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A STUDY OF COMPARATIVE INTERPRETATIONS BY STANLEY DRUCKER, ELSA LUDEWIG-VERDEHR, HÅKAN ROSENGREN, AND JOHN BRUCE YEH OF THE CLARINET CONCERTO BY CARL NIELSEN

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By

CHRISTINA GIACONA
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ABSTRACT

Carl Nielsen's *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra* is a staple of twentieth-century clarinet literature that requires exceptional musicality and technical mastery to justifiably perform the work. This document aids in the explanation and understanding of the *Concerto* by examining the interpretations of four prominent soloists: Stanley Drucker (the first American to record the *Concerto*), Elsa Ludewig-Verdehr, Håkan Rosengren, and John Bruce Yeh. A chapter has been dedicated to each performer in which I examine his or her relationship to the work, how he or she was introduced to the *Concerto*, who he or she performed and recorded the work with, different interpretations of style, general impressions of the work, and how each soloist interprets articulations, phrasings, and editorial markings. The last chapter draws conclusions from the similarities and differences present in each performer's interpretation and philosophy. To better explain each interpretation, musical examples have been used to show the differences between the performers' versions and the printed clarinet part.

CHAPTER 1

Historical and Background Information

Carl Nielsen (1865–1931), one of Denmark's most noted composers, is one of the more important and free-spirited composers to have straddled the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[1] He is best known for his six symphonies and his three concertos written for violin, flute, and clarinet. Nielsen was also a noted conductor, violinist, teacher, and writer who later at taught and became director of the Copenhagen Conservatory of Music. In Denmark, Nielsen's contributions made him the most prominent and influential Danish musician of his time.[2] Though Nielsen's music is much more popular today, his music was often played throughout Central Europe and to some extent in the United States during his lifetime. However, his works did not receive much exposure outside of Scandinavia after his death, unlike the music of his contemporary, Finnish composer Jean Sibelius, who was born the same year as Nielsen.[3] Sibelius's works have had the good fortune of being adopted by numerous influential conductors who promoted his symphonies.[4]

Over time, Nielsen's music has gained exposure outside of Scandinavia, and the Western world is starting to recognize its importance. In 1950 the Danish Radio

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[1] David Fanning. "Nielsen, Carl." In *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/19930 (accessed March 23, 2009).

[2] Ibid.

[3] Robert Simpson, *Carl Nielsen: Symphonist* (New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1979), 11.

[4] Ibid.

Symphony performed Nielsen's Fifth Symphony at the Edinburgh Festival. Both the performance and the accompanying LP release received great acclaim, and critics voiced astonishment that such a powerful work was not more widely known.[5] Since then, a steady growth in performances of Nielsen's music has occurred, especially in Britain and the United States.[6] Robert Simpson's book *Carl Nielsen: Symphonist* and the advocacy of modern conductors such as Leonard Bernstein have played key roles in generating that interest. Today, Nielsen's other compositions such as his wind quintet, string quartets, and vocal works are also receiving much attention.

Nielsen's music can be described as modern using musical styles ranging from Brahmsian romanticism to neoclassicism to more twentieth-century techniques.[7] His early influences, however, were Mozart and J.S. Bach.[8] Further influences on his compositional style developed from his studying late Renaissance and early Baroque polyphony as a compositional practice, yet as early as 1890 he began using his own unique harmonic language.

As Simpson states, Nielsen came to the conclusion that "Brahms was the most firmly disciplined master of his time," which inspired Nielsen to use the German romantic composer's musical traits and compositional construction in his

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[5] Ibid.

[6] David Fanning. "Nielsen, Carl." In *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/19930 (accessed March 23, 2009).

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid., 18.

own music.[9] Nielsen did, however, find it difficult to compose in German romantic tradition simply because sentimentality is rarely used in Danish music.[10] Nonetheless, according to Simpson, rather than Nielsen being a romantic, classicist, or "neoclassicist [Nielson] used a mixture of the three styles."[11]

Since his death, Nielsen's music and influences on it have been re-evaluated by many performers, critics, and scholars. Some agree with Vagn Holmboe who states new Danish music such as Nielsen's is part of the European tradition, while others agree with Nils Schiørring, who is a supporter of Nielsen's music as a rejuvenator of Danish music. Yet, others believe he was only continuing the Danish compositional style.[12] Regardless of the debate over whether Nielsen's music falls under Danish or European traditions, and where his direct musical and aesthetical inspiration came from, there is no question that some of Nielsen's first impressions of music were simple folk songs and dances from his native hometown.[13] The Danish folk music he grew up with is described as having simple flowing melodies, but at the same time shifts easily between regular to irregular meters.[14]

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[9] Simpson, 11.

[10] Ibid., 19.

[11] Ibid.

[12] Mina Miller, "Introduction," in *The Nielsen Companion*, ed. Mina Miller (Portland: Amadeus Press, 1994), 20.

[13] Simpson,12.

[14] Ibid.

Nielsen's first experience making music occurred after he caught the measles when he was six. Both of Nielsen's parents were very musical. Nielsen's father, Niels Jørgensen, was an excellent violinist and an even better cornet player, while his mother, Maren Kirstine loved to sing.[15] To keep Nielsen occupied during his illness, his mother handed him a three-quarter-size violin that had been hanging on the wall.[16] Nielsen then taught himself a few folk melodies that he played for his father when he came home.[17] His father just listened quietly, took the violin to tune it, and then handed it back. This was the only musical instruction between them.[18] Even though this was Nielsen's first experience with music and that what he played likely reflected what he heard around him as he grew up, he later said folk music has no bases in his compositions.[19] Scholars have argued with that statement because some of Nielsen's songs have often been viewed as "authentically Danish", both in Denmark and elsewhere, even if some have found it hard to pinpoint exactly what makes Nielsen's songs specifically Danish.[20]

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[15] Torben Meyer, "A Biographical Sketch," in, *Carl Nielsen: Symphonist* (New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1979), 226.

[16] Knud Ketting, "Funen childhood," Carl Nielsen Society, http://carlnielsen.dk/pages/biography/funen-childhood.php (accessed January 10, 2009).

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Karen Vestergard and Ida-Marie Vorre, "Danishness in Nielsen's Folkelige Songs," vol. 3 of *Carl Nielsen Studies* (Copenhagen: The Royal Library, 2008), 80.

To define Nielsen's music as simply a reflection of his early Brahms or Mozart influences, or even the folk music of his country, ignores a more crucial aspect of his compositional style: that it evolved. Throughout Nielsen's life, his compositional style changed, as does the style of many composers. Even his later compositions show influences from his contemporaries. Many studies and academic papers are dedicated to explaining Nielsen's compositional style.[21] Simpson describes Nielsen's music as "being full of 'fingerprints,'" meaning there are many influences found in his use of rhythm, melodic material, harmony, and tonality.[22] However, even though these 'fingerprints' can be found in Nielsen's music, his work is regarded as highly individual in organic construction.[23] While developing his own harmonic techniques he began composing in what is now called "extended tonality." Nielsen's later works demonstrate the use of tonality more as an achieved goal rather than a form of foundation.[24] Nielsen developed this compositional trait through the use of Wagnerian chromaticism. Like that of many composers, Nielsen's best music reveals a steady growth in his compositional style, which can be viewed as a direct reflection of his artistic development.[25]

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[21] Miller, 21.

[22] Simpson, 20.

[23] Michael Fjeldsøe, "Organicism and Construction: in Nielsen's Symphony No. 5," vol. 1 of *Carl Nielsen Studies* (Copenhagen: The Royal Library, 2003), 18.

[24] Simpson, 21.

[25] Simpson, 11.

There have been many ideas proposed on how to categorize Nielsen's shifting compositional style over this lifetime. Povl Hamburger suggests dividing his works into two periods before and after 1914.[26] This division is suggested as Nielsen's works before 1914 generally fit into his more "classical" style while his later works starting with the Fourth Symphony are stylistically diverse.[27] Torben Schousboe also classifies Nielsen's music into two stylistic periods. He divides Nielsen's works into those before and after 1910 making Nielsen's Third Symphony the pivotal piece.[28] Simpson proposes dividing Nielsen's compositional style into four periods. He categorizes all of Nielsen's works up to 1903 as period one, with the second period focusing on the Third Symphony (*Sinfonia Espansive*), the third climaxing with the Sonata No. 2 for violin and piano, and the fourth period starting in 1923 and ending with Nielsen's death in 1931.[29] While some of Nielsen's pieces might be stylistically among different categories, Nielsen's *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra* written in 1928 compositionally fits within the last period of all proposed compositional periods. Herbert Rosenberg claims that because the *Clarinet Concerto* was written late in Nielsen's career the music is often more difficult to grasp because of the composer's disintegration of tonality.[30] Simpson

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[26] Mina Miller, 21.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Knud Ketting, "Well-known composer," Carl Nielsen Society, http://carlnielsen.dk/pages/biography/well-known-composer.php (accessed January 10, 2009).

suggests the *Concerto* is filled with humor, pathos, and kindliness mingled in conflict shown by the inflexible sense of purpose it conveys, and that this theatrical romanticism is a trait that ties all of Nielsen's works together.[31]

Nielsen's composing the *Clarinet Concerto* in 1928 came about through a collaboration that began almost a decade earlier. The piece's style is in some ways rooted in a symphony Nielsen wrote during the early 20s. In 1921, years before the *Clarinet Concerto* was written, Nielsen made a phone call to his pianist Christian Christiansen who was rehearsing Mozart's *Sinfonia Concertante* with four members of the Copenhagen Wind Quintet.[32] When Christiansen picked up the phone the musician kept rehearsing. Impressed with what he heard, Nielsen asked if he could come over and listen to the rehearsal. Later Nielsen told the oboist, Svend Christian Felumb, that he wanted to write the group a quintet.[33] By this time Nielsen had become good friends with all the members of the ensemble. Nielsen composed the quintet with an intimate understanding of each member's personality.[34] In the final variations of the wind quintet, each player was given a featured passage codifying their own personality along with the qualities of their instrument.[35] The first

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[30] Herbert Rosenberg, "The Concertos," in *Carl Nielsen: Centenary Essays,* ed. Jürgen Balzer (London: Dennis Dobson, 1965), 47.

[31] Simpson, 143.

[32] Knud Ketting, "… a whole pile of works," Carl Nielsen Society, http://carlnielsen.dk/pages/biography/a-pile-of-works.php (accessed January 10, 2009).

[33] Ibid.

[34] Simpson, 160.

performance of the piece was at a private concert at a friend's house and, and later on October 9, 1922, the Copenhagen Wind Quintet gave the public premiere.[36]

On January 24, 1922, before the first performance of Nielsen's woodwind quintet, Nielsen premiered his Fifth Symphony on a concert. The piece received mixed reviews from audiences and critics. This symphony, which lacks a subtitle, is radical in style and is drastically different than his other symphonies.[37] To add to its dramatic effect, Nielsen included the use of percussion as a solo line instrument, which was new at the time. The snare drum is an integral part of the symphony, as the percussionist is instructed to improvise for nine measures as if trying to stop the progress of the orchestra, an effect Nielsen's will use later in his *Clarinet Concerto*. Nielsen said the Fifth Symphony was extremely difficult to compose, but his efforts resulted in compositional developments that continued to be useful in his later works. [38]

Primed with his accomplishments, in the Fifth Symphony and his relationship with the Copenhagen Wind Quintet, Nielsen was ready to create a new, stylistically diverse piece. With the encouragement of his friend Carl Johan Michaelsen, Nielsen started to compose his 1928 *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra* for the clarinetist of the Copenhagen Wind Quintet making it the second

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[35] Ibid.,143.

[36] Knud Ketting, "… a whole pile of works," Carl Nielsen Society, http://carlnielsen.dk/pages/biography/a-pile-of-works.php (accessed January 10, 2009).

[37] Ibid.

[38] Simpson, 92.

concerto written for a member of the ensemble. The first concerto had been a flute concerto for Holger Gilbert-Jespersen in 1926.[39] The 1928, second concerto was written for clarinetist Aage Oxenvad. Emil Telmányi, Nielsen's son-in-law, started working on a piano reduction in August of 1928 for the benefit of Oxenvad, who was not too happy with Nielsen for writing such a difficult piece.[40]

Nielsen often sought advice from the musicians playing his music. Thus, when he was writing the *Concerto,* a kind of collaboration formed between Nielsen and Oxenvad. Oxenvad was not only a member of the Copenhagen Wind Quintet, he was also the solo clarinetist of the Royal Chapel Orchestra. In the *Concerto*, Nielsen uses Oxenvad's experience as a soloist and a chamber player to help develop the piece's character and form.[41] As Ann Marie Bingham puts it, "The *Concerto* not only testifies to the strength of Oxenvad's technical prowess, but it evidently is an accurate portrayal of the man's personality and temperament."[42] The first performance of the *Clarinet Concerto* was given on September 14, 1928 at a private concert held at Carl Johan Michaelsen's summer home north of

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[39] Knud Ketting, "… a whole pile of works," Carl Nielsen Society, http://carlnielsen.dk/pages/biography/a-pile-of-works.php (accessed January 10, 2009).

[40] Knud Ketting, "Art and consciousness," Carl Nielsen Society, http://carlnielsen.dk/pages/biography/art-and-consciousness.php (accessed January 10, 2009).

[41] Eric Nelson, "The Danish Performance Tradition in Carl Nielsen's Konzert for klarinet og orkester, Opus 57 (1928)," *Clarinet,* winter 1987, 30-35 in Miller, *The Nielsen Companion*, 345.

[42] Ann Marie Bingham, "Carl Nielsen's Koncert for Klarinet og Orkester, Opus 57 (1928): A performance guide" (DMA thesis, University of Kentucky, 1990), 2.

Copenhagen. Oxenvad served as soloist, accompanied by twenty-two members of the Chapel Royal who were conducted by Telmányi. The first public performance was on October 11, 1928, in Copenhagen with the same performers, after which the piece received a generally positive response.[43]

Even though Nielsen's *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra* developed as a collaborative project between Oxenvad and Nielsen, and Nielsen wrote the piece with the intention of Oxenvad performing it, Oxenvad never felt comfortable enough technically to record it until late in his life.[44] While plans were made for Oxenvad to record the *Concerto,* he did not live long enough to complete the project.[45] Without a recording available and with the music demanding so much out of the performer, the *Clarinet Concerto* did not gain much fame outside of Denmark. It was not until 1947 that French clarinetist and composer Louis Cahuzac made the first recording of the *Concerto*. This recording was the inspiration for New York Philharmonic's clarinetist Stanley Drucker's 1967 recording with the New York Philharmonic under the direction of Leonard Bernstein. Drucker's recording popularized the *Clarinet Concerto* to the United States and Western Europe making the recording a milestone in the exposure of Nielsen's music.

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[43] Knud Ketting, "Art and consciousness," Carl Nielsen Society, http://carlnielsen.dk/pages/biography/art-and-consciousness.php (accessed January 10, 2009).

[44] Eric Nelson, "The Nielsen Concert and Aage Oxenvad," Mark Charette, www.woodwind.org/clarinet/Study/Nielsen.html (accessed November 23, 2008).

Since Drucker's recording, numerous clarinetists have recorded the work and have performed the piece in national competitions. Notable clarinetists who have professionally recorded the *Concerto* include John McCaw, Ib Eriksson, Louis Cahuzac, Martin Fröst, Håkan Rosengren, Benny Goodman, Kjell-Inge Stevensson, Richard Stolzman, John Bruce Yeh, and Sabine Meyer. As of 2009 more than thirty different commercially available recordings have been made. By the end of the twentieth century Nielsen had been recognized by the musical world as one of the most innovative and influential composers of his era. As the world starts to learn more about Nielsen's compositions, they should inspire a new generation of composers, performers, and music-lovers alike. As for the *Clarinet Concerto* it is still noted as both technically and interpretively demanding, offering a challenge to the most accomplished future performers.[46]

This document will compare and contrast four prominent clarinetists' interpretations of the Nielsen Clarinet Concerto in order to create a resource where musicians can go in order to obtain a fuller understanding of one of the pillars of the clarinet repertoire. The four clarinetists used in this dissertation are Stanley Drucker (principal clarinetist, New York Philharmonic), Elsa Ludewig-Verdehr (Professor of Clarinet at Michigan State University and member of the Verdehr Trio), Håkan Rosengren (Professor of Clarinet at Cal State Fullerton and Solo Clarinetist), and John Bruce Yeh (Acting Principal Clarinetist and E-flat Clarinet, Chicago Symphony Orchestra). The information used in this document was obtained through interviews and private lessons.

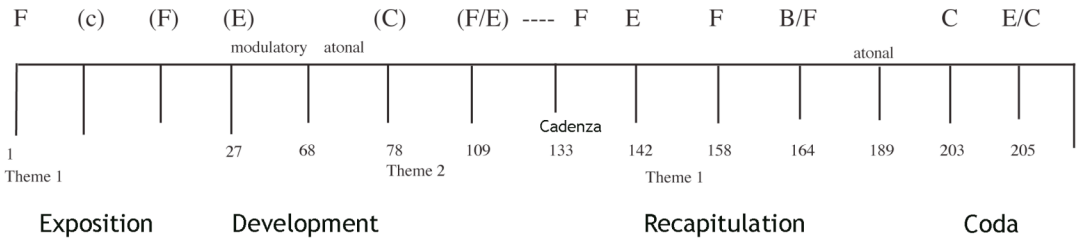
[46] Bingham, 1.

For a better understanding of the piece, I divide the *Concerto* into four sections to help enable a discussion of the four interpretations discussed in this thesis, beginning with Drucker's. The section divisions I employ for the *Concerto* are taken from Hebert Rosenberg's essay in *Carl Nielsen: Centenary Essays,* titled "The Concertos." In this chapter Rosenberg states that with a little ingenuity the *Concerto* may be regarded as four movements played *attacca*.[47] Section I starts at the beginning and continues until the *Poco Adagio* fourteen measures after ⑪. Section II starts at the *Poco Adagio* fourteen measures after ⑪ and runs through ⑳. Section III starts at ⑳ and continues to the *Allegro vivace* eight measures before ㉞. Section IV starts at the *Allegro vivace* eight measures before ㉞ and continues to the end of the piece. Ann Marie Bingham has analyzed the four sections as indicated below. This analysis is used as the basis for the sectional approach I take to the concerto in this document.

1. *Allegretto un poco. Allegro non troppo. Piú allegro. Tempo I.*
2. *Poco adagio*
3. *Allegro non troppo. Poco piu mosso. Adagio*
4. *Allegro vivace. Poco adagio. Allegro*

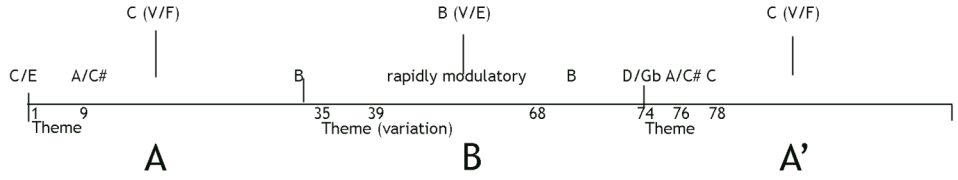
[47] Herbert Rosenberg, *Carl Nielsen: Century Essays,* ed. Jürgen Balzer (London: Dennis Dobson, 1966), 52.

Figure 1.1 *Allegretto un poco. Allegro non troppo. Piú allegro. Tempo I.* (mvt. 1)



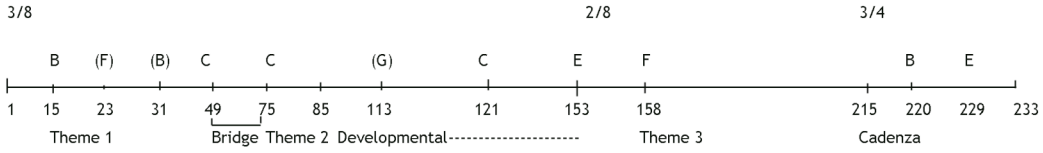
This analysis takes the first movement (from the beginning to the *Poco Adagio* fourteen measures after ⑪) and describes it as a loose interpretation of the sonata form. Bingham focuses on the tonal shift from I to V and back to I as evidence of the sectional nature of piece.

Figure 1.2 *Poco adagio* (mvt. 2)



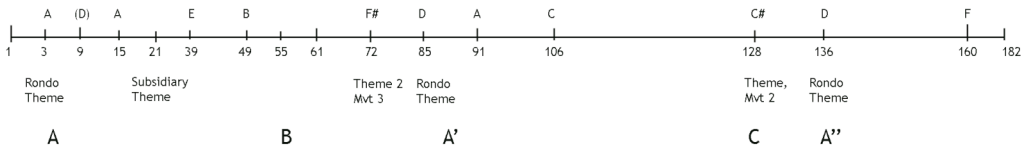
For the second movement (running from the *Poco Adagio* fourteen measures after ⑪ to ⑳) Bingham focuses on the repetition of the theme in the same key as proof of the second movement's ternary structure.

Figure 1.3 *Allegro non troppo. Poco piu mosso. Adagio* (mvt. 3)



The third movement (starting at ⑳ and continuing to the *Allegro vivace* eight measures before ㉞) is defined mostly by being surrounded by the clear ternary structure of movement two and the clear rondo form of movement four. The movement itself is not very structured and acts as a sort of developmental "movement" of the piece in its entirety.

Figure 1.4 *Allegro vivace. Poco adagio. Allegro* (mvt. 4)



The fourth movement (the *Allegro vivace* eight measures before ㉞ and continuing to the end of the piece) follows a clear rondo form according to Bingham. The A theme is repeated in the correct place for a rondo section with a single episode occurring in between each refrain.

Chapter two's formatting is different than Chapter's three, four, and five to better add clarity for the reader. Due to the nature of this project, all preceding chapters will be compared to chapter two. The topics for Drucker's interpretations are introduced in chapter two by stating the topic, then explaining the occurrences throughout the *Concerto* before moving to the next topic. This allows the reader to easily find the musical examples in the printed part and in the preceding chapters. Chapter's three, four, and five are formatted linearly to help understand each interpretation and their comparison with Drucker's interpretation. The printed editions of the *Concerto* do not have measure numbers. To match the printed music, I will refer to the musical examples by their relationship to the circled section numbers as found in the music.

CHAPTER 2

Stanley Drucker

Biography

In 1967, only two commercial recordings of Nielsen's *Clarinet Concerto* existed, neither clarinet part performed by Americans. However, that year, some forty years after the composer's death, Nielsen and the *Concerto* gained a champion in New York Philharmonic conductor Leonard Bernstein—and his principal clarinetist, Stanley Drucker.

Stanley Drucker, international soloist and pedagogue, celebrates his sixtieth year as principal clarinetist of the New York Philharmonic during the 2008-2009 season.[48] His career with the New York Philharmonic started at the age of nineteen.[49] Drucker has appeared with many ensembles throughout the world and as a soloist approximately 150 times.[50] Throughout his time with the New York Philharmonic, Drucker has worked with nine different directors not to mention scores of guest conductors. He has made several significant recordings, several under the direction of Leonard Bernstein. Nominated twice for a Grammy Award in the category of Best Instrumental Soloist/Classical with the Orchestra, Drucker has

[48] The New York Philharmonic, "Stanley Drucker Bio," The New York Philharmonic, http://nyphil.org/meet/orchestra/index.cfm?page=profile&personNum=106 (accessed March 14, 2009).

[49] Ibid.

[50] Unless otherwise indicated, all information and quotations in this chapter are taken from: Stanley Drucker, interview by author, Vail, Colo., July 19, 2008.

also had his work featured as recording of the month in the *New York Times*. As a pedagogue, Drucker has also taught at the Julliard School of Music since 1968.[51]

Drucker started playing the clarinet at the age of ten when his parents gave him the instrument for his birthday. Wanting the best for their son Drucker's parents thought being a musician would be a good career path for him as they were much influenced by clarinetists Benny Goodman and Arty Show. Drucker's first clarinet teacher was jazz musician Arthur Small, with whom he studied for about a year until Small got a touring job with a dance band. Drucker's next clarinet teacher was the soon-to-be world-renowned clarinet pedagogue Leon Russianoff.

While taking lessons from Russianoff Drucker decided to attend the High School of Music and Art in Manhattan before attending the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. While at Curtis, only wind and string instruments were accepted into the program. Thus, members of the Chicago Symphony filled the brass sections for orchestra concerts. Drucker said that playing with the brass players from the Chicago Symphony made for "one fine group to play in." At the age of sixteen, when Drucker was still studying at Curtis, the director of the Indianapolis Symphony stopped in Chicago to hold auditions for open chairs in the orchestra. Drucker took the audition and won the principal clarinet position in the Indianapolis Symphony. After playing with the Indianapolis Symphony for about a year, Drucker heard about an open position with the conductor-less ensemble the (Adolf) Busch Chamber Players, directed by violinist Adolf Busch. When Drucker joined the Busch Chamber Players, Busch became a very important mentor. With the help of

[51] Pamela Weston, "Stanley Drucker," *Clarinet Virtuosi of Today* (Hertfordshire, England: Egon, 1989), 103–10.

Busch, Drucker successfully auditioned for the Buffalo Philharmonic, which led to Drucker auditioning for the New York Philharmonic and joining that ensemble, then under the direction of Bruno Walter, during its 107th season.

After playing with the New York Philharmonic for twelve years, Drucker was appointed principal clarinet under the direction of Leonard Bernstein during the 1960–61 season. Throughout Drucker's career with the philharmonic, nine different directors have conducted the orchestra. These nine directors are Bruno Walter (1947–49), Leopold Stokowski (1949–50) and Dimitri Mitropouslos (1948–58) as co-principal conductors, Leonard Bernstein (1958–69), George Szell (1969–70), Pierre Boulez (1971–77), Zubin Mehta (1978–91), and Lorin Maazel (2002–present).

Each conductor played an important part in Drucker's recording career. His first recording experience was with the Indianapolis Symphony, which then recorded for RCA Victor. During Drucker's time working with Bruno Walter during the 1940s, the philharmonic made several recordings for Columbia Records. Many of these recordings have been digitally remastered by Sony Records and reissued on compact disk. During the 1950s, Leopold Stokowski and Dimitri Mitropoulos pioneered new ways for audiences to view performances by filming live New York Philharmonic performances were shown between films at the Roxy Theatre in Hollywood, California.[52] Leonard Bernstein was the first director of the New York

[52] The New York Philharmonic, "Stanley Drucker Bio," The New York Philharmonic, http://nyphil.org/meet/orchestra/index.cfm?page=profile&personNum=106 (accessed March 14, 2009).

Philharmonic to be an American-born and-trained conductor.[53] During Bernstein's time with the philharmonic he made numerous recordings, launched two television series initiated aired on CBS, advocated the promotion of modern music and living composers, and oversaw the beginning of the orchestra's largest commissioning project.[54] He also took the philharmonic on many glamorous tours and received invitations to play around the world. During the Bernstein era something was being recorded almost every day, and Drucker said, "the music making was super." Drucker made an unbelievable number of recordings with the New York Philharmonic during this time, and on several recordings he was a featured soloist. His first solo recording ever was Debussy's *Premiere Rapsodie* and the second was Nielsen's *Clarinet Concerto*. The last solo recording Drucker made with Bernstein was a performance of Copland's *Clarinet Concerto* that was nominated for a Grammy Award.

Drucker has two recordings of the Nielsen *Clarinet Concerto*. The first recording was with the New York Philharmonic under the direction of Bernstein and the second was with Jesús López-Cobos, who guest conducted the New York Philharmonic in 1987. The Bernstein recording was recorded live in 1967 during a five-performance run of the *Concerto*. Nearly the entire performance was perfect,

[53] David Schiff, "Bernstein, Leonard," In *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online*, www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/02883 (accessed March 24, 2009).

[54] Ibid.

and the only patchwork done was a pizzicato section in the string parts.[55] The second recording with Jesús López-Cobos was also from a live performance.

