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JEAN FRANÇAIX'S CLARINET CONCERTO: AN EXAMINATION OF PERFORMANCE PRACTICES

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JEAN FRANÇAIX'S CLARINET CONCERTO: AN EXAMINATION OF PERFORMANCE PRACTICES

A DOCUMENT APPROVED FOR THE
SCHOOL OF MUSIC

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Abstract

This document explores the performance practices of Jean Françaix's *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra* by four world-renowned clarinetists. These artists are Philippe Cuper, Dimitri Ashkenazy, John Finucane, and Charles Neidich. Their approaches to the work are compared for similarities and differences in regard to selected passages from each movement. Those who will benefit the most from this study include performers, students, teachers, and researchers who have a desire to gain a deeper understanding of the concerto. An introductory chapter provides details regarding the research process, and a brief background about the composer and his work. Following this introduction, individual chapters are devoted to the performance practices of the four performers mentioned above. Finally, the concluding chapter compares the approaches of the four artists, and draws conclusions about the work as a whole.

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Purpose

Jean Françaix's *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra* written in 1967-68 represents one of the most difficult works in the clarinet repertoire. In Jack Brymer's book entitled *Clarinet*, he describes Françaix's *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra* as:

> A work for the future, possibly, when the instrument has developed further or the human hand has changed. At present, its roulades in the key of B major are beyond almost any player; but the work is a worthwhile challenge, and the A clarinet would probably provide the answer.[1]

While it has been roughly thirty-five years since Brymer wrote this description, the challenging nature of the work remains daunting. There is a select group of performers who have created commercial recordings of the concerto on LP or CD despite the demands placed on the performer. These performers include Jacques Lancelot (1972?), Maurice Gabai (1982?), Philippe Cuper (1992), Dimitri Ashkenazy (1995), Walter Boeykens (1974), and John Finucane (2009).[2] These recordings provide a varied set of interpretive models that any enterprising student of Françaix's *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra* should study.

Very little has been written about Jean Françaix's *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra*. Aside from Philippe Cuper's article cited above, information about the work usually appears in the form of program notes or short descriptions, such as the quote by

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[1] Jack Brymer, *Clarinet*, Yehudi Menuhin Guides, ed. Yehudi Menuhin (New York: Schirmer Books, 1976), 222.

[2] For additional performances that have not been recorded to LP or CD, see Philippe Cuper, "Checking Points in the Jean Françaix 'Clarinet Concerto,'" *Clarinet & Saxophone* 23, no. 1 (Spring 1998): 21; Pamela Weston, *Clarinet Virtuosi of Today* (Hertfordshire, England: Eglon Publishers, 1989), 94, 229, 326.

Jack Brymer. Therefore, there is a great need for research to be done regarding the concerto in order to provide a better understanding of the work for those who desire to study it. The goal of this document is to explore the performance practices of world-renown performers and use their interpretations to gain better insight into the concerto. Those who will benefit from this study include students and performers who desire to have a better understanding of the work, and clarinet instructors who want greater knowledge about the concerto for pedagogical purposes.

Procedures

Interviews were used as the primary method for gathering information regarding performance practices of the concerto. This manner of collecting data allowed the artists being interviewed the opportunity to share their philosophical ideas about the work, as well as the manner in which they approach the challenges presented in it. With this in mind, interviews were conducted with Philippe Cuper, Dimitri Ashkenazy, John Finucane, and Charles Neidich. The interview with Cuper took place on July 22, 2010 during the International Clarinet Association *ClarinetFest* in Austin, Texas. Cuper demonstrated how to play passages from the concerto in addition to answering questions about the work and the composer. Ashkenazy was interviewed on June 19, 2010 during the thirty-fifth annual *University of Oklahoma Clarinet Symposium* in Norman, Oklahoma. Like Cuper, Ashkenazy answered questions in a personal interview setting, and played excerpts from the work. Finucane was interviewed via Skype on March 5, 2012 as he could not be physically present for an interview. Like Finucane, Charles Neidich was interviewed through Skype on March 15, 2012. During Neidich's

interview he played recordings of past performances he had done of the concerto and answered questions about the work and composer.[3]

The following criteria were considered when selecting the four interviewees: their availability for an interview, their reputation as performers, their personal connections with the composer, and if they had created a commercial recording of the concerto. Aside from having worked extensively with the composer, Cuper is a world-renown performer. An entire chapter in Pamela Weston's book *Clarinet Virtuosi of Today* is devoted to Cuper.[4] Dimitri Ashkenazy is in great demand around the world as a soloist, chamber musician, instructor, and recording artist. While Dimitri Ashkenazy did not play for Françaix in person, Françaix had high praise for his recording and met with him on one occasion.[5] John Finucane enjoys great success as a clarinetist and conductor in Ireland and abroad. His recording of the concerto represents the most recent recording that is commercially available. Charles Neidich is a world-renowned clarinetist and conductor. Like Cuper, Neidich had a strong connection with Françaix. While praising Neidich for his performance of the work, Françaix was quoted as having described his *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra* as "our concerto."[6]

The interviews with the selected performers are examined for similarities and differences in philosophies, tempi, musical phrasing, articulations, dynamics, and interpretation of cadenzas. In addition to the interviews, the commercial recordings of

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[3] Charles Neidich, interview by author, Norman, OK, March 15, 2012.

[4] Weston, *Clarinet Virtuosi of Today*, 72-76.

[5] Dimitri Ashkenazy, interview by author, Norman, OK, June 19, 2010.

[6] Neidich, interview by author, Norman, OK, March 15, 2012.

Cuper, Askenazy, and Finucane are utilized for the discussions of their performance practices. Each chapter incorporates background information about the performers as well as their connections with Jean Françaix if applicable. At the conclusion of writing, the author sent the artists their individual chapters for review and was able to receive comments and additional information via email.

Specific passages from each movement of the concerto were chosen in order to draw comparisons between each of the performers' interpretations. These excerpts were selected by the author who has spent time learning the work, and creating a reduction of the piano score for personal use.[7] The following questions were used as a guide for selecting the excerpts: does the passage have thematic or melodic significance within the movement, and does the excerpt present a great challenge or controversy for the performer? While other passages are discussed, Table 1.1 contains a list of the excerpts that were chosen for a comparative analysis between the performers.

[7] A revised edition with corrected notes and markings in the clarinet part, along with a new arrangement of the piano part, was submitted to Éditions Musicales Transatlantiques by the author. According to an e-mail sent on June 21, 2011 by Bernard Axelle, the heirs of Françaix did not grant permission for the new edition to be published.

Table 1.1. A list of the selected passages for comparative analysis

Movement I	Movement II	Movement III	Movement IV
1 to 2 5 to 8 Six measures after 11 to 12 Nine measures before 14 to 14 Four measures after 14 to four measure before 15	20 to three measures before 21 21 to the fourth measure of 21 Eighth measure of the Trio to 26	Beginning to 32 One measure before 35 to the fourth measure of 35	Thirteenth measure of 42 to 43 Third measure of 46 to the fourth measure of 47 Eleven measures before 48 to 48

Review of Literature

Currently there are no dissertations or books, of which the author is aware, about Jean Françaix's *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra*. This presents an opportunity for original research that could have a significant impact on clarinet pedagogues, performers, and students who desire to have a better understanding of the work. Since this document is limited to an in-depth analysis of performance practices, further research in the area of theoretical analysis may prove useful for helping listeners and performers understand the work better. A supplemental investigation of the advantages or disadvantages of performing the work on A clarinet instead of B-flat clarinet could be advantageous for performers. Finally, the need for a revised edition for clarinet and piano, as well as the orchestral score, still exists. The author has chosen not to explore these topics in great detail in the current document.

This document is modeled after similar performance practice writings by David Etheridge, David Carter, Christina Giacona, and Miles Mitsuru Ishigaki.[8] Similarities and differences exist between the current document and those after which it is modeled. Like Etheridge, Giacona, and Ishigaki's work, this document discusses a musical composition by a deceased composer. Therefore, the views of the composer regarding specific passages in the composition are limited to writings by Françaix and secondary sources. This differs from Carter's document as John Corigliano is a living composer who could be consulted about any discrepancies in the available editions of his concerto.

Aside from the orchestral score, there is at the present time only one edition of Françaix's concerto with piano reduction published by Éditions Musicales Transatlantiques. Unfortunately this edition is full of problems that have not been corrected since the work was first published.[9] However, the edition represents a completely intact manuscript of the work.

[8] David Carter, "Corigliano's Clarinet Concerto: The Clarinetist's View" (DMA document, University of Oklahoma, 2008); David Etheridge, *Mozart's Clarinet Concerto: The Clarinetist's View* (Gretna: Pelican Publishing Company, 1998); Christina Giacona, "A Study of Comparative Interpretations by Stanley Drucker, Elsa Ludewig-Verdehr, Håkan Rosengren, and John Bruce Yeh of the Clarinet Concerto by Carl Nielsen" (DMA document, University of Oklahoma, 2009); Miles Ishigaki, "A Study of Comparative Interpretations of the *Three Pieces for Clarinet Solo* by Igor Stravinsky" (DMA document, University of Oklahoma, 1988).

[9] For a list of all of the errors in the current edition for clarinet and piano, as well as the orchestral score, see Cuper, "Checking Points in the Jean Françaix 'Clarinet Concerto,'" 19-20.

Background of the Composer and the Concerto

Jean Françaix (1912-1997) came from a musical family in Le Mans, France, and displayed precocious talent as a musician and composer from an early age. His musical abilities were praised by the composer Maurice Ravel during Françaix's childhood. Inspired by this praise, and that of other composers, Françaix studied composition under Nadia Boulanger at the Paris Conservatoire. In addition to his compositional studies, Françaix furthered his ability as a pianist and won the *premier prix* in 1930. His compositional output was prolific with over two-hundred works that utilized traditional forms from the Common Practice Period. These works are exclusively tonal because he did not think highly of atonality.[10] Françaix's attitude about contemporary music can be seen in the following quote:

> I wish I were Le Sage's limping devil…so that I could go round lifting the roofs of people's houses where they are listening to some of these broadcasts of contemporary music. I would like to bet that, after ten minutes, there are only four or five people still listening—these being, the composer and the more dedicated members of his family. Real contemporary music will only triumph when it is no longer modern, in other words, in fifty years time, when it is no longer attached to a series of "schools" and "isms."[11]

Composed in 1967-68, shortly after his concerto for flute, *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra* demonstrates Françaix's great ability to compose for wind instruments.[12] Like his *L'horloge de Flore* composed in 1959 for oboe and orchestra,[13] his *Concerto*

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[10] Muriel Bellier, "Françaix, Jean," in *Grove Music Online, Oxford Music Online*, http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/10083 (accessed June 14, 2011).

[11] Jacques Lancelot, *Jean Françaix: Concerto pour Clarinette et Orchestre*, Orchestre de Chambre de Nice, Pol Mule, dir., Inedits ORTF 995 019, LP, [1972?].

[12] Bellier, "Françaix, Jean," under "Works."

[13] Ibid.

for Clarinet and Orchestra has become one of his most famous concertos.[14] Interestingly, the work was not dedicated to a particular clarinetist, but to Fernand Oubradous, a conductor and bassoonist.[15]

The composer's conception of *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra* is very colorful and comical. Françaix's description of the work can be seen in the following program note:

> This concerto is, or at least I hope it is, amusing to listen to. It is a kind of aerobatics display for the ear, complete with loops, wing-turns and nose-dives which are fairly terrifying for the soloist, who needs to have a good stomach and several thousand flying hours under his belt. I must say the poor fellow has been given the full treatment, including a slow movement full of phrases with great charm but little time for breathing—rather like a long glide in a plane which is constantly on the verge of stalling. Finally, the pilot starts his noisy engines again, but remains carefree to the point of swapping his airforce cap for the revolving wig of a clown.[16]

Just as his view of the concerto was somewhat comical, his ideas about theoretical designs in music are filled with a similar personality. In a brief biographical sketch Françaix described his musical training and ideas regarding music theory by saying:

> My dodecaphonic 'friends' will tell you I am an extinct volcano, and I would be reluctant to take issue with them. The only seal of approval I have is a qualification from the Paris conservatoire; I have a few ribbons on my chest, as do many others in France. My composition teacher Nadia Boulanger never managed to teach me harmony or counterpoint, let alone fugue. To save her reputation, she used to tell everyone I had mastered all these things at an instinctive level. But if the truth be known, elegant theories are the last things on

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[14] Jacques Françaix, "Jean Françaix (1912-1997): Biodata," http://www.jeanfrancaix.org/ (accessed May 30, 2011).

[15] Bruocsella Symphony Orchestra, "Jean Françaix's Clarinet Concerto," http://www.bso-orchestra.be/francaix_concerto_clarinet_en.htm (accessed June 28, 2011).

[16] Cuper, *Copland/ Françaix/ Nielsen: Concertos for Clarinet & Orchestra*, CD, 1992.

> my mind when I compose. I am more interested in winding forest paths off the beaten track of theory.[17]

While Françaix's attitude about music theory seems carefree, there are recognizable structural elements present in each of the movements of the concerto. What follows is a brief discussion about the manner in which Françaix made use of the concerto design, and his use of formal structures within each movement.

Western classical composers use the concerto as the most popular way of combining solo instruments, or groups of soloists, with orchestral accompaniment. It has a long history reaching back to the seventeenth-century, and has been used in numerous innovative ways by composers. During the time of Mozart and Beethoven the concerto employed structural elements that became common for composers of their time and beyond. These are highlighted by Wallace Berry in *Form in Music*. First, the influence of the dance suite on the concerto of the Baroque period was eventually replaced by that of sonata form during the Classical period.[18] Second, a three-movement form (fast-slow-fast) was adopted during the Classical era and used afterward as a commonly accepted mold.[19] Third, the first movement began to make use of the "double exposition," which could also be used occasionally in other movements.[20] Finally, the virtuosic display of the soloist in a cadenza often occurred in the outer

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[17] Bruocsella Symphony Orchetsra, "Jean Françaix, by Jean Françaix," http://www.bso-orchestra.be/francaix_autobio_en.htm (accessed June 6, 2011).

[18] Wallace Berry, "Concerto," in *Form in Music*, 2nd ed. (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1986), 230.

[19] Ibid., 231.

[20] Ibid.

movements, and was commonly placed in the codas of these movements.[21] While there may have been other common traits in the solo concertos of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the compositional practices mentioned above will be used as a point of comparison to the manner in which Françaix utilizes the genre of the concerto.

Françaix uses the single-movement sonata form as the structure for the first movement of his *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra* (see Table 1.2). However, the "double exposition" that was common prior to the twentieth-century is not used anywhere in the work. Françaix utilizes a four-movement scheme strongly influenced by multi-movement sonata form in place of the three-movement mold. The first movement uses single-movement sonata form (see Table 1.2), the second movement is in ternary form (see Table 1.3), the third movement consists of a continuous set of theme and variations (see Table 1.4), and the last movement is a five-part rondo (see Table 1.5). Finally, the outer movements of Françaix's concerto contain cadenzas similar to the concertos written prior to the twentieth-century. However, these cadenzas are placed in locations other than the coda sections of the outer movements. Tables 1.2-1.5 illustrate Françaix's use of formal structures in each of the movements in the concerto. While there are no measure numbers in the current edition for clarinet and piano, each measure was numbered for the sake of this analysis.

[21] Ibid., 232-33.

Table 1.2. Sonata form in the first movement

	Exposition				**Development**
Thematic Groups	Intro.	Primary Theme	Trans.	Secondary Theme	Thematic material developed from Exposition
Measure #	1-4	5-24	24-42	43-72	73-108

	Recapitulation				
Thematic Groups	Primary Theme	Trans.	Cadenza	Secondary Theme	Coda
Measure #	109-120	121-129	130-177	178-198	199-207

Table 1.3. Ternary form in the second movement

Thematic Groups	A	B	A
Measure #	1-134	135-250	Repeat of 13-134

Table 1.4. Continuous theme and variations in the third movement

Thematic Groups	Intro.	Theme	Var. 1	Var. 2	Var. 3	Coda
Measure #	1-12	13-28	29-44	45-54	55-70	71-93

Table 1.5. Five-part rondo in the fourth movement

Thematic Groups	Intro.	A	B	Cadenza	A′
Measure #	1-4	5-57	58-113	114-145	146-165

Thematic Groups	C	Cadenza	A″	Coda
Measure #	166-204	205-215	216-230	231-243

Specific references to passages from the concerto in the following chapters will be cited with the rehearsal numbers that are in the current edition for clarinet and piano. All of the musical examples are based on the clarinet part from the current edition for clarinet and piano with the exception of figure 2.13, which comes from the piano part of

the same score. References to musical terms that are marked in the score for clarinet and piano are italicized, while those that are used to describe a performers' interpretation of the music are in normal font. All references to pitches from the clarinet part in B-flat are as they appear in the current score for clarinet and piano, not as concert pitches.

Chapter 2: Philippe Cuper

Background of the Performer

Philippe Cuper was born in the northern French town of Lille in 1957. His musical training began in the town of Marcq-en-Baroeul[22] at the age of twelve after being taught solfège by his mother. Despite Cuper's desire to learn the accordion or trumpet, Gilbert Voisin inspired Cuper and became his first clarinet teacher.[23] In addition to studying with Voisin, Cuper attended summer sessions at the Nice International Summer Academy taught by Jacques Lancelot, the world premiere performer of Françaix's *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra*.[24] After studying with Voisin, Cuper moved to Paris and studied with world-renowned clarinetists Guy Dangain, Ulysse Delecluse, Guy Deplus, and Henri Druart.[25] In addition to studying with these clarinetists, Cuper served as first clarinetist for the French air force band and the Concerts Lamoureux. While serving as principal clarinetist for the Concerts Lamoureux, Cuper studied musicology at the Sorbonne and clarinet at the Paris Conservatoire under Guy Dangain. After graduating from the Conservatoire in 1980, Cuper joined the Orchestre de la Garde Républicaine and the World Youth Orchestra

[22] Philippe Cuper, e-mail message to author, March 19, 2012.

[23] Weston, *Clarinet Virtuosi of Today*, 72-74.

[24] Cuper, *Copland/ Françaix/ Nielsen: Concertos for Clarinet & Orchestra*, CD, 1992.

[25] Weston, *Clarinet Virtuosi of Today*, 74.

while continuing to study clarinet with Henri Druart.[26] In addition to playing with the orchestras mentioned above, Cuper has performed with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra, the Bavarian Radio Orchestra, and the Scala di Milano Orchestra as principal clarinetist.[27] As a teacher, he has served as a clarinet instructor in France and abroad. After teaching at the Conservatorio Superieur de Aragon in Spain, Cuper joined the faculty at the Versailles National Conservatory where he currently teaches. In addition, Cuper serves as the principal clarinetist for the Paris Opera Orchestra.[28]

Philippe Cuper began learning Françaix's *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra* at the early age of sixteen at the Nice International Summer Academy.[29] After approximately a decade of practicing the concerto, Cuper met Françaix during a rehearsal of Françaix's *Octet* and began to collaborate with the composer. Françaix graciously invited Cuper to his apartment in Paris several times to discuss the work and listen to Cuper practice various passages from the concerto. At the culmination of this collaborative process, Cuper invited Françaix to conduct the Orchestre de Bretagne for his recorded performance of the work in 1992. Cuper also wrote an article about the concerto that provides a list of errors in the current edition for clarinet and piano as well

[26] Cuper, *Copland/ Françaix/ Nielsen: Concertos for Clarinet & Orchestra*, CD, 1992.

[27] Cuper, e-mail message to author, March 19, 2012.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Unless otherwise indicated, all quotes and information about Philippe Cuper and his performance practices come from Philippe Cuper, interview by author, Austin, TX, July 22, 2010.

as the orchestral score.[30] These mistakes still remain in the scores, despite Cuper's and Françaix's joint efforts. Cuper's article, recorded performance, and interview with the author will be incorporated into the following analysis of Cuper's performance practices for the concerto.

Movement I

The tempo markings for each of the movements of the concerto place a high demand for virtuosity on the performer. According to Cuper, these markings are actually faster than the composer originally intended. In his article about the concerto, Cuper describes his first rehearsal with Françaix and the orchestra by saying:

> After a few bars I stopped and asked M. Françaix why the orchestra was playing slower than the indicated tempo. I told him that I had been working on the concerto for 18 years to try to play it at his written tempo…Françaix responded by telling me that when he had composed the concerto he had an old metronome that had not worked correctly, but he did not know this at the time of publication.[31]

Although the printed tempo of the first movement is quarter note equals 132, Cuper (in consultation with Françaix) suggests that the actual tempo is quarter note equals 120-126.[32] Cuper believes that the original marking is too fast for aural clarity and adds that Françaix was not strict about tempi in the same way that composers such as Stravinsky or Boulez were in their works. Cuper suggests that the tempi for each movement should

[30] Cuper, "Checking Points in the Jean Françaix 'Clarinet Concerto,'" 19-21.

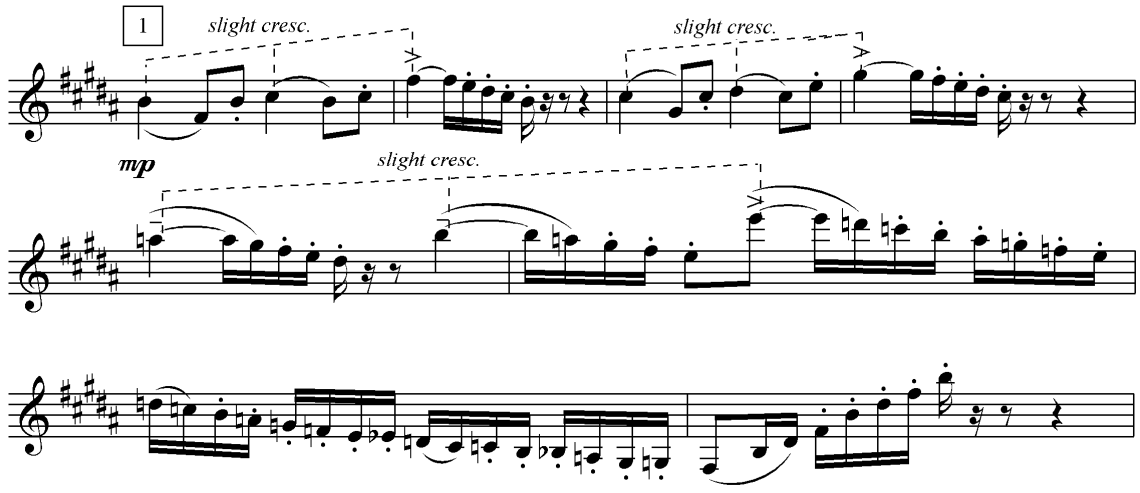
[31] Ibid., 19.

[32] Ibid., 20.

be determined by the ability of the performer to make sense of the work acoustically in whatever concert hall they are performing it in.

Philippe Cuper's approach to phrasing throughout the concerto is loyal to the printed score. According to Cuper, any variance in dynamic levels from what is in the printed score should be very minimal. In the presentation of the primary theme from 1 to 2, Cuper follows the printed *mezzo piano* dynamic.[33] However, he does increase the volume slightly where the melodic line naturally rises (see fig. 2.1).

