teeth. Together, these characteristics of embouchure allow for the most efficient production of sound and enhance the quality of the tone produced.

As the name implies, air direction refers to the path the air travels when going through the mouthpiece. Generally, it is best to keep a steady airstream across the mouthpiece to produce an even sound and tone quality. The steady airstream also aids in the playing of technically difficult passages because it allows for a rapid progression of notes to be played clearly.

When I play a pitch bend, I first make a slight adjustment in my embouchure by lowering my jaw, which lowers the position of my bottom lip. While making this adjustment, I change the direction of my air by focusing it downward. Together, these changes allow me to make the tone center of a note dive down as a way to connect to the

succeeding note of a lower pitch. Learning to perform a pitch bend required a great deal of repetitive practice. Initially, I could only make slight differences in the tone center, but with time, I found that I could produce more dramatic differences in lowering the pitch.

Becoming comfortable with this technique was essential to learning how to perform a glissando. Essentially, a glissando involves the connection of notes in a scalar pattern. As can be seen in Figure 9, the glissando in Shaw's piece begins on the G above the staff and ends with the G in the next octave. When a scale is played, the changes in notes are obvious, but when played as a glissando, the distinction between pitches is blurred to create an uninterrupted sound. This effect is achieved using a combination of different techniques.

To begin the glissando, the player lowers the pitch using the same techniques found in a pitch bend. To achieve the desired continuity, the player slides fingers off of the keys instead of lifting them off. The next step is to slightly raise the pitch of the note once the finger has slid off the key. A glissando is a complicated series of pitch bends and raises that, when coordinated properly, smears the connection between two notes.

This jazz technique proved to be the most difficult to learn, and I still have room for improvement. My biggest struggle with the glissando was coordinating the pitch bends and raises. Over time, my ability did improve, but I would like to continue working on this to develop more consistency when performing a glissando.

After learning how to play these components of jazz techniques, the next step was to establish rhythmic accuracy. The concept of swing rhythm was not foreign to me because I am a fan of jazz music, which proved to be beneficial when learning the *Concerto*. However, maintaining a consistent beat and playing each rhythm accurately

was one of the biggest challenges I had when preparing for the recital. When playing a classical composition, I am cognizant of the importance of maintaining accuracy throughout the piece. I did not have this mindset when I began learning Shaw's *Concerto*, which complicated the early stages of practicing.

When I first began to learn the piece, I frequently rushed the music, meaning that I played the melodic lines faster than the tempo outlined by the rhythm section. To improve this, I focused on subdividing each rhythm in my head by thinking the rhythmic syllables of each passage. Doing this helped tremendously, but what really brought it all together was the addition of a percussionist.

Having a percussionist play a steady rhythmic pattern gave me no choice but to play in the correct tempo. For my performance, I asked the percussionist to play a simple rhythm while placing heavy emphasis on the downbeat of each measure, which helped me stay on track if any deviation in rhythmic pulse occurred.

The primary accompanying instrument for my performance was the piano. I had access to an experienced pianist, so I was confident that the part would be played well. Scheduling rehearsal times with both the pianist and percussionist was a challenge as it is difficult to find a common free time in three busy schedules. At times, I rehearsed with just one of the accompanying musicians, which was helpful in that it made me aware of how each part sounded so there were no surprises when we collaborated as a group. Rehearsing as a group was not without its challenges, however. Initially, it was difficult to coordinate the same tempo and style, but a more cohesive sound was achieved after playing the piece a few times.

In addition to performing the piece, I gave a lecture about the piece. Deciding what to cover in my oral presentation was difficult because there are a variety of topics surrounding Shaw's composition, and there are many different ways to approach understanding the piece.

At the suggestion of my faculty mentors, I wrote down what first came to mind when I think about how I interpret the piece. Doing this activity helped to narrow my attention to a more specific avenue and provided the foundation for a cohesive presentation. I did not commit this passage to memory because I wanted my lecture to be more relaxed and conversational. I find that when a presenter merely recites a memorized speech, the presentation comes across as rehearsed and stiff, which is exactly what I wanted to avoid. I did read over this passage several times in an effort to ensure for a smooth presentation with little to no stalling or struggling for words when discussing Shaw's *Concerto for Clarinet* in front of an audience.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The performance occurred on October 25, 2013, during the student recital lab hour. This is a designated time every Friday in which music majors perform for each other. Therefore, the majority of those in attendance were fellow music majors. Although the Recital Hall was not filled to capacity, there was a large audience present. After entering from backstage, I stood center stage with the pianist and percussionist seated to my right. I was feeling quite nervous, but I pushed aside the anxiety I was feeling and began the lecture.

I made flashcards as a way to keep my thoughts organized, which proved to be beneficial to my presentation. After introducing the topic of my project, I discussed Shaw's upbringing and briefly relayed different moments in his career. I then described the different attitudes Americans had toward jazz music and presented the connection I made between these attitudes, Shaw's career, and his *Concerto*. Next, I gave an overview of the classical concerto form and explained how Shaw's composition compared to its classical counterpart. Because I addressed an audience of musicians, I did not deem it necessary to provide detailed descriptions of the jazz techniques. Instead, I listed what techniques were present throughout the piece and mentioned which aspects were more challenging.

At the conclusion of my presentation, I began the performance, which was approximately nine minutes in duration. Overall, I was pleased by my performance. It was not perfect, but I think the time I devoted to learning the piece was evident. I think the audience enjoyed my performance, judging by the feedback I received upon the conclusion of my performance. I received a wealth of positive comments from my peers and professors, which leads me to believe that my presentation and performance were effective.

As a whole, completing my project was challenging yet rewarding. Presenting and performing in front of my peers pushed me out of my comfort zone, as I am very introverted. There were many times that I questioned my ability to complete the task at hand, but I found that I was able to overcome my worries and was pleased with the outcome of my performance. Participating in the Capstone Experience was an incredible learning opportunity as it pushed me both personally and academically. This has been the largest project I have tackled thus far, and I feel a sense of pride and accomplishment in the final product.

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