In 1966, the year before Drucker's first recording, Julius Baker, the principal flutist of the New York Philharmonic, recorded the Nielsen *Flute Concerto.* Bernstein asked Drucker and Baker to record the works of Nielsen as a way of promoting Nielsen's compositions. Both Nielsen concerto recordings were released on the same album in 1967. After the release of the Nielsen *Clarinet Concerto* album, Drucker's recording was featured in the *New York Times* and noted as the recording of the month. Around this same time the New York Philharmonic also recorded Nielsen's Second, Forth, and Fifth symphonies.

When asked how Leonard Bernstein influenced his interpretation of the *Concerto,* Drucker said, "Bernstein's conducting was always joyous. There was a tremendous amount of passion, joy, and chemistry." Drucker also said Bernstein's conducting was not about following a pattern; his conducting was about the expression one can achieve, thus making expressive playing easy. On one Bernstein/New York Philharmonic tour Drucker was invited to a reception where Nielsen's daughters were in attendance. After hearing Drucker perform, Nielsen's daughters gave him a first-edition copy of the Nielsen *Clarinet Concerto* score along with the solo clarinet part and the piano reduction.

Other than Bernstein's influence, Louis Cahuzac's recording of the Nielsen *Clarinet Concerto* most inspired Drucker. He used this recording on a ten-

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[55] Re-recorded sections inserted to cover errors in a live performance recording.

inch LP that he still owns today as if it were a masterclass lesson. While Drucker said the Cahuezac recording should not be used as a "holy grail" by any means, he added, it should be viewed as a good historical recording. "To me there is a sort of ease to the approach of the music." Drucker mentioned that so many wonderful clarinetists are so tied up in equipment such as reed, barrels, extra keys, and ligatures that they miss what music is about, and the Cahuezac plays the music.

When Drucker first recorded the *Concerto* the piece was regarded as "something fearsome." That is not to say it is any easier now, but Drucker feels the technique required to perform it is understandable, with no tricks attached. Drucker argues with practice, one's fingers are able to "move around in the right place at the right time." Drucker describes the *Concerto* as being "extremely original" along with the rest of Nielsen's compositions. "When you hear a phrase from any of his orchestral works or chamber pieces, you know it is Nielsen," Drucker explains. He claims this unique identity is what gives Nielsen's music a lasting quality.

When Drucker was preparing to perform the *Concerto,* he used Nielsen's *Fifth Symphony* as a model. He specifically listened to how the integration of the clarinet and snare drum create a different timber. Drucker views this integration as a pivotal characteristic of the *Concerto.* He does not make any changes in the printed clarinet part, as Drucker believes Nielsen knew exactly what he wanted from the soloist: "It is pretty clearly indicated [in the music] what he [Nielsen] wanted." As far as Drucker's performance of the *Concerto* goes, he generally uses standard fingerings and makes minimal changes to the part. He typically elongates the

motivic phrase material and also believes that every time the snare enters it indicates an important arrival and the clarinet part should not overshadow that.

Section I

Drucker's interpretation of Section I (from the beginning to the *Poco Adagio* fourteen measures after ⑪) regards the most important elements to be the interval of the perfect fifth and minor second, the clarinet's interaction with the snare drum, elongation of the melodic phrase material, and an effort not to slow down between shorter phrase material. Generally Drucker does not change any of the notation because he feels Nielsen clearly marked everything needed to accomplish the essences of unique originality.

At the beginning of the *Concerto* the opening theme is immediately presented by the cellos and basses, followed by the upper strings with fugue like entrances.[56] The third presentation of the theme is by in the solo clarinet. The opening motive accentuates the interval of a perfect fifth at ①. Drucker said the perfect fifth needs to be distinguished, and he does this by accenting the second beat (see fig. 2.1). The perfect fifth is first presented ascending, but the same attention needs to be paid if the interval is descending as in four measures after ① (see fig. 2.2).

[56] Ibid.

Figure 2.1 Opening motive with the perfect fifth interval

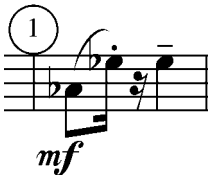
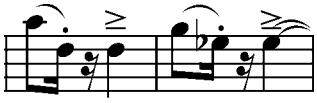


Figure 2.2 The opening perfect fifth motive altered, four measures after ①



The same articulation of adding an accent on beat two occurs at ⑧, (see. fig. 2.3) four measures after ⑧, (see. fig. 2.4) and at the *Poco a poco accelerando* nine measures before ⑨ (see fig. 2.5). The *Poco a poco accelerando* nine measures before ⑩ is in $\frac{3}{4}$ meter rather than $\frac{2}{4}$, which is what the beginning is in. The accents do not always land on the second beat of the measure but the accent should still be placed on the held note after the eighth-note–sixteenth-note motive (see fig. 2.5).

Figure 2.3 Return of the opening fifth motive transposed and altered

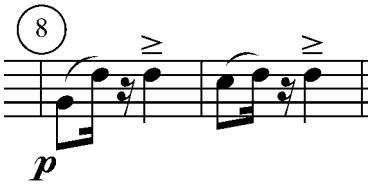


Figure 2.4 Four and five measures after ⑧ with descending perfect fifth motive

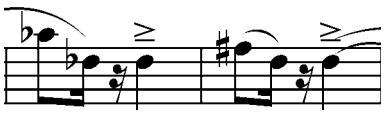
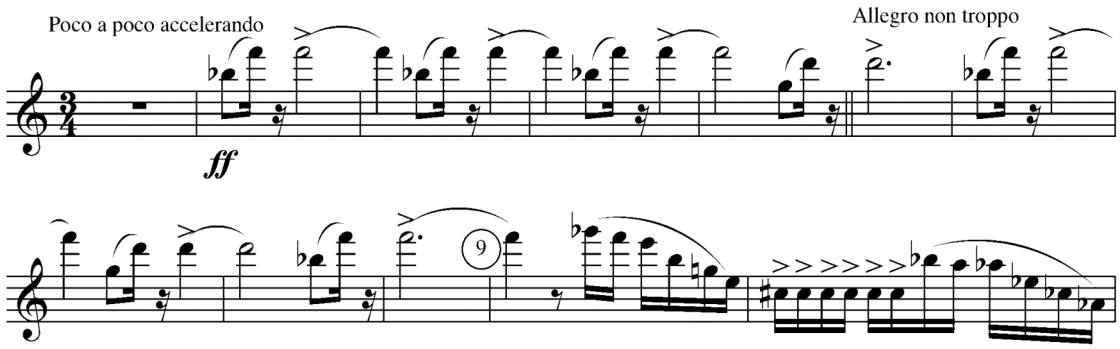


Figure 2.5 Opening fifth motive repeated and transposed



Other than the interval of a perfect fifth Drucker believes the interval of a minor second also needs to be accentuated in Section I. Drucker adds importance to the minor seconds at one measure before ② (see fig. 2.6), at ⑤ (see fig. 2.7), six measures after ⑥ (see fig. 2.8), and in the seventh and eighth measures after ⑦ (see fig. 2.9). At ⑤ Drucker does not accentuate the minor second interval, but he does keep the phrasing simple to allow the minor second interval be heard (see fig. 2.7).

Figure 2.6 Minor second one measures before ②

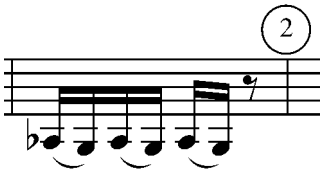


Figure 2.7 Minor second at ⑤

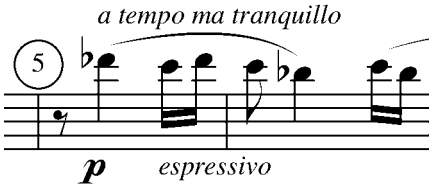


Figure 2.8 Minor second before fermata six measures after ⑥

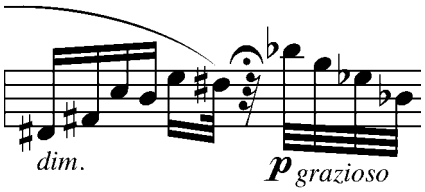
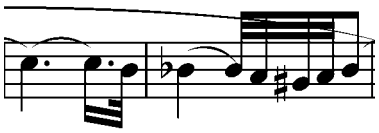


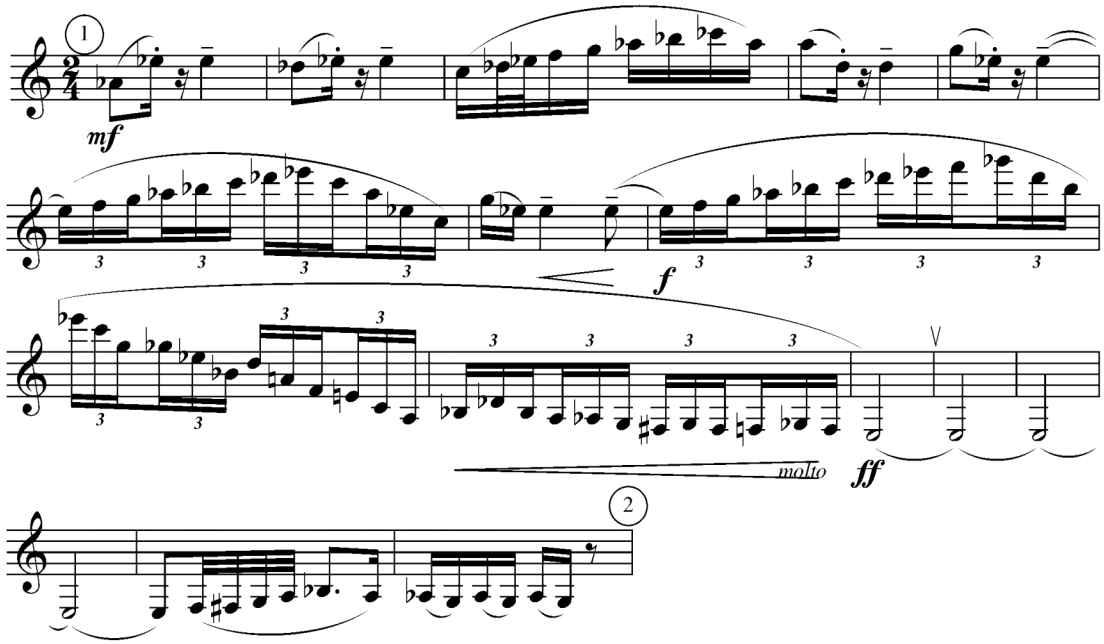
Figure 2.9 Seven and eight measures after ⑦



Six measures after ⑥ Drucker adds a slight *rallentando* a few notes before the fermata (see fig 2.8). In the seventh and eighth measures after ⑦ Drucker adds a slight weight to the last note in the seventh measure after ⑦ leading to the downbeat in the eighth measure after ⑦ (see fig. 2.9).

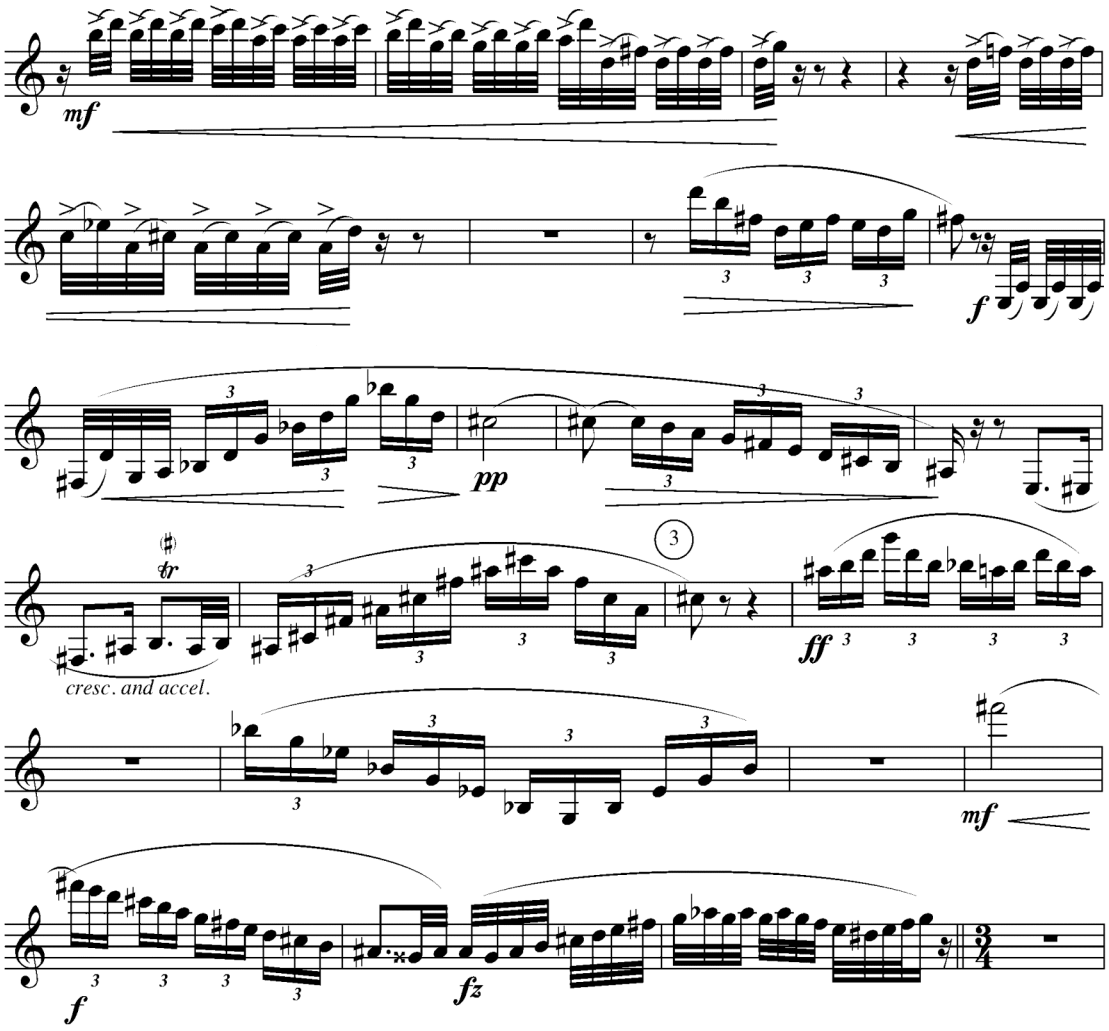
Throughout this section, the melodic material should be thought of as elongated phrases. Hence, Drucker seldom uses rubato. Breaths should not be taken if it hinders long phrasing, even if marked in the music. The breath markings are editorial markings, thus Drucker feels they is not necessary to incorporate them. The first phrase in the solo clarinet part starting at ① should be phrased all the way until ② (see fig. 2.8). Six measures before ② there is a breath mark at the beginning of the measure, but Drucker does not take a breath until ② (see fig. 2.10).

Figure 2.10 ① through ② as printed



Continuing seven measures after ②, every small phrase should be thought of as one large, long phrase lasting until nine measures after ③. One idea Drucker likes to employ in this situation is, rather than thinking like a wind player who needs to take constant breaths he thinks more like a string player to connect all the short phrases. Often he stretches the last note of a short phrase to help connect it with the short phrase that follows, such as seven measures before ③ (see fig. 2.11).

Figure 2.11 Seven measures after ② until ten measures after ③

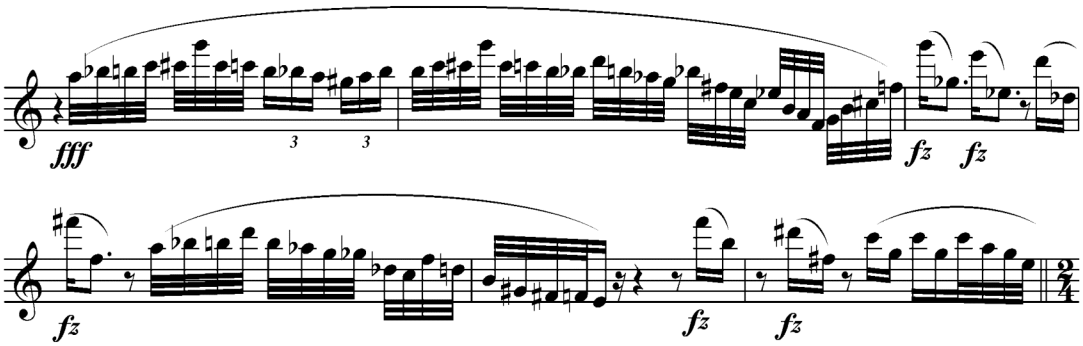


The long phrase idea continues with the melodic material starting six measures before ④ through two measures before ⑤, but instead of stretching the ending of short phrases, Drucker makes sure not to slow down between them. This occurs in the measure before ④ leading into ④ and three measures before ⑤. Two measures before ④ Drucker adds a quick crescendo on the first beat of the measure to lead the phrase to the s*fortzando* at the end of the same measure.

The interaction with the snare drum is a pivotal part to the entire concerto, and the snare drum's first entrance seven measures before ④ is very important. The

duet between the clarinet and snare drum starts one measure after the snare entrance, six measures before ④ (see fig. 2.12).

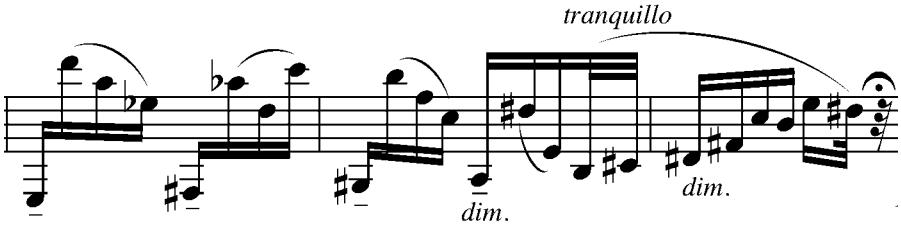
Figure 2.12 Six measures before ④ until one measure before ④



The clarinet part must keep a strict tempo, eliminating rubato while elongating the motivic phrases. At the same time, the snare drum part must be heard. In the eleventh measure after ③, Drucker stretches the B on the third beat of the measure to help line up with the snare drum part.

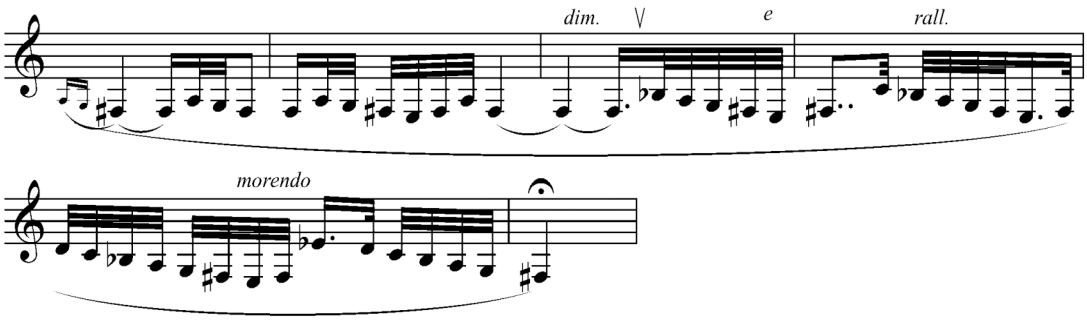
The phrase starting at the *a tempo* at ⑥ and continuing to the fermata six measures after ⑥ should be played as one phrase. In order to do this Drucker does not slow down or stretch any notes four measures after ⑥ (see fig. 2.13). By not stretching the note lengths, he allows the snare drum to line up with the clarinet and the rest of the orchestra. Drucker adds a quick *rallentando* on the last four notes before the fermata six measures after ⑥. The *rallentando* must not start any sooner because the snare drum plays on the downbeat six measures after ⑥.

Figure 2.13 Four measures after ⑥



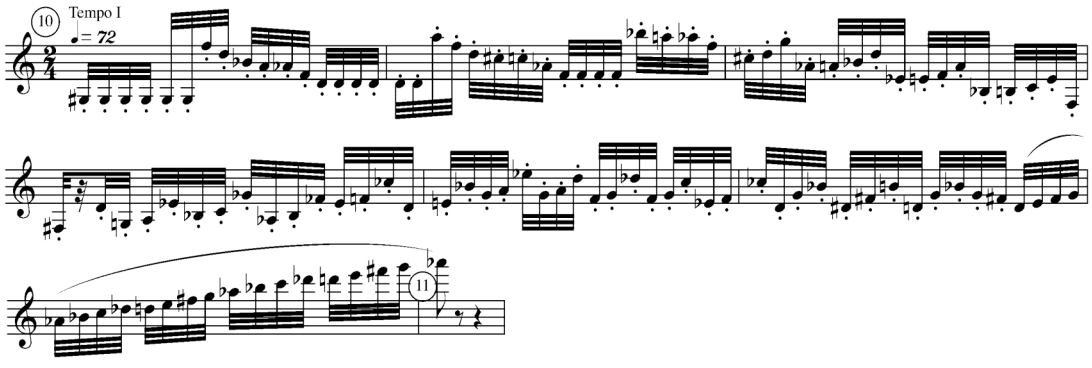
Five measures before the first cadenza, Drucker plays everything as written while elongating the phrase (see fig. 2.14).

Figure 2.14 Line before the first cadenza



At the *Tempo I* at ⑩ through ⑪ the rhythm is constant thirty-second notes except for one thirty-second rest, four measures after ⑩. At this point Drucker does not slow down, resting for the precise notated amount of time (see fig 2.15). Playing exactly what the music indicates allows for the snare drum and the clarinet to play more like a duet rather than clarinet with snare drum accompaniment.

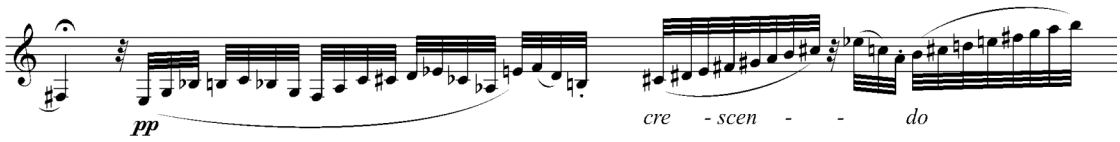
Figure 2.15 ⑩ to ⑪



First Cadenza

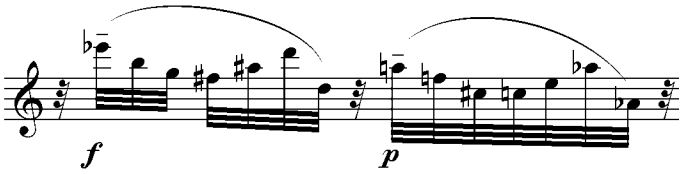
Multiple musical suggestions are provided for the player in the first cadenza, but, as with other cadenzas, the player should take liberty. At the beginning of the cadenza is a thirty-second rest where time should be taken. Up to this point in the music many melodic ideas have been introduced to the listener, and by taking extra time before starting the first cadenza, the soloist gives the listener time to clear his or her aural palate. For clarity, I refer to the music in the first cadenza by its line in the clarinet part. The first line of the cadenza is the second line in the clarinet part. I will count the first line of the cadenza (second line on the page) as line one. The entire first line of the cadenza should be thought of as one long phrase (see fig 2.16). The second rest in the first line does not indicate a pause in the phrasing. The rest indicates a lift used to help crescendo into the second line of the cadenza.

Figure 2.16 First line of the first cadenza



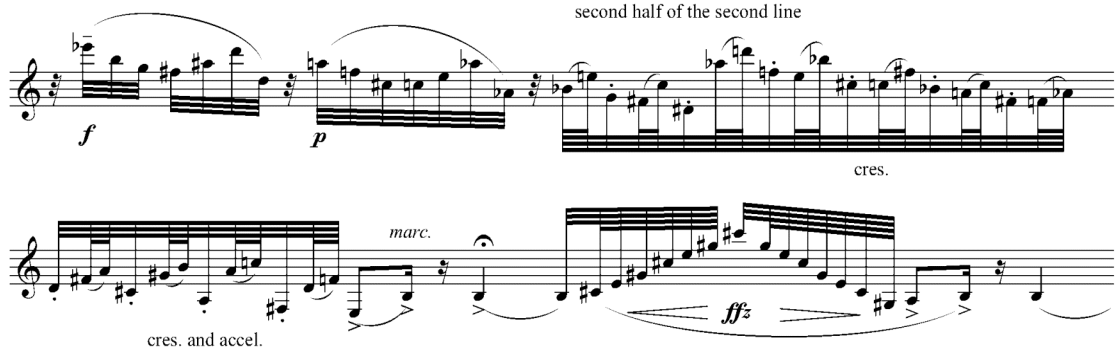
The two motives starting in the second line should be phrased the same way: by stretching the first note and pulling back on the last two notes (see fig. 2.17).

Figure 2.17 First half of the second line of the first cadenza



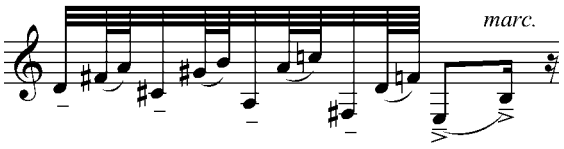
The second phrase on the second line of the cadenza Drucker leads to the *marcato* notes in the third line (see fig. 2.18).

Figure 2.18 Second and third line of the first cadenza



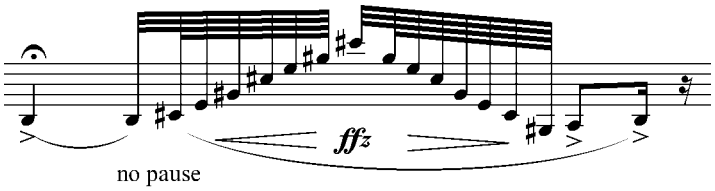
The articulation should be brought out, and as the tempo speeds up, the lower notes on the third line should be brought out (see fig. 2.19).

Figure 2.19 Third line of the first cadenza with Drucker's articulation added



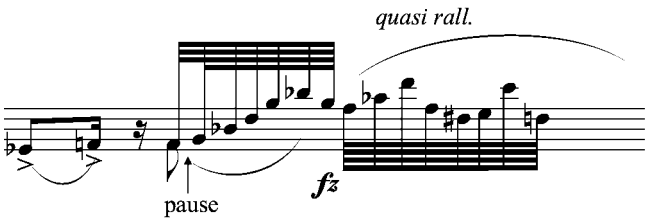
Drucker states the next phrase, starting on the third line of the cadenza, should not be interrupted. Starting at the *marcato* marking there is a quarter note B tied to a thirty-second note. After the B, Drucker makes a separation as indicated by a breath mark. Drucker continues the phrase by slurring the next notes in the motive. Drucker slurs the tied quarter to thirty-second note B to the rest of the note slurring the entire motive (see fig. 2.20).

Figure 2.20 Second half of the third line of the cadenza



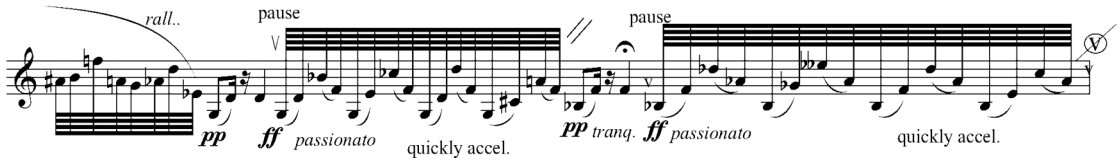
Drucker slurs all similar motives the same way. He slurs through the quarter note using the articulation to help with forward motion in the longer phrases. On the fourth line of the cadenza, the last motive before the *quasi rallentando* marking, Drucker pauses where the slur breaks (see fig. 2.21).