Figure 2.1. Philippe Cuper's interpretation of the primary theme starting at 1

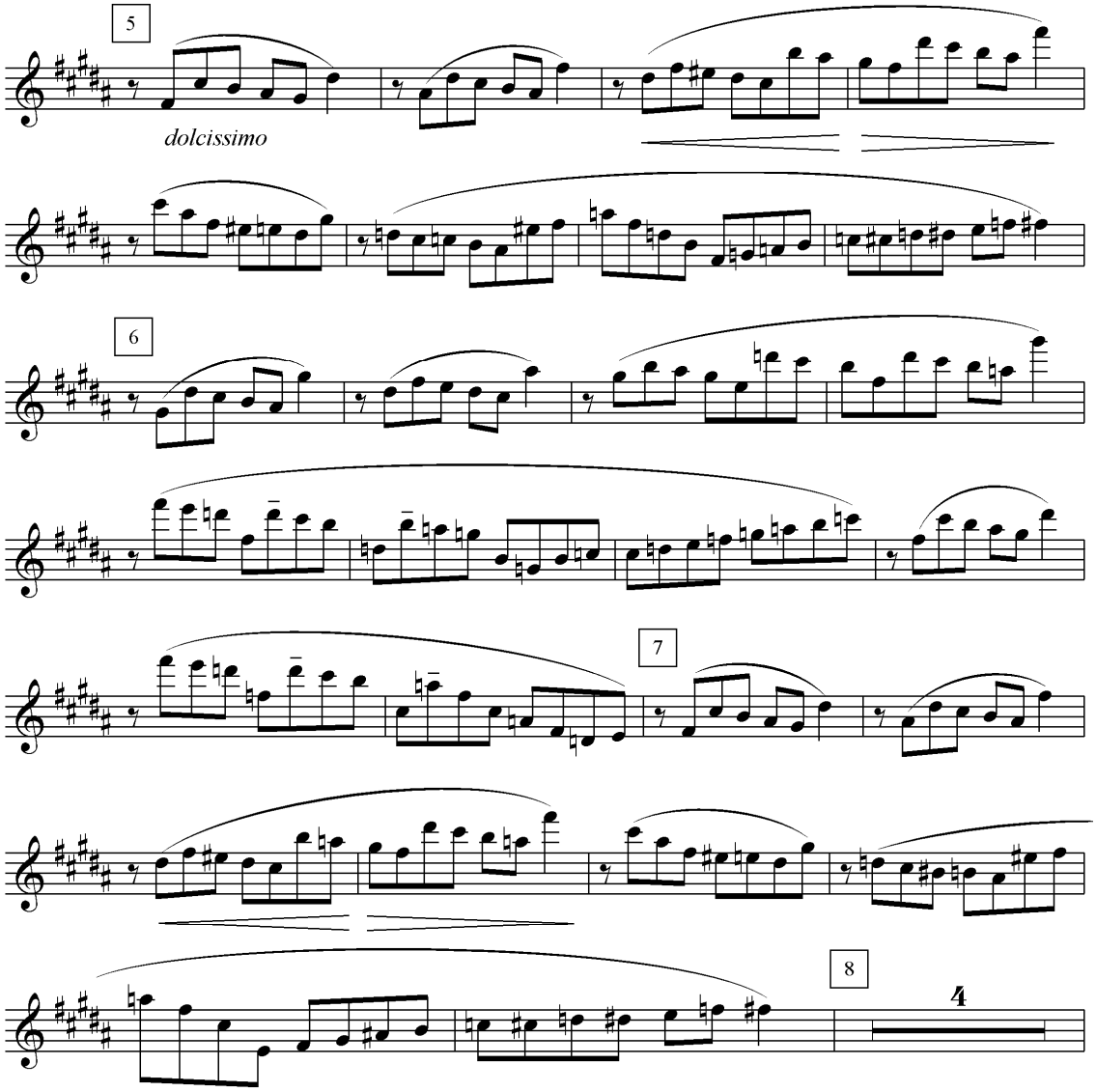


Cuper performs the secondary theme from 5 to one measure before 8 with no deviation from the printed dynamic levels (see fig. 2.2). He does not make use of any rubato in the secondary theme, but maintains the rhythmic integrity of the line as

[33] Unless otherwise indicated, all references to rehearsal numbers and markings in the concerto come from Jean Françaix, *Concerto pour Clarinette et Orchestre: Réduction pour Clarinette et Piano* (Paris: Éditions Musicales Transatlantiques, 1968).

printed in the score. Additionally, Cuper successfully maintained a very soft dynamic level throughout the secondary theme in his recorded performance, which led Françaix to praise Cuper for his "velvety *pianissimi*."[34]

Figure 2.2. The secondary theme from 5 to 8



[34] Cuper, *Copland/ Françaix/ Nielsen: Concertos for Clarinet & Orchestra*, CD, 1992.

Six measures after 11 the clarinet plays an accompanimental figure that leads to the recapitulation starting at 12 (see fig. 2.4). According to Cuper, the printed dynamic marking of *ppp* is too soft for the soloist in this passage. Instead, he believes it is important to bring this passage out more, and balance with the orchestra. Despite the technical difficulty of the passage, Cuper does not pull back the tempo. To facilitate a slightly easier technique, Cuper fingers the chalumeau E-flats with the one and one fingering in the sixth measure of 11 (see fig. 2.3). He performs the rest of the passage with normal fingerings. While the accompanimental figure is very fast, Cuper believes that the changes in harmony need to be brought out by emphasizing the first two notes of each of the harmonic shifts (see fig. 2.4).

Figure 2.3. One and one chalumeau E-flat fingering

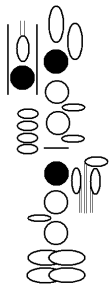
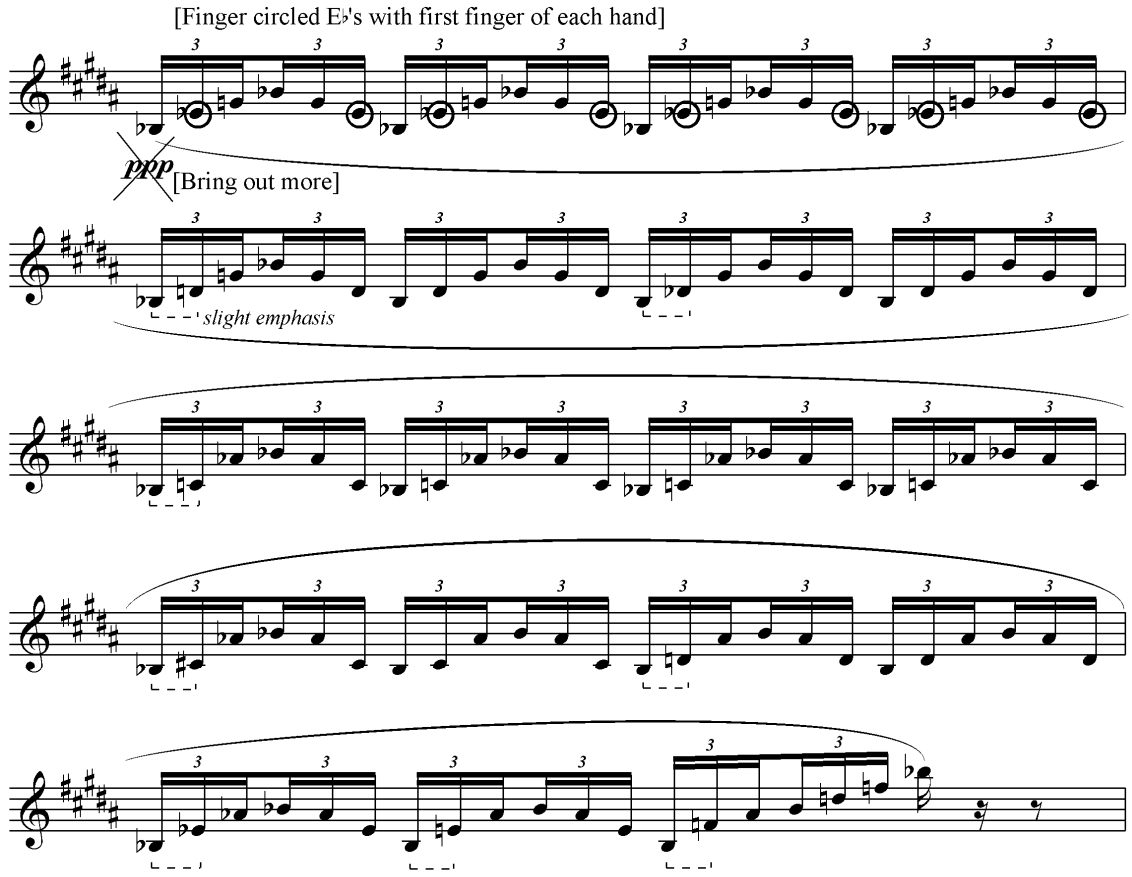


Figure 2.4. Accompanimental passage starting six measures after 11

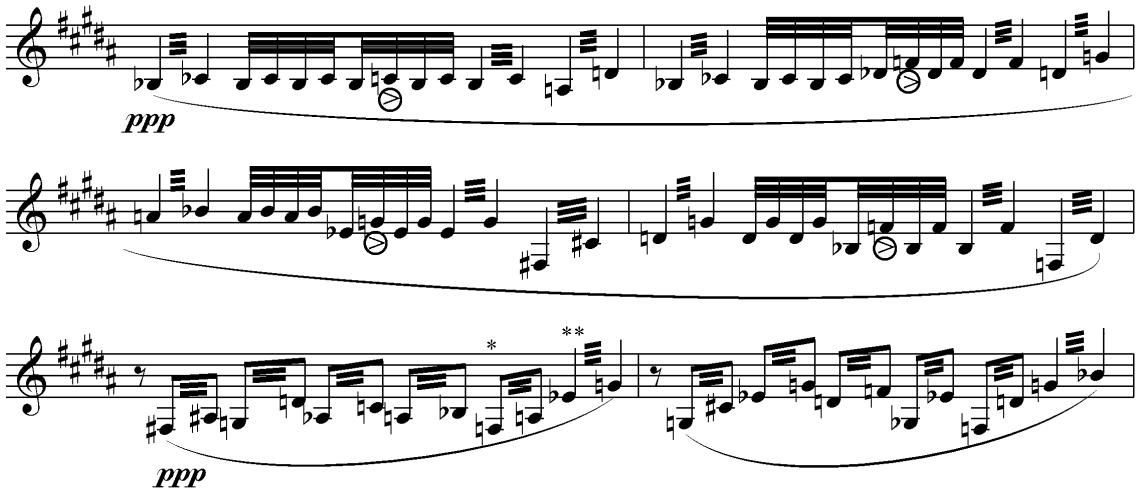


Cuper plays the *cadenza* beginning ten measures after 13 *In Tempo* as written. Twenty measures after 13 the tempo is marked *In tempo, ma a piacere*. According to Cuper, from this point through the rest of the *cadenza*, the performer has more room to interpret the music freely.

Of great importance is Cuper's interpretation of the tremolo passage starting nine measures before 14. Cuper treats the tremolos as being precisely measured thirty-second notes. He emphasizes the accented notes to bring out the reference to the secondary theme from the exposition. According to what Françaix told Cuper, there are two tremolos that are incorrectly printed. Five measures before 14, the tremolo from

low E-flat to A-natural should read low F-natural to A-natural. The next tremolo from F-natural to G-natural should read E-flat to G-natural (see fig. 2.5).

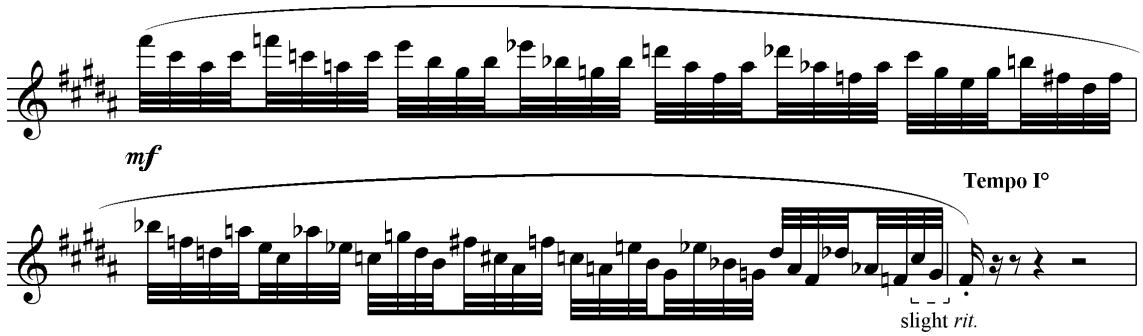
Figure 2.5. Cuper's interpretation of the tremolo passage starting nine bars before 14



*The current edition for clarinet and piano reads E-flat to A.
**The current edition for clarinet and piano reads F to G.

Cuper does not suggest any alternate fingerings for the technically difficult passages in the *cadenza*. He believes that fingerings need to be chosen based on the player and the instrument they play on. For Cuper it is not problematic to play the passage starting in the fourth measure of 14 with standard fingerings (see fig. 2.6). In his recording, Cuper pulls back the tempo for the last two notes to facilitate a smoother entrance for the bassoons at the *Tempo Primo*.

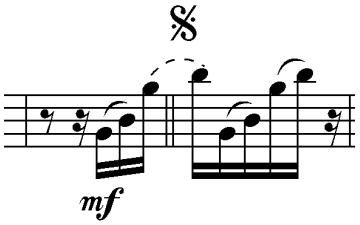
Figure 2.6. The technically difficult passage starting in the fourth measure of 14



Movement II

Printed errors exist in the second movement as discussed in Cuper's article.[35] One mistake that was not addressed in his article occurs in the fourth and fifth measures of 18. According to Cuper, a slur is missing between the two measures (see fig. 2.7). He adds that the tempo marking is brisker than Françaix originally intended, and should be dotted quarter-note equals 69 to 72.[36] This slower tempo accommodates better aural clarity and is less technically demanding.

Figure 2.7. Corrected articulation in the fourth and fifth measures of 18

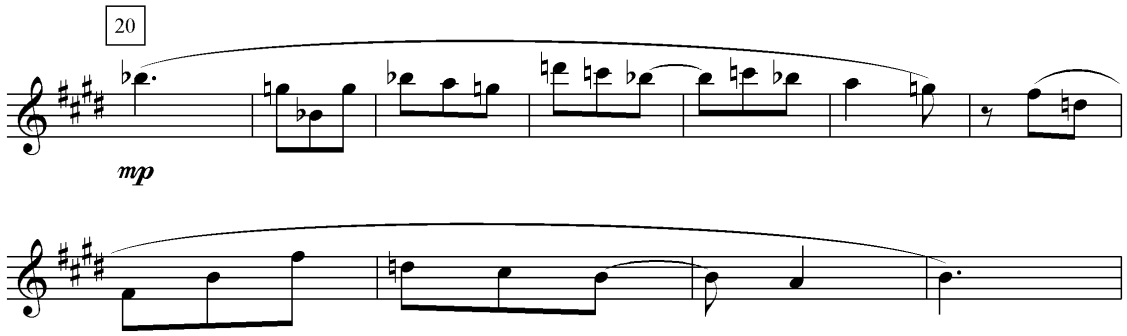


[35] Cuper, "Checking Points in the Jean Françaix 'Clarinet Concerto,'" 20.

[36] Ibid.

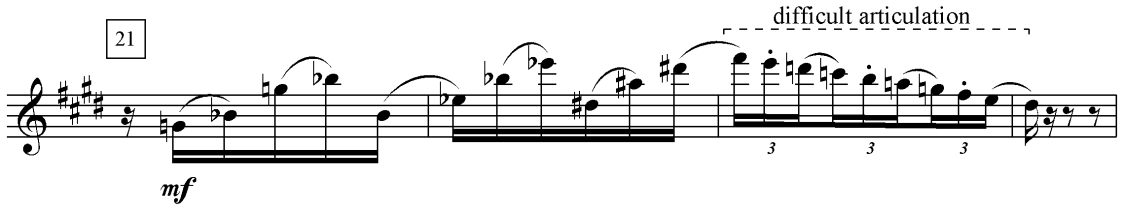
Cuper believes that the second movement is a straight forward *Scherzando* that does not contain any musically complicated passages. Like his interpretation of the first movement, Cuper is faithful to carefully observe the printed markings in the score. He plays the melody beginning at 20 without any changes in dynamic levels in his recording (see fig. 2.8).

Figure 2.8. The melodic line beginning at 20



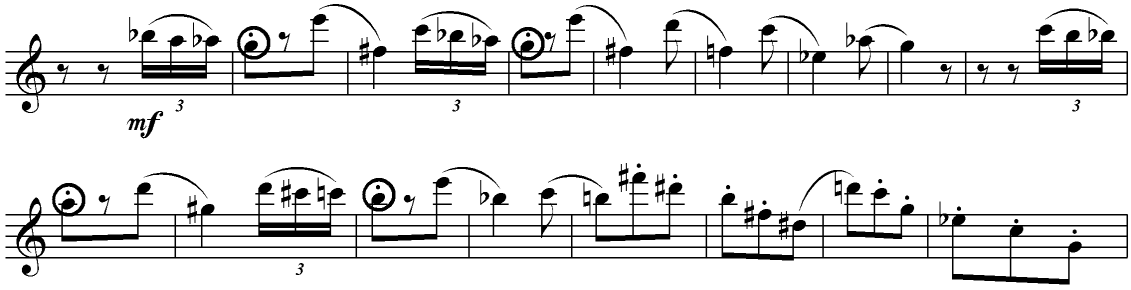
Although Cuper does not think there are any important phrases in this movement for the soloist, he does believe that a careful observance of the printed articulations in the third measure of 21 is crucial (see fig. 2.9). This is due to the difficult nature of the measure, which Cuper thinks is easy to play incorrectly.

Figure 2.9. Difficult articulation in the third measure of 21



Cuper's interpretation of the melody beginning in the eighth measure of the Trio contains no dynamic changes, and strictly follows the articulation markings. This is showcased by his rendering of the staccato eighth-notes after the triplet sixteenth-notes, which are played short in Cuper's recording (see fig. 2.10).

Figure 2.10. Cuper's interpretation of the melody beginning in the eighth bar of the Trio



Movement III

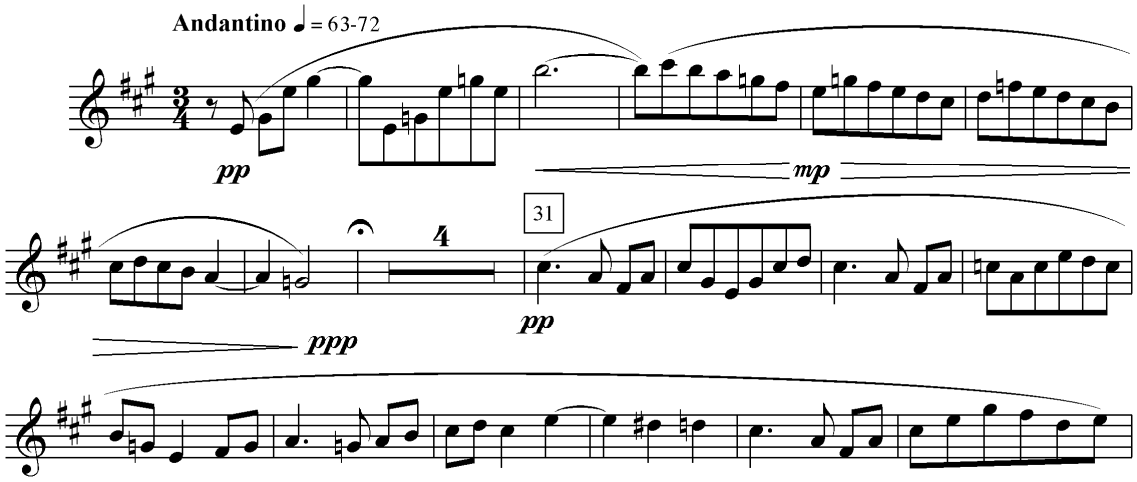
In Cuper's recording, the tempo of the third movement is slightly slower than the printed tempo of a quarter-note equals 76. According to Cuper, Françaix suggested a tempo range of quarter-note equals 63-72.[37] Cuper adds that a relationship between the tempi of the second and third movements exists. He states, "Here, there is a sort of rapport with the tempo of the second movement. The tempo of the beat here is equal to the tempo of a bar of the second movement."[38] Additionally, Cuper believes it is important to faithfully observe the tempo without applying any rubato since rubato is not indicated in the score.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid.

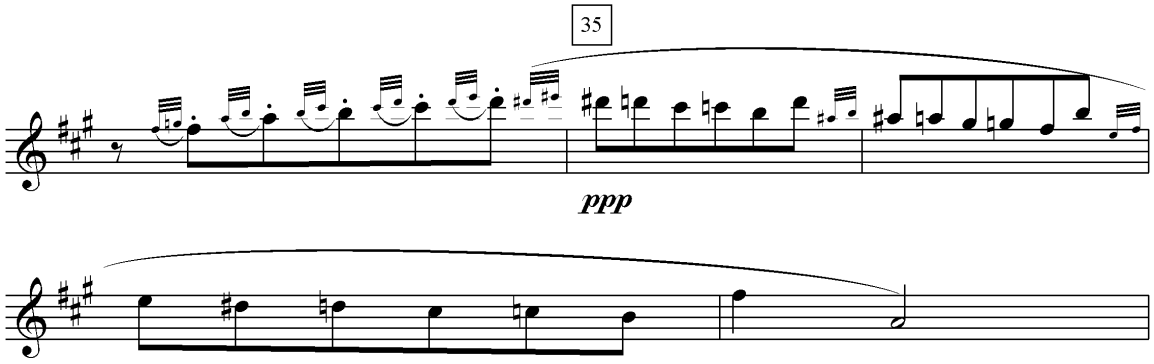
Breath control is an issue that performers face when playing the introductory phrase and the presentation of the theme starting at 31 (see fig. 2.11). Cuper does not recommend breaking these phrases up into smaller parts, but advocates playing each of them in one breath. If a performer does not have the lung capacity to perform the phrases in one breath, Cuper suggests using circular breathing.

Figure 2.11. Introductory phrase and the first phrase of the theme starting at 31



The melody beginning one measure before 35 is challenging to play in tune as it is in the upper register at a very soft dynamic level (see fig. 2.12). In this case, Cuper recommends finding fingerings that will avoid the tendency to play sharp. This is especially true for the last two grace-notes leading into 35. While he does not promote the use of any specific alternate fingerings, Cuper does adjust the intonation as needed with embouchure and tongue position.

Figure 2.12. Melody beginning one measure before 35



Movement IV

According to Cuper, there is a relationship that exists between the first and fourth movements in regard to tempi. At rehearsal 46 there is an appearance of the primary theme from the first movement, which plays a large role in determining the tempo for the fourth movement. While the printed tempo is dotted quarter-note equals 138, Françaix suggests a tempo of dotted quarter-note equals 126 to 132.[39] However, Cuper points out that Françaix's proposed tempo is slightly faster than the tempo for the first movement. Cuper explains this discrepancy by saying, "for him [Françaix] this first theme from the first movement is remembered as a 'souvenir' only."[40]

The fourth movement presents a dilemma in terms of the pulse. While a large portion of the movement is printed in 6/8 time with a suggested pulse of two beats per measure, the underlying orchestral accompaniment is strongly felt in 3/4 (see fig. 2.13). The feeling of being in three is encouraged further by the grace-notes in

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid.

the melodic line of the clarinet in the first two measures of the movement (see fig. 2.14). Cuper, however, does not feel the movement in three when he is performing the work. Instead, he believes that Françaix intended for there to be an ambiguity in the pulse. Although Cuper feels the movement in two beats per measure, he is not opposed to the idea of practicing the movement in three.

Figure 2.13. Piano reduction of the accompaniment starting eight measures before 36

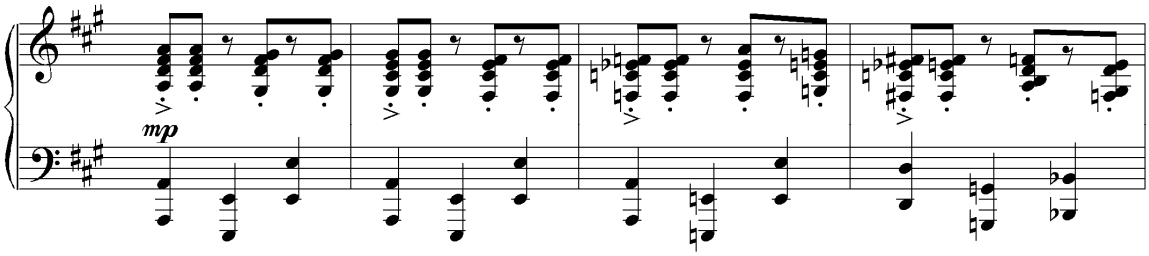
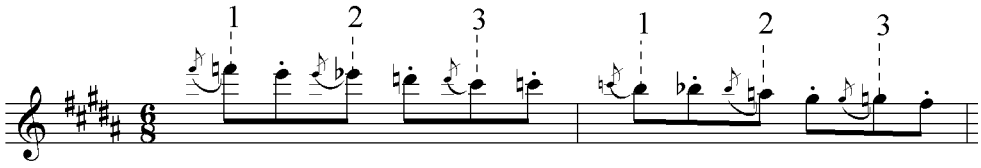


Figure 2.14. The first two measures of the clarinet part felt in 3/4



According to Cuper, the first cadenza begins thirteen measures after 42 and lasts until the *a Tempo, risoluto* six measures before 43. While it is not marked as a cadenza in the printed score, Cuper claims this is an error.[41] Cuper allows for only a slight amount of interpretive freedom in the cadenza and maintains that it is important to follow the composer's markings very carefully. He begins by playing the first eight

[41] Ibid.

measures of the cadenza in the original tempo. Starting in the ninth measure of the cadenza, Cuper pulls the tempo back and then begins to gradually increase the tempo until the twelfth measure of the cadenza (see fig. 2.15). From the thirteenth measure onward, Cuper is careful to follow Françaix's markings. However, he adds a forte dynamic mark eleven measures before 43 that Françaix told him was missing from the printed score (see fig. 2.16).[42]

Figure 2.15. Measures 9-12 in the first cadenza

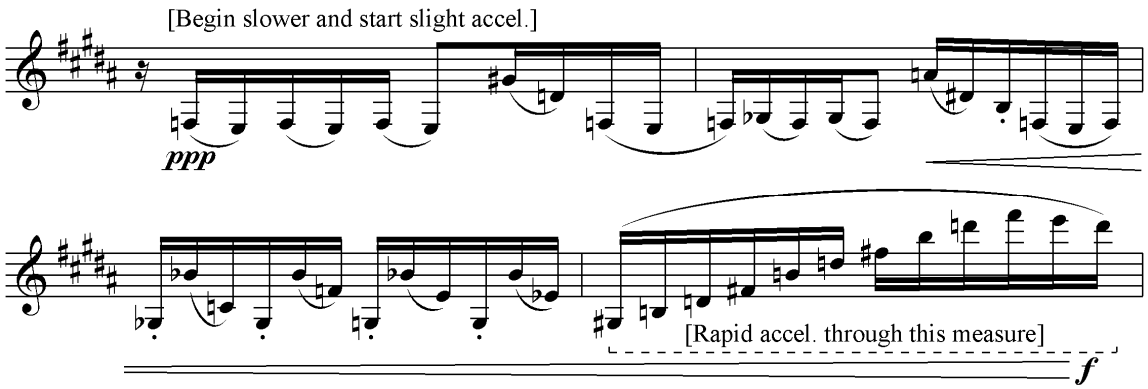
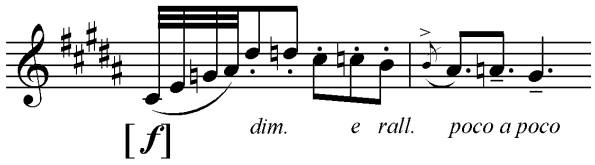


Figure 2.16. Forte dynamic marking added eleven measures before 43

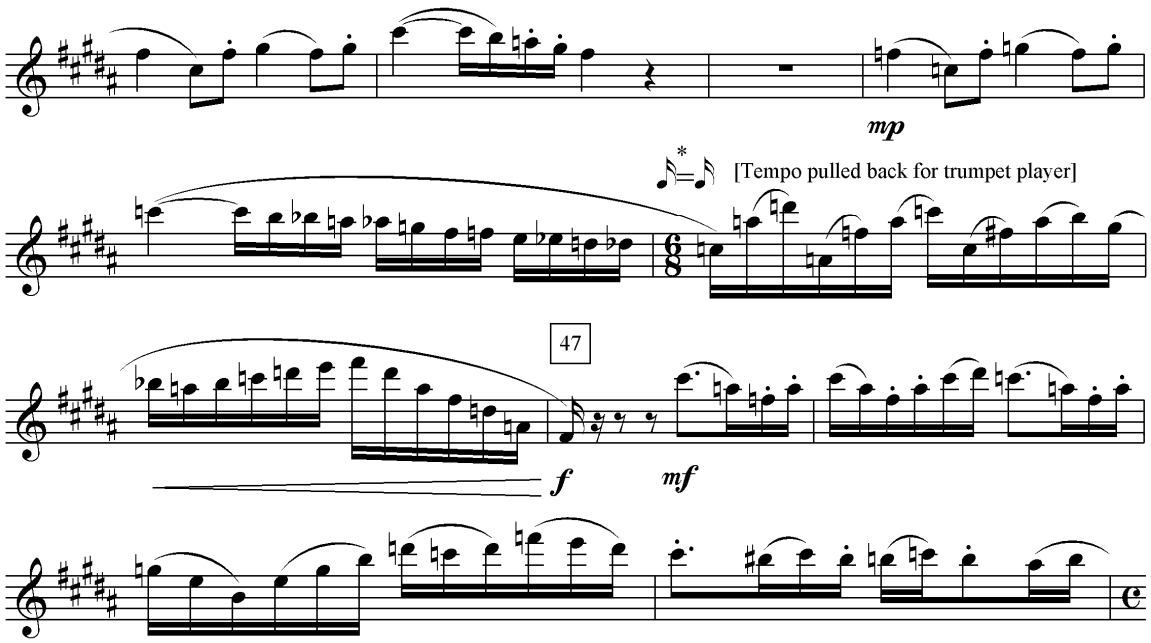


Another passage that Cuper cites as being significant occurs from the third measure of 46 to the fourth measure of 47 (see fig. 2.17). Within this passage there is a

[42] Ibid.

presentation of the primary theme from the first movement, and a technically demanding passage for the orchestra that follows. Cuper's interpretation of this passage is mostly loyal to the printed markings; however, starting two measures before 47, he pulls the tempo back. According to Cuper, Françaix conducted this section slower since the trumpet part is difficult to play in tempo. Cuper returns to the original tempo in the fifth measure of 47.

Figure 2.17. Third measure of 46 to the fourth measure of 47



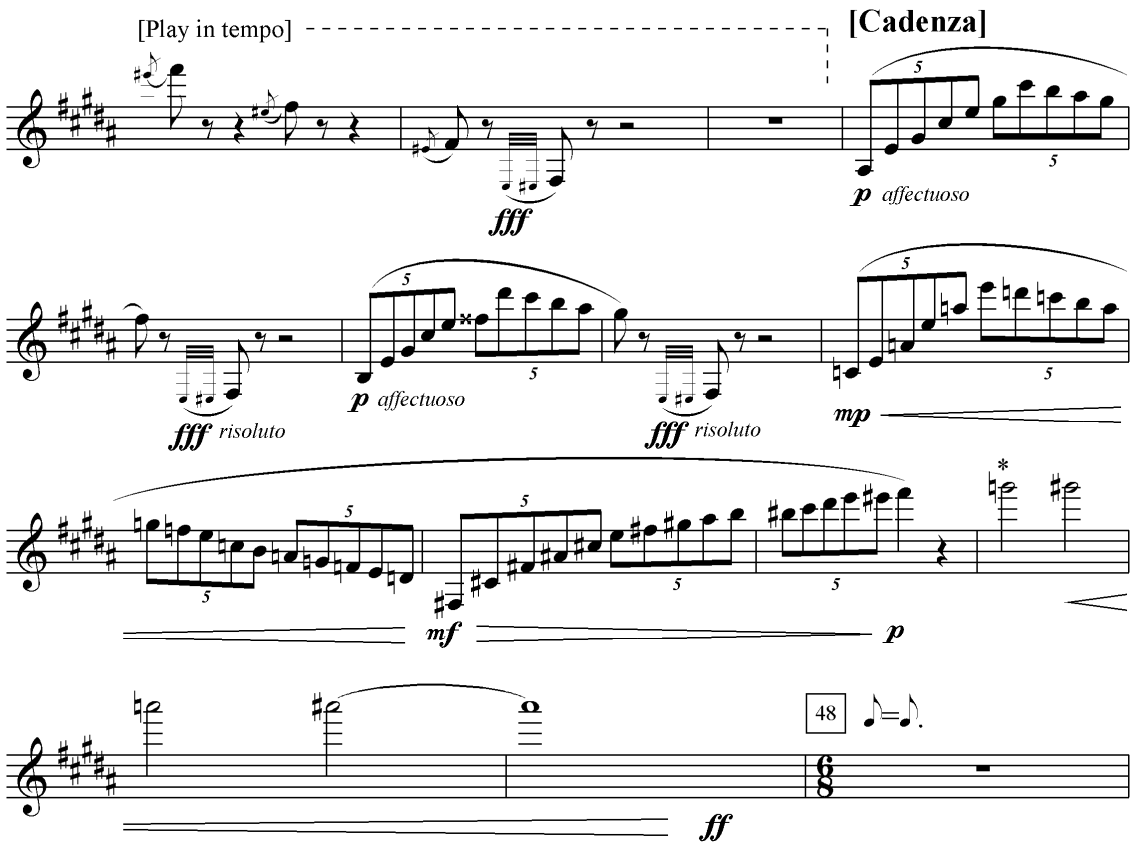
*In the current edition for clarinet and piano this is erroneously marked as an eighth-note equals a dotted eighth-note. [43]

[43] Ibid.

According to Cuper, the second cadenza begins eleven measures after 47 and lasts until one measure before 48 (see fig. 2.18). Like the first cadenza, the second cadenza is not marked in the current edition for clarinet and piano. Cuper cites this as being another error in the part.[44] He plays the three measures preceding the cadenza in tempo; however, Cuper points out that it is tempting for a performer to treat them as part of the cadenza because of similar thematic material. Consistent with his interpretation of the rest of the concerto, Cuper follows what is in the printed part very carefully. He believes this cadenza contains a dialogue between two characters represented by the markings *affectuoso* and *risoluto*. Therefore, it is important to carefully observe these markings and the dynamics associated with them.

[44] Ibid.

Figure 2.18. The eighth measure of 47 to 48



*The current edition for clarinet and piano contains an ossia with notes printed an octave below. However, Cuper plays the upper notes as seen in the example above.

Closing Remarks

Cuper's opinions regarding the difficulty of the work and its reception in France are worthy of note. He states that it is important to study all of the works written by Françaix involving the clarinet. Cuper specifically mentions Françaix's *Tema con Variazioni* as an example. *Tema con Variazioni*, dedicated to his grandson Olivier,

contains a childlike innocence and humor similar to the concerto.[45] While they do not share the same formal structure, they both utilize traditional forms from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and a colorful harmonic language influenced by French jazz. Most importantly, both works require a high level of technical proficiency from the performer that needs to be balanced with sensitive musical phrasing.

Cuper mentions the fact that the concerto was not performed often, or appreciated, during Françaix's lifetime. The main reason for the lack of performances was the difficult nature of the work. Cuper adds that during Françaix's life, composers of less conservative contemporary music, such as Boulez, dominated the musical landscape in France. This caused performers in France to overlook Françaix's music, although Françaix believed that his *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra* would be appreciated in the future.

As mentioned earlier, there is a need to investigate whether it would be technically easier to perform the concerto on an A clarinet. Cuper mentions a conversation with Françaix where he asked the composer why he did not write the concerto for A clarinet and *Tema con Variazioni* for B-flat clarinet. According to Cuper, Françaix was not dogmatic about which clarinet the concerto is performed on. If the work is easier to play on an A clarinet, play it on an A clarinet. Cuper even jokingly mentions the possibility of transposing the work for C clarinet if it made the work easier for performers.

Cuper points out that there are numerous bad interpretations of Françaix's concerto. He adds that these misinterpretations of the work are rooted in the desires of

[45] Jean Françaix, *Tema con Variazioni: pour clarinette en la et piano* (Paris: Éditions Max Eschig, 1974), 1.

performers to deviate from what Françaix wrote in the score. Such performers "use the music to serve themselves rather than the composer."[46]

Cuper's philosophy is primarily driven by the belief that it is important to remain faithful to the score in order to avoid diminishing the artistic voice of the composer. While the tempi are misprinted, he follows the advice that he received while collaborating with Françaix, and does not play faster or slower than recommended. Additionally, Cuper does not see the need to add embellishments such as glissandi to enhance the comical nature of the work, unlike some of the other artists that will be discussed. His informed and detail-oriented interpretation serves as a fantastic example of a performance of the work as the composer intended it, and makes him a great base to begin comparing other interpretations with.

[46] Cuper, e-mail message to author, March 19, 2012.

Chapter 3: Dimitri Ashkenazy

Background of the Performer

Dimitri Ashkenazy was born in New York in 1969—a year after Jean Françaix composed his *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra*. Growing up in a musical household with three pianists, his father Vladimir Ashkenazy, his mother Thorunn Johannsdottir[47] and his brother Vovka Ashkenazy, one would expect Dimitri to follow in their footsteps. While Dimitri began studying piano at the early age of six, he also became fascinated with the clarinet. This fascination led to his study of the instrument under Giambattista Sisini at the Conservatory of Lucerne.[48] In addition to his thirteen years of study with Sisini, Ashkenazy received a handful of lessons with Franklin Cohen, principal clarinet of the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra.[49]

After completing his training, Ashkenazy built a vast reputation as a touring artist. His solo and chamber music performances have taken place all over the globe with world-famous chamber groups and orchestras. In addition to touring the world, Ashkenazy has been sought after as a master class instructor and as a recording artist.

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[47] Dimitri Ashkenazy, e-mail message to author, March 29, 2012.

[48] Dimitri Ashkenazy, "Dimitri Ashkenazy, Clarinet," http://www.dimitriashkenazy.net/ (accessed March 13, 2012).

[49] Unless otherwise indicated, all quotes and information about Dimitri Ashkenazy and his performance practices come from Dimitri Ashkenazy, interview by author, Norman, OK, June 19, 2010.

On occasion he has collaborated with his brother and father in live and recorded performances.[50]

Although Ashkenazy did not collaborate with Jean Françaix on his recording of the concerto, he did send a copy of his recording to Françaix who had high praise for the performance. After recording the concerto, Ashkenazy was able to meet Françaix in Paris for a brief visit. During this time, they listened to Philippe Cuper's recording and enjoyed casual conversation. Through this experience Ashkenazy gained greater insight into the composer and his music, which would shape the way he performed future performances of Françaix's music.

According to Ashkenazy, Françaix's "warm" and "simple" personality had an influence on him. Ashkenazy points out that these character traits are prevalent in Françaix's music, and describes Françaix's music by saying that it is easily accessible to the listener. He adds that despite the simplicity of the music, there is a more profound side to it as well. According to Ashkenazy, the concerto embodies all of the traits of a great comedy. While the humorous side of the work draws performers and listeners to appreciate the lighter side of life, he believes that Françaix's concerto also contains moments of deeper reflection. Ashkenazy cites the third movement as containing the greatest moment of introspection, while the other movements only contain fleeting periods of deep contemplation. He adds that these moments of reflection enhance the comical nature of the rest of the work by providing a contrast.

Ashkenazy's interpretation of the concerto is influenced by Christoph Mueller, conductor of the Cincinnati Philharmonia Orchestra. Mueller's suggestions about the

[50] Dimitri Ashkenazy, "Dimitri Ashkenazy, Clarinet" (accessed March 13, 2012).

music were insightful, and Ashkenazy still incorporates Mueller's ideas into his performances of the concerto with other orchestras.

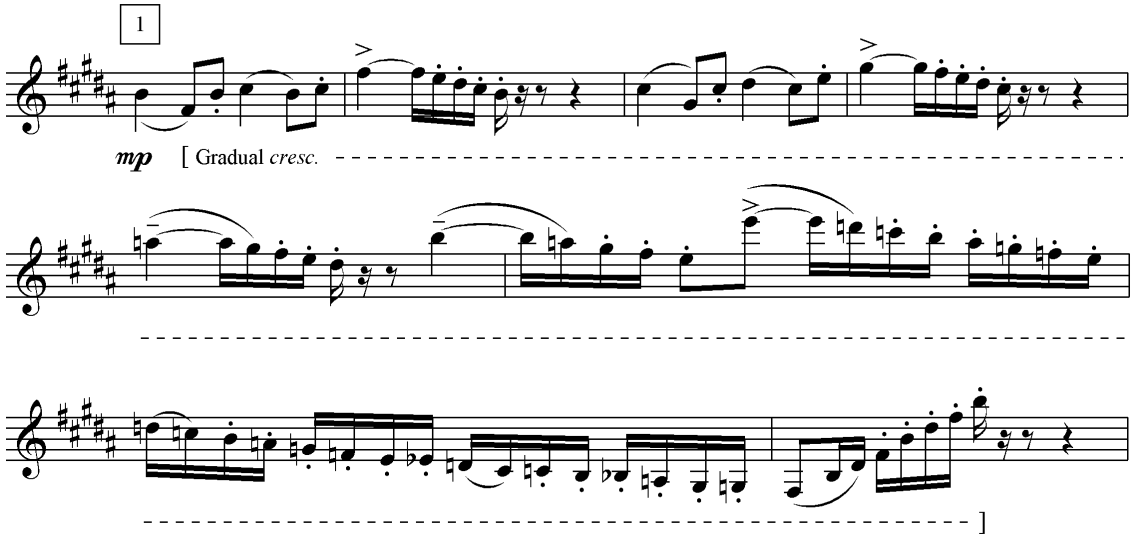
Movement I

Ashkenazy bases his musical decisions for the concerto on the current edition for clarinet and piano. While Ashkenazy did not collaborate with Françaix in regard to correct notes and tempi, his own artistic knowledge gave him guidance in regard to these areas. Ashkenazy believes that the printed tempo marking for the first movement is too fast, and leads to performances that are "acoustically nonsensical." He adds that slightly pulling back the tempo allows the beauty of the composition and its harmonic changes to be highlighted. According to Ashkenazy, performing the work too fast for the sake of showing off the technical abilities of the performer does not allow the listener to have an informed understanding of the musical content. He recommends performing the first movement at approximately a quarter-note equals 120-126. His final decision regarding tempo in the first movement, however, depends upon the orchestra, the conductor with whom he is working, the hall in which he is performing, and when he is performing the work.

The manner in which Ashkenazy approaches musical phrases in the concerto is somewhat faithful to what is in the printed score for clarinet and piano. He uses his musical artistry to guide him in shaping melodic lines, and at times bends or stretches the tempo to enhance the colorful harmonic changes in the music. For Ashkenazy, the presentation of the primary thematic material from 1 to 2 is the first part of a gradual

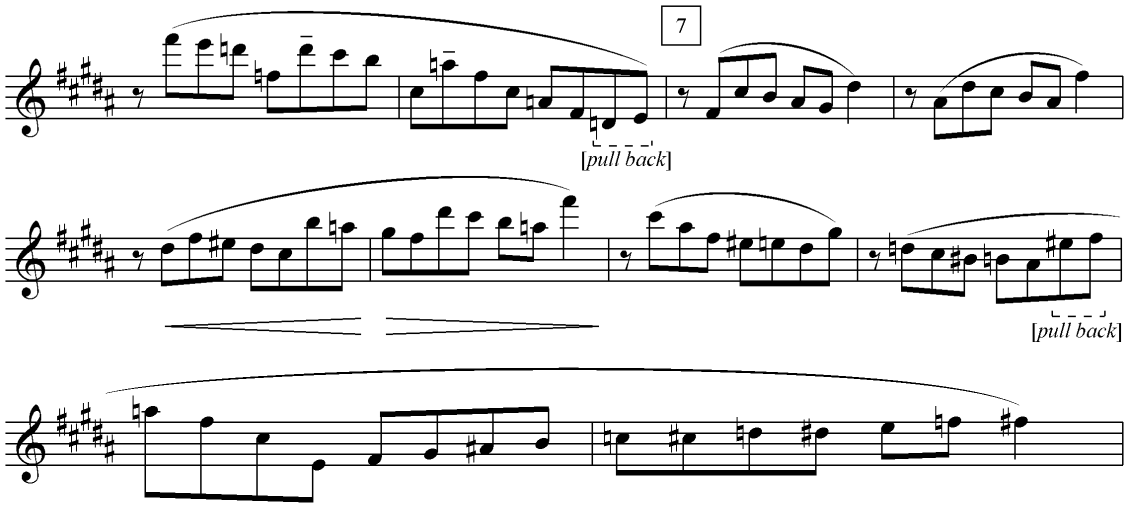
build in dynamics from the beginning to a *fortissimo* climax four measures before 5 (see fig. 3.1).

Figure 3.1. Ashkenazy's interpretation of the primary theme beginning at 1



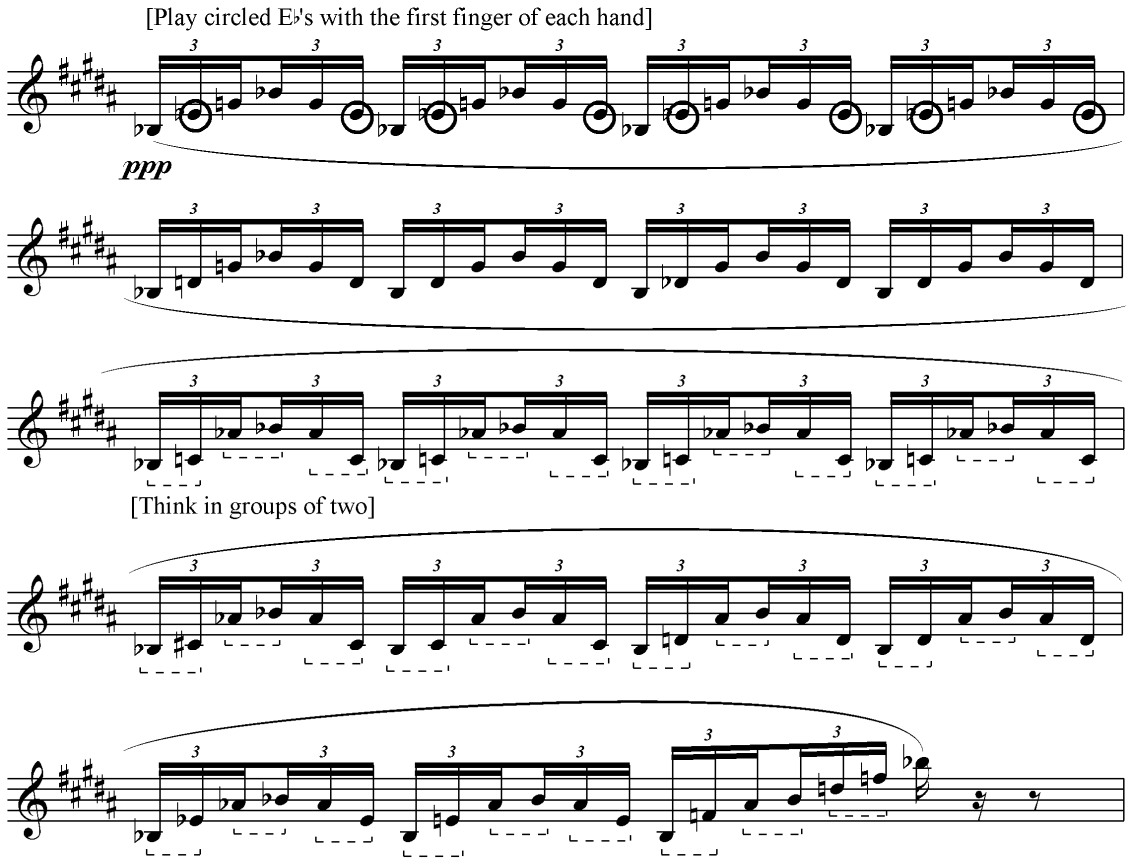
Ashkenazy's interpretation of the secondary theme from 5 to one measure before 8 is influenced by the colorful harmonic changes that accompany the melody. While he is loyal to the markings in the part, he varies the tempo slightly to bring out the changes in harmony. Of great importance to Ashkenazy are the two eighth notes leading into 7, and the two eighth notes leading into the seventh measure of 7 (see fig. 3.2). He pulls the tempo back slightly on these eighth notes to accentuate the harmony on the downbeat that follows.

Figure 3.2. Two measures before 7 to one measure before 8



Ashkenazy interprets the accompanimental passage beginning in the sixth measure of 11 as it is marked in the clarinet part. He thinks in groups of two sixteenth-notes starting in the eighth measure of 11 (see fig. 3.3). Ashkenazy believes this helps to facilitate smoother technique in this passage. Like Cuper, he uses the one and one chalumeau E-flat fingering (see fig. 2.3, pg. 19) in the sixth measure of 11 to make the technically difficult line easier to play (see fig. 3.3).