Figure 2.21 Fourth line with pause taken by Drucker



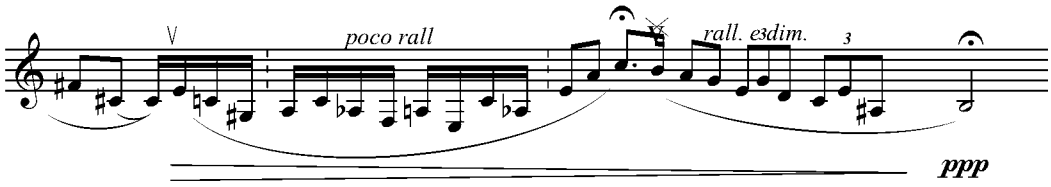
The *quasi rallentando* material should be played at the tempo introduced at the beginning of the piece. Drucker pulls back the tempo ever so slightly before the *pianissimo* in the fifth line of the cadenza. The *pianissimo* marking in the fifth line material is the same motive without a quarter note being tied to the next motive. Drucker makes space between these two motives. At the end of the second phrase, Drucker pauses before playing the next motive. This motive should be played the same as the last two with the exception of the pause at the end of the second motive. There should be no break (see fig. 2.22). The momentum needs to push all the way through to the fermata in the seventh line in the cadenza.

Figure 2.22 Fifth line of the cadenza with Drucker's phrasing



Drucker plays the rest of the cadenza as written. He does not pause between the second fermata and the note following in the last line. The fermata note should lead into the next note (see fig. 2.23).

Figure 2.23 Last line of the first cadenza

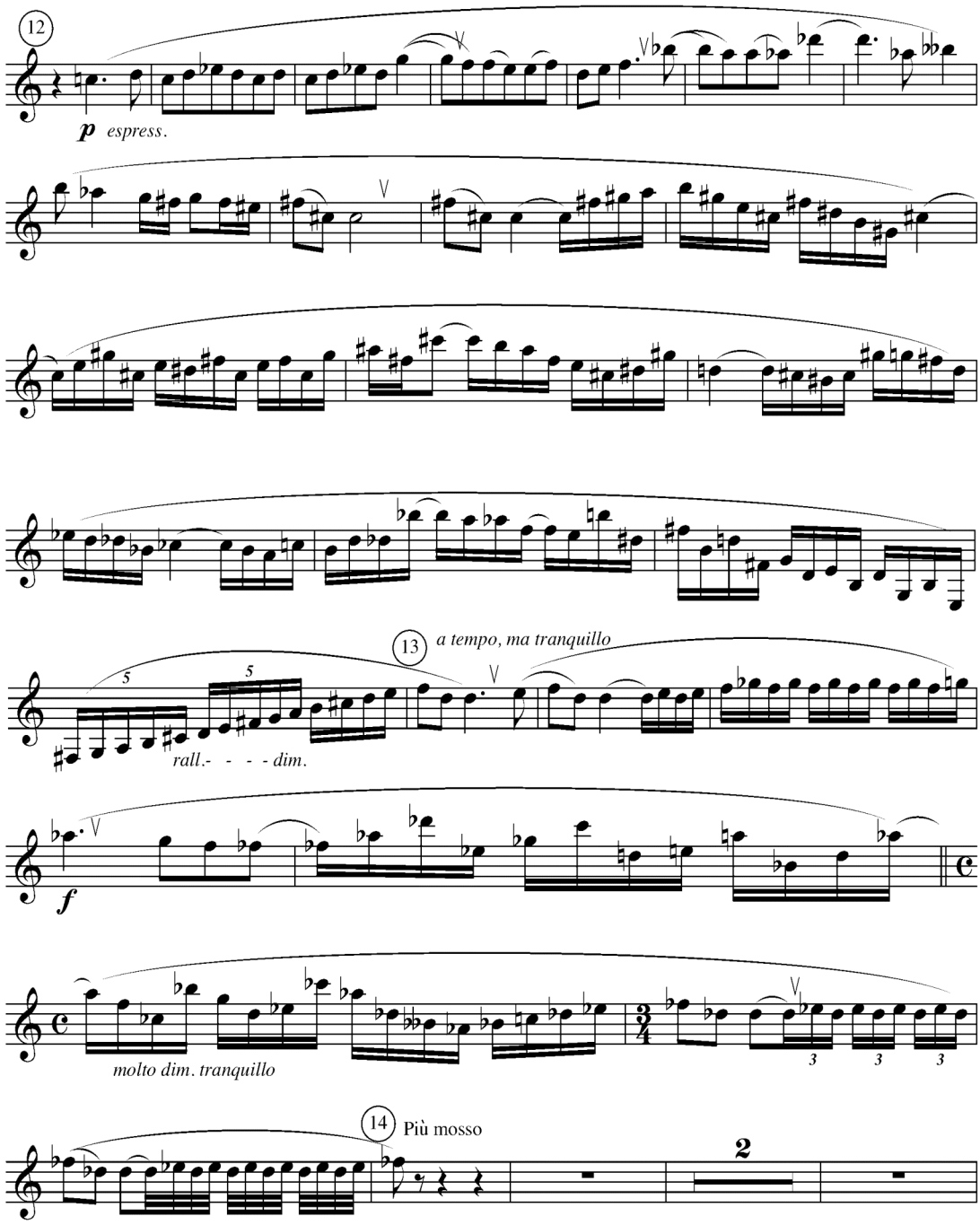


Section II

Section II (the *Poco Adagio* fourteen measures after ⑪ through ⑳) starts with the bassoons and first horn before the clarinet enters at ⑫. In this section the important elements are implementing long melodic phrasing, playing the tempo changes as marked, and breathing where indicated in the music.

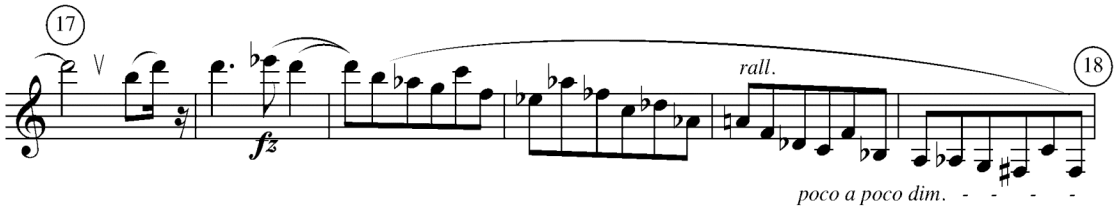
Starting at ⑫ where the clarinet enters, the clarinet part is marked with slurs and internal phrasing as well as lifts and breath marks. Drucker plays all markings as indicated (see fig. 2.24). All the circled breath marks should be taken. The uncircled breath marks should be played as lifts without taking a breath. The remaining breath marking throughout Section II should be played as lifts. The articulation in Section II should also be played as written.

Figure 2.24 From ⑫ to ⑭ with Drucker's breath markings



The melodic material starting at ⑭ throughout the entire Section II Drucker plays with long phrasing, allowing for integration with the snare drum. The *rallentando poco a poco diminuendo* at ⑰ should not start before marked (see fig. 2.25).

Figure 2.25 ⑰ to ⑱



Near the end of Section II starting at the fermata eight measures before ⑳, there should be no pause between the fermata and the next note. Drucker adds a slur to connect the melodic material before and after the fermata. Five measures before ⑳ there is an *a tempo* marking. The solo clarinet is the only instrument playing at this point, allowing for rubato. Drucker starts the *a tempo* three measures before ⑳, but he only plays the *a tempo* for that measure followed by a *rallentando* and *diminuendo* as marked.

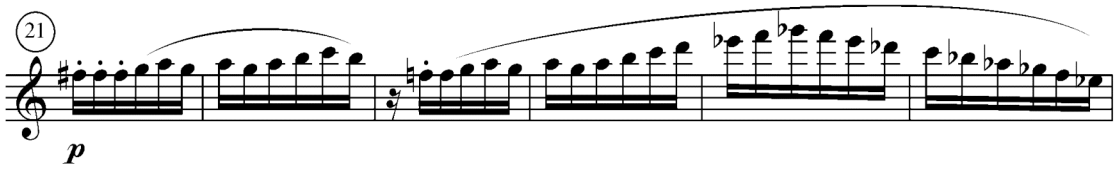
Section III

Section III (⑳ continuing to the *Allegro vivace* eight measures before ㉞) should be played with long forward phrasing with tempo changes, articulations, and dynamics as marked. This section starts with horn and low strings. Then the first bassoon enters, replacing the horn. When the clarinet enters at ㉑ the articulation needs to match the effect of the first violins fifteen measures after ⑳ (see fig 2.26).

Section III often introduces important melodic material first heard in a voice other than the clarinet. The clarinet will often restate the melodic material that was just presented by the other voice. This happens at ㉑ and at ㉚. At ㉙ the first bassoon introduces the new melodic material that is then restated by the clarinet at ㉚.

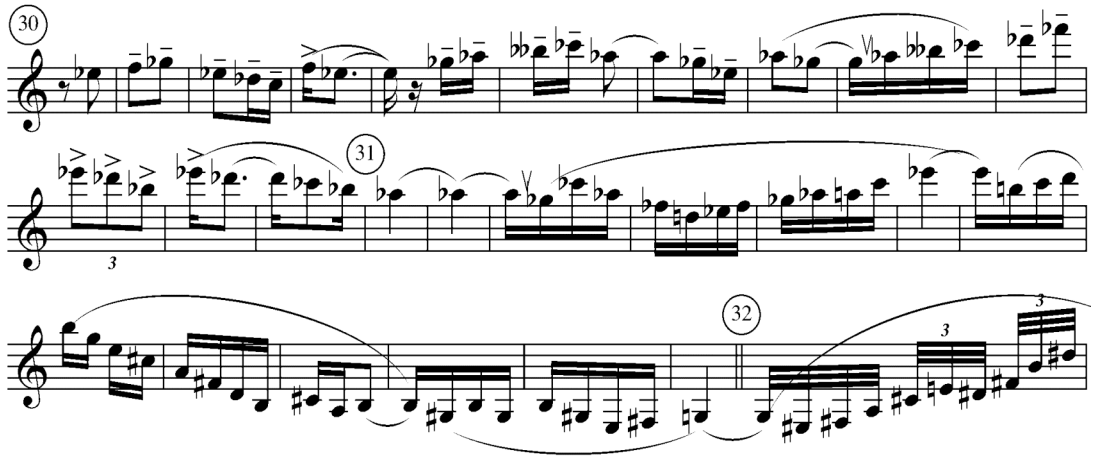
When the first violins enter fifteen measures after ⑳ they have a staccato melody that resembles the clarinet entrance at ㉑ (see fig. 2.26). When the clarinet enters, only the first three notes are staccato, but they must be played with the exact same length as the violins' staccato melody. At ㉑ the clarinet and the first violins play the same melody together, making this passage a duet (see fig. 2.27).

Figure 2.26 ㉑



Six measures after ㉙ the first bassoons enters, introducing a new melodic idea that is then played by the clarinet at ㉚. The clarinet must match the articulation of the bassoon at six measures after ㉙. Drucker adds a slight accent to each articulated note starting at ㉚ (see fig. 2.27).

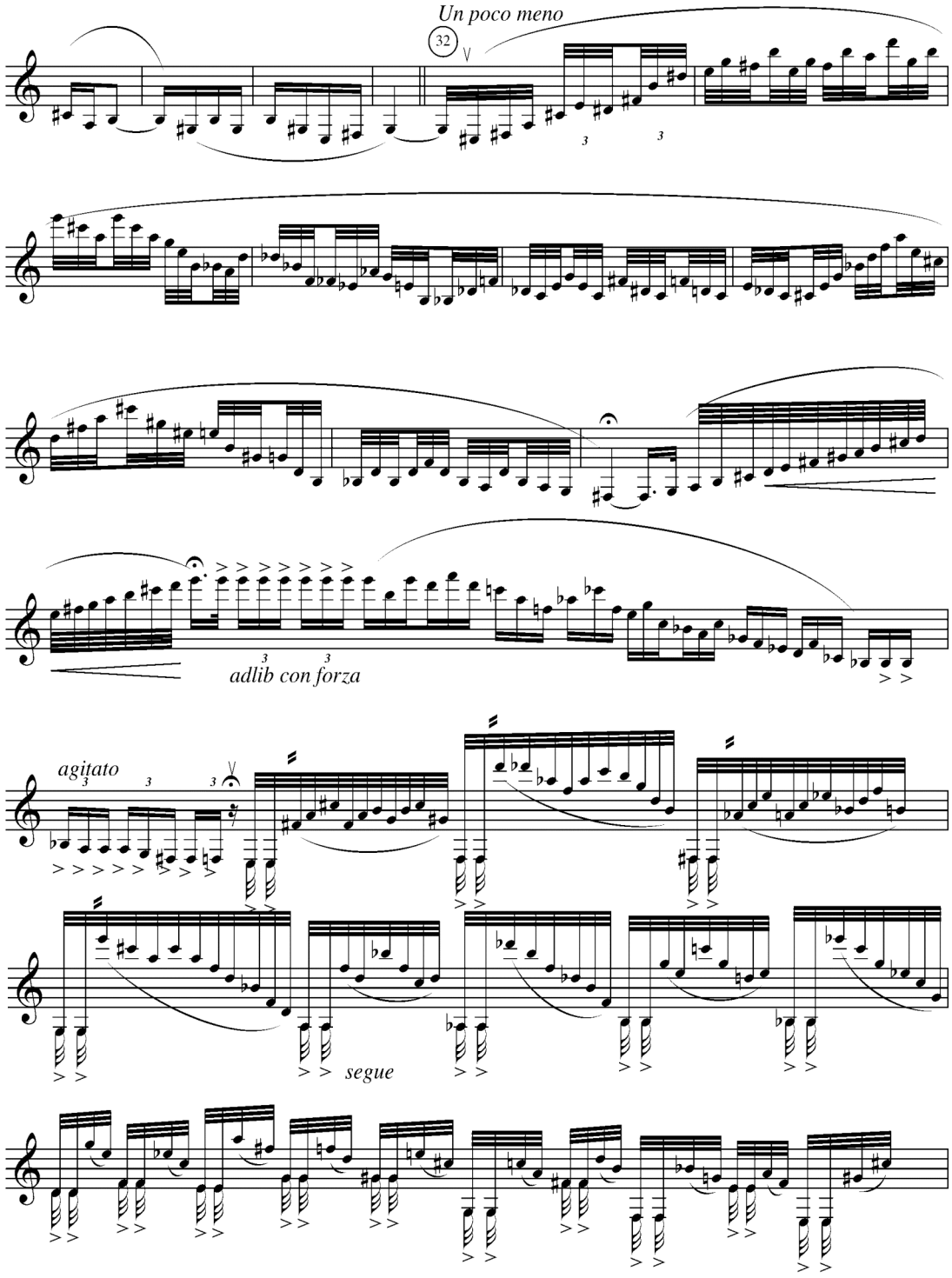
Figure 2.27 ㉚ to one measure after ㉜



Second Cadenza

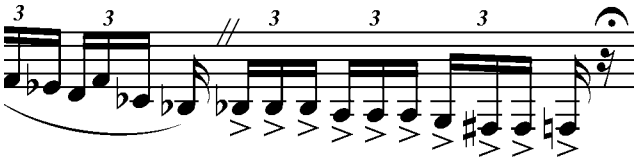
The second cadenza starts at the first fermata after ㉜ and should be played following all the indications marked in the music. The musical phrase starting from the first fermata after ㉜ continues past the next fermata, finishing with the third fermata after ㉜ (see fig. 2.28). Drucker takes a big breath after the second fermata to ensure playing *con forza* as marked, but he makes sure not to take too much time. At the end of the line after the third fermata there are two accented B-flats. Drucker pauses before the two accented B-flats and regroups them with the B-flat on the next line. From this point forward he regroups the triplets to form three triplet groupings ending the last note on a downbeat (see fig. 2.29).

Figure 2.28 Four measures before ㉜ through the fourth line of the second cadenza



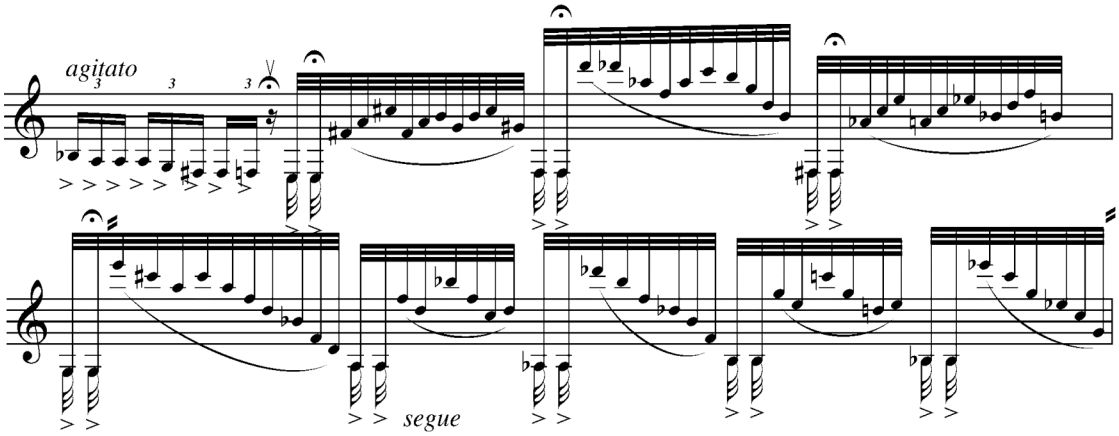
The triplets are now groups of three B-flats, three A-flats, one G and two F-sharps, and F-sharp, and with a an F-natural on a downbeat with rests remaining. This section should not slow down but should push forward to the fermata (see fig 2.29).

Figure 2.29 Regrouped triplets as grouped by Drucker



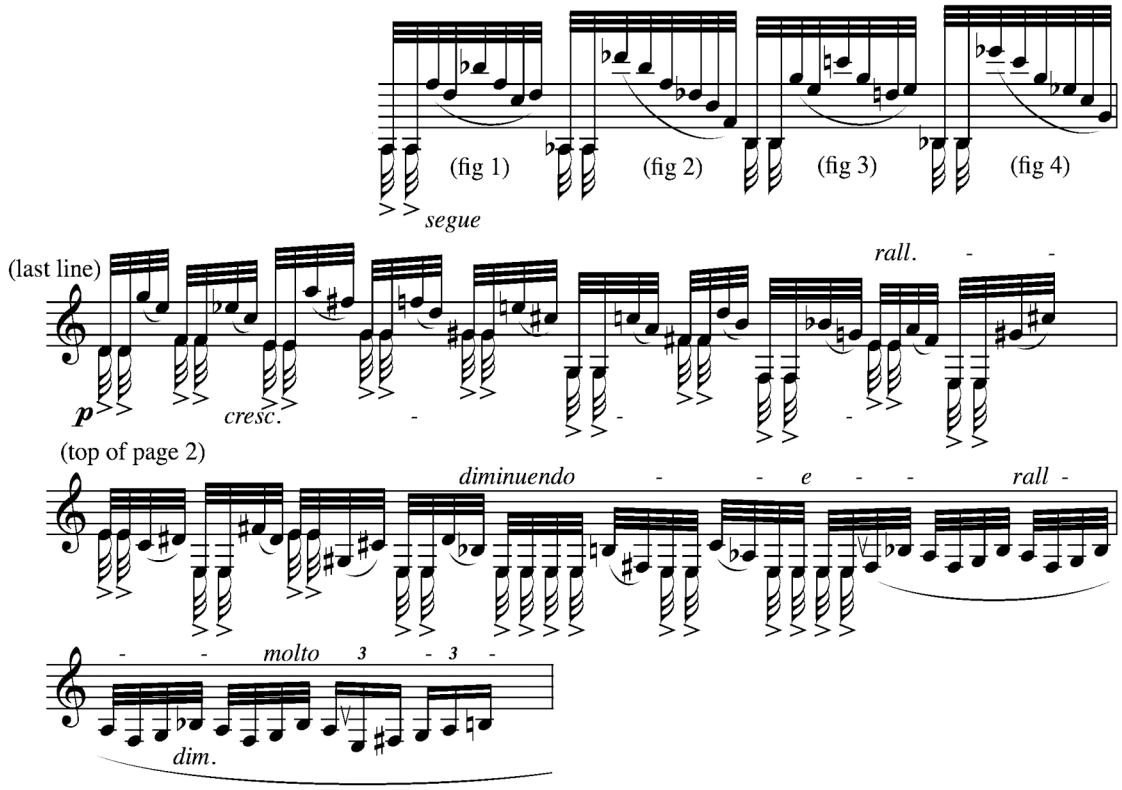
The cadenza continues on but the two low notes should be taken out of tempo. They are marked with an accent and should be played as such with weight and note length added to each. The second note of the accented pair should be held as if a small fermata were written above. Even though the two lowest notes are taken out of tempo, there should be no pause between the low and high notes. This same idea continues on with every accented pair until the music indicates *segue*. From *segue* on the rest of the lower paired notes should be played as rhythmically written and as fast as possible. Four groupings after *segue,* at the end of the last line on page eight, Drucker adds a small pause. For dramatic effect, he slows down before the pause (see fig. 2.30).

Figure 2.30 From the third fermata as played by Drucker



The next four-note groupings on the last line should be played *ad lib* adding an accelerando leading to directly before the four accented low Es at the top line of page nine. After the written-in pause there is a *diminuendo* and *rallentando* marked. Drucker holds back on these markings until right before the $\frac{3}{4}$ or *Adagio* measure (see fig. 2.31).

Figure 2.31 From the *segue* marking to the *molto dimuendo*



From the *Adagio* to ㉝, Drucker takes his time and adds some rubato but he does not play too slowly. Two measures before ㉝, he plays loud and *sfortzando* so the orchestra can continue with the musicality established.

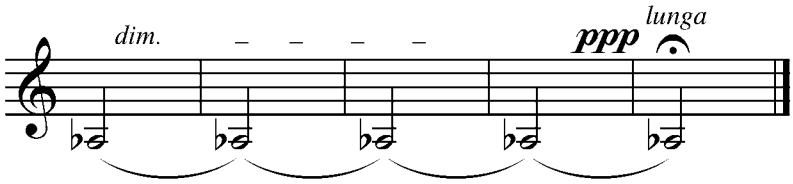
Section IV

The fourth and final section (*Allegro vivace* eight measures before ㉞ until the end) transitions into the finale with the snare drum playing eighth-notes cresendoing with the clarinet, which then takes over.[57] This section is about effect, and the effect comes from playing each dynamic and tempo change as marked.

[57] Rosenberg, 54.

The volume starting at ㊷ should slowly dissolve to nothingness by the time Drucker reaches the end of the piece. Drucker continually slows down and the clarinet and orchestra should *diminuendo* through the last fermata. Five measures before the end, the clarinet part has two swells that Drucker omits. He holds the dynamic level and lets the orchestra do all the dynamic changes (see fig. 2.32).

Figure 2.32 The last five measures as played by Drucker



Drucker's interpretation of the *Clarinet Concerto* is based around the fact that the music itself "tells it all," and Nielsen clearly indicates what he wants the soloist to do through his notation on the page. To bring the *Concerto* to life, Drucker flows all the brief thematic material into longer phrases while still accentuating the important motives and intervals. The intervals of most importance are the perfect fifth and the minor second. The very first interval of the piece and the first clarinet entrance is the perfect fifth, which is then transformed throughout the rest of the *Concerto*. Every reoccurrence of the perfect fifth should be made distinct. The last important element of Drucker's interpretation of the piece is the clarinet's interaction with the snare drum. Drucker used Nielsen's *Fifth Symphony* as a guide to playing with a snare drum more as a member of a duet than as a lead part with accompaniment.

CHAPTER 3

Elsa Ludewig-Verdehr

Biography

A decade before Drucker became the first American to record the Nielsen *Clarinet Concerto,* another American was gearing up to perform the then little-know piece. Before her third public performance of the *Concerto*, Dr. Elsa Ludewig-Verdehr had already been nicknamed the "Nielsen Kid" for her dedication to the work. Dr. Elsa Ludewig-Verdehr has performed around the world in groups such as the Verdehr Trio, and the Richards Wind Quintet, and at gatherings such as the Marlboro Music Festival. With the Verdehr Trio she has performed national and international tours throughout Europe, Canada, Central and South America, India, China, Asia, Australia, Egypt, Greece, and Turkey.[58] Not only has she appeared as an ensemble performer, but she has also had many engagements as a clinician and soloist. The *New York Times* has described her playing as "distinguished and musical."[59] Verdehr received her education at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music and the Eastman School of Music. During her time at Eastman, Verdehr studied with internationally renowned performer and pedagogue Stanley Hasty. Currently, Verdehr is clarinetist of the Verdehr Trio and the clarinet professor at Michigan State University, where she was awarded the Distinguished Faculty Award. She

[58] Margaret Iris Dees, "A Review of Eight University Clarinet Studios: An Investigation of Pedagogical Style, Content and Philosophy through Observations and Interviews" (DMA thesis, Florida State University), 89.

[59] The Verdehr Trio, "Members," The members of the Verdehr Trio, www.verdehr.com/members.htm (accessed January 9, 2009).

spends her summers as principal clarinetist of the Grand Teton Music Festival Orchestra.[60]

The first time Verdehr heard of and performed Nielsen's *Clarinet Concerto* was in 1956 at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music. She was one of two seniors selected to perform a concerto with the orchestra.[61] As Drucker would discover a decade later, at this time only two recording had been made of the *Concerto*: one by Louis Cahuzac in 1947 and the other by Ib Eriksson in 1954.[62] After selecting the work, Verdehr spent the next six months consumed in preparing the *Concerto*. After her performance and ultimately graduating from Oberlin, Verdehr started graduate work at the Eastman School of Music where she also studied the *Concerto.* A friend at Eastman who was starting to promote concerts, invited her to give a recital at Carnegie Hall, where she performed the *Concerto*. There, she met Stanley Drucker's clarinet teacher Leon Russianoff, and from that point forward every time Verdehr went to New York she visited with him. The third performance she gave of the *Concerto* was at Eastman with the Eastman Philharmonia.

During the Eastman performance, Verdehr was featured on an all-Scandinavian program. Howard Hansen, who was the head of the school and the director of the Eastman Philharmonia, gave a disclaimer about the *Concerto,* telling

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[60] Ibid.

[61] Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations and information in this chapter was taken from: Elsa Ludewig-Verdehr, interview by author, East Lansing, Mich., September 14, 2008.

[62] Ann Marie Bingham, "Carl Nielsen's Koncert for Klarinet og Orkester, Opus 57 (1928): A performance guide" (DMA thesis, University of Kentucky, 1990), 2.

the audience members that they might not like the piece as much as the Grieg *Piano Concerto* that would be performed later in the program. He then went on to tell about the great musicality the Nielsen *Concerto* had to offer. During the Eastman performance, Verdehr played the *Concerto* with music, but the first two performances were by memory. Before the Eastman performance, two of Verdehr's colleagues had horrible memory slips, and thinking that such things usually come in threes, she chose to perform the piece with music. During the time when Verdehr was performing the Nielsen, it was not often performed. Since then, the *Concerto* has grown in popularity among musicians. The first time Verdehr met Michele Zukovsky, the principal clarinetist of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Zukovsky referred to her as the "Nielsen Kid" because Verdehr was one of the few people performing the work. Even after having three very successful performances, Verdehr didn't really become invested in the work until she started teaching it. "There is nothing like sitting there objectively and looking at a piece as someone is playing it and beginning to realize all that goes into it," she said.

To Verdehr the *Concerto* is about the form, the musical and emotional content, and the contrasting material that she believes is inherent in the human experience. Verdehr views the form of the *Concerto* to be three sections that use the traditional tempo indicators of fast-slow-fast. The three sections are from the beginning to the *Poco Adagio* eight measures before ⑫, from the *Poco Adagio* to the *Allegro non troppo* at ⑳, and from the *Allegro non troppo* to the end. Unlike Drucker, Verdehr makes two cuts in the second half of the *Concerto.* The first cut removes material from ㉓ to ㉚ and the second cut removes material between ㊲ to

the *Allegro* eight measures after ㊶. With these cuts Verdehr believes the ABA structure is more easily heard. If no cuts are made, she views the form to be an ABA structure with an extended coda. Verdehr feels the cuts make for a more exciting ending because the piece evolves into a slow, dark, ending. She also feels programming the *Concerto* on student recitals is difficult without cuts because of the piece's sheer length. Not only do the cuts make the *Concerto* shorter, but they also make the piece less demanding on the performer.

Verdehr's overall interpretation of the *Concerto* focuses on the phrases of musical contrast, the use of changes in color and character add to the emotional content, the importance of the perfect fifth motive, and how to play with the snare drum as more of a duet than an instrumental accompaniment. Many elements of Verdehr's interpretations are similar to Drucker's, such as the perfect fifth motive, the interaction with the snare drum, and phrasing. Even though they both agree these are important elements, whom they play within this criteria is different. According to Verdehr, phrasing for the *Concerto* needs to be thought of in micro and macro phrase structures. There are many phrases that need to be played using forward direction to allow for long phrase structure like Drucker's interpretation, but there are also many short phrases that she believes should be thought of in one measure motives rather than in longer phrases. When it comes to emotional aspects of the piece, Verdehr suggests elements of emotional content should be expressed through the use of color and character. It is very important to know when to make the color darker rather than brighter and vice versa to allow the natural character of the piece to come through. In terms of the importance of intervals from Verdehr's

perspective, the opening motive that is introduced in the orchestral and clarinet parts includes the interval of the perfect fifth, which occurs several times throughout the piece, often in different variations. Every time this motive or interval occurs, she says it should be emphasized through forward motion, color changes, and/or articulation. Lastly, Verdehr maintains that the soloist's interaction with the snare drum is significant in expressing the emotional content. When the *Concerto* is played with the piano reduction, she says the snare drum part needs to be played. Like Drucker, Verdehr views the snare drum part more as duet material than accompaniment. To Verdehr the snare drum entrances signify important material to come, either emotional, tempo, or color changes.

At least one aspect of Verdehr's interpretation has changes since she first began performing the *Clarinet Concerto* in the mid-twentieth century. In 1974, in the December edition of the *Clarinet*, an article by clarinetist Loui Brown appeared discussing the discrepancies between the clarinet part and the score in the *Samfundet Til Udgiveles Af Dansk Musik, 3. Serie Nr. 32* edition that, for a long time, was the only edition of the *Concerto* available. Verdehr has now added many of these corrections to her performance practice. Some of the changes are very subtle, but nonetheless essential.

Section I

According to Verdehr, Section I (the beginning until the *Poco Adagio* fourteen measures after ⑪) starts out sounding sunny and happy but quickly changes character with one quick motive. This idea of happiness suddenly changing to a

haunting quality characterizes Section I overall. According to Verdehr, the important elements to consider in the first section are the loose ABA structure, the opening motive using the perfect fifth interval, the inversions of the opening motive, melodic color changes, phrasing in macro and micro segments using focal points, the use of nonstandard fingerings, and changes in articulation and dynamics.

A loose ABA structure is the foundation of Section I. The A section runs from the beginning (*Allegretto un poco*) to the *a tempo ma tranquillo* at ⑤, the B section spans from the *a tempo ma tranquillo* at ⑤ to the *Tempo I* sixteen measures before ⑤, and the A section returns from *Tempo I* sixteen measures before ⑤ until the *Poco Adagio* eight measures before ⑫. The reason Verdehr views Section I in a loose ABA structure is for performance practice. She emphasizes the returning melody at the *Tempo I* sixteen measures before ⑤ as if it is the return of A in sonata form.

Within the *Concerto's* loose ABA structure in Section I, the piece's opening motive takes on key importance from Verdehr's perspective. The opening motive is first presented in the lower and then in upper strings, followed by the clarinet entrance, which then expands the motive. The clarinet entrance should sound distinctive, and while adding color, it changes as the character of the phrase evolves. At ① the clarinet's entrance is marked at *mezzo forte* but Verdehr makes the color change more subtle by changing the dynamic to *mezzo piano*. The opening clarinet theme features more active color changes compared to those in the rest of the *Concerto* even without Verdehr changing the dynamic marking, the color changes are more subtle in the opening theme. The opening clarinet theme is from section ①

until ②, and this opening theme sets the stylistic foundation for the *Concerto* by changing demeanor through one phrase. The musical focal point of the first clarinet phrase should be approached using a crescendo that leads to eleven measures after ① (see fig. 3.1). Within the first theme are three different focal points before the final peak is reached. The first focal point is from ① to four measures after, the second is from five measures after ① until seven measures after ①, and the third starts seven measures after ①, and lasts until eleven measures after ① (see fig. 3.2).

Figure 3.1 The clarinet part from ① to ②

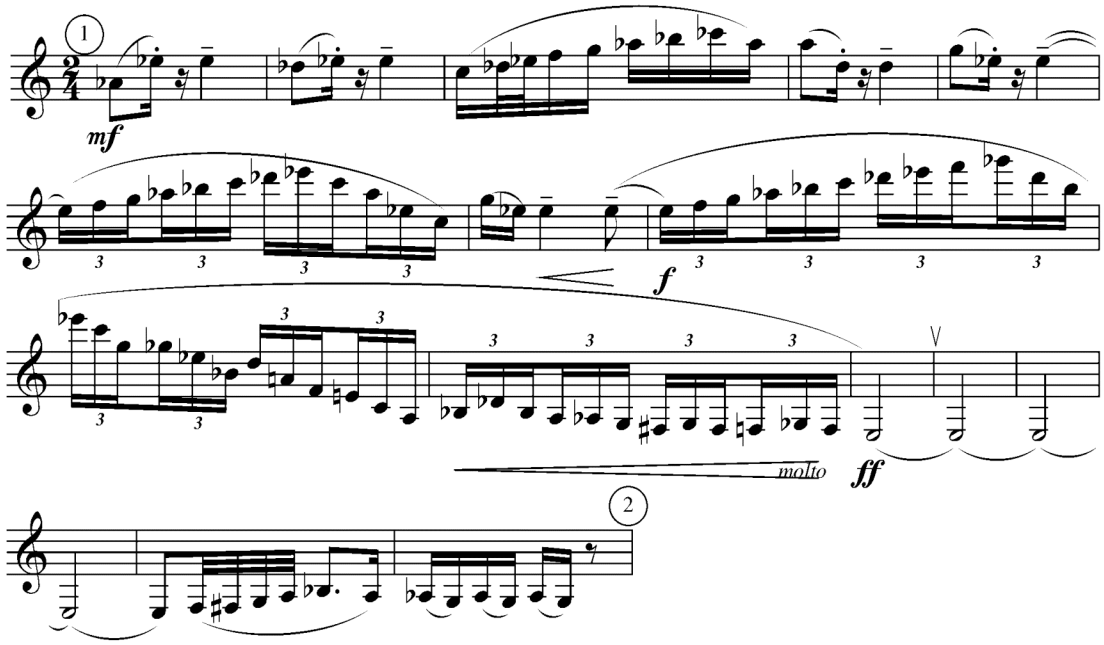
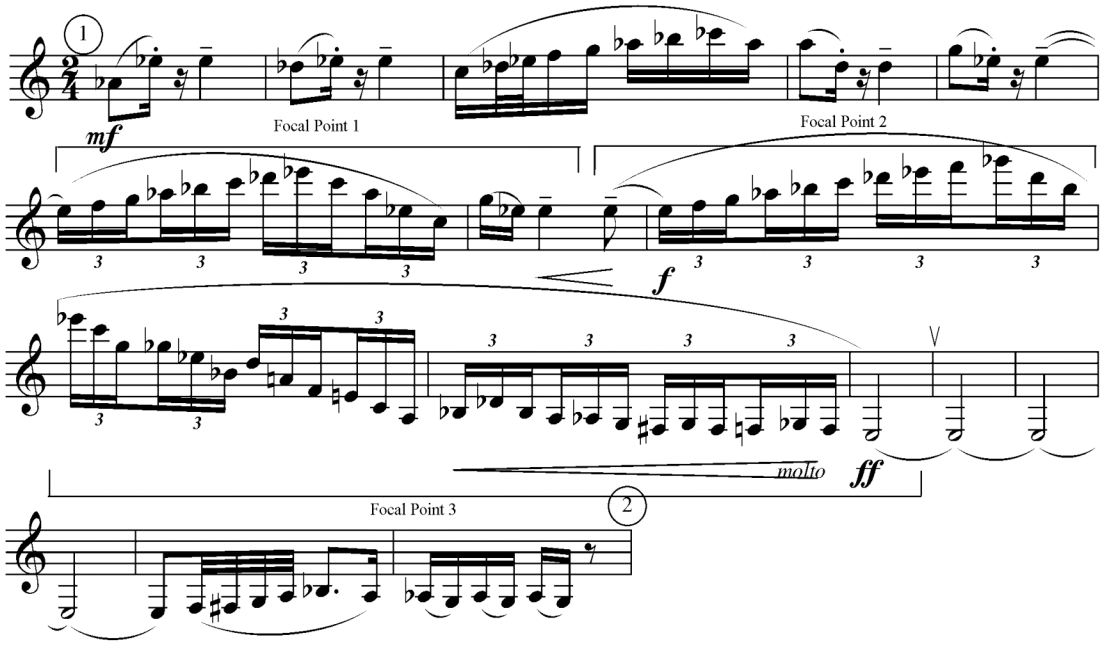
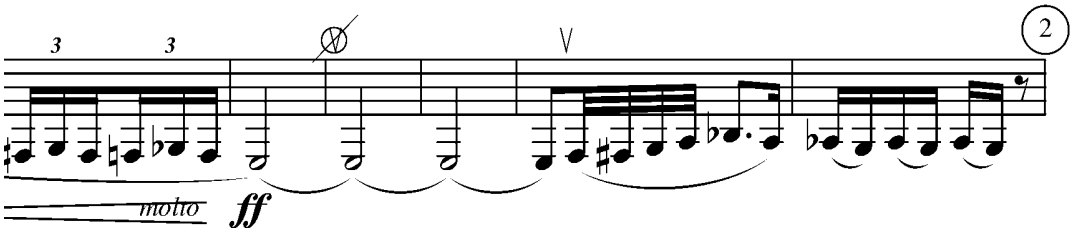


Figure 3.2 ① to ② with three focal points



Verdehr does not play the second focal point the same as the first even though the opening motive is repeated. The first focal point should sound somewhat haunting she says, while the second should be played starting at a dynamic level between *piano* and *mezzo piano* until the triplet sixteenth notes accelerate and crescendo into seven measures after ①. This acceleration should continue until six measures before ② accenting the F-sharp and F-natural on beat two seven measures before ②. Verdehr does not breathe where indicated five measures before ② but she does takes a breath two measures before ② (see fig. 3.3). At the very end of the phrase there is a repeated motive leading into the section phrase. She adds a small crescendo and slight accent on the first note of each two-note grouping (the A-flats one measures before ②).

Figure 3.3 Six measures before ②



On the second phrase starting seven measures after circle ② Verdehr changes to *mezzo forte* rather than *forte* as marked to avoid a harsh tone color (see fig. 3.4). Like Drucker, she believes the high D needs to be played with an open D fingering (see fig. 3.5) rather than the regular D fingering so the performer does not go over the break. To Verdehr the important notes to hear in this passage are BBBCAAABGGGADDDD while adding a slight accent to the first B, A, G, and D. In figure 3.5, I have placed arrows on top of the important notes. According to Verdehr's interpretation, a crescendo should be added to this phrase, attributing all the same principles to the next phrase ten measures after ② (see fig. 3.6)

Figure 3.4 Seven measures after ② with Verdehr's changes in dynamic including crescendos

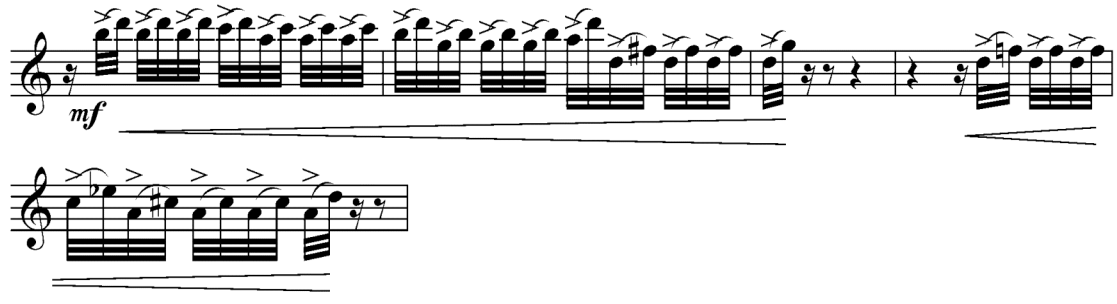
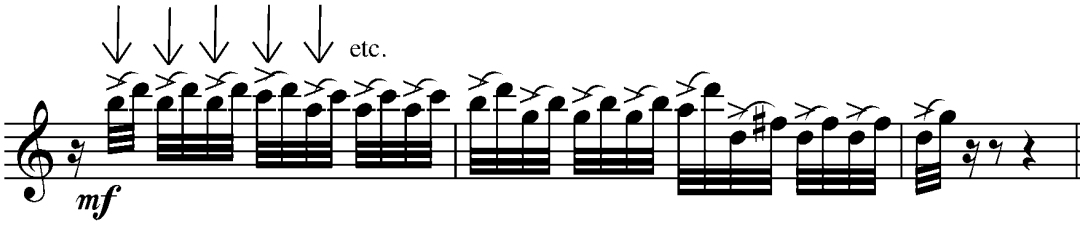


Figure 3.5 Open D fingering (overblown G)

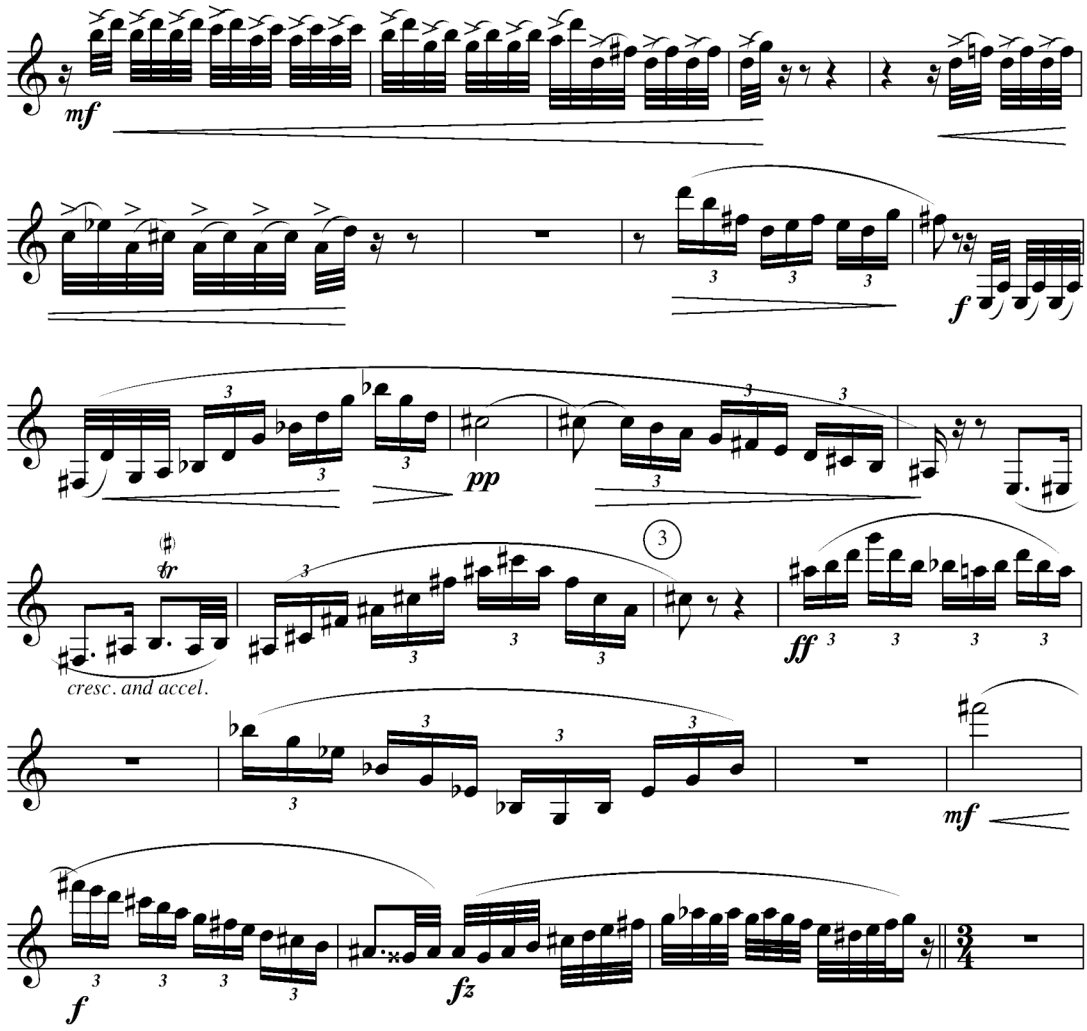


Figure 3.6 Seven measures after ② with arrows indicating the framework



Seven measures after ② until four measures after ③ Verdehr relies on contrast in the short motives to express musical content. She finds it important to listen to the orchestra during the rests since it keeps the music moving forward. Verdehr describes the first motive five measures after ② as "very happy, calm, and lyrical." This mood evolves thirteen measures after ② to "crazy and vigorous"; then fourteen measures after ② the mood changes again, "sounding like an argument between two people." Verdehr plays each motivic idea drastically different than the material that came before. Crescendos and diminuendos with forward motion should be added where appropriate. Verdehr plays seven measures before ③ at a *forte* dynamic with a crescendo to five measures before ③. Five measures before ③ should be played suddenly *pianissimo* until three measures before ③ where an accelerando and a crescendo should be added (see fig. 3.7).

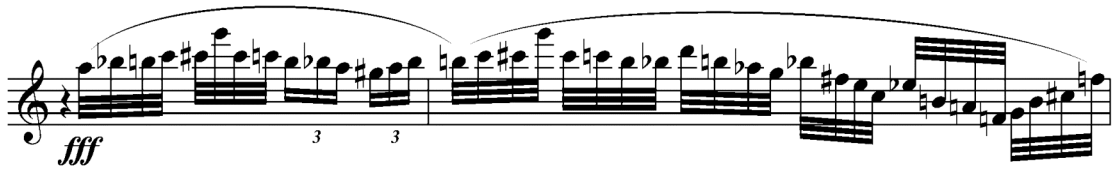
Figure 3.7 Seven measures after ② with Verdehr's phrasing



The added crescendo three measures before ③ builds intensity that will lead into the snare drum's first entrance ten measures after ③, which is often played very loud and aggressively. Verdehr states the clarinet part must also have the loud, aggressive quality, but must also be played expressively. She brings out the rhythmic differences within the clarinet line such as triplet-sixteenth notes that are surrounded by thirty-second notes six measures before ④. To bring out the change

in rhythm, Verdehr adds a slur over the measure six measures before ④ and another slur over five measures before ④ (see fig. 3.8).

Figure 3.8 Eleven measures after ③ with Verdehr's changed slur markings



Verdehr plays the *sforzandos* at ④ and the *sforzandos* throughout the rest of the *Concerto* as expressive accents with a little sense of taper. By the end of the phrase at ④ the clarinet line turns into an extremely expressive transition leading into the *a tempo ma tranquillo* at ⑤.

The *a tempo ma tranquillo* at ⑤, a Brahmsian marking according to Verdehr, should be played *espressivo* using Brahmsian rubato. The tempo should be slightly slower than the original tempo and the clarinet should sing throughout. This melody is made up of an expansion of a five-note motive and each time the motive is repeated the melodic content expands. The D-flat at ⑤ should be played using the side fingering to create a smooth line (see fig. 3.9), according to Verdehr, but in measures after ⑤ the D-flat should be played using the regular fingering (see fig. 3.10).

Figure 3.9 Side D-flat fingering

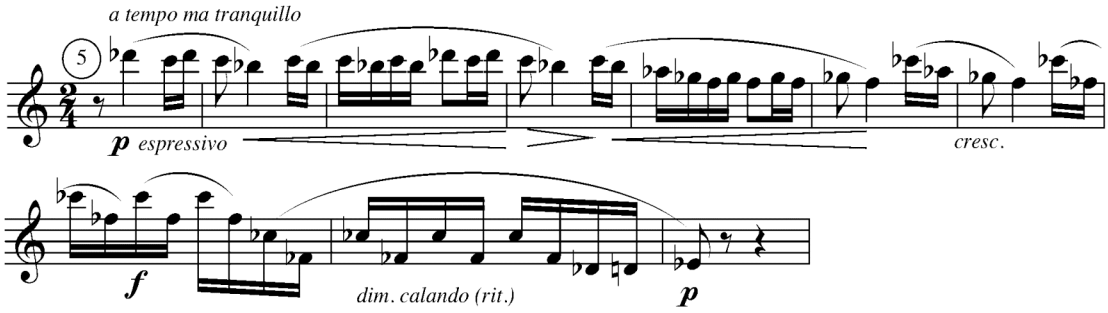


Figure 3.10 Regular D-flat fingering



At ⑤ the internal slurs show the micro phrase structure while the outermost slurs show the macro phrase structure. Verdehr leads the phrase throughout using micro and macro phrase structures. She adds crescendos and diminuendos that slightly crescendo until the end of the phrase (see fig. 3.11). Nine measures after ⑤ should be played with a slight *ritardando* as the clarinet part slowly melts into the string sound ten measures after ⑤. Verdehr describes the musical content at ⑤ as a remembrance of a great love.

Figure 3.11 ⑤ to ten measures after



The transitional material in the orchestra part two measures before ⑥ reminds Verdehr of Strauss's *Don Juan* and she plays the *Concerto* as such. The *a tempo* at ⑥ quickly turns into a clarinet and snare drum duet with cadenza like phrasing. In this section Verdehr says it is easy to overlook the framework since

there are so many notes on the page.[63] To help avoid that, four measures after ⑥ she accentuates the low notes on beat one and two, and she does the same on beats one and two five measures after ⑥ by slightly stretching the notes. Five measures after ⑥, into six measures after ⑥ there should be a slight *ritardando* leading to the fermata six measures after ⑥. Verdehr plays the *grazioso* section six measures after ⑥ as a portrayal of lightheartedness, and with each musical fragment she adds more expression. Verdehr says one of the great things about the clarinet is that the instrument allows the performer to change color depending on the dynamic level. She starts the phrase ten measures after ⑥ *piano,* and as the phrase slightly crescendos, she creates different color changes.

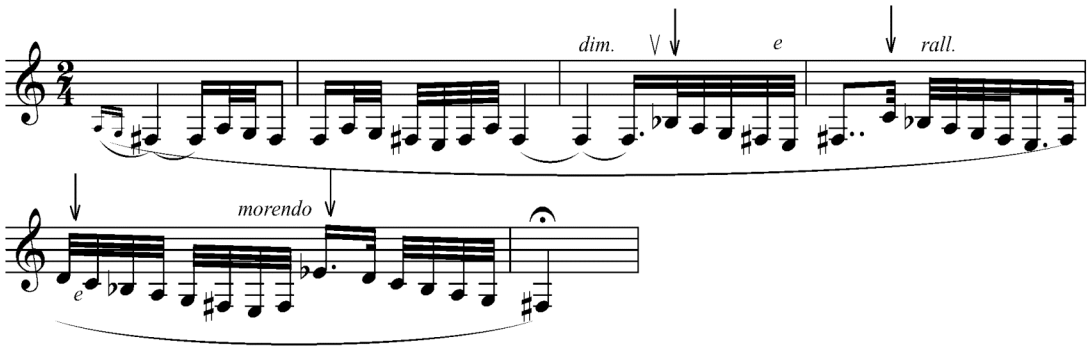
A slow development of intensity gradually builds from eleven measures before ⑦ until the start of the first cadenza. Verdehr adds intensity and energy eight measures before ⑦ by slightly pushing the tempo faster to ⑦. Beat two of circle ⑧ is marked *piano* and, based on Verdehr's interpretation the effect should sound like a *subito piano*. The character of the music changes to less aggressive and more musical. The accents after ⑦ should not be aggressive like a traditional accent, but should have more of a gong quality, meaning to lean into the notes rather than to strike them.

Four measures before the first cadenza acts as transitional material into the cadenza. Verdehr plays these four measures a little slower than the section before. She thinks of these measures as steam being released, and as that steam is released, less pressure is left to fuel the intensity, making the music slowly diminuendo into

[63] When Verdehr referrers to the framework, she is indicating to accentuate the notes of the melody, not the embellishing pitches.

nothingness by an overplaying of the tempo marking. According to Verdehr's interpretation the grace notes four measures before the first cadenza should be played on the beat with the slightest of accents Verdehr says the framework—or important notes of these four measures—needs to be heard. One accomplished this by, three measures before the first cadenza, accentuating the B-flat; two measures before the first cadenza, focusing on the C; and one measure before the cadenza, highlighting the D and E-flat. When she reaches the fermata, she holds the F-sharp under the fermata for a long time, then diminuendos to silence. Verdehr suggests taking a deep breath, clearing one's mind, and then starting the cadenza (see fig. 3.12).

Figure 3.12 Four measures before the first cadenza, the arrowed notes are the framework



First Cadenza

Verdehr divides the first cadenza into four sections. The first section starts after the F-sharp fermata and continues to the third thirty-second rest in line three in the clarinet part (see fig. 3.13). The second section starts from the third thirty-second rest on the second line and continues until the D quarter note on the sixth

line of the clarinet part (see fig. 3.14). The third section overlaps with the second section by starting on the eighth-note G before the quarter note D on the sixth line (see fig. 3.15), and continues to after the fermata on the eighth line, directly before the "Tempo quarter-note equals seventy-two" (see fig. 3.16). Section four starts at the "Tempo quarter-note equals seventy-two" marking and continues to the *Tempo I* at the end of tenth line in the clarinet part (see fig. 3.17).