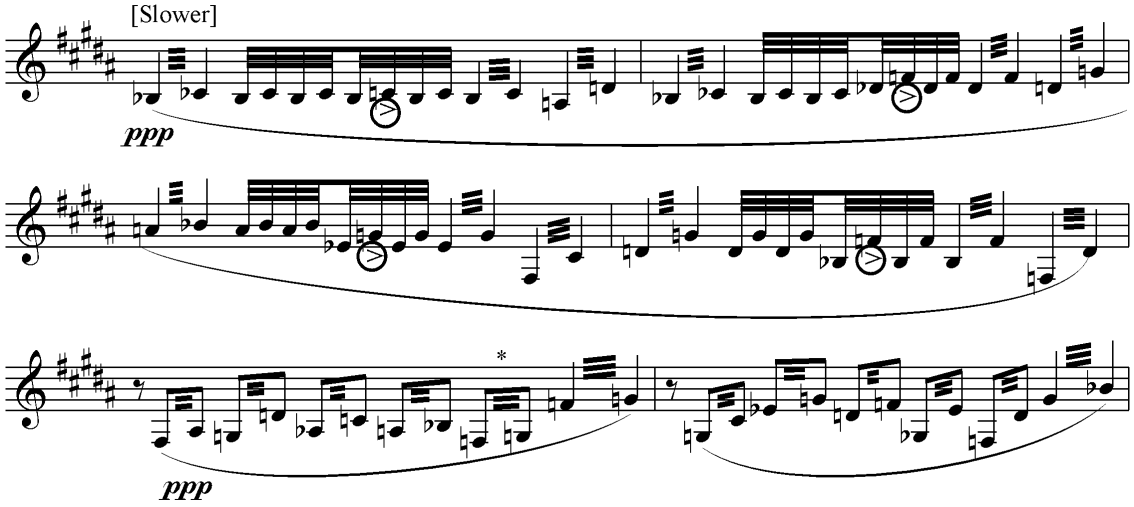
Figure 3.3. Accompanimental passage in the sixth bar of 11 to two measures before 12



Ashkenazy's musical interpretation of the *cadenza* follows the printed score closely. He performs the beginning of the *cadenza* as marked *In tempo*. Ashkenazy believes the articulations should be carefully observed to mimic the character of the bassoon, which plays similar underlying figures throughout the first movement. Beginning with the grace-note pickups into the twenty-first measure of 13, where it is marked *In tempo, ma a piacere,* Ashkenazy pulls the tempo back to bring out the secondary theme from the exposition. Starting seventeen measures before 14 Ashkenazy slows the tempo down further to make a grand presentation of the primary theme, and to allow for acoustical clarity in the melody.

According to Ashkenazy, the tremolo passage that begins nine measures before 14 is also slower. Ashkenazy suggests that the tempo of this section should be based on how fast the performer can play the tremolos and bring out the accented notes. While he clearly observes the accented notes, Ashkenazy is careful to maintain the *ppp* dynamic mark in the printed part. Five measures before 14 he plays a tremolo from low F-natural to G-natural instead of the printed low E-flat to A-natural (see fig. 3.4). This is because he performs the work on a standard B-flat clarinet that does not have a low E-flat extension. Ashkenazy adds that Italian opera clarinetists use clarinets with low E-flat extensions when they prefer to play an entire opera on one clarinet and transpose when needed. In this case B-flat clarinets need this extension to cover the lowest note of an A clarinet.

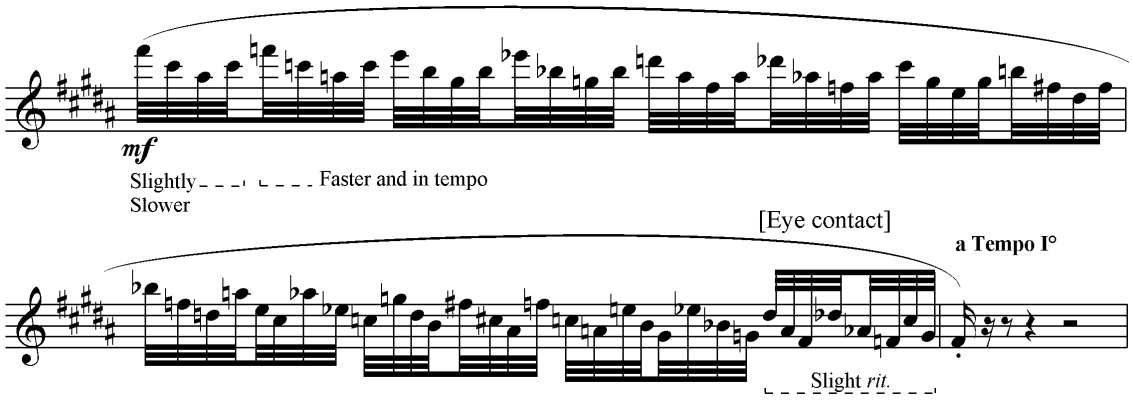
Figure 3.4. The tremolo passage starting nine measures before 14



*The current edition for clarinet and piano reads E-flat to A-natural.

Starting with the *a Tempo* two measures before 14, Ashkenazy plays slightly under tempo through the rest of the *cadenza*. He does not believe this portion of the *cadenza* should be played rigidly in tempo, but should have the feeling of searching for something before being resolved four measures before 15. Therefore, for the difficult passage beginning in the fourth measure of 14, Ashkenazy plays the first four notes slightly slower in his recording with the Cincinnati Philharmonia Orchestra before increasing the tempo (see fig. 3.5). For the last eight notes of the *cadenza*, he suggests that the performer needs to make eye contact with the conductor and pull the tempo back slightly in order to facilitate a smooth entrance for the bassoons starting in the fourth measure before 15.

Figure 3.5. Ashkenazy's interpretation of the technically difficult passage starting in the fourth measure of 14



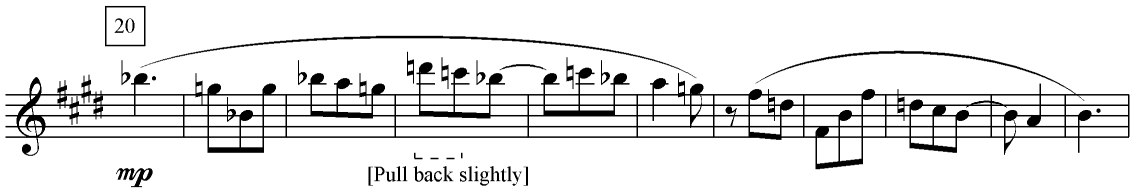
Movement II

Ashkenazy's tempo in the second movement is governed by the ability of the musicians in an orchestra to communicate their parts clearly. He believes the tempo

marking of dotted quarter-note equals 84 is too fast. Ashkenazy adds that the appropriate tempo for this movement is dictated by the ability of the performers in the orchestra, especially the oboes, to perform the first ten measures of the movement. He believes that the chosen tempo should strike a balance between allowing the music to be communicated clearly, and remaining fast enough to keep up the energy and excitement of the movement. While every orchestra is different, Ashkenazy recommends a tempo of dotted quarter-note equals 74.

Ashkenazy believes that the melody beginning at 20 is musically important since it represents the most melodic line in the second movement outside of the Trio section (see fig. 3.6). While he believes it is important to maintain a steady tempo throughout, Ashkenazy pulls back slightly on the first two eighth-notes in the fourth measure of 20. Taking time on these eighth-notes allows Ashkenazy to accentuate the climax of the melody.

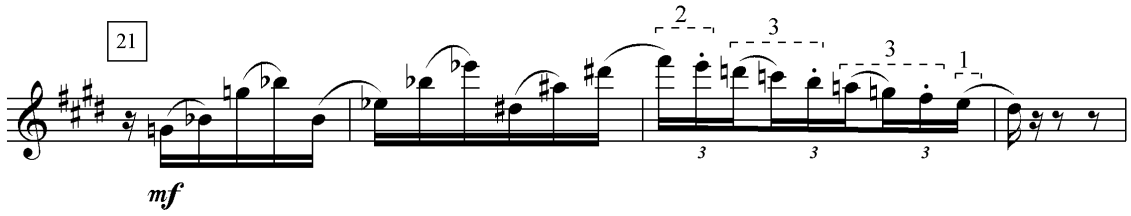
Figure 3.6. Ashkenazy's interpretation of the melody beginning at 20



Like Cuper, Ashkenazy acknowledges that the articulation in the third measure of 21 is difficult to execute correctly. In order to play this measure accurately, Ashkenazy regroups the notes in his mind in the pattern of 2+3+3+1 to facilitate easier technique (see fig. 3.7). Just as Ashkenazy does not alter the tempo or rhythms in the

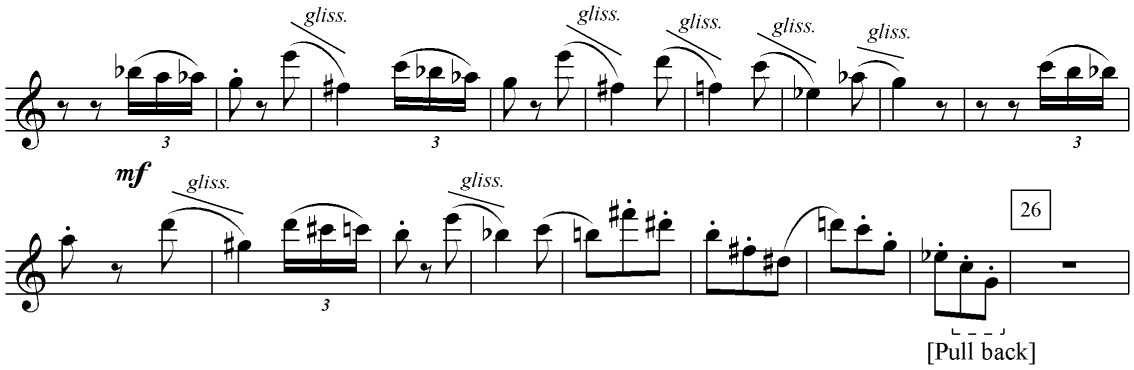
accompanimental passage in the first movement (see fig. 3.3), he plays this passage with rhythmic precision.

Figure 3.7. Ashkenazy's mental regrouping in the third measure of 21



Ashkenazy's interpretation of the melody beginning in the eighth measure of the Trio is unique (see fig. 3.8). While he is careful to play the correct notes and rhythms in the clarinet part, he adds a slight glissando whenever an eighth-note is slurred into a quarter-note. He believes this helps to enhance the comical nature of the movement. In addition to bringing out this humorous quality, Ashkenazy pulls back slightly on the last two eighth-notes in the measure before 26 to facilitate a smooth entrance for the orchestra.

Figure 3.8. Ashkenazy's interpretation beginning in the eighth measure of the Trio

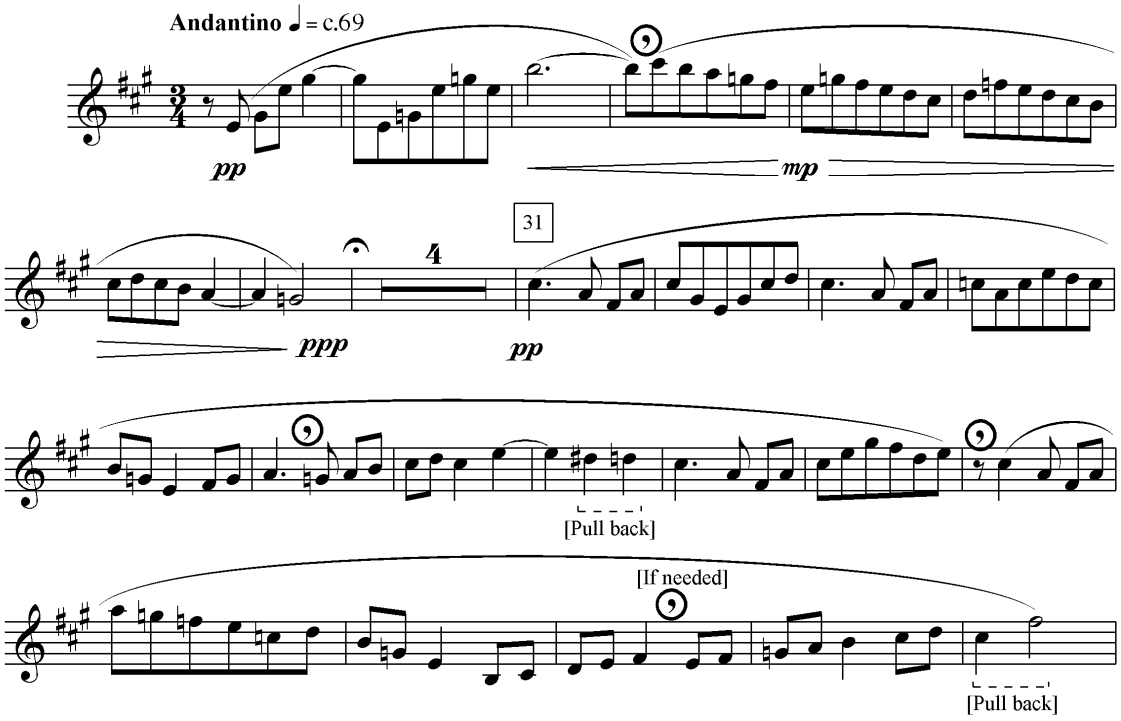


Movement III

Movement three represents a deep moment of reflection within the concerto. The printed tempo of quarter-note equals 76 is slightly too fast according to Ashkenazy. He believes this tempo does not allow the listener to appreciate the flourishes and colorful harmonic changes in the clarinet part. Ashkenazy maintains that the printed tempo causes the grace-notes and trills to sound frantic rather than allowing the music to flow naturally. He suggests a tempo of quarter-note equals 69, although he has performed the work at a slower tempo.

Breath control is an issue that performers face from the beginning of the movement to 32 as mentioned earlier (see fig. 3.9). Since Ashkenazy believes the tempo should be slower, the problem of breathing becomes an even greater challenge. He does not think it is problematic to break the slurred line in places for the sake of breathing, and does not believe circular breathing is necessary. Ashkenazy carefully plans where to breathe based on what is occurring in the accompanimental parts, and is careful to avoid interrupting the flow of the theme when it is prominent. To accomplish this, Ashkenazy takes a breath after the first eighth-note in the fourth measure (see fig. 3.9). In the sixth measure of 31 he listens carefully for the change of notes in the woodwinds and breathes after the dotted quarter-note. This breath allows him to pull back slightly on the last two quarter-notes in the eighth measure of 31. Since the tempo is slow enough to breathe during an eighth rest, Ashkenazy takes a breath during the eighth rest six measures before 32. If needed, he adds a breath after the quarter-note three measures before 32. This breath allows him to pull the tempo back slightly one measure before 32.

Figure 3.9. The beginning of the third movement to one measure before 32



Ashkenazy believes it is important to find fingerings that help facilitate smooth technique and promote good intonation starting in the measure before 35. He addresses the technical issue of the grace-notes in the measure before 35 by fingering the C-sharp grace-note that leads to the eighth-note B-natural with side keys one and two (see fig. 3.10). Since the dynamic marking is very soft at 35, and the clarinet is playing in the altissimo register, Ashkenazy occasionally fingers the last D-sharp at 35 with a unique fingering that addresses the issue of intonation (see fig. 3.11). In addition to using these fingerings, he pulls the tempo back slightly for the last two grace-notes leading into 35 to aid smoother technique and enhance the musical phrasing (see fig. 3.12).

Figure 3.10. C-sharp fingering for the B to C-sharp grace-notes one measure before 35

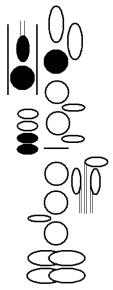


Figure 3.11. D-sharp fingering for the last D-sharp at 35

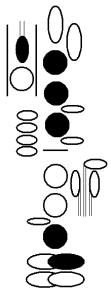
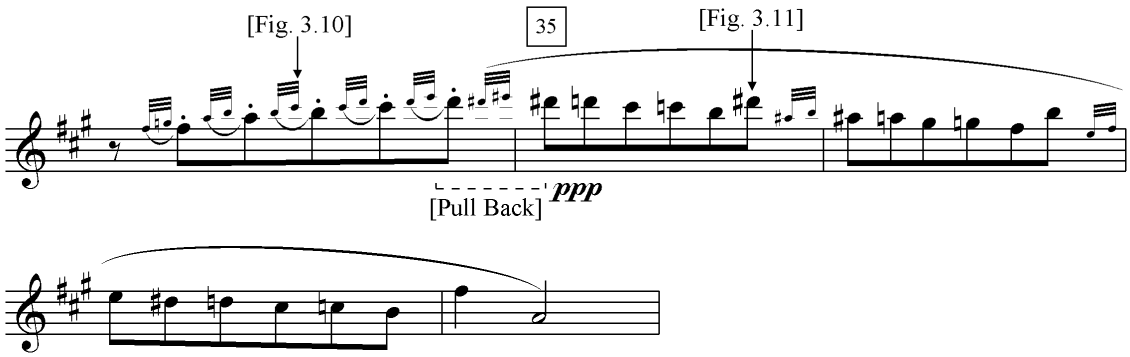


Figure 3.12. Ashkenazy's interpretation of the melody starting one measure before 35



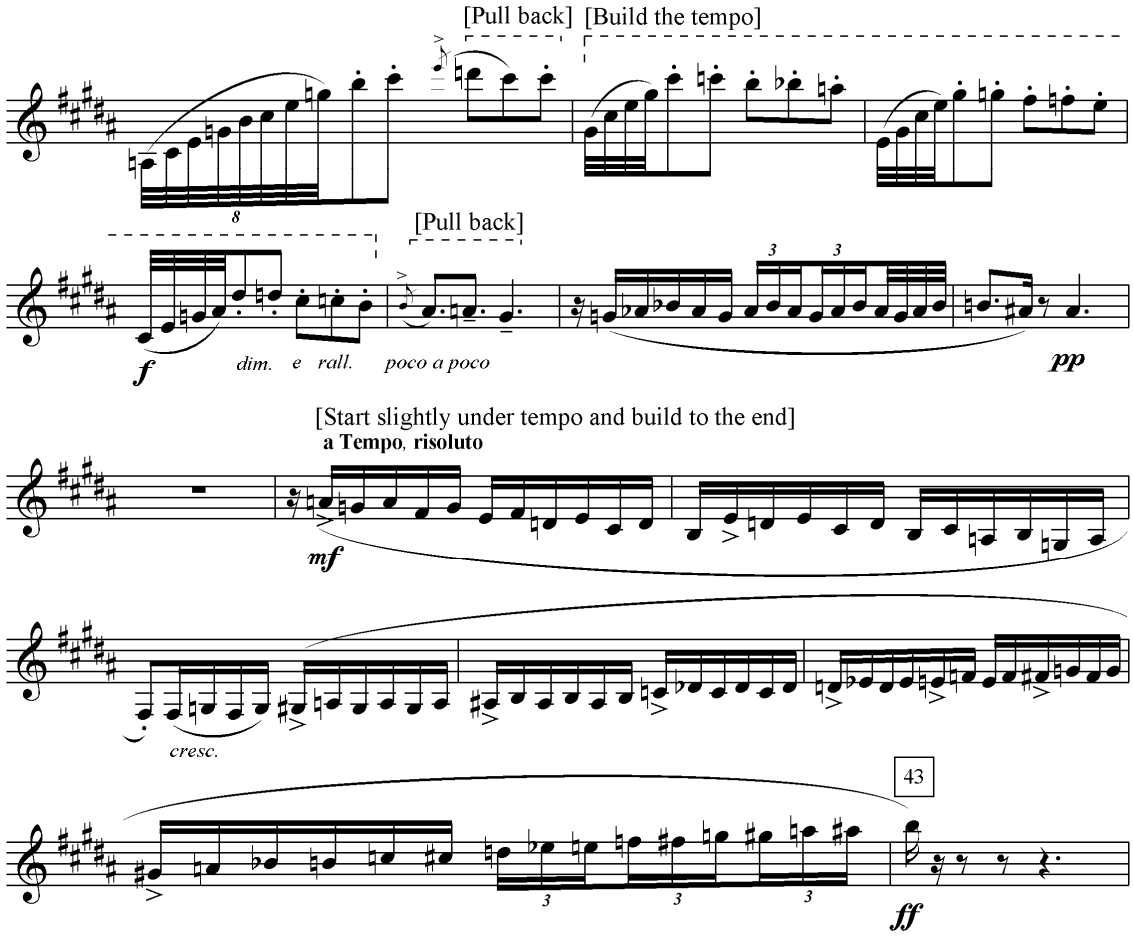
Movement IV

Like Cuper, Ashkenazy acknowledges the connection between the tempo of the first movement and the presentation of the primary theme at 46 in the fourth movement. Instead of thinking of the tempo being slightly faster in the fourth movement, Ashkenazy pulls the tempo back considerably to allow the music to communicate itself more clearly. The printed tempo of dotted quarter-note equals 138 is "insane" according to Ashkenazy. This tempo does not allow the music to make sense acoustically, and is not practical for the soloist or the orchestra. He recommends a tempo of dotted quarter-note equals 112. Like Cuper, Ashkenazy primarily feels the pulse of this movement in two instead of three. However, he occasionally feels the pulse as one beat per measure. Such moments are spontaneous rather than being carefully planned.

Ashkenazy believes that the onset of the first cadenza is a gradual process instead of an immediate arrival. He adds that there is a slight ambiguity that takes place starting in the thirteenth measure of 42 until the twentieth measure of 42. This section continues the musical idea that precedes it. Since the soloist is alone in this passage, Ashkenazy believes there is a temporary feeling of being lost. In the twenty-first measure of 42 the music suddenly goes in another direction. It is at this point that Ashkenazy says, "You suddenly figure out that you have landed in a cadenza rather than that a cadenza starts and is quite clear." Just as the cadenza begins in this fashion, it ends in a similar manner. Ashkenazy points out that the passage six measures before 43 to 43 is somewhat ambiguous in nature since it is unaccompanied, but does not seem to completely belong to the cadenza (see fig. 3.13). Since these measures are fairly vague in character, Ashkenazy believes it is acceptable to freely interpret the tempo

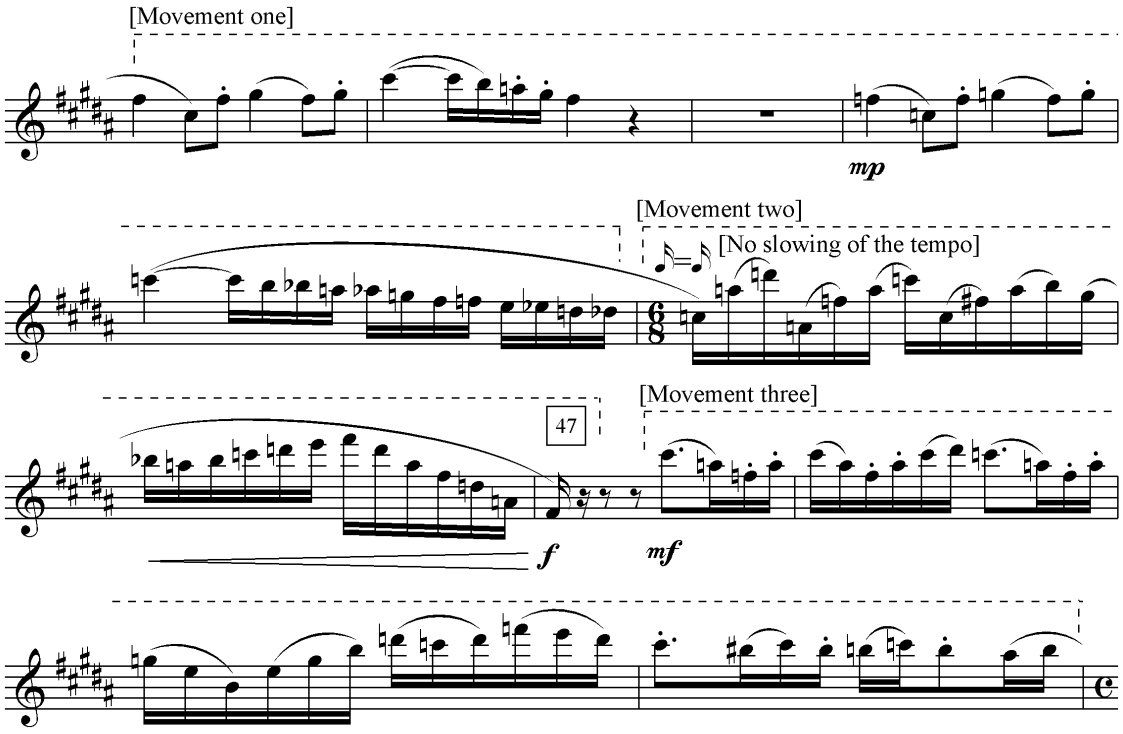
marking six measures before 43, where it is marked *a Tempo, risoluto*. Ashkenazy begins the passage slightly under the original tempo in order to leave room to build up to the end of the cadenza at 43. He adds that this may also help ease any anxiety a performer may experience at this moment, and facilitate a smoother transition into 43. Additionally, Ashkenazy pulls the tempo back on the last three eighth-notes fourteen measures before 43, and builds the tempo through the measures that follow until the printed *dim. e rall. poco a poco* eleven bars before 43 (see fig. 3.13).

Figure 3.13. Fourteen measures before 43 to 43



The passage beginning in the third measure of 46 to the fourth measure of 47 is significant to the overall structure of the concerto according to Ashkenazy (see fig. 3.14). He points out that it encapsulates the content of the first three movements before resuming the "circus theme" of the fourth movement starting in the fifth measure of 47. Mentally he breaks these measures down by movement: the first movement appearing in the third measure of 46 to three before 47, the second movement appearing from two before 47 to the downbeat of 47, and the third movement appearing at 47 to four measures after 47. Unlike Cuper, Ashkenazy does not pull the tempo back two measures before 47 to accommodate the difficult trumpet part. This may be due to the fact that he plays the movement slightly slower overall, making such a concession unnecessary.