Figure 3.13 Section one of the first cadenza according to Verdehr

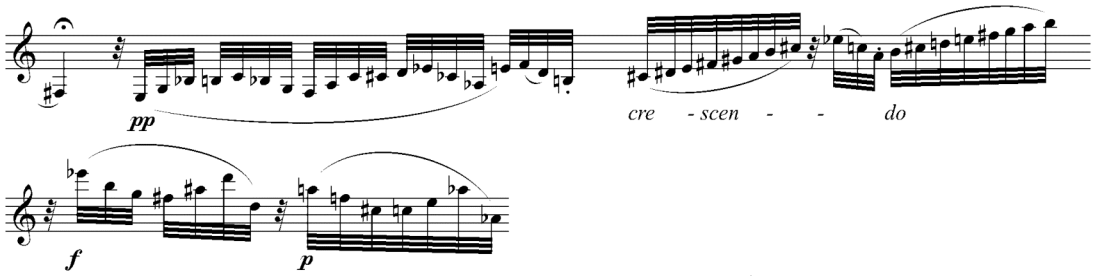


Figure 3.14 Section two of the first cadenza according to Verdehr

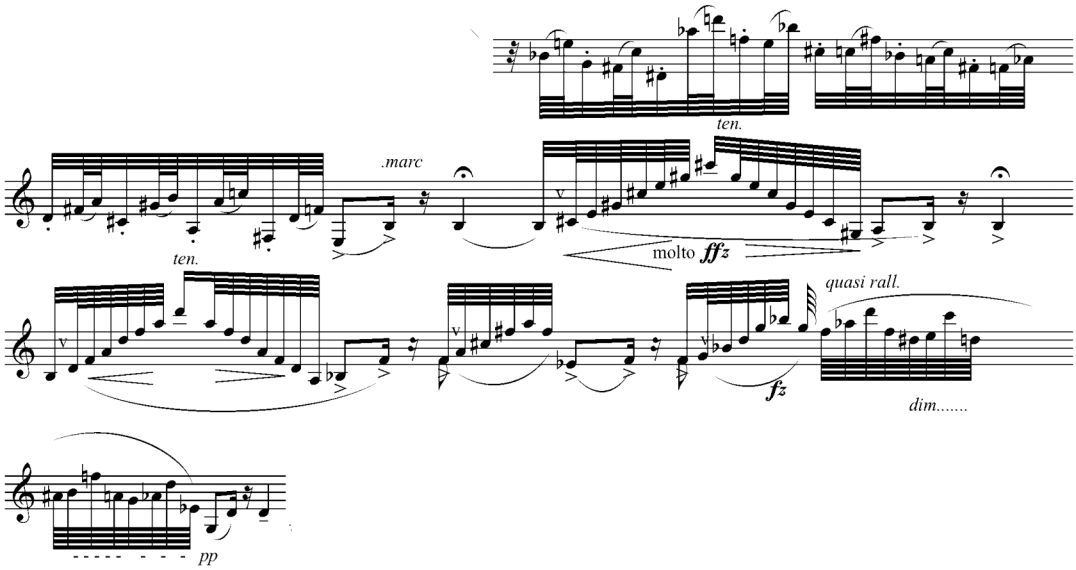


Figure 3.15 Section three of the first cadenza according to Verdehr

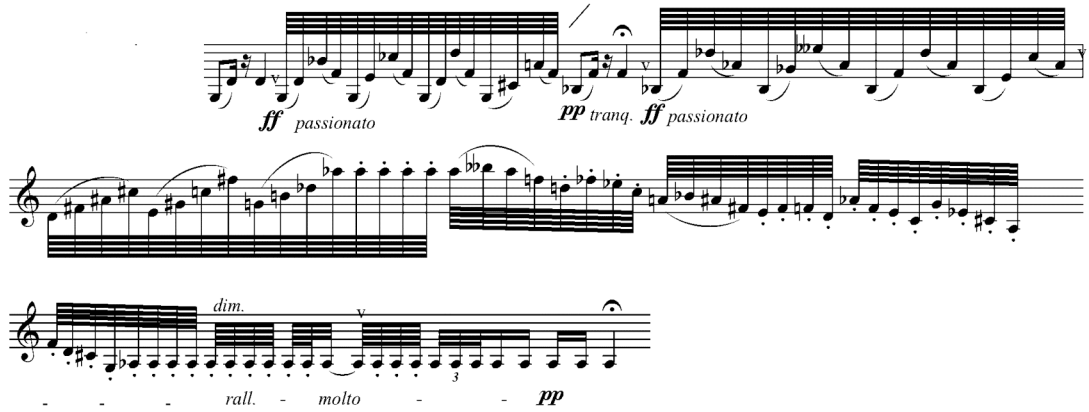
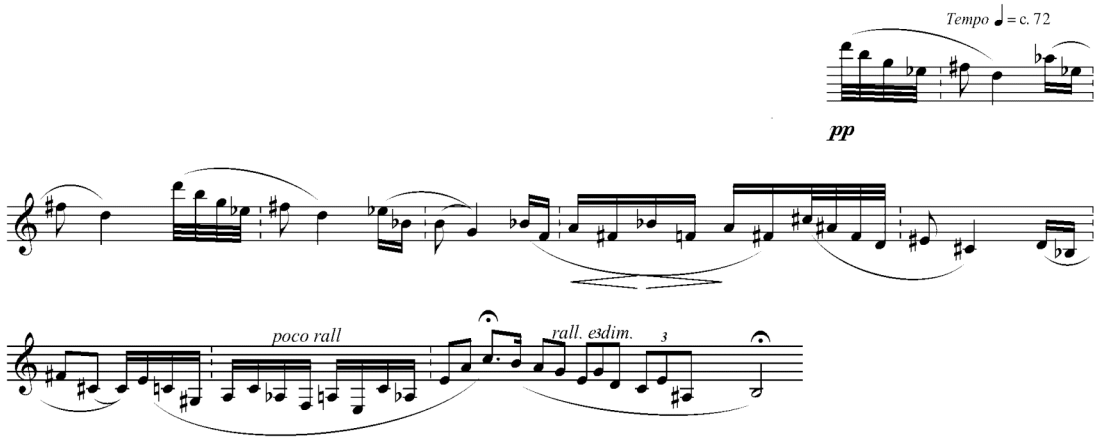


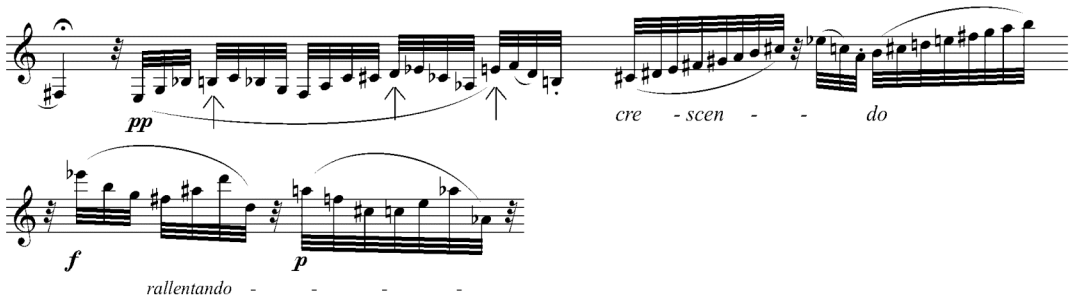
Figure 3.16 Section four of the first cadenza according to Verdehr



As earlier in the piece, Verdehr adjusts the dynamics in the first cadenza to fit her purposes. The first section of the cadenza is marked *pianissimo*, but Verdehr does not think of playing this dynamic marking. Instead, she takes the dynamic level she ended the fermata F-sharp with directly before the start of the cadenza and starts the cadenza at that level. She hesitatingly starts the tempo of the first section of the cadenza, allowing for a more gradual crescendo and accelerando. According to her interpretation, the important notes to accentuate in first line of the cadenza are the

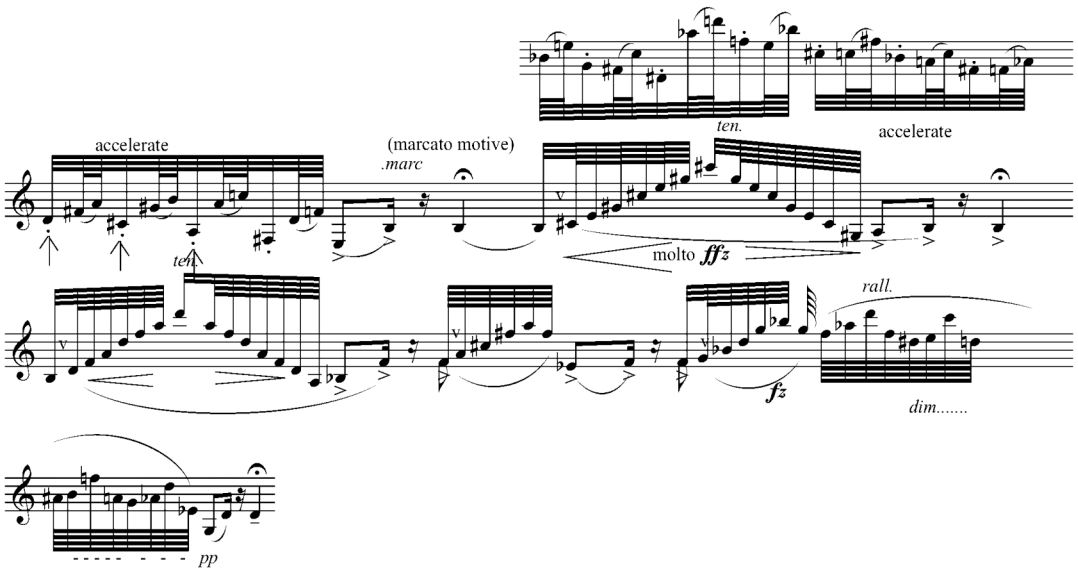
B-natural, the D, and the E-natural. I have put arrows on these notes in figure 3.17. Start the crescendo as marked and continue through to the F on the next line, then *rallentando* until the end of section one.

Figure 3.17 First line of the first cadenza to the first half of the second line



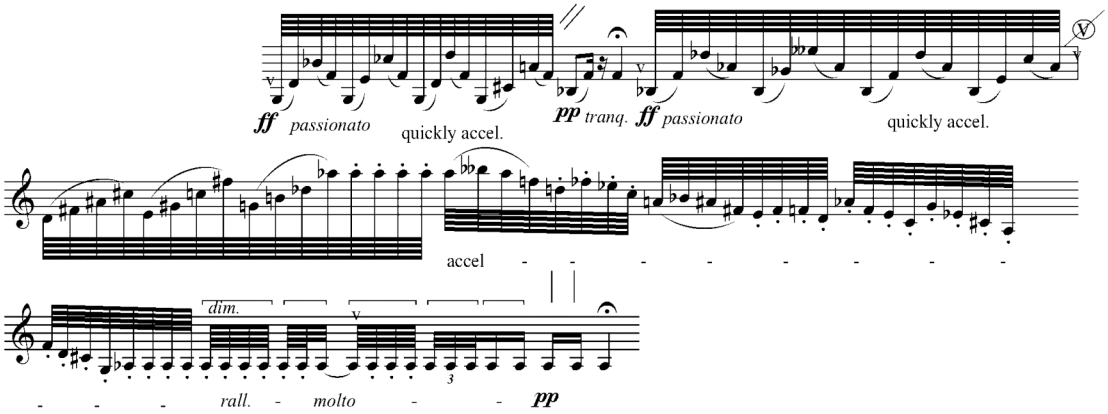
From the start of section two until the *marcato* marking on line four, Verdehr plays the notes before like "pick-up notes" for the accented eighth-note, sixteenth-note *marcato* motive. The "pick-up notes" should start slowly, then accelerate to the *marcato* motive. Verdehr lengthens and accentuates the D, C-sharp, A, and F-sharp on the forth line before the *marcato*. In this section, one should play each quarter note as if it were marked with a fermata. From the *marcato* until the end of section two, the soloist should play all the markings on the page in a cadenza style, making sure to play expressively (see fig. 3.18).

Figure 3.18 Section two of the first cadenza



In section three of the cadenza, Verdehr adds a fermata to the quarter notes like the quarter notes in section two. The dynamics in this section go back and forth from *pianissimo* to *fortissimo* and need to be played as such, according to Verdehr's interpretation. Starting at the first *fortissimo passionato* marking on the fifth line, she starts the motive moderately fast then accelerandos to as fast as she can play, then pauses before the *pianissimo tranquillo* marking on line five. There should be no pause after the second *fortissimo passionato* motive in line five—instead one should crescendo and accelerando to the *rallentando molto diminuendo* in line seven. Verdehr finds the *rallentando molto diminuendo* in line seven a difficult phrase to pace because she does not want to end too quickly nor end too slowly. While slowing down she subdivides the eighth notes, then subdivides the sixteenth notes to ensure ending at the correct speed (see fig. 3.19).

Figure 3.19 Third section of the first cadenza

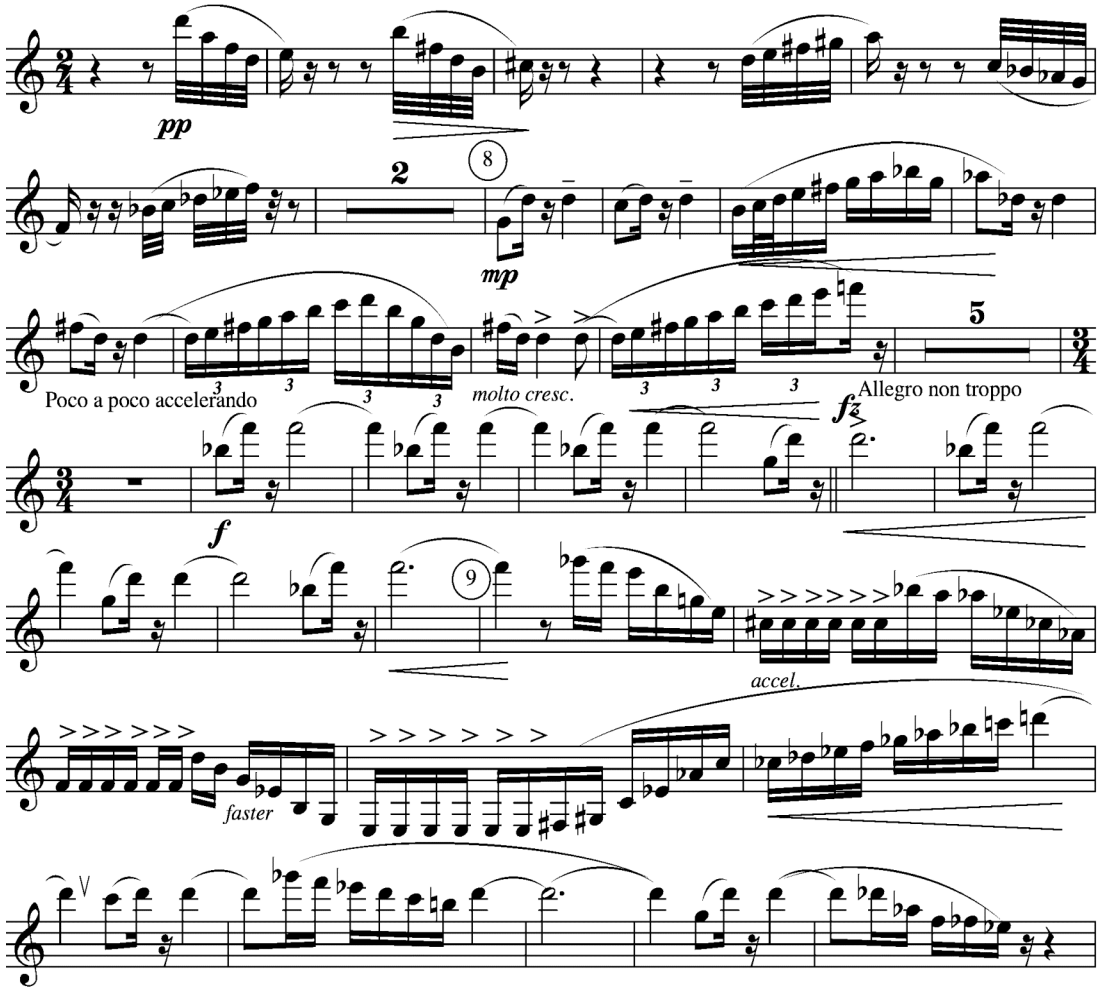


The forth section of the cadenza, should be played as lovely and lyrically as possible, according to Verdehr's performances of it. Soloists should put a slight tenuto on the first note of this section. Verdehr phrases this section in four-bar phrases and brings out the eighth-note E-sharp on line eight and the eighth-note F-sharp on line nine. It is very common to take a breath after the first fermata in line ninth but Verdehr makes a point not to do this. If a breath is needed she suggests taking one breath at the beginning of line ten after the C-sharp. From the first fermata until the second fermata in line ten, she plays the *rallentando* and *diminuendo* as marked.

At the *Tempo I* sixteen before ⑧ the bassoon duet with the orchestra reintroduces the opening theme but this time the clarinet only adds glimpses of the melody until ⑧. The section at ⑧ is marked *piano,* but because it is a recap of the opening melody Verdehr plays this section at a *mezzo piano* dynamic, then adds a *molto crescendo* through eight measures after ⑧. Verdehr continues to adjust dynamics to fit her needs before ⑨ and ⑨, which follows it. Eight measures before

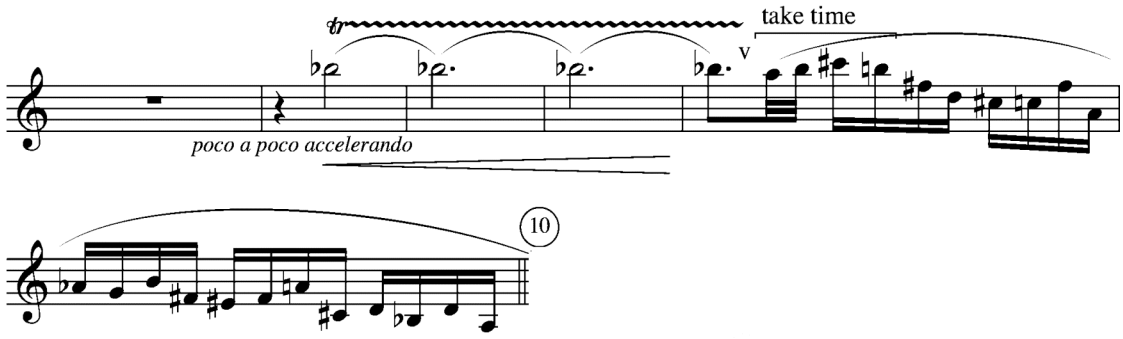
⑨ the clarinet part is marked *fortissimo* but since the clarinet is playing in the altissimo range Verdehr plays eight measures before ⑨ *forte*. She adds a crescendo one measures before ⑨ and at ⑨ takes her time on beat two of the measure. One measure after ⑨ Verdehr gradually accelerates to six measures after ⑨. Four measures after ⑨ the clarinet part has accents marks on the sixteenth-notes on beats one and two. For consistency with the measures before, Verdehr slurs the last two sixteenth notes on beat two four measures after ⑨ (see fig. 3.20).

Figure 3.20 Seven measures before ⑧ to ten measures after ⑨



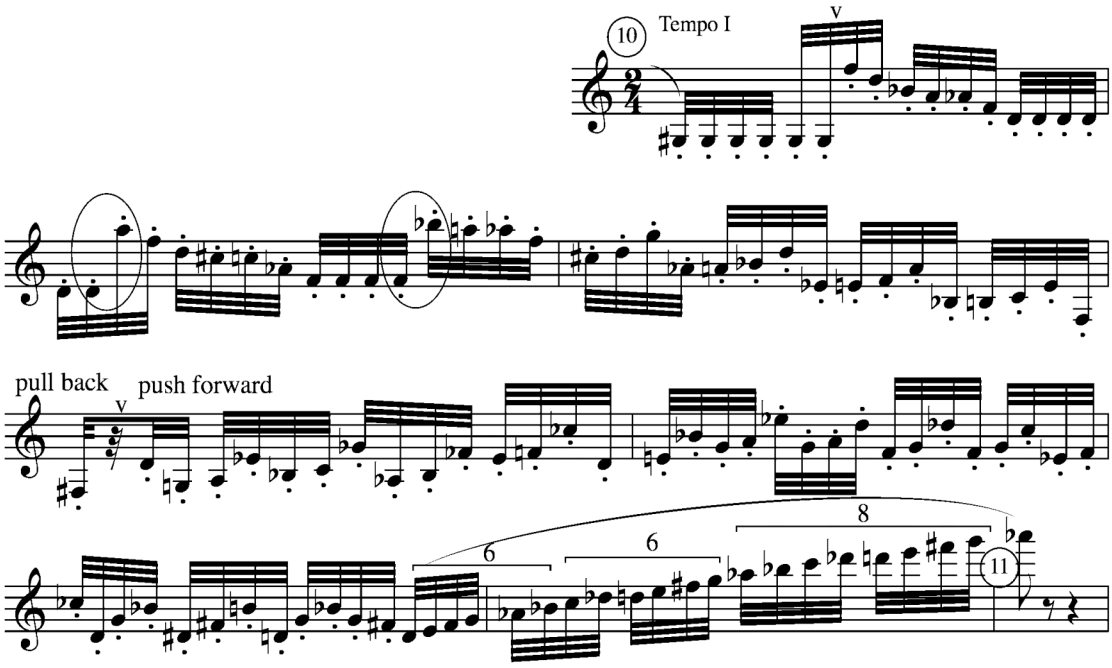
Five measures before ⑩ Verdehr does not start the B-flat trill too loud. Rather, she starts softly then crescendos to *forte,* two measures before ⑩. To match her technique, one should breathe where indicated two measures before ⑩ then take extra time on the thirty-second notes (see fig. 3.21). Taking the extra time ensures the soloist is with the orchestra.

Figure 3.21 Six measures before ⑩



At ⑩ the tempo is marked "quarter-note equals seventy-two", and the tempo should be played as such. Verdehr pays special attention to the wide leaps two measures after ⑩. Four measures after ⑩ she takes a quick breath during the rest, then accelerates back to quarter-note equals seventy-two. On beat four, six measures after ⑩ she regroups the sixteenth notes into two groups of six notes and one group of eight notes (see fig. 3.22).

Figure 3.22 ⑩ to ⑪ with Verdehr's indications



Section II

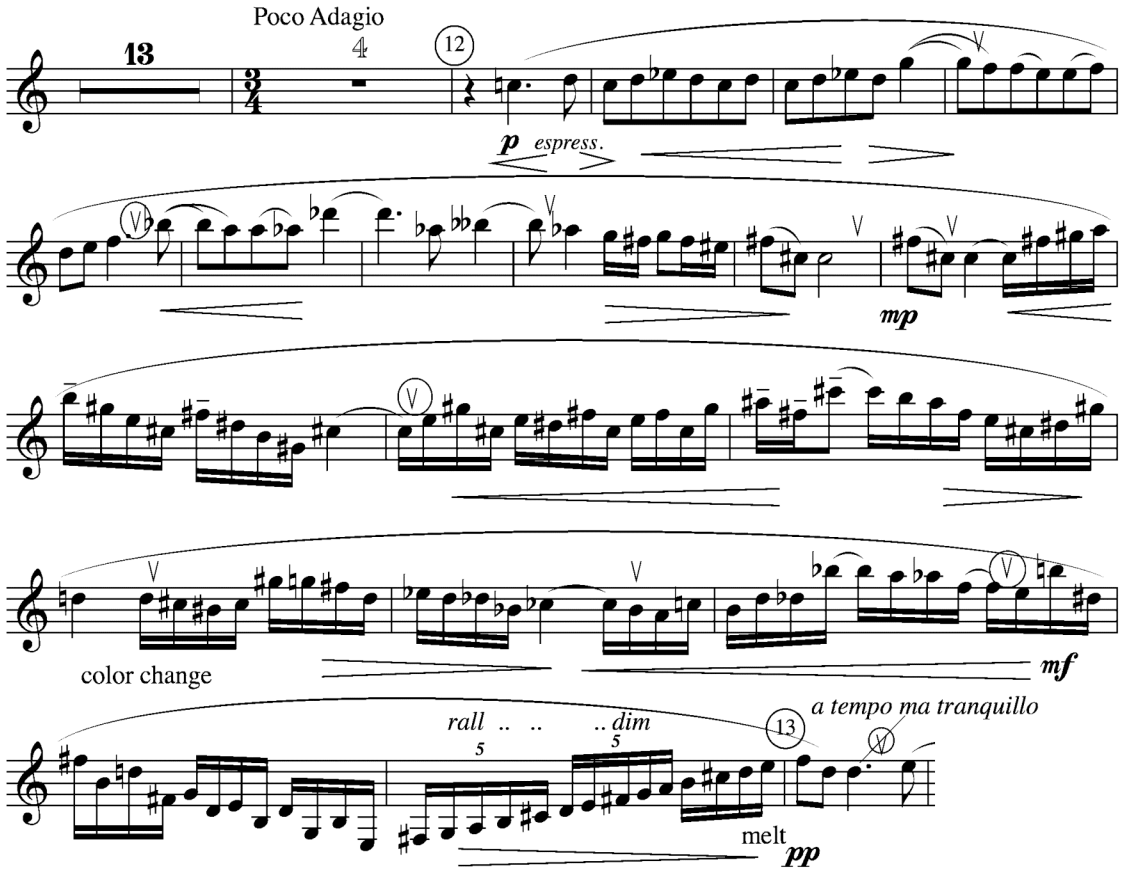
For Verdehr Section II of the *Concerto* (the *Poco Adagio* fourteen measures after ⑪ through ⑳) is about the different emotions expressed through different tone colors. Like Section I, Section II's form is a loose ABA structure. Verdehr employs micro and macro phrasing and uses rubato. Even though rubato is employed, she incorporates forward momentum.

The *Poco Adagio* tempo eight measures before ⑫ should be played circa one hundred. Verdehr says this section can drag if taken too slowly, so, if she pulls the tempo is pulled back, she also pushes the tempo forward. Phrasing and forward motion then keep this section moving. At ⑫ she suggests one should group the first three notes together, and group the next five notes two measures after ⑫ together. Three measures after ⑫ one should group the next five notes. Within each group,

the soloist should crescendo and diminuendo, creating shape and forward movement. The melody at ⑫ does not allow for breath mark pauses and Verdehr generally does not breathe where indicated in the music. She does, however, take a quick breath after the F four measures after ⑫ where marked. Nine measures after ⑫ there is a breath marking that should not be taken, according to Verdehr, but in the next measure ten measures after ⑫ a breath can be taken between beats one and two.

Verdehr makes additional slight changes to the music throughout this section. A tenuto should be added to the first note on beat one. Eleven measures after ⑫ and thirteen measures after ⑫ her interpretation suggests one also add tenutos to the A-sharp, F-sharp and C-sharp while stretching the C-sharp to create tension. From ten measures after ⑫ to ⑬ Verdehr plays the dynamic level around the *mezzo piano*. She experiments with color changes and adds *molto expressivo* character throughout (see fig. 3.23).

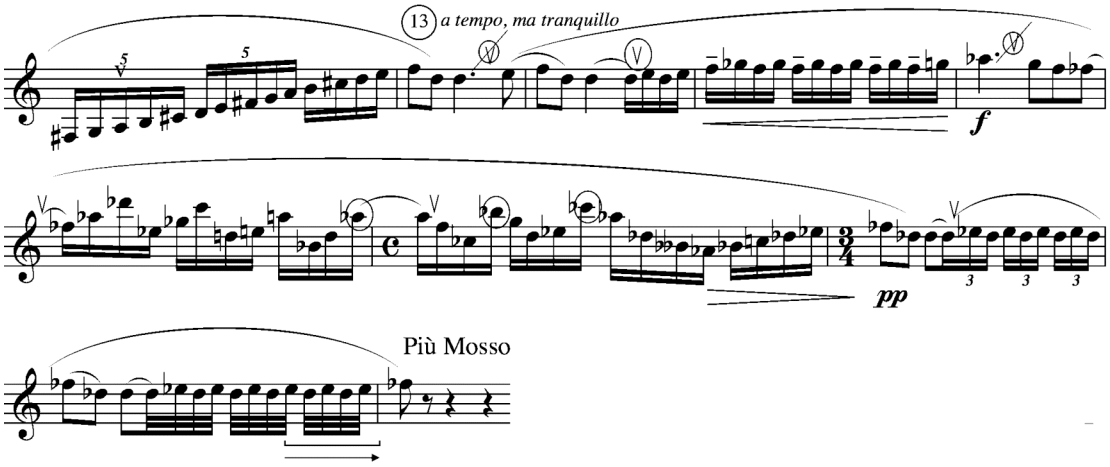
Figure 3.23 The beginning of the *Poco adagio* section



One measure before ⑬ the melody should melt into ⑬ when the melodic material quotes the opening theme. In the first measure ⑬ Verdehr resists taking a breath after the dotted quarter-note D where marked in the music. Instead, she takes a quick breath after the tied D's in the second measure after ⑬. Three measures after ⑬ Verdehr accentuates the first note on every beat and she crescendos to *forte* in the next measure. The framework in the third and fourth measures ⑬ is very important. The notes of importance are D-flat, C, A-natural, A-flat, B-flat, and C-flat. Verdehr adds a tenuto to each one of these notes and diminuendos on beat three, three

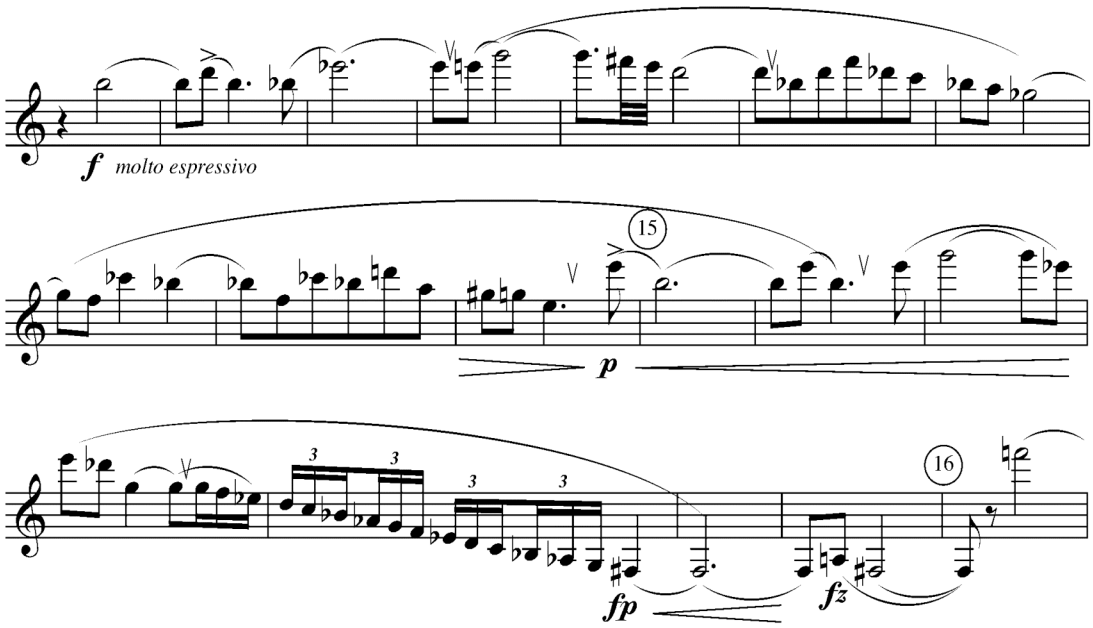
measures before ⑭ then she slightly accelerandos one measure before ⑭ to lead into the *più mosso* at ⑭ (see fig. 3.24).

Figure 3.24 One measure before ⑬ to ⑭ with Verdehr's markings



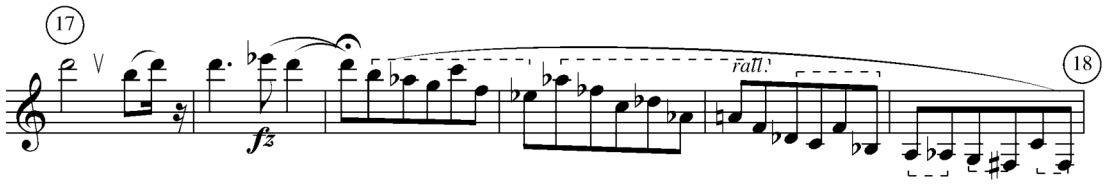
Verdehr refers to the section between ⑭ and ⑱ as the "neurotic section." She said she always imagines a "starving artist pacing the floors wondering if they are going to make enough money to pay the rent while questioning their choice of profession, wondering if it was truly worth it." In this section each clarinet entrance needs to bring out the focal points of each phrase. One eighth-note before ⑮ she starts the phrase *piano,* then crescendos to *forte* three measures after ⑮. On the third beat three measures before ⑯, one should add a *forte-piano* on the F-sharp, then crescendo to the *sforzando* one measure before ⑯, to match her interpretation (see fig. 3.25).

Figure 3.25 Ten measures before ⑮ to one measure after ⑯



At ⑯, the clarinetist should play beats two and three in the measure *piano,* then crescendo and accelerando until five measures after ⑯. Five measures after ⑯, the clarinet part takes over the "neurotic motive" from the snare drum and orchestra. One should play the triplet sixteenth-notes fully and expressively, then gradually rallentando into ⑱. Verdehr adds a fermata to the first eighth-note three measures after ⑰, then she regroups the notes between ⑰ and ⑱. Group one starts on the second eighth-note three measures after ⑰ and continues for the next six notes. The second group starts on the second eighth-note four measures after ⑰ and continues for the next seven notes entering into two measures before ⑱. The remaining notes two measures before ⑱ should be grouped, then one measure before ⑱, Verdehr's interpretation suggests one group each set of two notes together (see fig. 3.26).

Figure 3.26 The brackets and fermata indicate how Verdehr phrases ⑰ to ⑱



Throughout Section II Verdehr uses rubato especially between ⑱ and ⑳. Five measures before ⑳ the music is marked *a tempo* but Verdehr does not play this section at that tempo. Instead, she uses rubato to make the *a tempo* fit the mood that had been established, playing the *a tempo* as if it were a cadenza. Verdehr waits to diminuendo until the measure before ⑳.

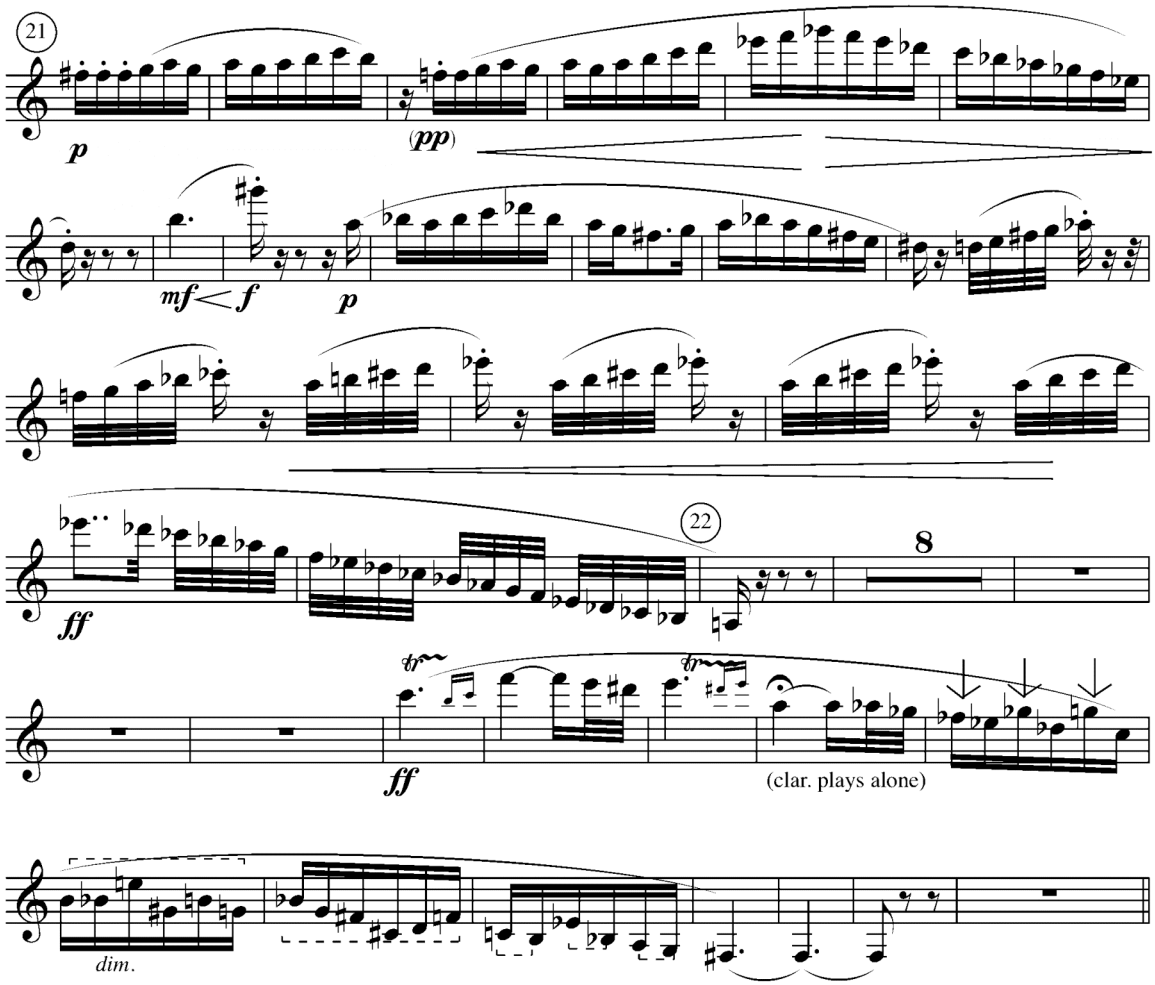
Section III

Section III (⑳ continuing to the *Allegro vivace* eight measures before ㉞) should start with a *grazioso* feel transforming to a jaunty ending with a grand gesture culminating everything that has come before. The framework needs to be heard, through the addition of tenutos, accents, and rubato on important notes. Verdehr generally takes Section II faster than marked. She does suggest making one cut in the music from ㉓ to ㉚. If no cut is taken, one should feel the music in between ㉓ and ㉚ in one.

As she does with dynamics elsewhere, Verdehr departs from tempos marked on the page in Section III, and also adjusts dynamics as needed The *Allegro non troppo* at ⑳ is marked eighth-note equals 144, but Verdehr finds eighth-note equals 144 a bit slow so she changes the tempo to eighth-note equals 158-60. Three measures after ㉑ Verdehr plays this measure a little bit softer than ㉑, She then

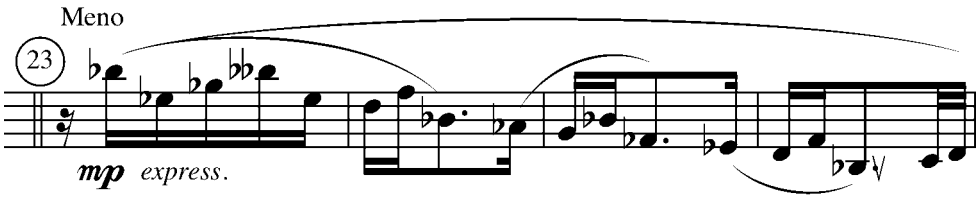
crescendos and diminuendos to seven after ㉑. The trill eight measures after ㉑ is marked *forte,* but she plays the trill at *mezzo forte,* then crescendos to *forte,* on the downbeat of the next measure. Nine measures before ㉓ the clarinet plays this phrase alone making no need for Verdehr to play with a strict tempo. Verdehr adds a fermata to the A nine measures before ㉓, which allows for the sound of the orchestra to clear before continuing. Eight measures before ㉓, she accentuates the notes F-flat, G-flat, and G-natural to match her interpretation. Verdehr groups the next three measures in one-measure segments, emphasizing each eighth-note beat with an emphasis on the *tranquillo* measure five measures before ㉓ (see fig. 3.27). Four measures before ㉓ goes back to eighth-note equals 158-60.

Figure 3.27 ㉑ To one measure before ㉓



At ㉓, Verdehr continues to tweak the tempo and phrasing. At ㉓, the tempo is marked circa 116, but Verdehr prefers this section to go slightly faster at circa 126. This theme is expressive and the phrasing should help indicate that. There is a slur starting at ㉓ that continues until eight measures after ㉓. Verdehr adds internal phrase markings by slurring from ㉓ to the B-flat in the next measure. The next internal slur is from the A-flat two measures after ㉓ until the F-flat in the next measure. The last added slur is the last note of three measures after ㉓ until the B-flat four measures after ㉓ (see fig. 3.28). Four measures before ㉕ is marked *fluente* and Verdehr accelerates and plays this section in one.

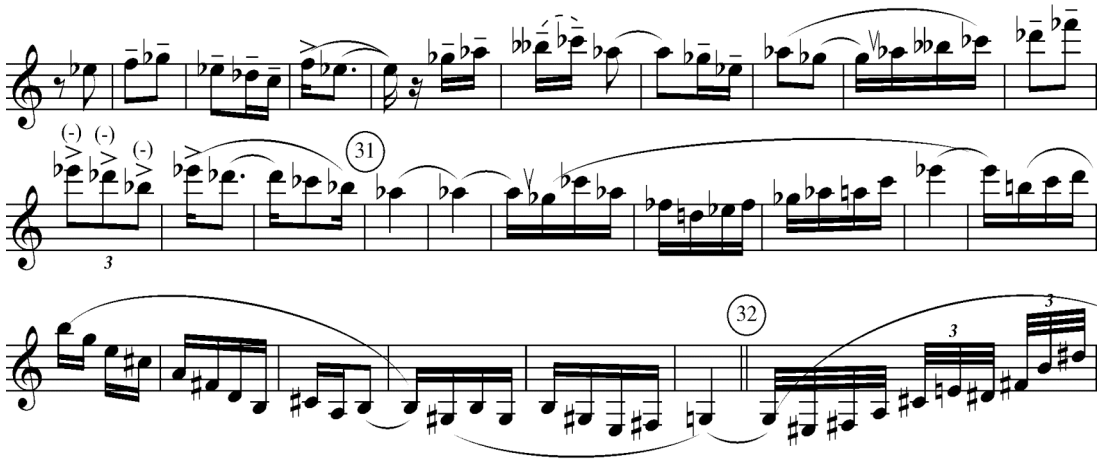
Figure 3.28 ㉓ to four measures after



Verdehr usually makes two cuts in the third section of the *Concerto,* and the first cut is from either ㉕ to five measures before ㉚ or from ㉓ to ㉚. She admits, "Who am I to make changes to a piece by such a wonderful composer, but nonetheless I feel the momentum can drag and with the cuts everything keeps moving forward." Five measures before ㉚ the eighth-note should equal 120. If one chooses not to make this cut, Verdehr suggests experimenting with color changes and internal phrasing especially at eight measures before ㉗ and two measures after ㉘.

At ㉚ the mood of the piece shifts again in Verdehr's interpretation. Verdehr makes ㉚ sound jaunty by adding weight to each eighth-note. Six measures after ㉚ She slurs to the first two notes and eleven measures after ㉚ adds an accented tenuto to each note (see fig. 3.29). The musical material from ㉜ until nine measures after ㉜ is played in one breath. If needed, one can accelerate to ensure only taking one breath. After the fermata nine measures after ㉜ Verdehr plays everything as Nielsen wrote it. She says if you play this section as written a wonderful aggressive quality will come from it. Then it is time to begin the second cadenza.

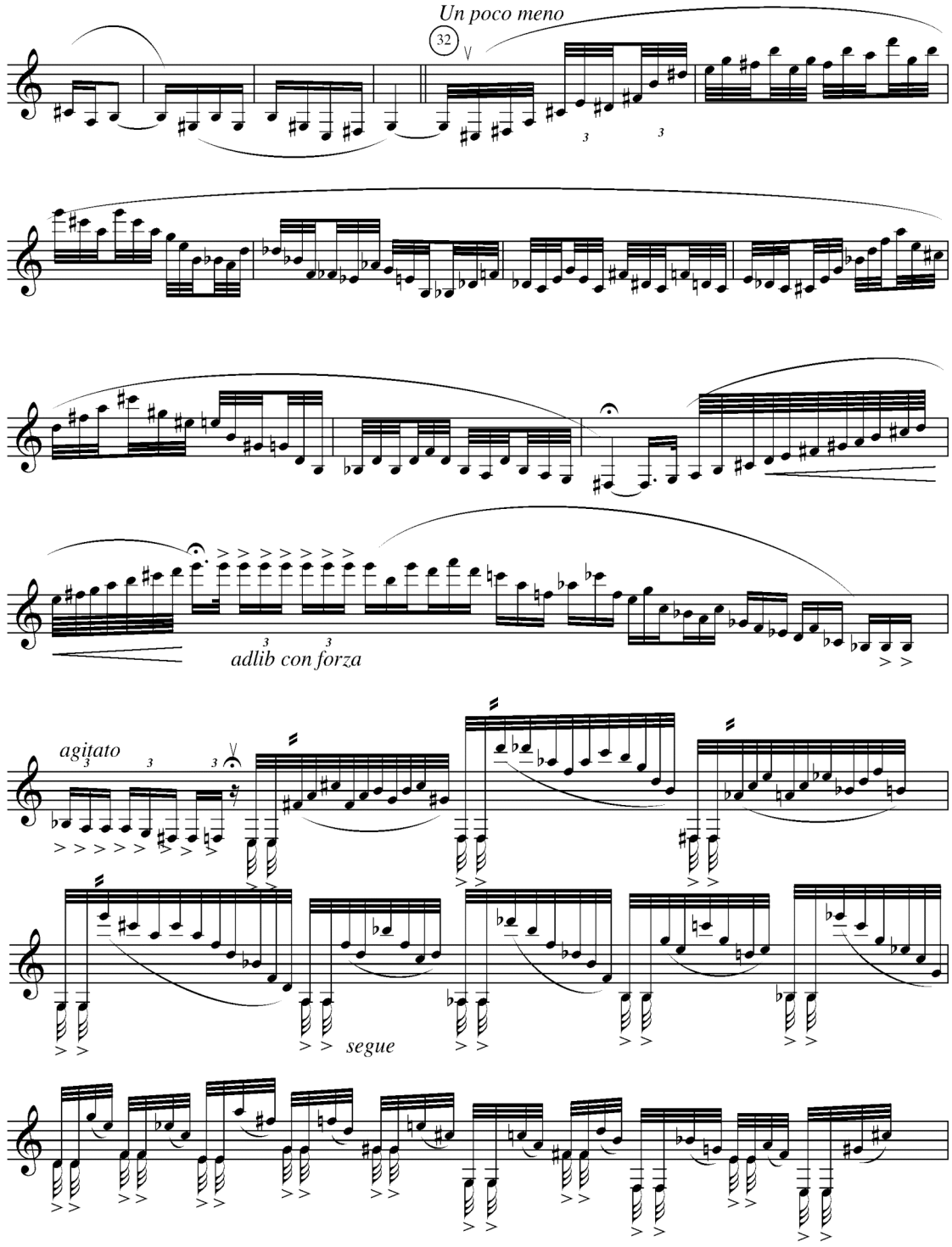
Figure 3.29 Thirteen measures before ㉛ to ㉝ with Verdehr's markings



Second Cadenza

How to phrase and when to breathe play key roles in Verdehr's interpretation of the second cadenza because there are few places where breaths can be taken. Starting at ㉜, one needs to take a huge breath that should to last until the first fermata. If possible, the soloist should not take a breath until after the third fermata. At the third fermata after ㉜, the clarinetist should accent the bottom notes like Drucker, according to Verdehr's interpretation. After playing the two accented notes, Verdehr pauses before playing the rest of the notes that lead into the next two accented notes (see fig. 3.30). The soloist can then continue with this phrasing until *segue* in the music. At this point, Verdehr does not pause between any other notes.

Figure 3.30 Breath marks indicate where Verdehr takes a breath



Verdehr describes four measures before ㉝ until ㉝ as the grand culmination of the entire piece. To effectively reach this moment she uses the downward phrasing to lead into the correct tempo at ㉝.

Section IV

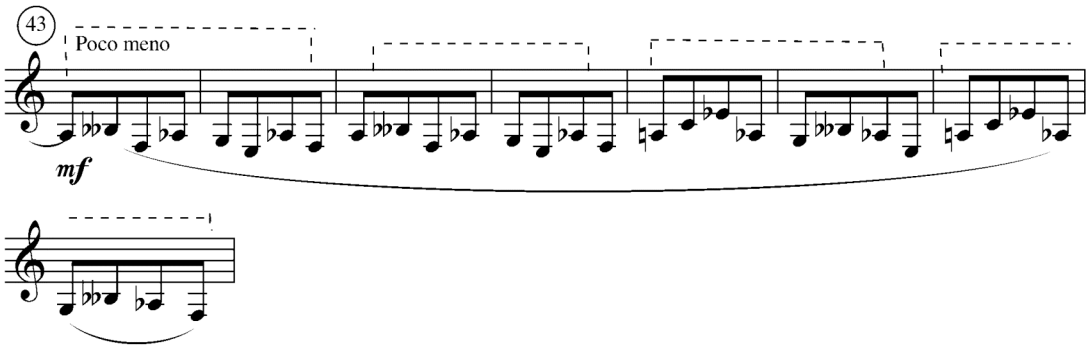
In Section IV of the *Concerto,* Verdehr continues her practice of attention to tempo and other changes from the notation in order to heighten mood. Section IV (*Allegro vivace* eight measures before ㉞ until the end) evokes the recurring feelings of tension. Verdehr emphasizes playing the lyrical passages as smoothly as possible while keeping the internal pulse steady. All crescendos and diminuendos printed in the music needs to be played, especially in the last five measures. At ㉞ Verdehr prefers the tempo to be played at quarter-note equals 160. She recommends a second cut to be made from ㊲ to nine after ㊶.

Although Verdehr does not play *Allegro vivace* section eight measures before ㉞ extremely fast, she makes sure to accelerate to quarter-note equals 160 by ㉞, and at ㉟ the tempo should be even faster, circa 168 allowing to create more intensity. The new theme at ㉟ is every important because it reoccurs throughout the rest of the piece.

Verdehr's choices through the end of the piece after ㉟ are intended to help the *Concerto* reach a compelling climax, or whatever you can say that is true about her decisions from here to the end. The second cut Verdehr takes is from ㊲ to the *Allegro* nine measures after ㊶. Verdehr believes this cut keeps the energy high which makes for an exciting ending. The music between the second cut changes

tempo quite frequently and unless played with excellent phrasing can lose the audience's attention. The end of the *Concerto* builds to a climax four measures before ㊸. At this point, Verdehr's interpretation suggests playing the *rallentando* as *poco meno mosso*. From ㊸ until eight measures after should be played as two-measure phrases (see fig. 3.31). From eight measures after ㊸ to the end of the piece, Verdehr thinks in eighth-note subdivisions. The *poco crescendo/diminuendos* five measures from the end are very important or the clarinet will just sound stagnant. Verdehr holds the fermata in the last measure for as long as possible. As described by Verdehr, most concertos end fast and impressively, but the Nielsen ends in the opposite manner. Verdehr says, "There are very few pieces that can end slow successfully, but the Nielsen *Concerto* is one of them."

Figure 3.31 The brackets indicates how Verdehr phrases ㊸ to six measures after



Verdehr's interpretation of the *Concerto* is structured around the musical contrast inherent in the *Concerto*. According to her, to provide a successful performance one must be able to employ color changes through dynamic control while adding emotional content to the perfect fifth motive and the clarinet/snare drum duets. Verdehr believes that being able to find continuity in a traditional

structure within the piece helps with phrasing. During the years Verdehr was regularly performing the *Concerto,* only two recordings were available, and over the years her interpretation has changed. However, though her interpretation of the piece has changed, she has always believed that working on it is like going through one's own personal emotional conquest, and by making the piece one's own, one can then convey your personal emotional imprint onto the audience.

CHAPTER 4

Håkan Rosengren

Biography

A Scandinavian like Nielsen, internationally acclaimed clarinetist Håkan Rosengren has performed across the world as a soloist, recitalist, and chamber musician.[64] He is currently a professor of music at California State University, Fullerton, where he teaches clarinet and coaches chamber ensembles.[65] Rosengren has recorded roughly thirteen albums and has worked with many prominent conductors such as Neeme Järvi, Esa-Pekka Salonen, and Christopher Hogwood. He has earned degrees from the Royal College of Music in Stockholm, the Royal Flemish Conservatory in Antwerp, and the University of California, Santa Barbara. He has also received grants from the Fulbright Commission and the Scandinavia America Foundation.[66] Rosengren's teachers include Mitchell Lurie, James Kanter, Sölve Kingstedt, and Walter Boeykens.[67]

Rosengren was born in Stockholm, Sweden, but was raised in the southwestern part of the country in a small village that had a population of one

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[64] Håkan Rosengren, "biography," Håkan Rosengren, www.hakanrosengren.com/biography.html (accessed March 23, 2009).

[65] Håkan Rosengren, "biography," California State University Fullerton, www.fullerton.edu/arts/music/faculty_staff/rosengren.htm (accessed March 23, 2009).

[66] Ibid.

[67] Håkan Rosengren, "biography," Håkan Rosengren, www.hakanrosengren.com/biography.html (accessed March 23, 2009).

hundred and fifty in the winter and five thousand during the summer.[68] Rosengren's musical education began at the age of six when he started learning to play the recorder at a community music school. At the age of ten he began studying the clarinet. He continued his studies in Stockholm with noted Swedish pedagogue Sölve Kingstedt. While at the Stockholm Academy, Rosengren also sang tenor in a chamber choir that was directed by Eric Ericson, known around the world as the father of choral education. This training led to the development of Rosengren's melodic sensibility and his belief that the understanding of harmony leads to a deeper understanding of music. After graduation, Rosengren moved to Antwerp, Belgium, where he studied with world-renowned clarinetist and conductor Walter Boeykens. Rosengren then moved back to Stockholm where he entered the postgraduate program at the Royal College of Music. After graduation, Rosengren received a Fulbright to study at the University of California, Santa Barbara. During Rosengren's final two years in Stockholm, he also played principal clarinet for the Royal Opera Orchestra.

Rosengren's 1985 début performance with the Swedish Radio Symphony was conducted by Jorma Panula. A Swedish television station was making a television segment about the music education programs in Stockholm and decided to film Rosengren and two other students practicing and taking lessons leading to a live performance. On this concert Rosengren performed the *Concerto*. Rosengren's performance was such a success that one year later the station aired the entire

[68] Unless otherwise indicated, all information quotations in this chapter are taken from: Håkan Rosengren, interview by author, Round Top, Tex, November 26, 2008.

concert again. Prior to the performance Rosengren spent countless hours collaborating with pianist Rudolph Stakemann, who, at this time, was an instructor at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm. Stakemann was an important influence on Rosengren's interpretation of the *Concerto*. Rosengren described Stakemann as, "a really great musician and teacher whose musical approach is uncompromising and relentless." The 1985 Swedish Radio Symphony performance led to Rosengren performing the *Concerto* across Scandinavia and eventually performing with every professional symphony in Sweden. Rosengren was then asked to record the *Concerto* for Sony Classical with the Swedish Radio Symphony conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen.

Being a Scandinavian, Rosengren said he had known of Nielsen's music, especially the *Clarinet Concerto,* since birth. As a young clarinetist, Rosengren knew he would eventually play the *Concerto,* and his first clarinet teacher even accidentally gave him a copy of the sheet music. At the time, he was not expected to learn the piece, but Rosengren knew it was an important work. Rosengren's first purchased recording of the *Concerto* was of clarinetist Kjell-Inge Stevenson with the Danish Radio Symphony conducted by Herbert Blomstedt. Around the age of fifteen or sixteen he starting learning the *Concerto,* and he remembers playing it for a summer festival audition at age seventeen. He later studied the work at the academy in Stockholm where he really developed his own interpretation.

Rosengren's overall impression of the *Concerto* is that of a very serious piece of music which is thoroughly composed with clear indications about how it is to be played. He says that though the piece might look as if it has four distinct

sections, in reality the sections are all connected through the recurrence of the opening theme. Compositionally, Rosengren finds the work interesting because "it takes a single motive that is twisted and turned throughout the piece." In terms of style, Rosengren describes the *Concerto* as having a "neoclassical, but romantic aesthetic with modern technical demands." He says the performer must keep this style in mind while performing the *Concerto*, but should also include the same performance qualities–clear phrasing, a light tone–as the Mozart *Clarinet Concerto*.

Although Rosengren considers the Nielsen on par with Mozart's *Clarinet Concerto,* Rosengren has never viewed the *Concerto* as a virtuosic piece because the difficult technique serves the musical expression. The *Concerto* is not a bravura piece that ends with great excitement, but rather ends with a sloe introspective Adagio. It is a technically demanding twenty-five minutes of through-composed music that requires Herculean stamina, yet, according to Rosengren, the technical demands are easy when compared to the challenging musical and tonal aspects of the piece, which are reflective of Nielsen's later works.