Figure 3.14. The third measure of 46 to the fourth measure of 47



Ashkenazy does not believe that the second cadenza beginning eleven measures before 48 is a standard cadenza (see fig. 3.15). Even though the texture is narrowed down to the soloist, he does not feel this passage exists to show off the technical abilities of the performer. Instead, he views this passage as being "a short moment of reflection before the coda starts." Ashkenazy adds that this moment of reflection contains a dialogue between two characters. Like Cuper, he views these two characters as being represented by the *risoluto* and *affectuoso* markings. The *affectuoso* character has a pleading quality to it compared to the *risoluto* character which is more "resolute."[51] Ashkenazy enhances the humorous nature of this passage by playing a slight glissando between the altissimo A-natural and A-sharp two measures before 48.

[51] Ashkenazy, e-mail message to author, March 29, 2012.

He accomplishes this glissando by fingering the altissimo A-natural (see fig. 3.16a) and rolling off of the left thumb hole and adding the left hand little finger C-sharp/G-sharp key to arrive at the altissimo A-sharp (see fig. 3.16b).

Figure 3.15. Ashkenazy's interpretation of the second cadenza starting eleven bars before 48

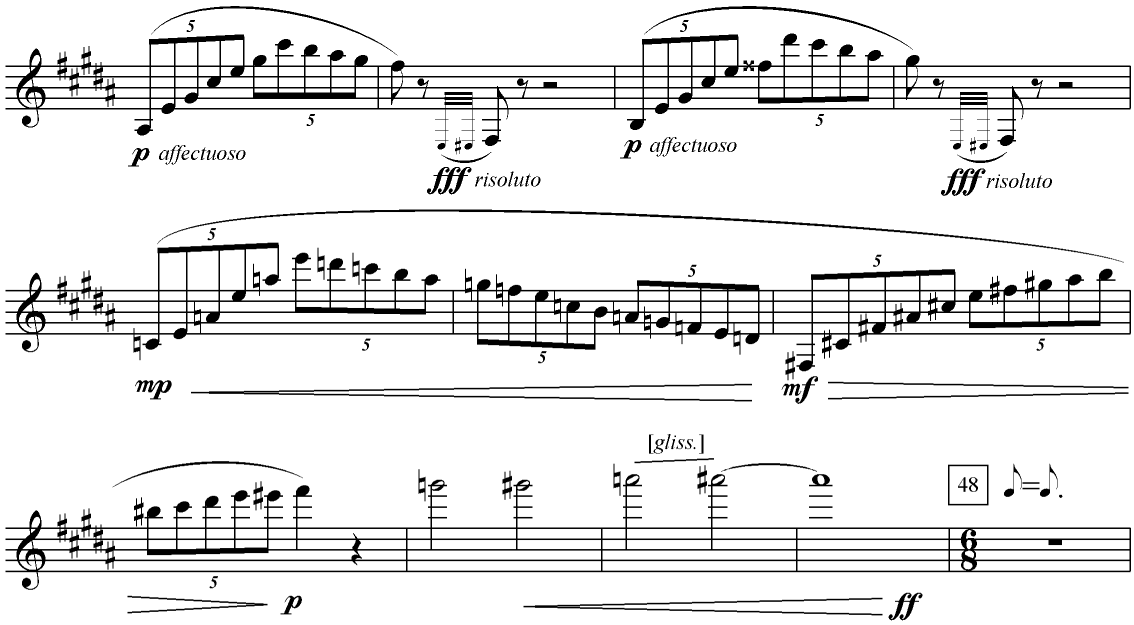
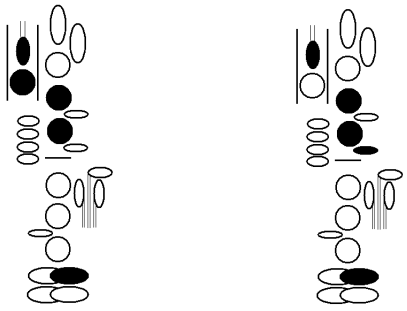


Figure 3.16. Altissimo A and A-sharp fingerings

a. b.



Closing Remarks

Dimitri Ashkenazy's musical interpretation of the concerto brings out Françaix's carefree humor and his unfettered outlook on life. Ashkenazy's use of subtle embellishments such as the glissandi in the second and fourth movements adds to the humorous nature of the work. In addition to bringing out the comical aspect of the work, Ashkenazy believes there is a more contemplative side of the concerto. Ashkenazy demonstrates this tenet with his beautiful and reflective interpretation of the third movement in two ways. First, his choice of a slower tempo allows him and the audience to enjoy each musical moment. Secondly, his decision to highlight a dialogue between the orchestral woodwinds and the soloist brings out the timbres of the instruments, while exploring the nuances of each musical phrase. All of Ashkenazy's technical and musical decisions are rooted in a deeply philosophical approach to the concerto. They allow him to celebrate the musical qualities of the work in an interpretation that goes beyond technical brilliance and focuses on musical integrity and clarity of sound.

Chapter 4: John Finucane

Background of the Performer

John Finucane's musical journey began with piano lessons in Dublin, Ireland, at an early age.[52] Although his piano teacher, Sean Lynch, was grooming him to become a great pianist, Finucane quit his study of the piano in favor of the clarinet after a local priest sparked his interest in the instrument. Inspired to further his knowledge of the clarinet, Finucane studied with James Daly, bass clarinetist of the National Orchestra of Ireland, and occasionally took lessons with Brian O'Rourke, principal clarinet of the National Orchestra of Ireland. After studying music theory at Trinity College for three years, Finucane was offered a job as a clarinetist for the RTÉ Concert Orchestra. It was during this time that Finucane occasionally visited London and studied with Colin Bradbury, principal clarinetist of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, and clarinetist Anthony Pay, a freelance artist. In addition to his studies in London, the RTÉ Concert Orchestra provided ample opportunities for Finucane to perform as a soloist for live and televised audiences. After extensive work with the RTÉ Concert Orchestra, Finucane became the principal Clarinet for the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra in 1995.[53]

Finucane currently serves as a faculty member at the Royal Irish Academy of Music in Dublin and is in great demand as a recitalist and conductor. His work as a conductor has involved working with the Hibernian Orchestra, the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra, and Irish Film Orchestras. As a conductor for Irish Film

[52] Unless otherwise indicated, all quotes and information about John Finucane and his performance practices come from John Finucane, interview by author, Norman, OK, March 5, 2012.

[53] John Finucane, *Clarinet Variations*, CD, 2009.

Orchestras, Finucane has conducted recording sessions for the films *Rua* and *Secret Garden*.[54]

Finucane's first experience performing Françaix's *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra* occurred approximately twenty years ago with the RTÉ Concert Orchestra conducted by Proinnsias O'Duinn. While Finucane never consulted another clarinetist or Françaix about the concerto, his collaboration with O'Duinn influenced his interpretation of the work. The combination of O'Duinn's "light and fast" approach to conducting with Finucane's own musical artistry form the basis for Finucane's approach to the concerto. Finucane recorded the work with the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra in 2009 under the direction of Robert Houlihan. According to Finucane, Houlihan knew relatives of Françaix personally, but never received any instruction from the composer about the concerto.

According to Finucane, Françaix's *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra* is a spirited virtuosic showcase. In his program notes for the recorded performance with the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra, Finucane says, "It is hard to resist the challenge of a piece that was described by the great clarinettist Jack Brymer as being unplayable until the shape of the human hand evolves."[55] Finucane adds that the concerto is not a very melodic work, but the melodies that do exist are "fun," "flighty," and have a sort of "champagne fizz" to them. Describing the entire work, Finucane says, "there is always this happy little turbulence of bubbles going on in the background." With this picture of the work in mind, an analysis of Finucane's performance practices will be discussed.

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[54] Ibid.

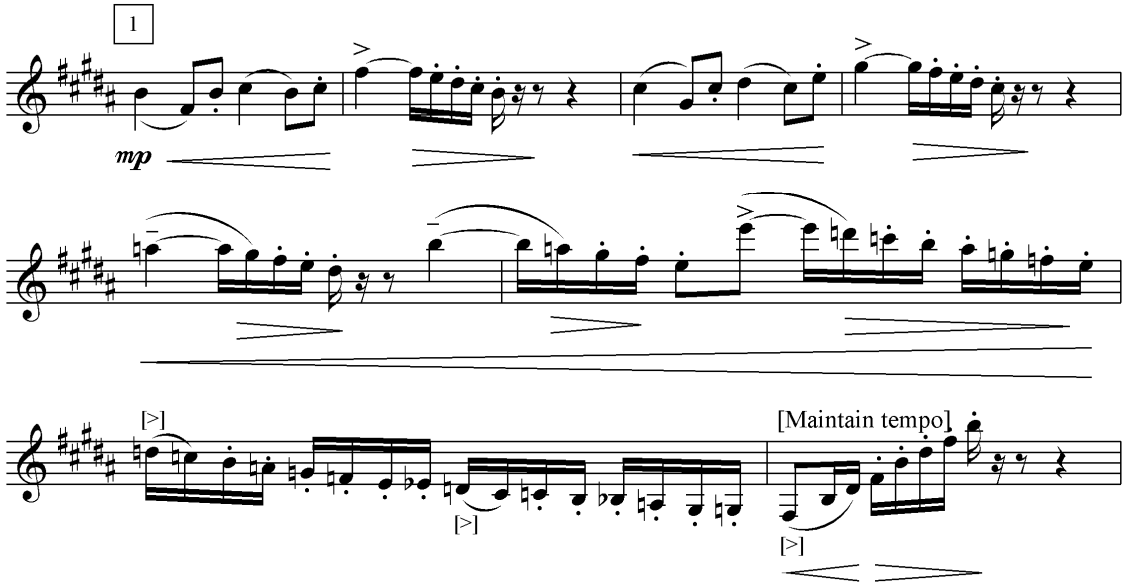
[55] Ibid.

Movement I

Like Cuper and Ashkenazy, Finucane believes that the current edition of the work for clarinet and piano is the final authority for making musical decisions instead of the orchestral score. He acknowledges that the tempi in all of the movements are too fast. Finucane performs the first movement at approximately quarter-note equals 126, but points out that he tends to push the tempo slightly in public performance.

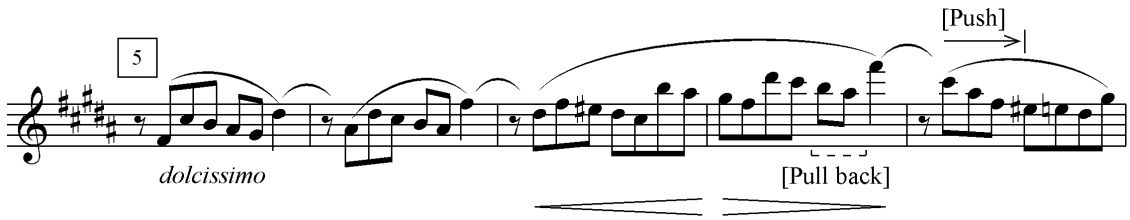
There are some slight differences from the printed score in how Finucane performs the primary theme from 1 to 2 (see fig. 4.1). For the first four measures of the passage, Finucane approaches the passage in two measure phrases with a slight rise dynamically in the first measure and a slight fall in the second measure of each phrase. The sixteenth-notes in the second, fourth, fifth, and sixth measures of 1 are "insignificant" according to Finucane. Therefore, he plays a slight diminuendo on each of these groups of sixteenth-notes. However, in measures five and six of 1, Finucane incorporates a gradual and underlying crescendo to bring out the upward sequence in the melody. Two measures before 2 Finucane tries to maintain a consistent dynamic level. In order to avoid the natural fall in the dynamics as the clarinet descends the scale, Finucane uses a slight crescendo in the airstream. He follows this with a slight crescendo beginning on the first beat of the measure before 2 and a decrescendo beginning on the second beat of the measure. In addition to these dynamic shapes, Finucane adds accents on the first and third beats two measures before 2, and on the downbeat of the measure before 2. Finally, in the measure before 2 Finucane wrote a marking in his part to remind himself to maintain the tempo. He believes this is important since there is a temptation to play a ritardando in this measure (see fig. 4.1).

Figure 4.1. Finucane's interpretation of the primary theme beginning at 1



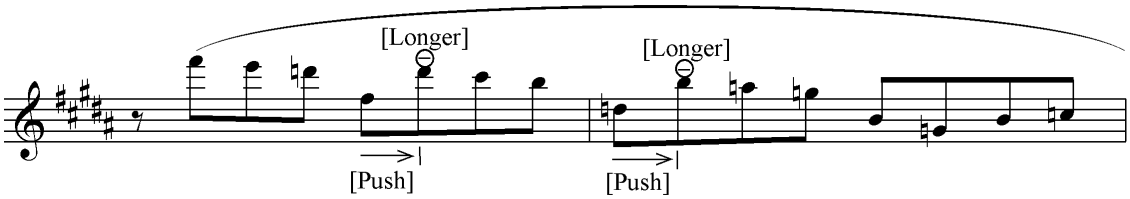
Finucane plays the secondary theme from 5 to 8 slightly faster than the overall tempo for the movement, tending to follow the harmonic changes of the orchestra through this section rather than leading. As a result of this approach to the passage, Finucane feels the pulse in two beats per measure instead of four. Despite his faster tempo, Finucane is careful to play the full length of the notes that precede the eighth rests. In addition, he approaches this section with more rhythmic flexibility by taking a little time on the two eighth-notes leading to the altissimo F-sharp in the fourth measure of 5. Finucane plays the first three eighth-notes slightly faster leading to the clarion E-sharp in the measure that follows (see fig. 4.2).

Figure 4.2. 5 to the fifth measure of 5



In the fifth and sixth measures of 6, and the two measures leading into 7, Finucane brings out the tenuto notes by playing the eighth-notes that precede them slightly faster. This allows him to remain on the tenuto notes slightly longer in order to highlight the downward sequence in the melodic line (see fig. 4.3).

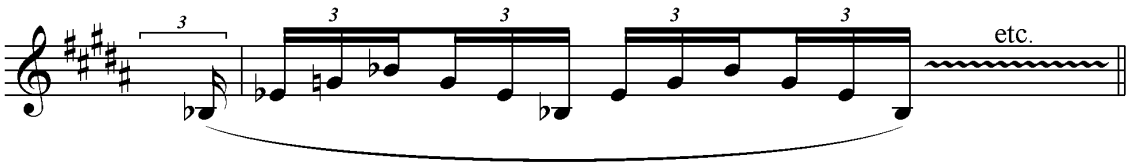
Figure 4.3. The fifth and sixth measures of 6



Finucane uses creative practice strategies for the technically difficult accompanimental passage starting in the sixth measure of 11. Like Cuper and Ashkenazy, Finucane utilizes the one and one E-flat fingering whenever possible (see fig. 2.3, pg. 19). The first practice technique involves thinking in groups of three sixteenth-notes as it is written in this passage. After this, he visualizes groups of two sixteenth-notes in the manner that Ashkenazy utilizes in the eighth measure of 11 to two measures before 12 (see fig. 3.3, pg. 38). Finally, he practices this section by

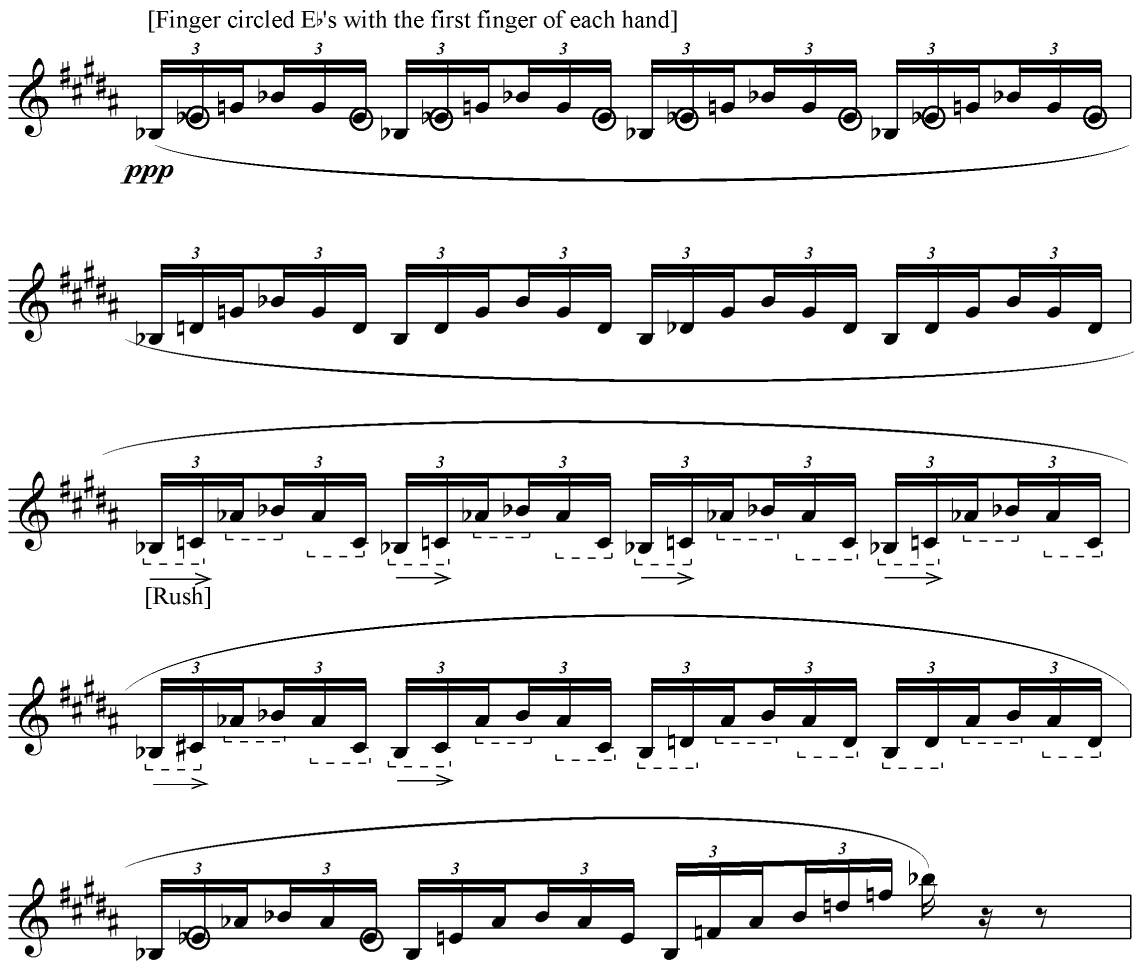
displacing the downbeat, and treating the first B-flat in the sixth measure of 11 as a pickup note to the E-flat (see. fig. 4.4). This method allows Finucane to practice the passage with an emphasis on the notes that do not normally fall on the downbeat.

Figure 4.4. Finucane's practice strategy starting in the sixth measure of 11



In public performance Finucane uses a combination of the above mental approaches to perform the passage. For the first two measures of the section, Finucane thinks in groups of three sixteenth-notes as written. Starting in the fourth measure before 12, he switches to visualizing groups of two sixteenth-notes like Ashkenazy (see fig. 3.3, pg. 38). However, Finucane differs from Ashkenazy slightly since he imagines rushing the low B-flats to C-naturals four measures before 12, and the low B-flats to C-sharps three measures before 12. This helps Finucane avoid getting stuck on the low B-flats in these measures and facilitates smoother technique. Finucane resumes the grouping of three sixteenths two measures before 12 since these measures are less challenging technically (see. fig. 4.5).

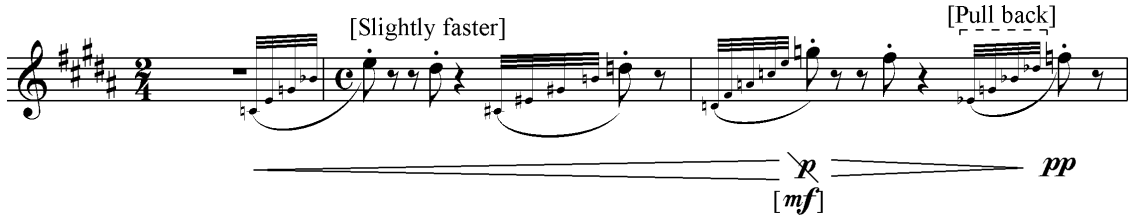
Figure 4.5. The accompanimental passage starting in the sixth measure of 11



Finucane's approach to the technical challenges in the *cadenza* is unique. The beginning of the *cadenza* is *In tempo* as it is marked in the score; however, Finucane slightly increases the tempo in the fifth and sixth measures of the *cadenza* to allow room for a greater *rallentando* in the eighth measure of the *cadenza*. Beginning with the grace-note pickups into the twelfth measure of the *cadenza*, where it is marked *In tempo, ma a piacere*, Finucane pulls the tempo back and plays the grace-notes as if he were strumming a guitar. He suggests that it is important to land firmly on the

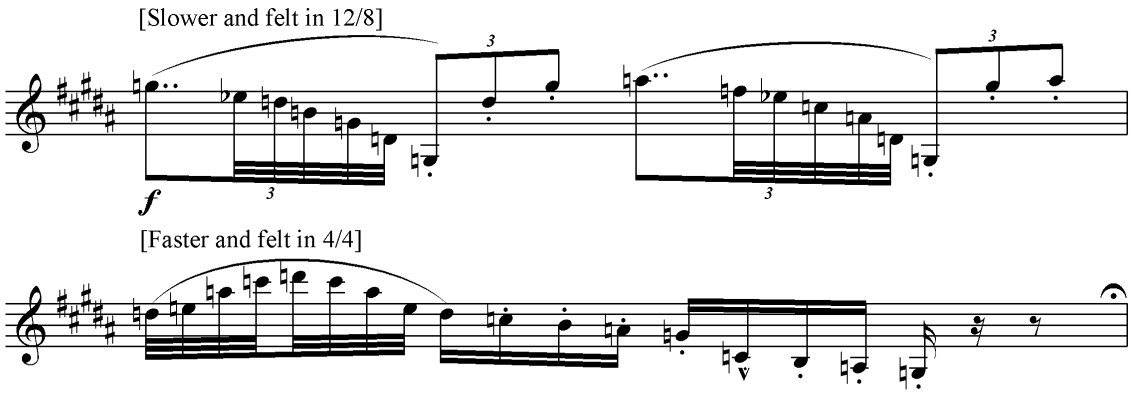
downbeats that follow the grace-note flourishes in order to bring out the syncopation of the melody. Starting with the grace-note pickups into the nineteenth measure of the *cadenza*, Finucane pushes the tempo forward slightly and builds dynamically to a mezzo forte instead of the printed marking of *piano*. Following this build in dynamics, he pulls back slightly on the last four grace-notes in the twentieth measure of the *cadenza* in order to bring closure to the musical phrase (see fig. 4.6).

Figure 4.6. Measures 18 through 20 of the cadenza



Finucane slows the tempo down slightly for the passage that begins seventeen measures before 14, and feels the first measure of the section in 12/8 instead of 4/4 (see fig. 4.7). In contrast, he feels the next measure in 4/4, and plays it slightly faster than the previous measure. He repeats this pattern with the two measures that follow. Finucane uses these meter and tempi changes in order to accentuate the contrasting characters of these measures.

Figure 4.7. The first two measures of the passage starting seventeen measures before 14



Finucane's approach to the tremolo passage beginning nine measures before 14 is different from the interpretations discussed in the previous chapters. In his recorded performance with the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra, Finucane performed the passage on an A clarinet and had it edited in with the rest of the recording done on a B-flat clarinet. He did this in order to play the written low E-flat five measures before 14. In regard to the question of whether or not the passage is easier on the A clarinet, Finucane adds that what you gain by making one tremolo easier tends to make other tremolos more difficult. A transposition of the passage for A clarinet can be seen in fig. 4.8. In live performance settings, Finucane performs the work on a B-flat clarinet and plays a low E-natural to A-natural tremolo five measures before 14 (see fig. 4.9). Finucane chooses to play a low E-natural in this case since it is the lowest note available on the B-flat clarinet.

Figure 4.8. Transposition of the tremolo passage for A clarinet

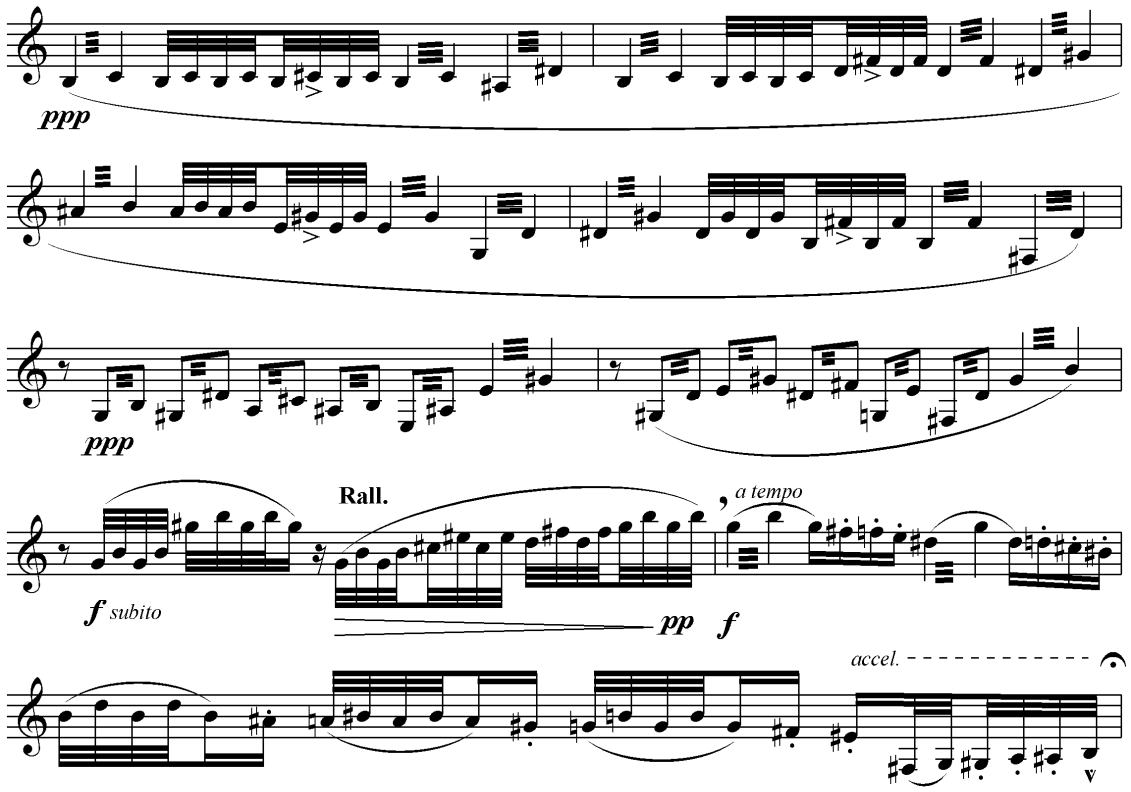
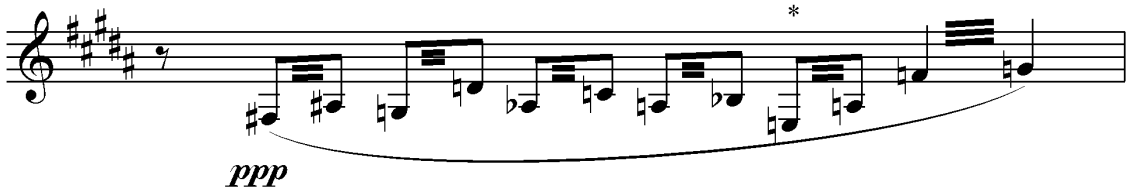


Figure 4.9. Five measures before 14



*The current edition for clarinet and piano reads low E-flat to A.

Finucane uses six different alternate fingerings to play the technically difficult passage beginning in the fourth measure of 14 (see fig. 4.10). He fingers altissimo F-sharp as an overblown clarion A-sharp without the right hand E-flat key (see fig. 4.11a). Finucane fingers the altissimo C-sharps and D-flat with overblown first line F-sharps

(see fig. 4.11b). He accomplishes the altissimo F by over blowing a clarion A above the staff (see fig. 4.11c). Finucane plays the altissimo E with an overblown throat tone B-flat (see fig. 4.11d). He fingers the altissimo E-flat by over blowing a throat tone A-flat (see fig. 4.11e). Finally, Finucane plays altissimo D with an overblown open G (see fig. 4.11f). Additionally, he groups the thirty second notes in threes in the fifth measure of 14 to accentuate the descending linear chromatic harmonies leading to the downbeat in the fourth measure before 15 (see fig. 4.10). Unlike Cuper and Ashkenazy, Finucane does not believe it is necessary to slow down at the end of the passage to help the orchestra enter smoothly in the fourth measure before 15.

Figure 4.10. The technically difficult passage starting in the fourth measure of 14

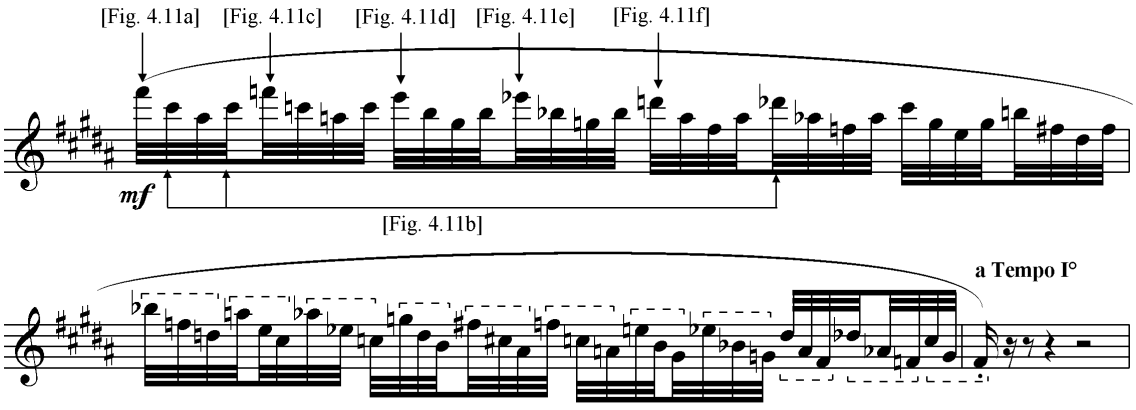
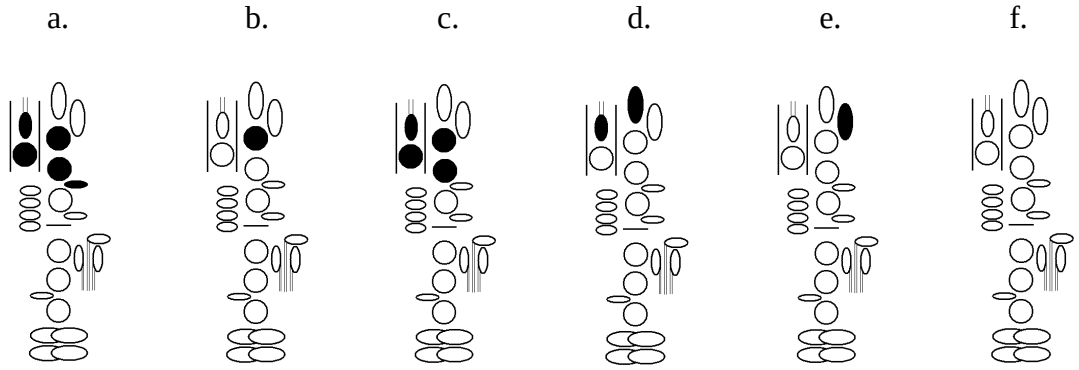


Figure 4.11. Finucane's alternate fingerings used in the fourth measure of 14



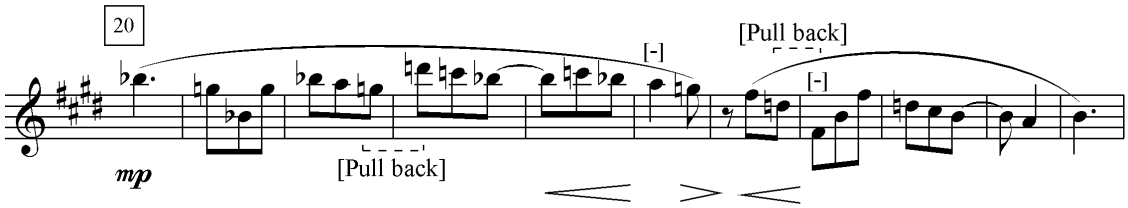
Movement II

The tempo marking for the second movement is too fast according to Finucane. He suggests a tempo range of dotted quarter-note equals 72-76 to allow the notes in the music to be executed cleanly. Finucane adds that the printed marking of dotted quarter-note equals 84 causes performances of the movement to sound scrambled. He chooses to play slightly slower to allow better communication between the soloist and the other woodwind parts. Even at a slower tempo, Finucane acknowledges the difficulty in coordinating the solo clarinet part with the flutes and clarinets in the orchestra.

Finucane believes that the melody starting at rehearsal 20 is musically significant since it is more melodic than the rest of the clarinet part in the second movement (see fig. 4.12). He stretches the tempo slightly between the last eighth-note of the third measure of 20 and the downbeat of the following measure. Finucane treats the A-natural in the sixth measure of 20 as an arrival point. To prepare for this arrival, Finucane adds a crescendo in the previous measure. He lengthens the A-natural slightly and plays a diminuendo on the G-natural. Finucane inserts a crescendo into the phrase beginning in the seventh measure of 20 leading to the downbeat of the eighth measure

of 20. To add emphasis on the downbeat of the eighth measure of 20, he adds a tenuto to the downbeat and slows the tempo slightly between the last note of the previous measure and the downbeat of the eighth measure of 20. This use of rubato serves to convince the audience of the melodic importance of this section which could be easily overlooked.

Figure 4.12. Finucane's interpretation of the melody beginning at 20



Finucane approaches the passage starting at 21 in a technically unique manner (see Fig. 4.14). To avoid excessive motion of the fingers, he keeps his right hand pinky on the E-flat key from 21 to the clarion C-natural in the third measure of 21. Finucane plays the clarion B-flat and clarion A-sharp in the second measure of 21 with the one and two fingering for a smoother transition to the altissimo E-flat and D-sharp (see fig. 4.13). In order to execute the difficult articulation in the third measure of 21, Finucane shifts the downbeat back one sixteenth-note to form a consistent slur two/tongue one pattern. This serves to keep the section from sounding frantic and lets Finucane continue to sound light and effortless.

Figure 4.13. The fingering for B-flat and A-sharp in the second measure of 21

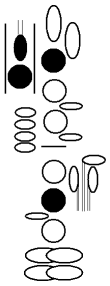
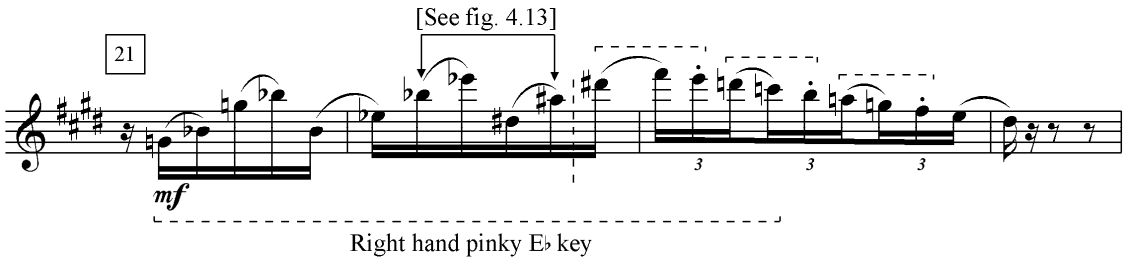
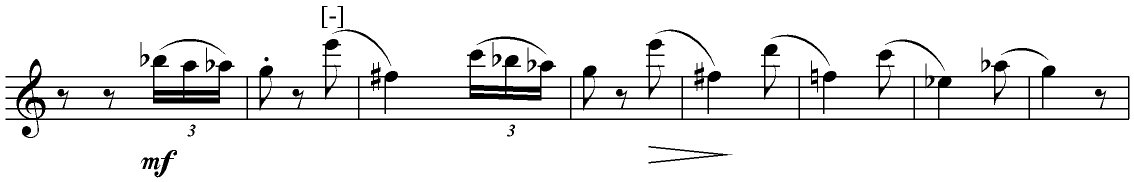


Figure 4.14. Finucane's approach to the difficult articulation in the third measure of 21



Finucane's interpretation of the melody beginning in the eighth measure of the Trio is mostly faithful to the printed score with only a few slight differences (see fig. 4.15). In the ninth measure of the Trio, Finucane adds a tenuto on the altissimo E to create a slight sense of awkwardness to the melody. Additionally, he inserts a diminuendo from the altissimo E in the eleventh measure of the Trio to the F-sharp on the downbeat of the next measure.

Figure 4.15. The eighth measure of the Trio to ten before 26



Movement III

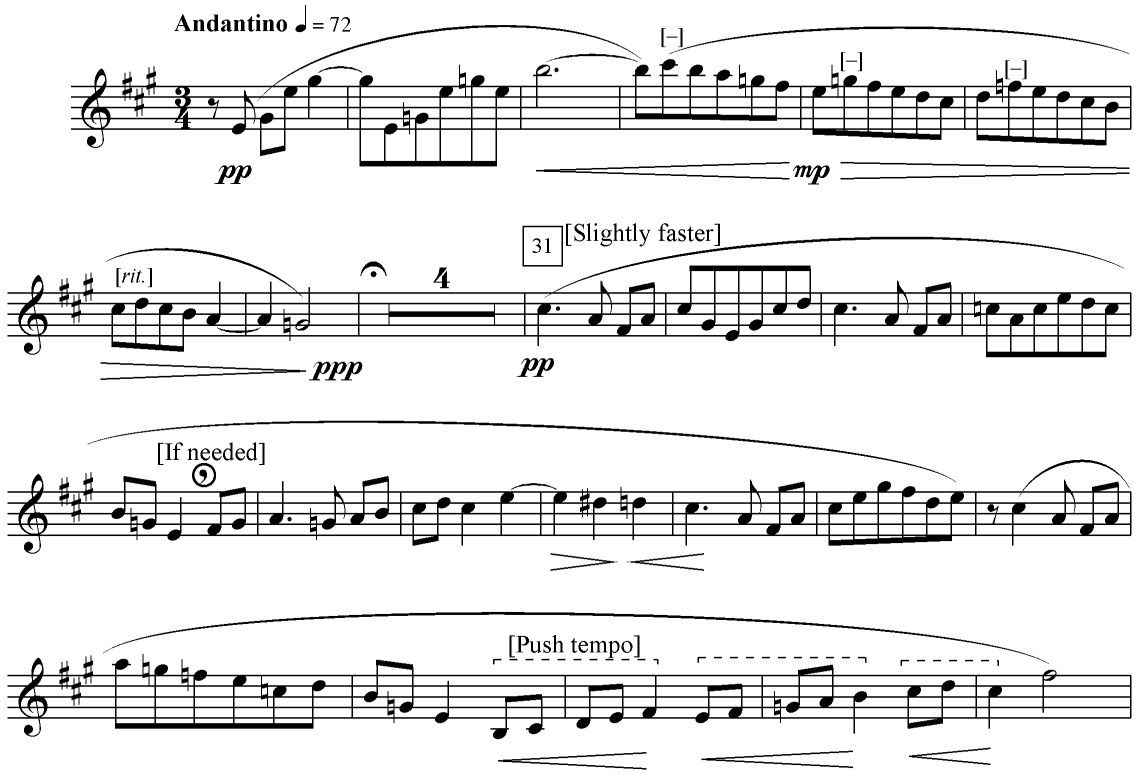
Finucane performs the third movement slightly slower than the printed tempo of quarter-note equals 76. According to Finucane, he has marked a tempo of a quarter-note equals 72 in his part. He adds that the tempo increases slightly at 31 to a tempo that is closer to the original marking of quarter-note equals 76.

Breathing is not a challenge for Finucane from the beginning of the movement to 32. While he does not use circular breathing, Finucane is capable of playing each of the phrases in one breath. He points out that some of the problems faced by performers with breathing have to do with a build up of carbon dioxide in the body. Finucane adds that the phrases leading up to 32 are long enough for a performer to exhale all of their air. This allows performers to take a full breath before each phrase begins. However, Finucane points out that it is easy to use up the air too soon if the phrases in this passage are played at louder dynamic levels than those marked in the score. If an extra breath is needed to perform this passage, Finucane believes it is acceptable to breathe after the E-natural in the fifth measure of 31 (fig. 4.16).

To enhance the musical quality of this passage, Finucane adds a slight tenuto on the altissimo C-sharp in the fourth measure, the clarion G-natural in the fifth measure, and the clarion F-natural in the sixth measure (see fig. 4.16). He plays a ritardando

starting six measures before 31, which creates a moment of reflection before the orchestra enters with the theme. In the eighth measure of 31, he plays a diminuendo between the first and second beat. Finucane follows this with a slight crescendo between beat three and the downbeat of the ninth measure of 31. Starting with the last two eighth-notes four measures before 32, he plays a slight crescendo in each case where there are eighth-notes leading to quarter-notes. In addition to the crescendos, Finucane plays each of these eighth-note groups slightly faster anticipating the end of the phrase.

Figure 4.16. The beginning to one measure before 32



Finucane's approach to the melody starting one measure before 35 is slightly different than Cuper's or Ashkenazy's (fig. 4.18). He adds a small crescendo on each of the grace-notes leading into the eighth-notes one measure before 35, making sure that the crescendos all fit within the framework of a *pianissimo* dynamic. Like Ashkenazy, Finucane fingers the altissimo C-sharp grace-note leading into the third eighth-note by fingering clarion B-natural and adding side keys one and two in the measure before 35 (see fig. 3.10, pg. 45). In order to address the issue of intonation in the altissimo register at a very soft dynamic level, Finucane fingers the altissimo E-sharp grace-note leading into 35 by fingering altissimo D-sharp and removing the ring finger of the left hand (see fig. 4.17). From 35 to the fourth measure of 35, he thinks the notes should musically sound "slimy" as if they were "oozing from the top note down." He believes this can be accomplished by playing the notes with a small amount of rhythmic ambiguity.

Figure 4.17. Finucane's fingering for high E-sharp one measure before 35

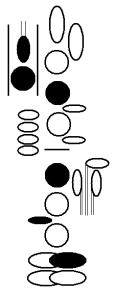
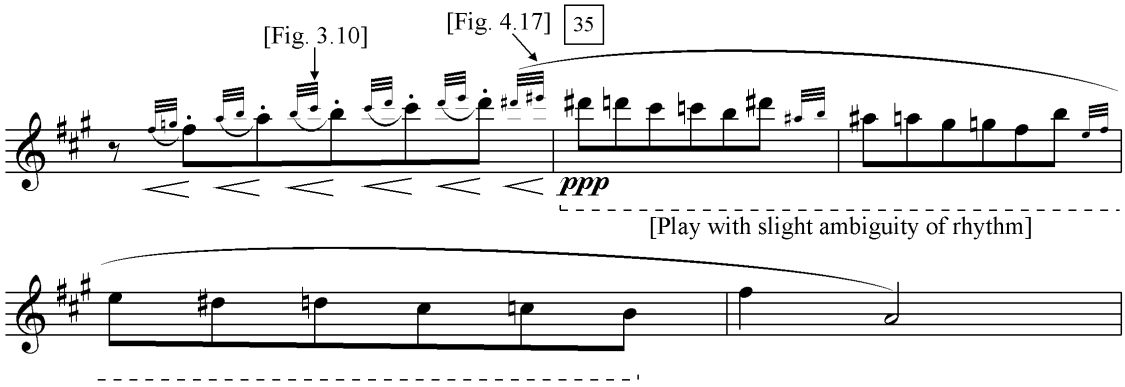


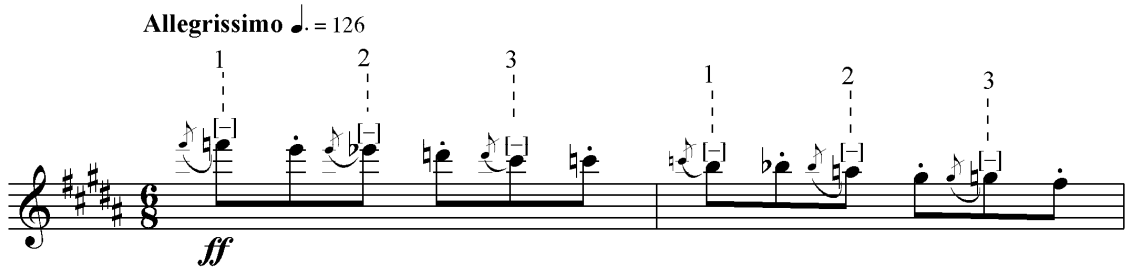
Figure 4.18. One measure before 35 to the fourth measure of 35



Movement IV

Excluding the cadenzas, Finucane takes a straight-forward approach to the last movement that involves little rubato. According to Finucane, the tempo marking of dotted quarter-note equals 138 is not practical for a full symphonic orchestra. He believes that it would sound "chaotic" if an orchestra of more than fifty musicians tried to perform the work at the printed tempo. Finucane adds that a tempo of dotted quarter-note equals 126 is a good compromise that allows the notes to speak more cleanly. He feels the majority of the movement in two beats per measure; however, he thinks of the first two measures in 3/4 instead of 6/8 because of the placement of the grace-notes. Additionally, Finucane inserts a tenuto on the eighth-notes that do not have a staccato mark in order to emphasize the feeling of three in the first two measures (see fig. 4.19).

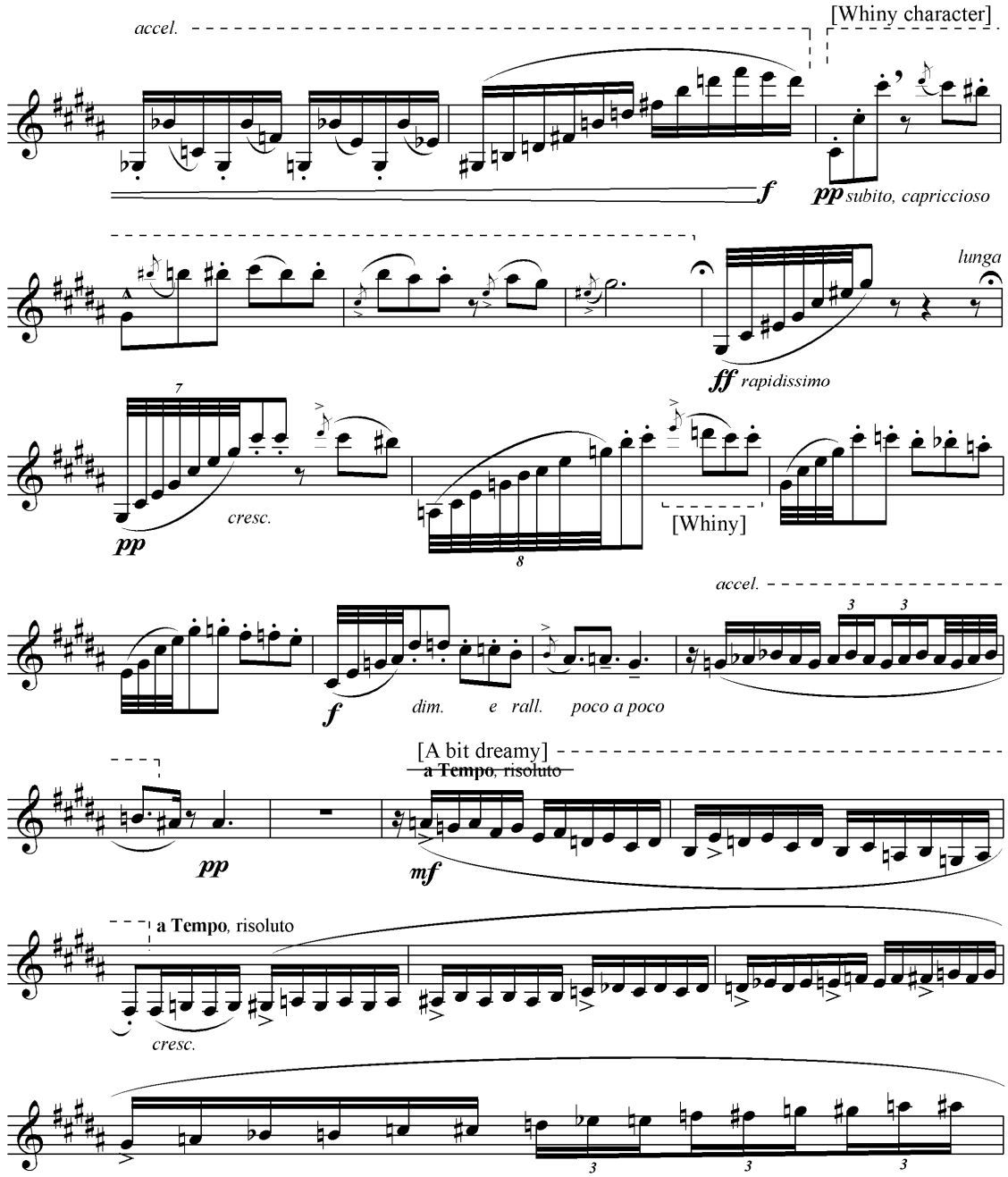
Figure 4.19. Measures one and two of the fourth movement



Finucane believes that the first cadenza clearly begins in the thirteenth measure of 42. He plays somewhat slower at the onset of the cadenza and allows himself more freedom for musical interpretation. Finucane points out that everything leading up to the cadenza is very metronomic, and does not provide opportunities for bending or stretching the tempo. He believes both cadenzas contain a more "Romantic" feel, which fosters abundant room for rubato. In the eleventh measure of the cadenza, he plays a slight accelerando and adds an even greater increase in tempo to the following measure (see fig. 4.20). The next passage, beginning in the thirteenth measure of the cadenza where it is marked *subito, capriccioso*, starts over at a slower tempo and embodies a new character. Finucane believes this new character is "whiny" and very similar to the child that is begging for his toys in the second act of *La Bohème*. This "whiny" character lasts for four measures and appears in a fragmented form fourteen measures before 43. Nine measures before 43, Finucane adds a slight accelerando into the downbeat of the following measure. Six measures before 43, where it is marked *a Tempo, risoluto*, Finucane does not play in tempo. Instead, he evokes a "dreamy" quality in the two measures that follow. Finucane begins to literally observe the *a*

Tempo, risoluto after the first eighth-note four measures before 43. This helps the orchestra enter in the correct tempo on the downbeat of 43 (see fig. 4.20).