Near the end of Nielsen's life, his compositional style changed. As shown in the *Concerto* Nielsen focused on the construction of different tonal areas rather than specific keys. Throughout the *Concerto,* many different emotions are conveyed and different tonal centers are established, but regardless of the tonal changes the piece ends back in a tonal center. According to Rosengren, these attributes make the Nielsen *Clarinet Concerto* one of the greatest works in clarinet literature, equally matched with the Mozart *Clarinet Concerto.*

As a performer, Rosengren believes that he needs to understand Nielsen's motivations for every marking on the music in order to correctly interpret the *Concerto.* Every articulation, dynamic, expression, tempo indicator, etc., has a specific purpose, and Rosengren says the only way to truly play the music is to play these markings—whether they are accents or tenutos—the way Nielsen intended. For instance, at ① each note in the opening motive is articulated differently (see fig. 4.1). The first note Rosengren plays firmly, then he lifts the second note to correctly articulate the quarter-note E-flat. On beat two there is a tenuto marking on the quarter-note E-flat, and this tenuto is a type of accent even though it is not executed the same way as an accent. In the *Concerto*, Rosengren views tenuto markings as accents with a singing quality, and if they are not played as such, he believes the style will be incorrect. This attention to the sound of the piece continues even in more mundane matters such as fingering. Rosengren uses many nontraditional fingerings, but fingerings are chosen for quality of sound rather than ease of playing.

Section I

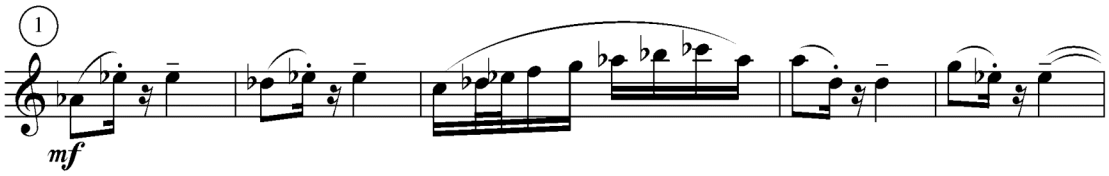
Section I (the beginning until the *Poco Adagio* fourteen measures after ⑪), by Rosengren's interpretation, should be stylistically played according to Nielsen's specifications by understanding every phrase, musical style, color change, expression, character, dynamic change, and articulation marking. Rosengren plays Section I as specified in the music, taking particular care with accents and dynamics. However, some of the breath marks, which Rosengren calls Oxenvad

markings, he does not take. The breath marks that Rosengren removes are the ones that he believes stylistically hinder Nielsen's interpretation.

Rosengren's care in playing the Nielsen is evident from the first clarinet motive, and even its first note. The motive, where the clarinet first enters ① is restated throughout the piece literally and in inversions. Rosengren plays this motive with the idea of the tenuto marking on the quarter-note E-flat as a "singing quality accent" rather than a held note. He clearly articulates the first note, then releases the sixteenth note with a lift, then plays the quarter note with an accented singing quality. Since the second measure of ① is the same articulation as the measure before, it should be played as such. Rosengren continues his concern for how the piece should be played even to the level of which fingerings should be used. At ①, the first note the clarinet plays is an A-flat, and A-flats generally are sharp on the clarinet. Rosengren suggests adding a few fingers in the right hand[69] to lower the pitch. Between measures two and three after ① Rosengren lifts the quarter-note E-flat to ensure placement of the sixteenth-note in the next measure. The lift also helps with sliding between the E-flat and C (see fig. 4.1). The *Concerto* starts in $\frac{2}{4}$ meter and Rosengren makes a point not to play beat two as a downbeat. If too much weight is given to beat two, the feel of *Concerto* becomes too heavy, he said. The only emphasis should be on beat one.

[69] Rosengren suggests putting down the index and ring finger in the right hand.

Figure 4.1 The clarinet opening motive

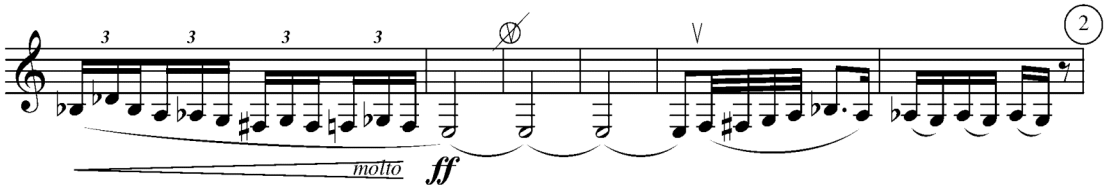


When it comes to dynamics and breath marks, Rosengren makes slight adjustments for the sake of tone, character, and authenticity. The opening motive is marked *mezzo forte,* and within the romantic/neoclassical ideal, *mezzo forte* markings should be played very lightly with a generous *piano* or *mezzo piano* sound. However rather than thinking about volume, Rosengren plays fully to keep the performance practice within the style. "This dynamic allows for the character for the opening motive and phrase to be played with a happy character with a dark undertone," he said. Before the clarinet enters at ① the low strings set the dark undertones. The orchestra enters at a dynamic of a generous *piano* and, according to Rosengren's perspective, the clarinet needs to match the tone the orchestra has established.

There are many editorial breath markings throughout the *Concerto* that Rosengren calls "Oxenvad markings" because these editorial markings most likely came from Aage Oxenvad himself.[70] When finding places to breathe, Rosengren does not always take a breath where the marking indicates. For example, five measures before ② there is a breath marking that Rosengren does not take. He feels that this is valid because these marking are not directly from Nielsen. To ensure not taking a breath five measures before ②, Rosengren takes a breath seven measures after ① between the quarter- and eighth-note E-flats (see fig. 4.2).

[70] The person Nielsen wrote the *Clarinet Concerto* for.

Figure 4.2 Ten measures after ① with Rosengren's indications on where to breathe



When choosing fingerings, Rosengren picks a fingering that will allow him to produce the sound and quality to best suit the piece. He does not choose a fingering to make it easier to play the note. Rosengen says, "There are five different registers on the clarinet, and the *Concerto* often explores many different ranges all in the same phrase." The most important aspect in music in general, according to Rosengren, is always to represent the tonality and good sound quality. Rosengren chooses fingerings using this ideal. Using this ideal as a standard eight measures after ①, Rosengren fingers the high G-flat as a high F with the right side E-flat key (see fig. 4.3).

Figure 4.3 High G-flat fingering



Seven measures after ②, Rosengren uses the regular high D fingering (see fig. 4.4) for the first high D, then he switches to the open D fingering (see fig. 4.5) for the next two high D's. Rosengren plays the rest of the high D's in this measure and in the next measure with the regular high D fingering. He says emphasis must also be

placed on the accented notes in this section. By changing fingerings it gives more weight to the first high D per beat, per measure. Rosengren plays the accents on beats one and two with more weight than the other accented notes (see fig. 4.6).

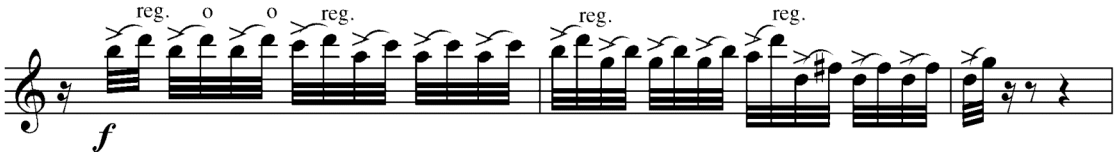
Figure 4.4 Open high D fingering (overblown G)



Figure 4.5 Regular high D fingering



Figure 4.6 Seven measures after ② with Rosengren's fingerings



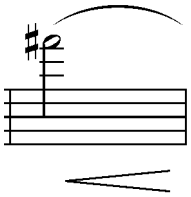
Rosengren calls the high F-sharp six measures after ③ a vertical note.[71] The reason for this is to ensure he plays the note with the correct dynamic and pitch. He uses a half-hole, long F-sharp fingering (see fig. 4.7). Since the clarinet part is not the most important line six measures after ③, he starts the F-sharp a bit softer, then adds a slight crescendo. Rosengren says the F-sharp should be as free sounding as possible (see fig. 4.8).

[71] To Rosengren a vertical note means hearing everything accompanying the pitch to better place the note in context.

Figure 4.7 Half-hole long F fingering



Figure 4.8 Six measures after ③ with Rosengren's crescendo marking



Six measures before ④, in the measure marked *fortississimo*, Rosengren fingers the high G as (see fig. 4.9), to fit perfectly within the context of the phrase even though the fingering might seem unstable on its own. Four measures before ④ Rosengren plays the high G with the regular high G fingering (see fig. 4.10) because the note needs to be played with a *sforzando* as written. From six measures before ④ Rosengren plays the phrase forcefully but very musically by adding *crescendos* and *diminuendos* to show its contour. The two-note motives, two measures before ④ should not have a screaming quality even though they are marked with *sforzandos* (see fig. 4.11). One measure before ④ Rosengren does not slow down, but he does slightly hesitate to prepare for the *sforzandos* in the measures to come.

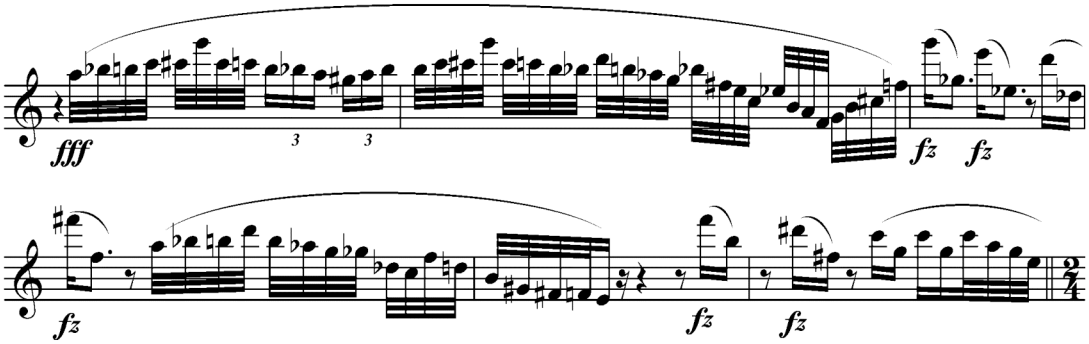
Figure 4.9 Alt. G fingering six measures before ④



Figure 4.10 Regular G fingering four measures after ④



Figure 4.11 Six measures before ④



Continuing his adjustment of fingerings, five measures before ⑤ (see fig. 4.12) the music needs to have a singing quality, so Rosengren uses the regular B-flat fingerings, but on the very last B-flat three measures before ⑤ he uses the one and one fingering (see fig. 4.13) to help the phrase *diminuendo* to *pianissimo*.

Figure 4.12 Five measures before ⑤

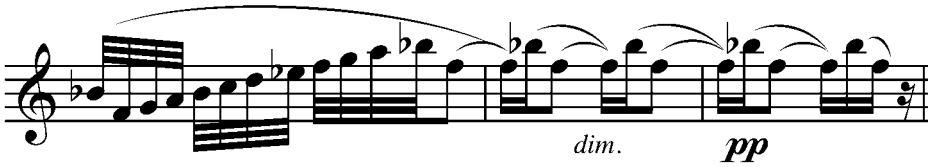


Figure 4.13 One and one B-flat fingering



The first lyrical, romantic section in the piece occurs at ⑤. Rosengren does not take ⑤ too slowly, but he does play it with a relaxed feeling and uses rubato. "The details are very important, and the phrases within the sub phrasing should be played as marked," he said. "The player should use rubato, but it should be very subtle throughout…" In a way, this is the first most difficult section because of the musicality." To help with expression Rosengren uses finger articulations,[72] which allows the player to avoid making the crisp sound of the tongue on the reed.

A defining aspect of Nielsen's *Concerto* is drama, according to Rosengren, and his choices in how he plays dynamics and accents at ⑥ work to heighten it. At ⑥ it is easy to make the high notes sound "screamy," he said. In addition to avoiding this he also makes sure not to add an accent on the high G-sharp two

[72] Finger articulation means to heavily press the finger down to achieve an articulated attack.

measures after ⑥. Rather, he leads the high G-sharp to the A (see fig. 4.14). To ensure the high G-sharp speaks, and for better quality of sound, Rosengren uses a breath accent with the fingering (see fig. 4.15). Three measures after ⑥ he crescendos to four measures after ⑥ to achieve the dynamic change to *fortissimo.* "Drama is the key to the *Concerto* and every phrase must be played with that in mind," he explained. The material between ⑥ and the fermata six measures after ⑥ should sound very dramatic. Then, four measures after ⑥ Rosengren takes his time making the music sound "dramatic legato" rather than a "smooth-lyrical legato." In this same measure he articulates the first two notes, but he does not accent or "pop" the high D or the high A-flat (see fig. 4.16). "If you push enough air through the instrument there will be no need to accent anything," he said.

Figure 4.14 The G-sharp should lead into the A without adding accents two measures after ⑥

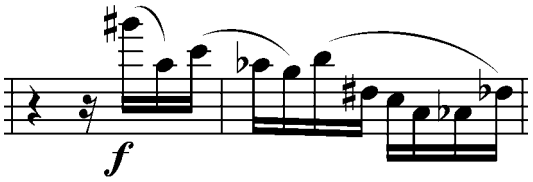
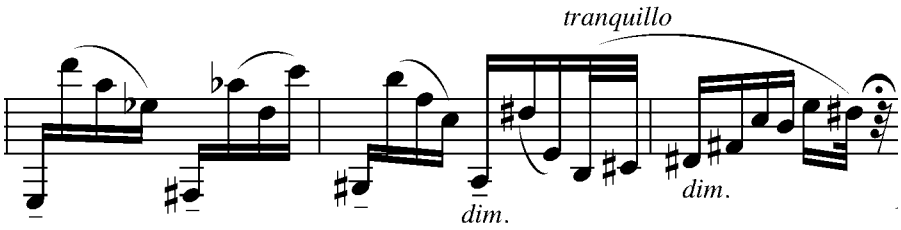


Figure 4.15 G-sharp fingering Rosengren uses two measurers after ⑥

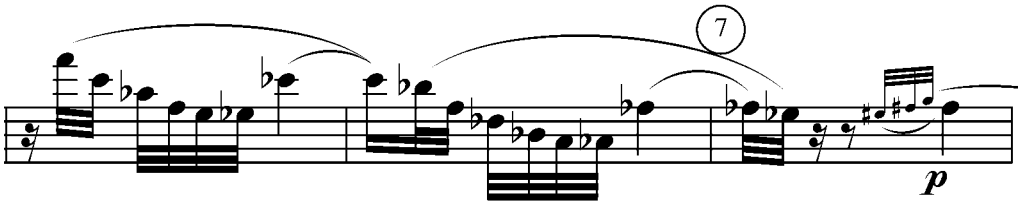


Figure 4.16 Four measures after ⑥



Rosengren makes sure to avoid harsh accents, which he calls "slather type accents." He states that no accents at all should be added to anything. It is okay to add weight to the note, but not enough to constitute an accent. Two measures before circle seven ⑦, he says make sure never to accent to the first note. Rather, he thinks about playing the phrase "Mozart-like," meaning delicately and lightly, to break from the stereotype of harsh-sounding twentieth-century music (see fig. 4.17).

Figure 4.17 Two measures before ⑦



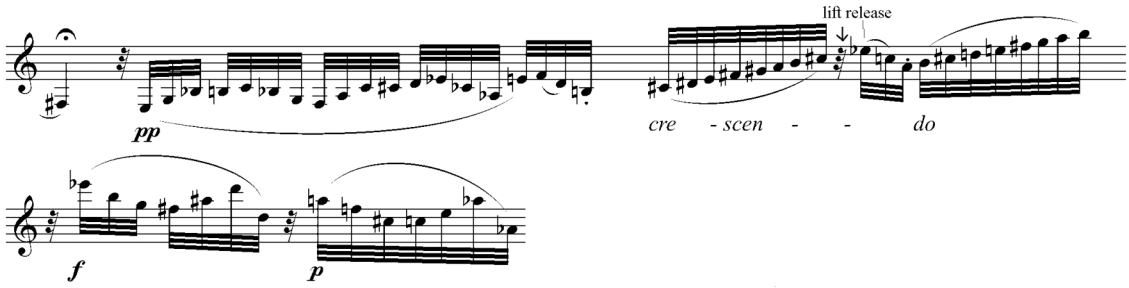
First Cadenza

In both cadenzas, creating a sense of natural flow is crucial, according to Rosengren. "The key to both cadenzas is not to have too many stops. The player should let them flow organically," he said. If there are too many pauses with either cadenza then the *Concerto* sounds like a modern piece, because the different sections start to sound more like modern effects rather than expressing emotional

phrasing. When Rosengren plays the cadenzas he does play the effects written in by Nielsen, but he says they should not be played so far over the top, that they take away from the neoclassical/romantic character of the piece. He says the marcato markings should be played using dramatic emotional effect to convey the neoclassical/romantic character. Rosengren suggests starting the beginning of the cadenza, and other phrases within both cadenzas, slowly to ensure a drastic tempo change as the music accelerates through every phrase.

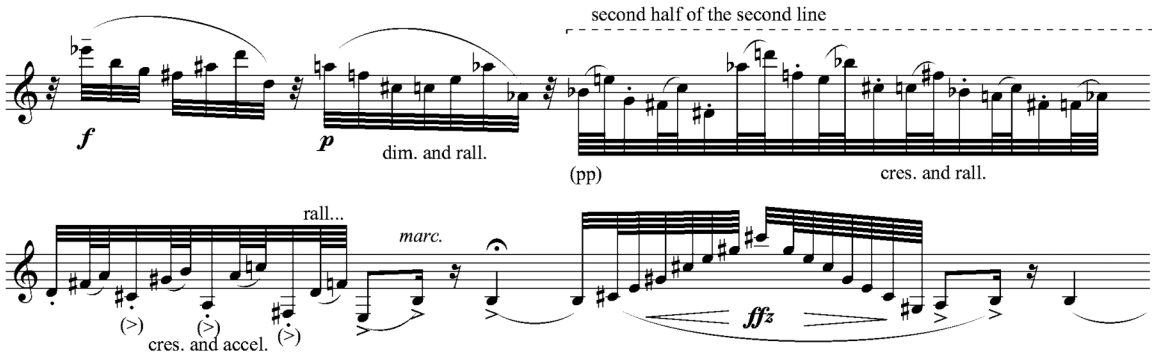
Rosengren starts the cadenza slowly outlining the contour of the notes, and he makes it a point to play the correct articulations throughout. Halfway through the first line of the cadenza a *crescendo* is written in the part. Rosengren starts to *accelerando* and *crescendo* where written in the music, and not before. The *accelerando* and *crescendo* continue until the *forte* marking on the second line of the cadenza. Near the end of the first line of the cadenza there is a thirty-second rest. Rosengren interprets the rest to indicate a lift release of the C-sharp directly before. He also says it is very important to not rest longer than a thirty-second rest or the *crescendo accelerando* will not be a smooth transition (see fig. 4.18). There are many rests throughout the first cadenza and Rosengren views each rest as an indication to lift-release the note preceding.

Figure 4.18 First line of the first cadenza to the first half of the second line



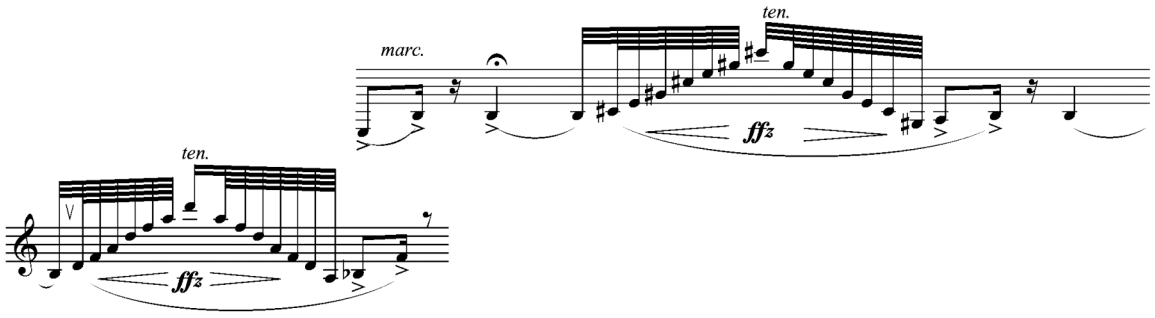
The first half of the second line of the cadenza has a figure marked *forte* and another figure marked *piano*. The first figure Rosengren plays *forte* as marked, but he adds a tenuto to the first note of the figure. He plays the second figure *piano;* then Rosengren *diminuendos* and *rallentandos* throughout the second figure. Rosengren starts the second half of the second line of the cadenza at the same dynamic he ended the figure before it. The second half of the second line starts on a B-flat sixty-fourth note. Rosengren plays the articulation as written, making each staccato note shorter than the last. He starts this figure relatively slow, then *crescendos* and *accelerandos* to the low F-sharp on the third line of the cadenza. On the third line of the cadenza Rosengren slightly accents the lower notes. By the time he reaches the low F-sharp he audibly accents the note then slightly pulls back the tempo on the last three notes (F-sharp, D, F) to set up the marcato motive directly after (see fig. 4.19).

Figure 4.19 Second and third line of the first cadenza



On the third and forth lines of the cadenza, there are *double-forte sforzando tenuto* markings on the highest note of each phrase that Rosengren stretches longer than one would usually stretch a tenuto marked note (see fig. 4.20).

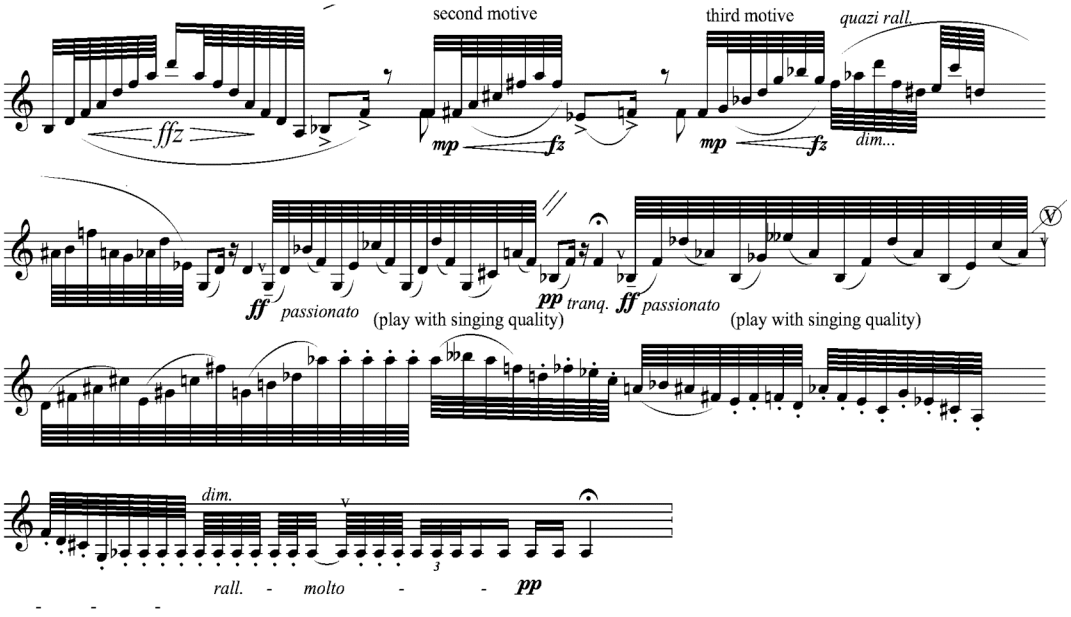
Figure 4.20 *Marc.* marking of the third line of the cadenza to the beginning of the fourth line



On the fourth line of the cadenza the first phrase has a *double forte sforzando tenuto* marking, and then *diminuendos.* When Rosengren *diminuendos* on the *double forte sforzando tenuto* phrase, he does not get any softer than a *mezzo piano*. He starts the second and third motives at *mezzo piano* then crescendos to the *sfortzando* marking. The fifth line of the cadenza is marked *fortissimo passionato.* Here Rosengren plays the phrase with a singing quality, adding a tenuto to the first note of the phrase. At

the end of this phrase Rosengren pauses before playing the *pianissimo tranquillo* figure directly after. He does play the second *fortissimo passionato* the same as the first, but the second time there is no pause before playing the next phrase. Rosengren lets the seventh line of the cadenza organically unfold to the fermata (see fig. 4.21).

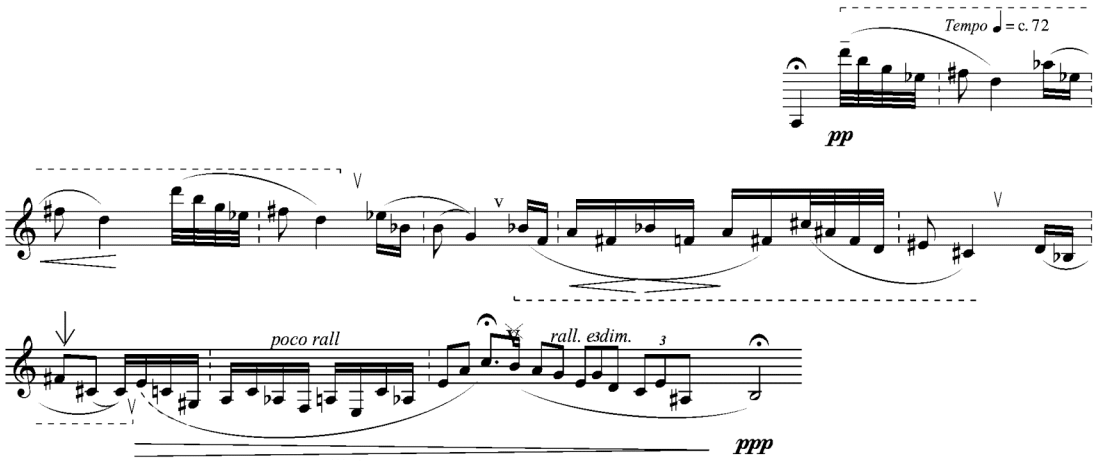
Figure 4.21 Fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh lines of the first cadenza



After the fermata on line seven, Rosengren phrases this section as a more relaxed version of the *grazioso* six measures after ⑥. The feel of the more relaxed version is more important than playing the tempo exactly at quarter-note equals seventy-two as marked. Rosengren makes it a point not to breathe at the end of slur markings or where a breath could detract from the phrasings. He does not breathe between the quarter-note G and sixteenth-note B-flat or between the quarter-note C-sharp and the sixteenth-note D. In the last line of the cadenza, Rosengren takes a

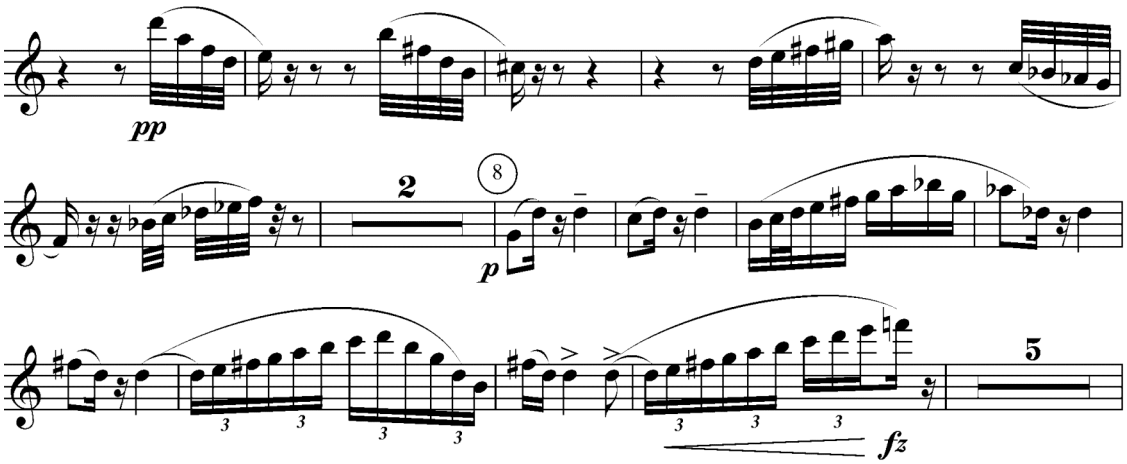
breath between the tied C-sharp and sixteenth-note E to ensure not breathing after the first fermata in this line like Verdehr (see fig. 4.22).