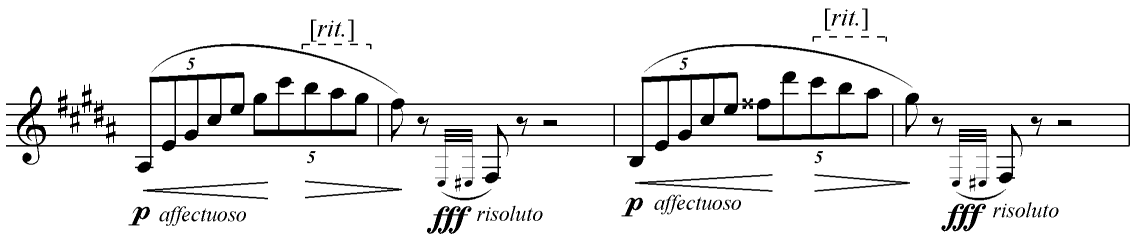
Figure 4.20. The eleventh measure of the first cadenza to 43



Finucane carefully follows the markings in the score for the passage from the third measure of 46 to the fourth measure of 47. However, he points out that the marking of an eighth-note equals a dotted eighth-note two measures before 47 is incorrect and should read sixteenth-note equals a sixteenth-note. Like Cuper and Ashkenazy, Finucane acknowledges the connection between the tempo of the first movement and the presentation of the primary theme from the first movement starting in the third measure of 46. However, Finucane matches the two tempi exactly instead of playing slightly slower or faster in the fourth movement. Unlike Cuper, Finucane does not slow down two measures before 47. He believes the trumpet player for the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra was able to play this passage at tempo without any problems for the recorded performance.

Finucane states that the ninth measure of 47 is strongly connected to the second cadenza since it contains the loud emphatic grace-notes that are associated with the *risoluto* marking in the cadenza. He adds that the cadenza definitely starts in the eleventh measure of 47 and ends at 48 (see fig. 4.21). Rather than visualizing two different characters in dialogue, Finucane thinks of two clarinetists playing with contrasting tones. If the concerto was being performed with a pianist, Finucane suggests that this would be a moment to point the bell of the clarinet at the piano for the *affectuoso* measures. In contrast, the *risoluto* measures would be performed with the bell of the clarinet facing the audience. For each case where it is marked *affectuoso*, Finucane plays a slight crescendo to the highest note of the measure and a diminuendo for the notes that follow. In addition to these dynamic shapes, he adds a ritardando on the last three eighth-notes leading into the *risoluto* measures.

Figure 4.21. The eleventh measure of 47 to eight measures before 48



Closing Remarks

If one is to philosophize about the work, Finucane maintains that the only conclusion that can be drawn is that the concerto is a reaction against the modernist movement that existed in France during the time the work was composed. Finucane adds that Françaix was not trying to take part in a debate with modernists. Instead, Françaix composed works that were traditional in nature and let them speak for themselves.

Finucane's approach to the concerto is straight-forward, and he does not believe it is wise to take a deeply philosophical approach to the work. He adds that the work is very well-written, and believes that philosophizing about the piece too deeply can lead a performer down the wrong path. Instead, he thinks the piece contains "happy" music that speaks for itself and does not contain any hidden surprises.

In summary, Finucane believes that the musical content of the concerto communicates itself clearly and does not feel the need to add embellishments to enhance the comical nature of the work. Instead, he allows himself the pleasure of enjoying the childlike qualities of the work in addition to the technically challenging nature of the concerto. Finucane demonstrates this with his highly energetic tempi in the technically demanding movements, which he executes with effortless technique.

Additionally, Finucane's visualization of different characters helps him bring out the musical gestures of the cadenzas in the fourth movement. This method is illustrated by Finucane imagining the "whiny" child from the second act of *La Bohème* while playing the first cadenza. Such characterizations, combined with Finucane's forward energy in the faster movements, bring out the "champagne fizz" of Françaix's *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra*.

Chapter 5: Charles Neidich

Background of the Performer

Charles Neidich began his study of the clarinet at the early age of seven under the tutelage of his father, Irving Neidich. At the age of seventeen, Neidich began studying with the famous pedagogue and performer Leon Russianoff. After completing a Bachelors degree in Anthropology from Yale University, Neidich studied clarinet and piano in the Soviet Union at the Moscow State Conservatory for three years under the teaching of Boris Dikov (clarinet) and Kirill Vinogradov (piano).

Since completing his collegiate studies, Neidich has enjoyed a highly successful career as a performer, teacher, conductor, and composer. He has performed with numerous orchestras, chamber groups, and as a soloist around the world. In addition to performing with a large number of ensembles, Neidich has been sought after as an instructor at summer music festivals and master classes, and has taught as a college faculty member at Juilliard, Queens College, the Manhattan School of Music, and the Mannes College of Music. As a conductor, Neidich has made appearances with orchestras in the United States and abroad, and has often played the role of soloist, conductor, and composer simultaneously in concerts.[56]

[56] Charles Neidich, "Charles Neidich Clarinetist, Conductor," http://www.charlesneidich.com/biography.htm (accessed March 22, 2012).

Neidich began learning Françaix's *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra* in 1971 only a few years after it had been premiered by Jacques Lancelot.[57] While learning the work, he used the current edition for clarinet and piano published by Éditions Musicales Transatlantiques.[58] At the time, he did not realize that there was a difference between the edition for piano and the version for orchestra. However, Neidich believes that the edition for clarinet and piano represents Françaix's final decisions about the concerto. This is in agreement to what Cuper said in his interview regarding the differences between the edition for clarinet and piano, and the orchestral score.[59]

In 1983, after winning the Munich International Competition with his performance of Françaix's *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra* and then performing the concerto with the Berlin Radio Philharmonic Orchestra, Neidich received a letter from Françaix praising him for his performance. Françaix expressed his gratitude to Neidich by saying that he had found a "champion of his music" thus allowing him to address his modernist critics. After receiving this letter, Neidich began a series of correspondences with Françaix in which he sent Françaix recordings of the concerto that he had performed with various orchestras. Françaix would in turn respond with comments about the performances. During these correspondences, Françaix referred to the concerto as "our concerto."

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[57] Unless otherwise indicated, all quotes and information about Charles Neidich and his performance practices come from Charles Neidich, interview by author, Norman, OK, March 15, 2012.

[58] Like the author of this document, Neidich created his own reduction of the piano part and was denied permission from Éditions Musicales Transatlantiques to publish his reduction.

[59] Cuper, interview by author, Austin, TX, July 22, 2010.

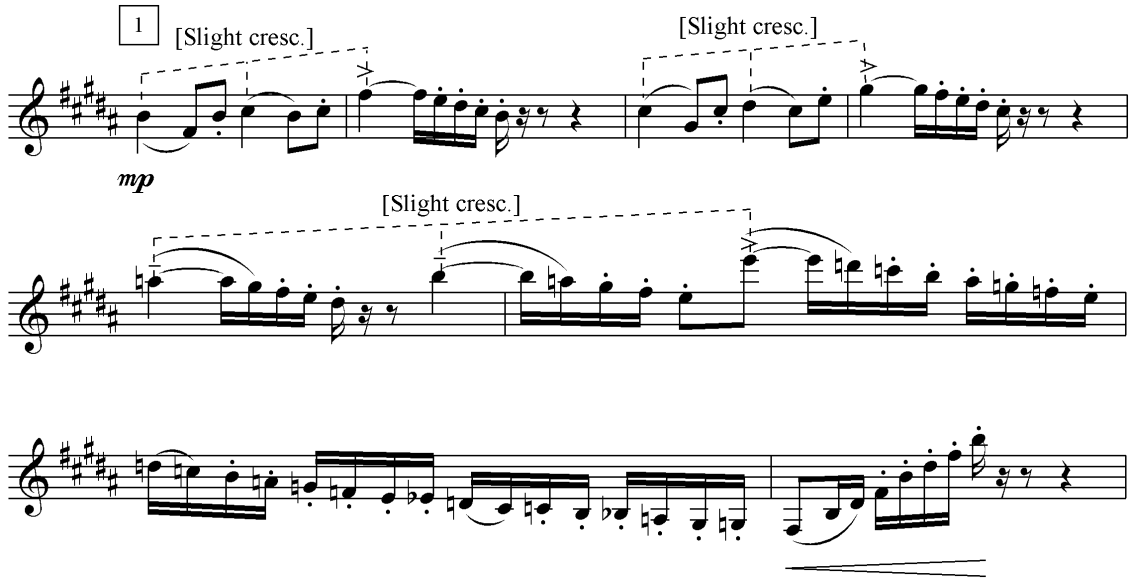
While Neidich had a strong connection with the composer, he does not believe that Françaix influenced him in regard to his performance practices of the work. Instead, Neidich's final decisions about musicality are based on his own interpretation of the work. In addition to believing that the concerto is very virtuosic in nature, Neidich describes the work by saying, "it's very cute, it's very funny, it's very touching, it's music." Neidich's performance practices will be examined with this perspective in mind.

Movement I

Neidich believes the printed tempi throughout the concerto should be taken seriously instead of being compromised for the sake of an ensemble. Unlike Cuper, Ashkenazy, and Finucane, Neidich performs the first movement at approximately quarter-note equals 132 as marked. Neidich adds that the aural clarity of the movement is not compromised at this faster tempo.

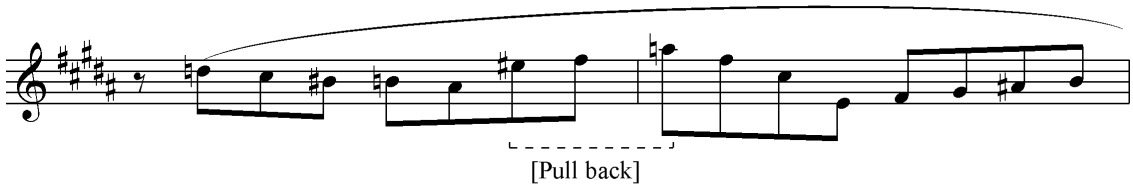
The musical phrasing of the primary theme from 1 to 2 is spelled out very clearly according to Neidich. Like Cuper, Neidich plays a slight crescendo through the first measure into the downbeat of the following measure (see fig. 5.1). He uses the same shape in the third and fourth measures of the theme. In the fifth and sixth measures of the primary theme, Neidich adds a crescendo similar to those preceding it; however, in this case the crescendo leads to the altissimo E-natural three measures before 2. Unlike Cuper, Neidich inserts a crescendo in the measure before 2 in order to help the orchestra enter more clearly.

Figure 5.1. The primary theme beginning at 1



Neidich suggests that the secondary theme from 5 to 8 should be felt as a "Bossa Nova" dance. While there are places where he employs rubato, Neidich does not believe that a performer should carefully plan where these moments occur. Instead, he maintains that the subtle nuances within the harmonic changes, combined with the musical intuition of the performer, should govern where rubato is used. While Neidich does not carefully plan how he is going to play every phrase in this passage, he consistently pulls back slightly where there are clarion E-sharp and clarion F-sharp eighth-notes leading to a clarion A-natural downbeat. Such cases occur three measures before 6 into the next measure, and three measures before 8 leading into the following measure (see fig. 5.2). For the overall passage, Neidich summarizes his musical advice with the following words, "Don't think about it. Just dance." He does not believe that Françaix planned this section with an elaborate design in mind. Instead, Neidich says that it is necessary to "play around what the orchestra is doing."

Figure 5.2. Three measures before 8 leading into two measures before 8



The accompanimental passage starting in the sixth measure of 11 does not require any alternate fingerings according to Neidich (see fig. 5.4). He thinks that the one and one E-flat fingering (see fig. 2.3, pg. 19) is too sharp for this passage and is not needed. Neidich plays the E-flats in this passage with the side-key E-flat fingering (see fig. 5.3). He adds that there are numerous ways to practice this passage. While it is up to each performer to find what works best, Neidich suggests that proper rotation of the left hand is crucial for success. There is a tendency to get bogged down on the low B-flats, which makes it difficult to play this section smoothly. Neidich avoids this by thinking of moving away from the low B-flats toward the upper notes in each group. He believes that most of Françaix's soft dynamic markings are too soft throughout the concerto. While he does not offer a specific dynamic level, Neidich believes that the passage after 11 should be brought out more to balance with the dynamic level of the orchestra.

Figure 5.3. Side-key E-flat fingering

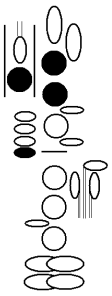
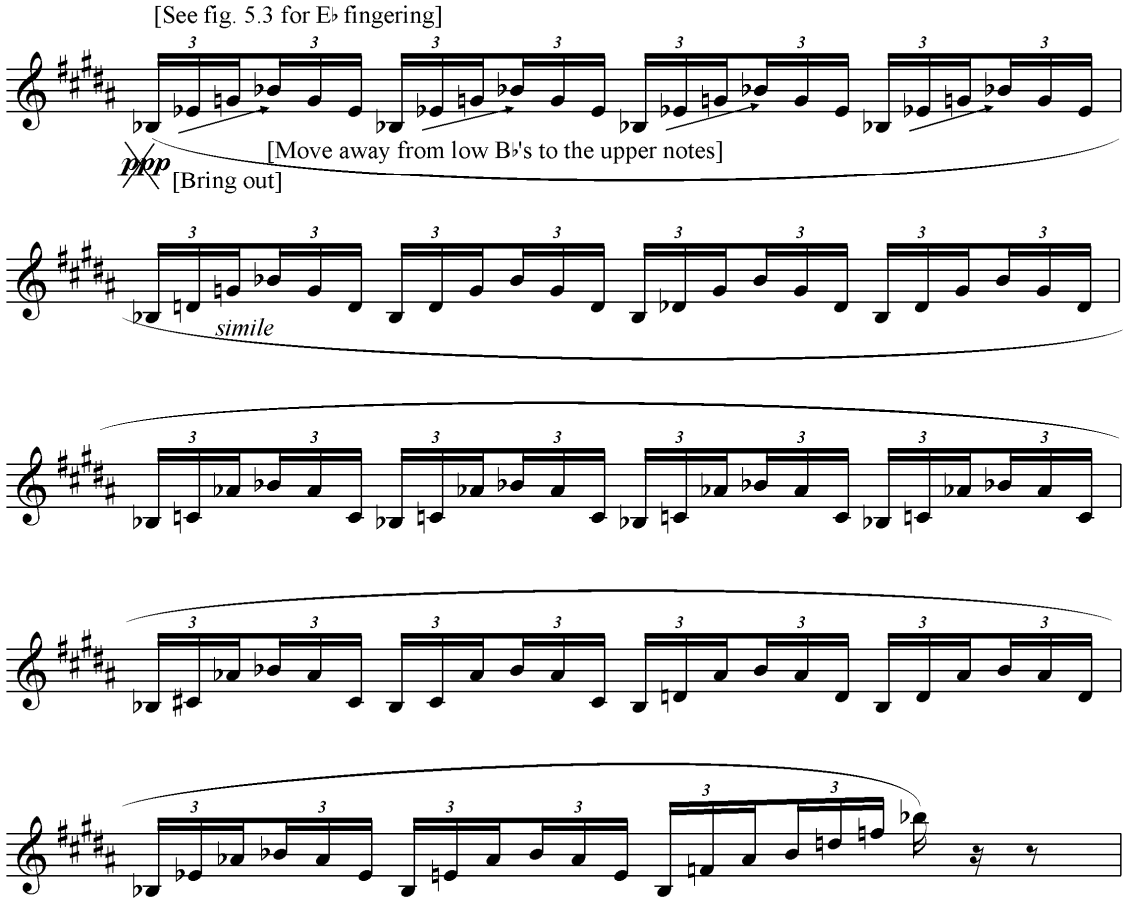


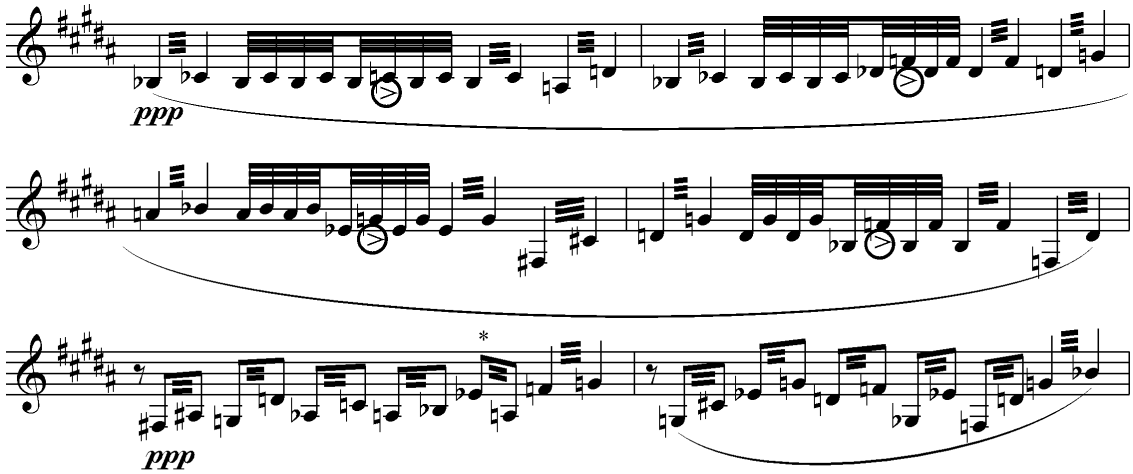
Figure 5.4. The accompanimental passage starting in the sixth measure of 11



Neidich does not believe the *cadenza* that starts in the tenth measure of 13 should be performed *In tempo*. He adds that this marking is more indicative of the thematic material from the exposition that should be clearly recognizable in the *cadenza*. Like Ashkenazy, Neidich states that the sixteenth-note fragments at the beginning of the *cadenza* are a reference to the bassoon part from the primary theme. These are followed by a presentation of the secondary theme beginning where it is marked *In tempo, ma a piacere* in the eleventh measure of the *cadenza*. Neidich allows himself much more freedom in tempo and phrasing for this presentation of the secondary theme. He notes that even when playing with freedom in this section, it is important for the underlying accompaniment from the secondary theme to be clearly heard.

Neidich plays the tremolo passage beginning nine measures before 14 with precisely measured thirty-second note tremolos. Like Cuper and Ashkenazy, Neidich advocates bringing out the accents to highlight the appearance of the secondary theme from the exposition. Neidich's approach to the low E-flat to A tremolo in the fifth measure before 14 is unique. While he acknowledges the fact that the low E-flat is a misprint, Neidich thinks Françaix's initial idea was correct in terms of voice leading. Therefore, he transposes the E-flat up an octave (see fig. 5.5). In this case, Neidich suggests using the one and one fingering for the E-flat (see fig. 2.3, pg. 19) instead of the side-key fingering.

Figure 5.5. The tremolo passage starting nine measures before 14



*The current edition for clarinet and piano reads an octave lower for the E-flat.

Although Neidich does not use any alternate fingerings for the technically difficult passage starting in the fourth measure of 14, he does choose to remove the right hand pinky E-flat key on the altissimo notes. Like Ashkenazy, Neidich begins the passage a bit slower and accelerates to the last few notes leading into the downbeat four measures before 15. Initially, Neidich did not want to slow down at the end of the run and experimented numerous times with orchestras. Through this work, he discovered that the bassoons were often unable to enter correctly unless he slowed the last few notes into the fourth measure before 15. The exact point at which he slows down at the end of the passage is determined by who is conducting the orchestra. If Neidich is conducting the orchestra himself, he does not slow down until the last two notes of the run. However, if someone else is conducting the work, he takes more time at the end of passage to help the orchestra enter correctly.

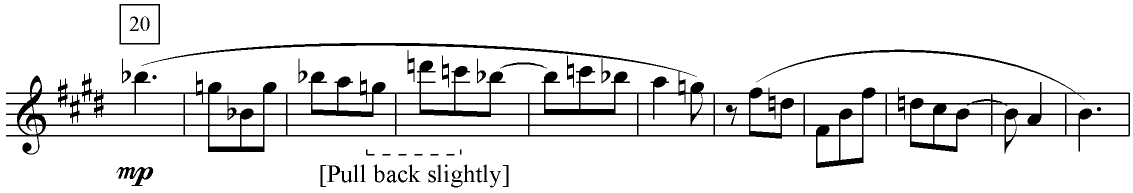
In order to practice this section, Neidich believes it is important to play with a steady tempo and play the passage in different groupings. He adds that practicing the passage in different groupings helps "trick" the brain into learning the notes. Once the notes have been learned at a steady tempo, Neidich suggests that the performer should experiment with using rubato throughout the passage.

Movement II

While Neidich believes it is important to observe Françaix's tempo markings, he plays the second movement slightly under the composer's marking of dotted quarter-note equals 84. He performs the second movement at the tempo of dotted quarter-note equals 82, which is still considerably faster than the other artists interviewed. Neidich does not believe his tempo is too fast for orchestras to handle; however, it is difficult for the soloist to enter with the orchestra in the fourth measure of 18 at this tempo (see fig. 2.7, pg. 21). In order to enter correctly with the orchestra in the fourth measure of 18, he stretches the three sixteenth-notes leading into the fifth measure of 18.

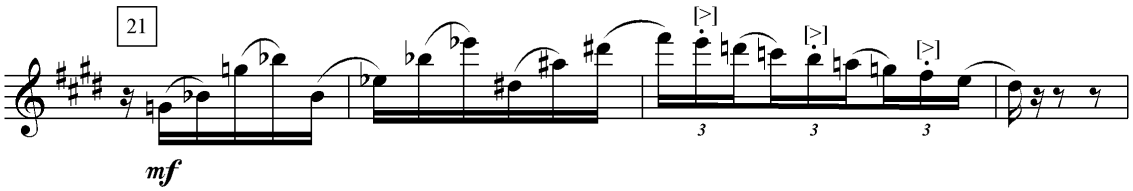
Neidich views the melody beginning at 20 as being a "Romantic phrase" that needs to "dance." While he adds that there are places a performer can bend or stretch the melody, Neidich thinks these moments will not be very noticeable since the overall tempo is very fast. Neidich does take a slight amount of time between the clarion G-natural in the third measure of 20 and the clarion C-natural in the fourth measure of 20 to accentuate the climax of the melody (see fig. 5.6).

Figure 5.6. The melody beginning at 20



The passage beginning at 21, which contains the difficult articulation in the third measure of 21, does not require any alternate fingerings for smooth execution. Neidich plays a slight accent on the tongued notes to successfully accomplish the articulation in the third measure of 21 (see fig. 5.7). Additionally, he believes that the end of the phrase "tumbles" down in a comical manner when the tongued notes are emphasized more.

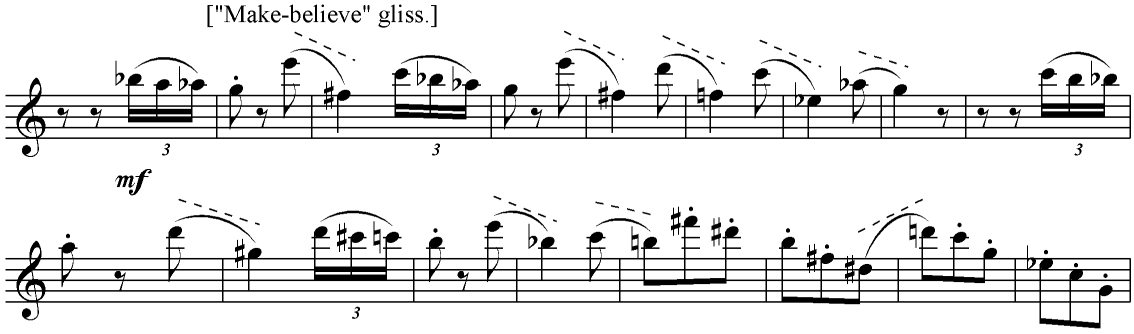
Figure 5.7. Neidich's approach to the difficult articulation in the third measure of 21



Neidich believes that the Trio is musically "drunk" throughout. This is highlighted by the fact that everything is slightly offset rhythmically with downbeats occurring on beat three instead of beat one. Similar to Ashkenazy, Neidich slightly embellishes the slurred intervals between the eighth measure of the Trio to 26. He envisions "make-believe" glissandi in each case where there is an eighth-note slurred

into the downbeat of the next measure (see fig. 5.8). Neidich adds that these “make-believe” glissandi should not be played literally since the comical nature of the work is “funny in a sophisticated way.” Instead, he believes they should be used as a mental tool for melodic shaping where the mere thought of playing a glissando causes the slurred intervals to take on a slightly smeared quality.

Figure 5.8. Measure eight of the Trio to one measure before 26



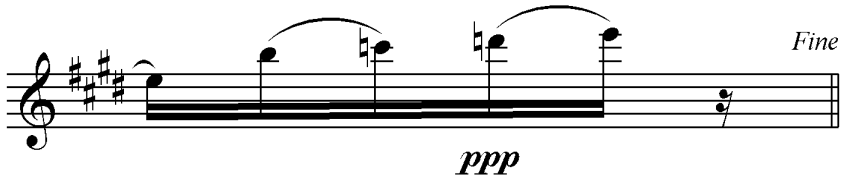
Movement III

Like the other artists, Neidich believes the tempo of the third movement is slightly too fast. According to Neidich, he plays this movement at approximately quarter-note equals 70-72. He believes there is a connection between the last four notes of the second movement and the first measure of the third movement (see fig. 5.9). This connection is enhanced slightly by playing a “quasi attacca” between the movements. Unlike Cuper, he is not concerned about trying to match the dotted quarter-note tempo of the second movement with the quarter-note tempo of the third movement. While there are places to use rubato in the third movment, Neidich does not suggest that this

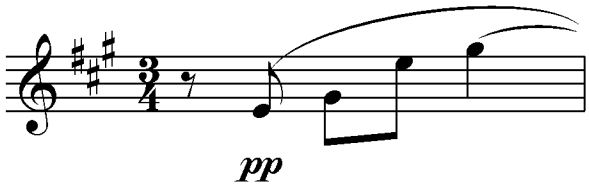
should happen often because he believes the movement is a “passacaglia,” and contains its own built in moments of push and pull.

Figure 5.9. The end of movement two and the beginning of movement three

Movement II

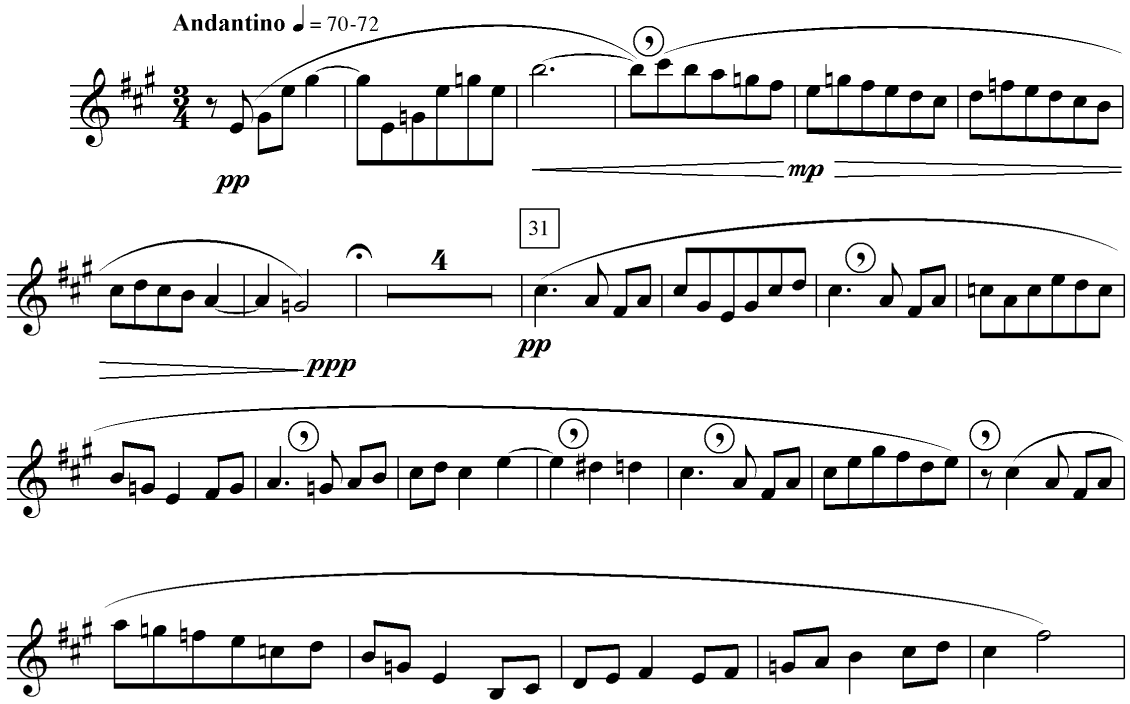


Movement III



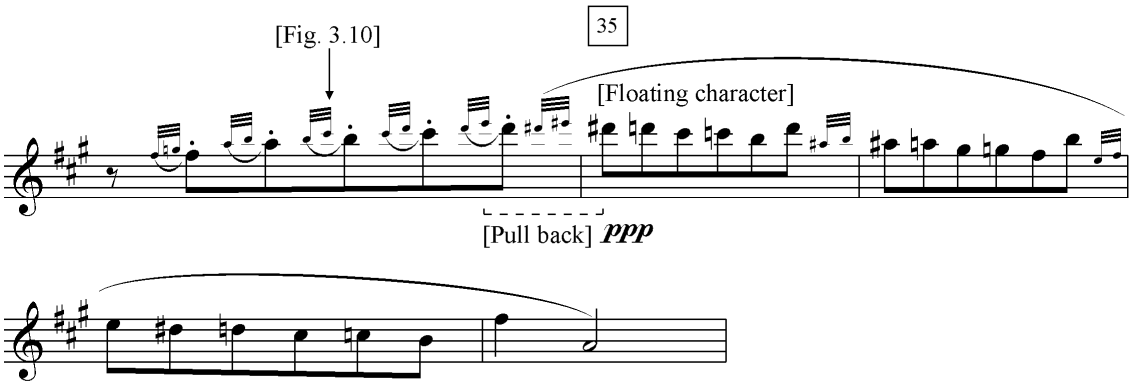
Neidich does not worry about the issue of breathing for the long phrases from the beginning of the third movement to 32 because he uses circular breathing. He suggests that if a performer cannot circular breathe and needs to take a breath during the long phrases, then it is acceptable to breathe after any of the longer notes (see fig. 5.10). Dynamically, Neidich suggests that the soft markings throughout this passage represent a “quality” rather than a specific volume level. He beleives that it is similar to the beginning of Debussy’s *Première Rhapsodie* which is marked *doux et expressif*. Since Neidich does not interpret the dynamic marks in this passage literally, he plays the melodic line slightly louder.

Figure 5.10. Acceptable places to breathe from the beginning to one measure before 32



Neidich does not use any alternate fingerings for the melody beginning one measure before 35 except for the altissimo C-sharp grace-note, which he fingers as a clarion B-natural with side-keys one and two added (see fig. 3.10, pg. 45). Since Neidich believes the measure before 35 represents the end of the "passacaglia" theme, he pulls the tempo back slightly into 35. Starting at 35, he thinks of the descending line as having a "floating character." He does not deem it necessary to plan the rubato in the descending line, but points out that it is important to think in terms of the character of the line (see fig. 5.11).

Figure 5.11. The melody beginning one measure before 35



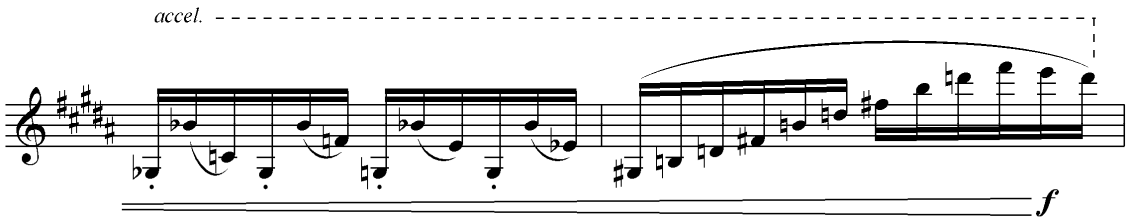
Movement IV

Neidich performs the last movement at the astounding tempo of dotted quarter-note equals 136. Although the bass instruments play in three, he tends to feel the movement in two. Neidich believes that Françaix intended for the basses to be playing in three in order to give the feeling that they are misplaced throughout. The resulting effect is a hemiola in the basses which confuses the sense of pulse for the listener.

According to Neidich, the first cadenza begins in the thirteenth measure of 42. He acknowledges that there are numerous ways to approach this cadenza musically; however, he believes it is more important to think in terms of different characters rather than trying to carefully plan out each musical phrase. Neidich suggests that the character of the melody needs to be "sweet" twenty measures before 43 where it is marked *subito, capriccioso*. Beginning sixteen measures before 43, Neidich thinks there is a shift in character to that of "clowns in a circus." Six measures before 43, where it is marked *a Tempo, risoluto,* Neidich plays in tempo. While he thinks it is acceptable to start slower and accelerate into 43, Neidich believes it sounds more outrageous and

humorous if it is played in tempo throughout. Despite the fact that he does not think that the phrases of the cadenza should be meticulously planned, he is consistent with the other performers in his approach to the eleventh and twelfth measures of the cadenza. Neidich recognizes that there is a built-in accelerando in these measures leading to a change in character in the thirteenth measure of the cadenza (see fig. 5.12).

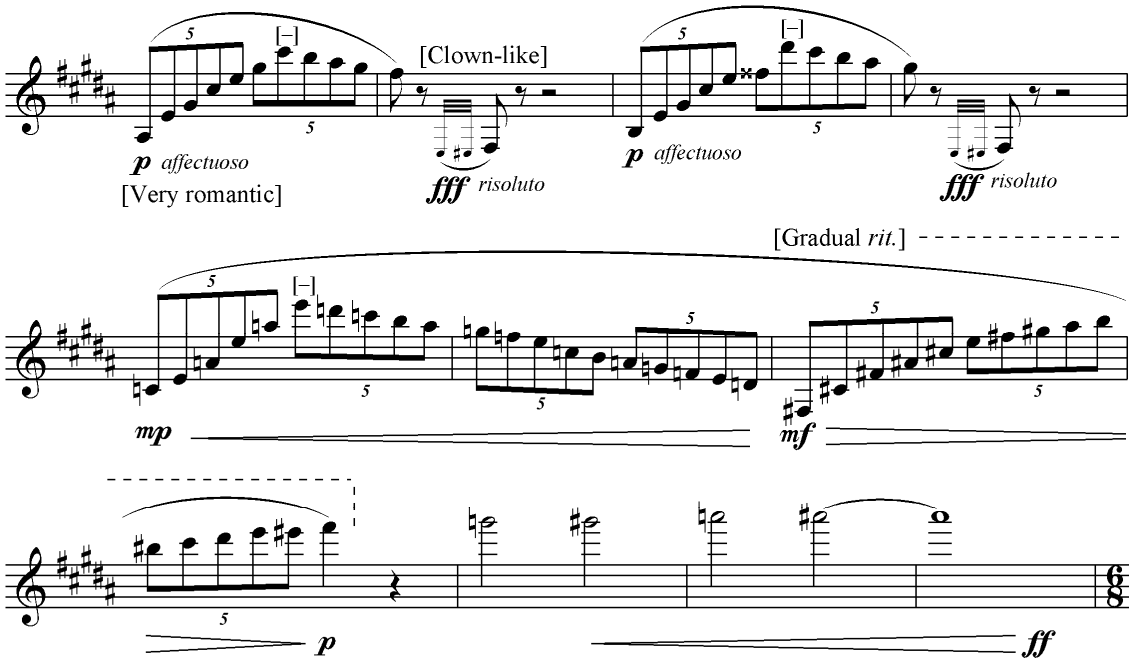
Figure 5.12. The eleventh and twelfth measures of the first cadenza



Like the other performers, Neidich acknowledges that there is a strong connection between the tempo of the first movement and that of the passage beginning in the third measure of 46. He suggests that this relationship between the two tempi actually begins at 44. Like Cuper, Neidich pulls the tempo back slightly starting two measures before 47 to accommodate the difficult trumpet part; however, he believes this slight change of tempo happens naturally. According to Neidich, the marking of an eighth-note equals a dotted eighth-note is incorrect and should read an eighth-note equals an eighth-note. Neidich adds that this would mean that the 6/8 measures in this passage are slower than those at the beginning of the movement. Additionally, the necessary slow-down to help the trumpet player is actually a correct tempo change, and not just a concession.

According to Neidich, the second cadenza begins in the eleventh measure of 47 and contains a "dream-like" quality to it (see fig. 5.13). Within this dream there are two contrasting characters represented by the markings of *affectuoso* and *risoluto*. The character that embodies the *affectuoso* is "very romantic," and is mocked by the *risoluto* character which is "clown-like." In each case where there are eighth-note quintuplets, Neidich slightly elongates the highest note in each group. Additionally, in the seventh and eighth measures of the cadenza, he plays a gradual ritardando up to the high F-sharp.

Figure 5.13. The second cadenza beginning in the eleventh measure of 47



Closing Remarks

During his interview, Neidich commented on the reception of Françaix's works in France and concluded by providing advice about performing the concerto. While there have been many students who have learned the piece, Neidich acknowledged that it is not performed with orchestra as often as it should be. Instead, the works of Françaix, as well as other students of Nadia Boulanger, have been underplayed in France since the French appear to favor the modern style of writing represented by Boulez. Neidich mentioned that there are still people in France who do not respect Françaix as a composer, despite a slight surge in French performances of Françaix's works in more recent times. For this reason, Françaix was excited to discover that Neidich championed his music.

Neidich's overall advice about performing the concerto could be summarized with the following words, "have fun." While the work is very difficult technically, it should not be about technique alone. He adds that "technique is a means to an end" and should not be the center of attention musically. However, his brisker approach to the fast movements of the concerto demonstrates his technical prowess, and ability to enjoy the musical content of the work without being hindered by the tempi. Additionally, Françaix's works are very comical in nature. Neidich believes that if people do not laugh when they hear Françaix's music, it has not been performed in the correct manner. In order to help an audience laugh, Neidich suggests that it is important to think of different comical characters, especially in both of the cadenzas of the fourth movement. Additionally, he adds "make-believe" glissandi to the melodic line that lasts

from the eighth measure of the Trio to 26. Such embellishments, along with Neidich's technical mastery, allow him to "have fun" with the concerto.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Comparison of the Artists

All four of the artists interviewed for the sake of this research have contributed a variety of unique ideas about Françaix's *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra*. The advice and musical insight offered by these virtuosos should serve as an excellent starting point any clarinetist who has a serious desire to learn the concerto. In order to further facilitate the understanding of these interpretations, what follows is a comparison of the different approaches presented by each of the performers.

The philosophical perspectives of Cuper, Ashkenazy, Finucane, and Neidich greatly shape how they interpret Françaix's *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra*. For Cuper, it is vitally important to follow what is in the printed part. He maintains that those who deviate from the score tend to do so for their own selfish motives rather than trying to honor what the composer has written. While Cuper does not think there is a large amount of room for interpretation, Ashkenazy believes that this work goes much deeper than the printed notes on the page. Ashkenazy sees the simple and humorous personality traits of the composer in this work, which is balanced by the contemplative nature of the third movement of the concerto. He adds that this moment of reflection is present in other works of Françaix, and that this contrasting character gives more meaning to the humorous side of his works. In contrast to Ashkenazy, Finucane does not advocate philosophizing too deeply about the concerto. While he views the work as being "fun," and an opportunity to demonstrate technical prowess, Finucane does not believe the concerto is very melodic overall. Neidich's philosophy about the concerto is

similar to Ashkenazy's since he acknowledges the humorous side of the work as well as the more "touching" musical moments. Additionally, Neidich does not believe that a performer has performed the work successfully if audience members do not experience laughter at some point.

The tempi chosen by the four performers are a revealing entryway into their interpretations. For the first movement, three out of the four artists interviewed performed it within Françaix's recommended range of a quarter-note equals 120-126.[60] The only exception is represented by Charles Neidich who performs the first movement at approximately a quarter-note equals 132. For the second movement, only half of the performers play the movement somewhere between a dotted quarter-note equals 72-76. A composite of the tempi of all four performers for the second movement is a dotted quarter-note equals 69-82 with Cuper's tempo at the lower end of the range, and Neidich's tempo at the upper end. All four of the artists perform the third movement within the range of a quarter-note equals 63-72 which represents the prescribed range that Françaix recommended to Cuper.[61] For the last movement, two out of the four performers performed the movement within Françaix's range of a dotted quarter-note equals 126-132.[62] However, a compilation of all of the tempi for this movement reveals a tempo range of a dotted quarter-note equals 112-136. A summary of these results can be seen in Table 6.1.

[60] Cuper, "Checking Points in the Jean Françaix 'Clarinet Concerto,'" 20.

[61] Ibid.

[62] Ibid.

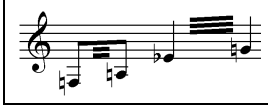
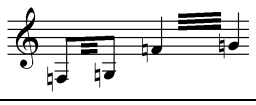
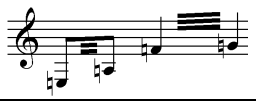
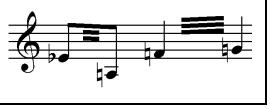
Table 6.1. A comparison of tempi for the four artists

	Movement I	Movement II	Movement III	Movement IV
Cuper	120-126	69-72	63-72	126-132
Ashkenazy	120-126	74	69	112
Finucane	126	72-76	72	126
Neidich	132	82	70-72	136

Each of the artists has their own unique approach to phrasing and musicality in the concerto. However, three out of the four artists incorporate a gradual crescendo from 1 to 2 for the primary theme in the first movement. Greater diversity can be seen in the interpretations of the secondary theme from 5 to 8. While differences exist, it is interesting that Ashkenazy and Neidich are consistent about pulling back slightly on the E-sharp and F-sharp eighth-notes leading into two measures before 8. The decision to pull back at this moment is influenced in both cases by the colorful harmonic change that takes place in the orchestral accompaniment. For the passage beginning six measures after 11, three out the four artists use the one and one E-flat fingering to facilitate easier technique (see fig. 2.3, pg.19). While all of the performers approach the tremolo passage starting nine measures before 14 in a different manner, three out of four believe it is important to bring out the accented notes in order to highlight the secondary theme from the exposition. Of great interest are all of the unique ideas about the questionable tremolo from low E-flat to low A-natural and the tremolo that follows it from F-natural to G-natural five measures before 14 (see Table 6.2). In addition to the fact that they all approach these tremolos differently, the two artists that had the strongest working relationship with the composer, Cuper and Neidich, do not agree on

how the tremolos should be played. It is important to note that Françaix did not object to either of their approaches, but kept an open mind to different interpretations of this passage. The technically difficult passage starting in the fourth measure of 14 is approached in a different manner by all of the artists. However, the majority of the performers believe that alternate fingerings are not necessary to play this passage. In addition to this, three out of the four interviewees maintain that it is important to slow down slightly at the end of the run in order to allow a smoother entrance for the orchestra four measures before 15.

Table 6.2. The different approaches to the questionable tremolos five bars before 14

Cuper	Ashkenazy	Finucane	Neidich
			

All of the artists have slightly different interpretations of the melody beginning at 20 in the second movement. Three out of the four approaches incorporate a slight ritard around the fourth measure of 20. While all of the interviewees approach the difficult articulation differently in the third measure of 21, half of them resort to using different mental groupings to successfully execute the passage. All of the performers approach the melody from the eighth measure of the Trio to 26 in a different manner. It is interesting that two out of the four artists believe that there should be a type of glissando, whether real (Ashkenazy) or “make-believe” (Neidich), played between the slurred intervals.

There are differences in how each of the interviewees approaches the musical phrasing from the beginning of the third movement to 32. Three of the artists do not believe it is necessary to break the slurred lines in this passage since they perform the phrases in one breath (Cuper and Finucane), or circular breathe (Neidich). However, Finucane and Neidich suggest that it is acceptable to break the slurred lines if a performer is unable to perform the phrases in one breath. The melody beginning one measure before 35 is played in a slightly different manner by each of the artists. While these differences exist, three of the interviewees use the same fingering for the B to C-sharp grace-notes in the measure before 35 (see fig. 3.10, pg. 45). Additionally, half of the artists pull back slightly on the last two grace-notes leading into 35.

The cadenzas in the last movement are interpreted differently by all of the artists as expected. However, in the first cadenza beginning in the thirteenth measure of 42, three out of the four performers play an accelerando between the ninth and twelfth measures of the cadenza. Additionally, half of the performers do not interpret the *a Tempo, risoluto* marking literally in the sixth measure before 43. Instead, they start slower and accelerate the tempo leading into the orchestral entrance at 43. For the passage starting in the third measure of 46 that lasts until fourth measure of 47, half of the artists slow the tempo slightly two measures before 47 to allow the trumpet players to successfully perform their parts. This is especially needed when the solo clarinetist decides to perform the last movement at a fast tempo. Finally, the second cadenza starting in the eleventh measure of 47 is approached in a unique manner by each of the interviewees. While they all play this cadenza differently, all the artists believe it is

important to bring out the contrasting characters represented by the *affectuoso* and *risoluto* markings.

Conclusion

Through the investigation of the performance practices of four world-renowned clarinetists, this document has demonstrated that different philosophical approaches to Françaix's *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra* greatly shape how the work is performed. While it is commonplace today for performers to carefully observe every marking in printed scores, this study reinforces that a score is always subject to interpretation by the soloist. This is demonstrated by the fact that three out of the four artists interviewed did not believe the printed tempi in the score were practical. Considering that Françaix conducted the work slightly slower for Cuper's recording, and that the oldest recording performed by Jacques Lancelot is slower overall, it is safe to assume that the printed tempi are faster than Françaix initially wanted. However, Neidich's performance of the work was much faster and was praised by the composer. From this fact, one could conclude that Françaix wrote the concerto with slower tempi in mind, but kept an open mind about the work being performed faster.

Another case similar to the tempi dilemma can be seen in the tremolo passage starting nine measures before 14 in the first movement. The author believes that the printed low E-flat to A-natural tremolo followed by the F-natural to G-natural tremolo in the fifth measure before 14 should read low F-natural to A-natural followed by E-flat to G-natural. This is in agreement with what Françaix instructed Cuper to play prior to Cuper's recorded performance (see fig. 2.5, pg. 21). It is important to note that Cuper

was the only artist of the four interviewees that collaborated with the composer prior to his recorded performance. Cuper is also the only performer out of the four that plays an E-flat to G-natural tremolo for the last tremolo in the fifth measure before 14. Since Cuper is very careful to follow what is in the clarinet part, it is hard to believe that he would alter the last tremolo in the fifth measure before 14 without a good reason to do so. Cuper changes this tremolo because of advice given directly by the composer. While it is clear from Françaix's work with Cuper that the composer had an opinion about the tremolos, Françaix did not object to the differing approaches taken by the other artists. Instead, he accepted the performers' solutions to the misprinted tremolos.

Françaix's less rigid approach to the printed markings in his *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra* is in sharp contrast to some of the modernist composers who were writing music in France during his life. These composers employed compositional techniques such as integral serialism in an attempt to control every aspect of their music. Since Françaix was not strict about controlling every musical detail in the concerto, the work is slightly incomplete as it is printed in the score. A true completion of the work can only be accomplished by musicians who have thoroughly mastered the concerto and have applied their own personal artistry to the work.

Each of the musicians interviewed for this research has demonstrated mastery of the concerto, and contributed ideas and suggestions for future performers to draw upon. Those who desire to study the work and perform it should become familiar with the performance practices of the artists discussed in the previous chapters. It is the hope of the author that this document will serve as a useful resource for future performers and their interpretations in the years to come.

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