Figure 4.22 The dotted markings indicate Rosengren's phrasing



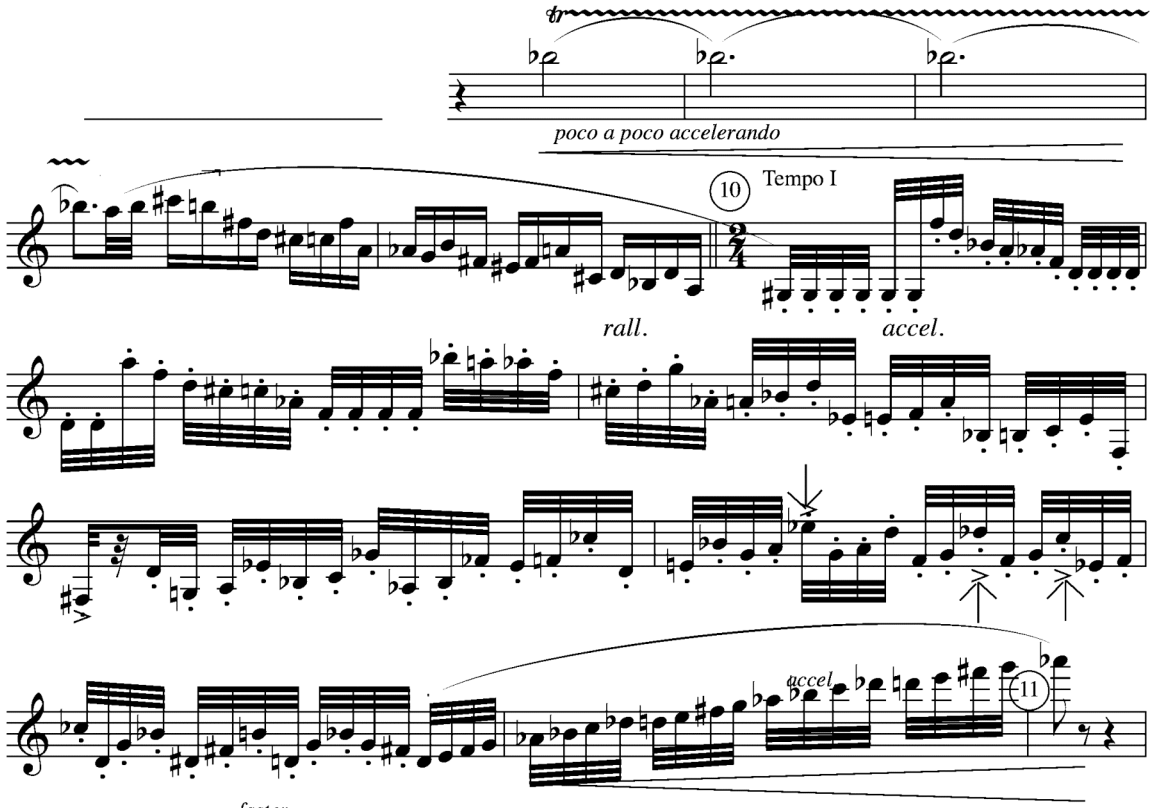
Eight measures before ⑧ the clarinet part "decorates" the orchestra according to Rosengren. He plays these decorated fragments as written. The last note of each decorated fragment is a sixteenth note, and Rosengren says playing the correct rhythm is very important. When the first theme returns at ⑧ Rosengren leads the phrase to the *sfortzando* high F. Unlike the first clarinet entrance at ①, at two or three measures after ⑧ Rosengren does not lift (see fig. 4.23).

Figure 4.23 Eight measures before ⑧



Five measures before ⑩ there is a trill starting on beat two and the printed part says to play the trill *poco a poco accelerando* continually until ⑩. Rosengren starts the trill softer to allow for a crescendo. Between ⑩ and ⑪ there is one thirty-second rest surrounded by constant thirty-second notes. Since the rhythm is exactly the same, Rosengren phrases to the rest, then starts a new phrase after the rest. He slows down slightly and accents the low F-sharp before the rest, four measures after ⑩. After the rest, Rosengren quickly *accelerandos* back to tempo. Three measures before ⑪ he brings out the E-flat, D-flat, and C by slightly accenting the notes, then he *molto crescendos* to ⑪, leading the phrase to the orchestra's entrance (see fig. 4.24).

Figure 4.24 Five measures before ⑩ to ⑪



Section II

Rosengren plays Section II (the *Poco Adagio* fourteen measures after ⑪ through ⑳) with very expressive rubato, but he keeps the forward momentum by playing the contour of the clarinet line with *crescendos* and *diminuendos*. There are many Oxenvad breath markings throughout this section, and Rosengren does not break the phrase to take a breathe where marked. He also plays the dynamics as marked and does not overplay any *forte* dynamic as the only phrase marked *forte* is also marked *molto espressivo*. Section II is not heavily orchestrated, so Rosengren takes the opportunity to play *piano* where marked. He plays all marked articulation and does not add accents. There are a few musical phrases that are without

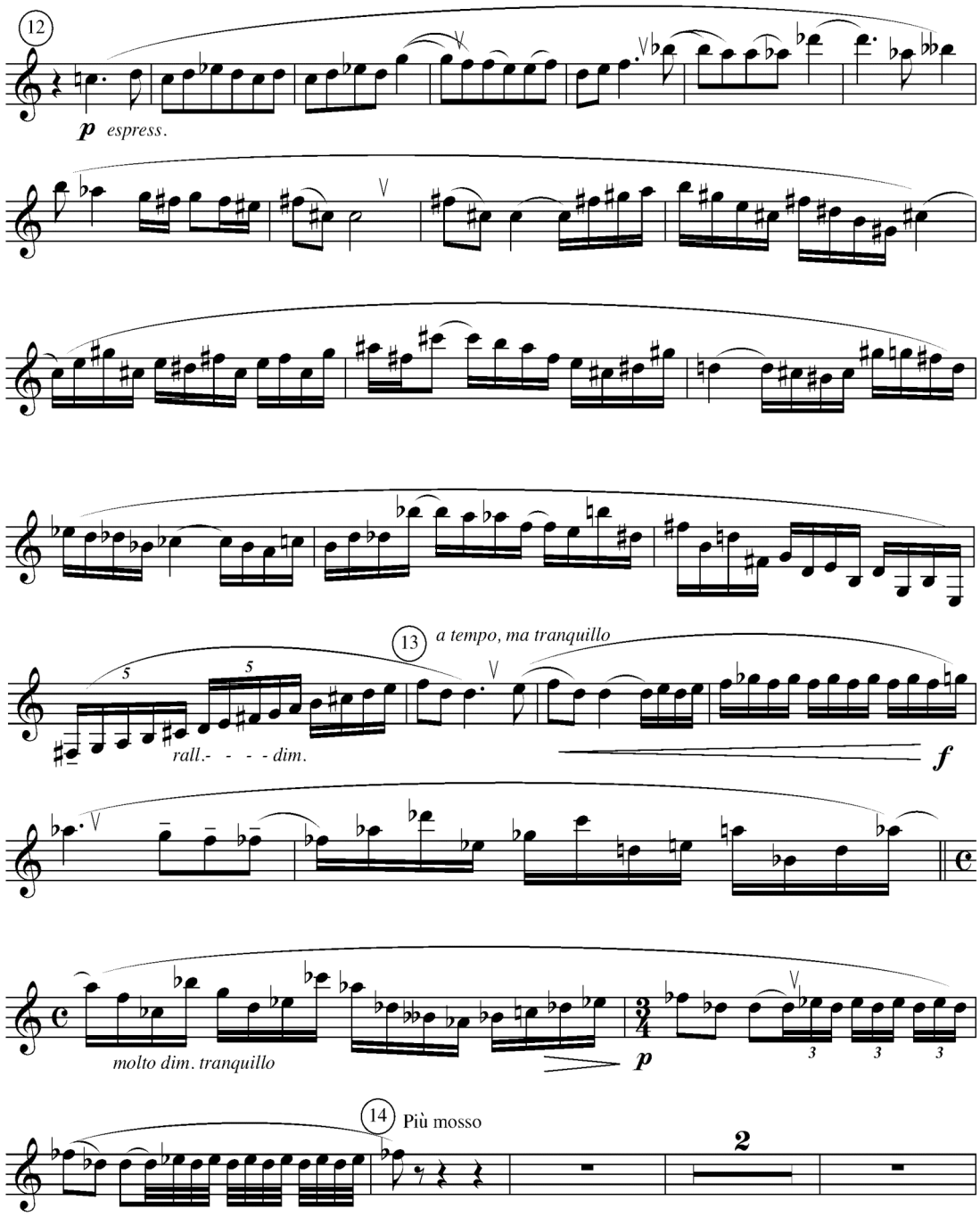
orchestra, and at these moments Rosengren plays the phrases cadenza-like by stretching some notes and phrases, but he still ensures that these phrases stay within what Nielsen wrote.

The clarinet entrance at ⑫ is marked *piano, espress.*, but the clarinet should take the dynamic level from the horn solo before ⑫. Rosengren says this might mean the clarinet needs to enter at *pianissimo* or softer. Between ⑫ and ⑬ there are many Oxenvad breath markings Rosengren interpreters to mean a lift, pause, or breath, but the majority of the markings he does not play at all. In this section Rosengren pays close attention to the articulations and the internal phrase markings. There are a few accents that are easy to gloss over because they are within a slur, but Rosengren plays every one.

Four measures after ⑫ there is an Oxenvad breath but Rosengren does not take it. Instead he takes a breath five measures after ⑫ and nine measures after ⑫. He does not take the marked breaths seven and five measures before ⑬, but he takes a breath four measures before ⑫ where marked. In this section Rosengren uses rubato but he does not stretch the tempo too much or the tempo will drag. Two measures before ⑬ he *crescendos* enough to play the low notes fully, then *diminuendos* to *pianissimo* at ⑬. Rosengren adds a tenuto on the low F-sharp one measure before ⑬, allowing for the *rallentando*. The *rallentando* should start on the last beat before ⑬. At ⑬ Rosengren takes a breath between the D and E as marked, but he does not breathe two measures after ⑬. He keeps the dynamic soft until the *crescendo* on beat three, three measures after ⑬. Four measures after ⑬ Rosengren plays the *forte* loudly but not forcefully loud. Instead, he makes the clarinet sound

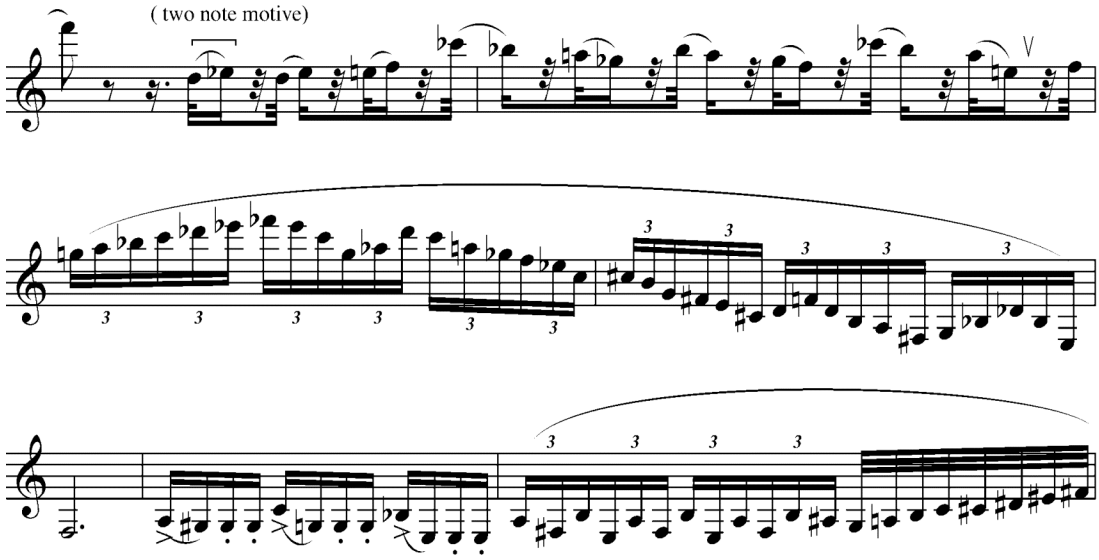
full at a loud dynamic. Four measures after ⑬ Rosengren takes a breath as marked, then adds tenuto markings to the eighth-notes directly after. Three measures before ⑭ the measure is marked *molto dim. tranquillo* but Rosengren waits into beat three to *diminuendo*. The *diminuendo* needs to reach a *piano* dynamic by beat one, two measures before ⑭. Rosengren stays soft for the next two measures to merge the phrase into the orchestra (see fig. 4.25).

Figure 4.25 ⑫ to ⑭ with Rosengren's breath, dynamic, and phrase markings



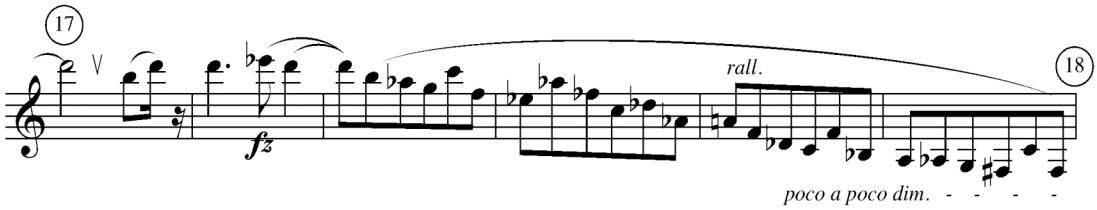
The musical material at ⑭ should sound contrasting compared to the phrase directly before. Between ⑭ and ⑱ the snare drum line is important in creating some of these contrasts. Nielsen did not write the *Concerto* for the modern snare drum and Rosengren says that the modern snare drums are much louder than the snare drum Nielsen intended to be used in the piece. It is especially important to keep in mind the dynamic level of the snare drum when a clarinetist performs the *Concerto* with the piano reduction. According to Rosengren, when playing the *Concerto* with the piano reduction, the clarinetist and the percussionist must play as if they are performing with an orchestra, and the pianist needs to play full and orchestral. When the pianist plays in an orchestral manner it is easier for all the players' parts to integrate with each other. Rosengren makes sure the clarinet line and snare drum line fit together, with the clarinet playing authoritatively with precise rhythm. Five measures after ⑯ Rosengren plays the second note, short or clipped in the two-note motives. Rosengren places a slight accent on beats one, two, and three, three measures before ⑰. According to his interpretation these accents should not sound like accents, but should just add weight to the beats (see fig. 4.26).

Figure 4.26 Five measures after ⑯ with Rosengren's markings



From this point until ⑱ Rosengren plays the rhythm as marked. Unlike Verdehr, Rosengren does not stretch the rhythm between measures two and three after ⑰ and he starts the *rallentando poco a poco diminuendo* where marked, two measures before ⑱, *diminuendoing* to silence (see fig. 4.26).

Figure 4.27 ⑰ to ⑱



Seven measures before ⑲ Rosengren plays the clarinet entrance as softly as possible, and he plays the contour of the phrases very expressively. Three measures before ⑲ Rosengren adds a *crescendo* throughout the entire measure until beat two in the next measure, which is two measures ⑲. Rosengren takes his time between

the fermata and the two measures after ⑲ and then *rallentandos* three and four measures after ⑲. At the *a tempo* before ⑳ he starts as softly as possible, then *crescendos* through the high D three measures before ⑳, then *diminuendos* and *rallentandos* to *pianississimo* at ⑳

Section III

Section III (⑳ continuing to the *Allegro vivace* eight measures before ㉞), according to Rosengren, is all about the drama between the contrasting sections. Every phrase should be played lyrically, not aggressively and the shape of each phrase should contour the notes. All tempos should be as written and ⑳ and ㉑ should be played with the eighth-note pulse rather than a quarter- or dotted quarter-note pulse.

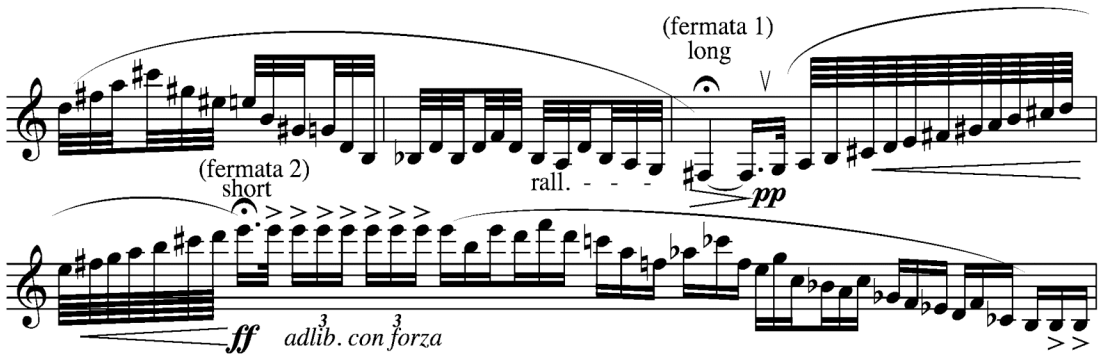
At ⑳ the tempo is marked quarter note equals 144 and should be played at this tempo. Rosengren feels this section in three rather than in one. The beginning of Section III should not feel fast; rather it should have a relaxed feel. Eight measures after ㉑ Rosengren plays the trill *forte,* then *diminuendos* to place the G-sharp in the next measure without an accent. There is a *crescendo* marked two measures ㉒, but Rosengren starts the crescendo six measures before ㉒. He does not make the *crescendo* drastically louder but plays each motive slightly louder than the one before. Rosengren said some performers have a tendency to *diminuendo* two measures before ㉒, but the dynamic needs to stay *fortissimo* for the next two measures.

The new tempo at ㉓ should be played eighth-note circa 166 as marked. This section should sound fluid and expressive throughout. Rosengren takes advantage of the dotted notes to add expression by slightly *crescendoing* to the next note. The overall dynamic level from ㉓ to ㉕ should be played around *mezzo piano* or *mezzo forte.* Six measures before ㉕ the clarinet holds an F-sharp for the entire measure. Rosengren plays the note a little softer than the measure before to allow the orchestra to be heard. In the measures before ㉕ he slows down on the last three notes.

Second Cadenza

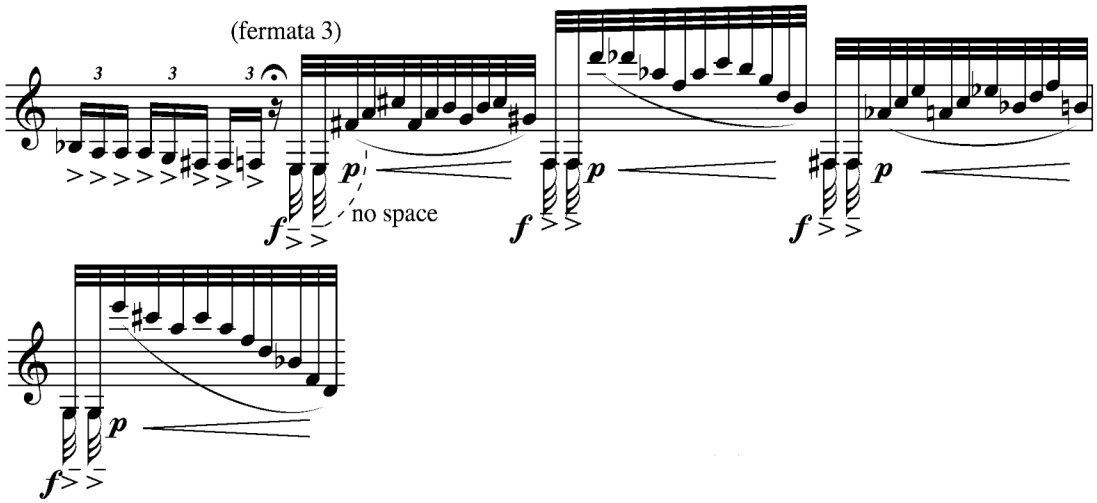
The second cadenza starts on the fermata after ㉜, and before reaching the fermata Rosengren slows down on the three notes before. On the fermata, he *diminuendos* to *pianissimo,* and pauses before going on. After the first fermata, Rosengren *crescendos* as fast as possible to *fortissimo,* then holds the second fermata for less time than the first fermata (see fig. 4.28).

Figure 4.28 Seven measures after ㉜



After the third fermata, Rosengren adds some length to the accented low notes but he does not pause between the accented notes and the rest of the figure. Rosengren plays this entire section loud and full. He plays the accented notes *forte* then plays the rest of the notes in the figure *piano,* crescendoing to the end of the figure leading to the next accented notes (see fig. 4.29).

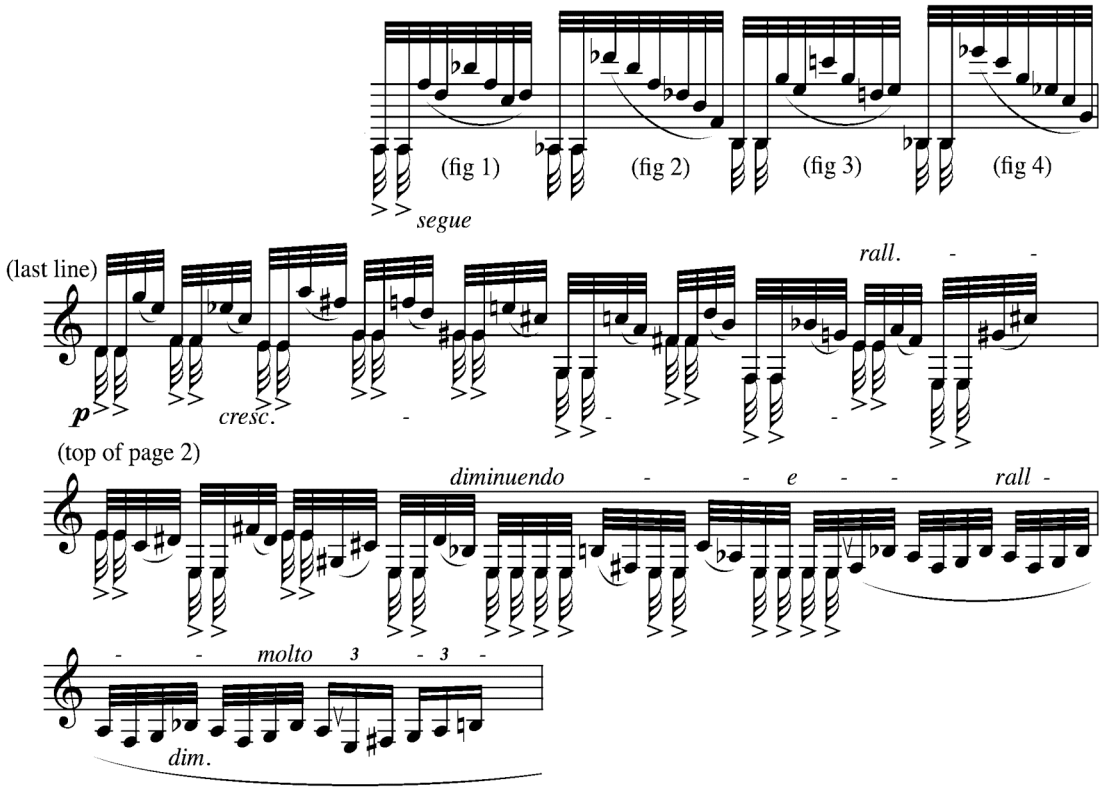
Figure 4.29 Second line of the second cadenza



Rosengren advises that performers be aware that Nielsen did not write any accents on the lower notes after the *segue* marking. Rosengren follows Nielsen's articulations but Rosengren rallentandos, then pauses on the fourth figure after *segue.*

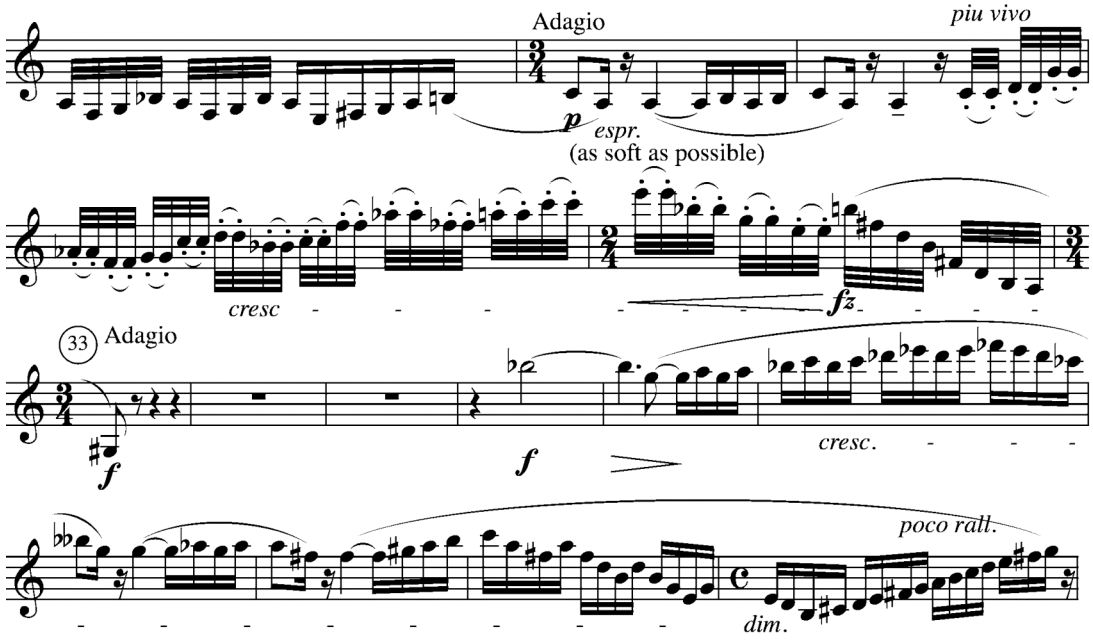
For the last line of the cadenza on page eight of the clarinet part, Rosengren starts *piano* and slowly *crescendos*, then accelerates until the *diminuendo* marking on the next page (see fig. 4.30).

Figure 4.30 *Segue* marking to the *molto dim.* on the next page



The return of the opening theme (①) is presented at the *Adagio* four measures before ㉝. Rosengren plays this theme as softly as possible. There is a marked *crescendo* two measures before ㉝, and at this point Rosengren *crescendos* to *fortissimo* at ㉝. Four measures after ㉝ he starts the *fortissimo* marking around *forte*; then he *crescendos* until the *diminuendo* marking ten measures after ㉝ (see fig. 4.31).

Figure 4.31 One measure before the Adagio to ten measures after ㉝ with Rosengren's marking



Section IV

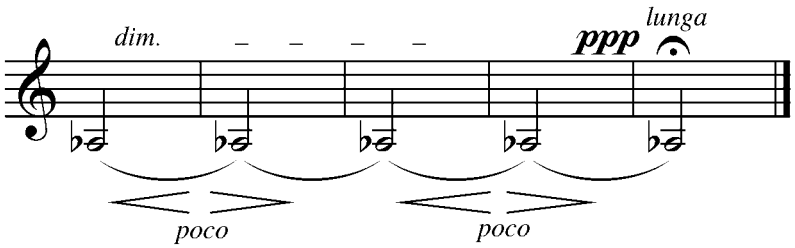
Section IV (*Allegro vivace* eight measures before ㉞, until the end) culminates many of the ideas expressed throughout the *Concerto*. As in all the other sections, the dynamics, articulations, and tempo changes should be kept as Nielsen wrote them, according to Rosengren's interpretation. Many phrases are written with slightly louder or softer dynamics than the phrase before. Rosengren makes sure to play each dynamic as written even it if it is only a slight change. Musically, there is a constant struggle between contrasting sections and Rosengren accentuates these changes through different tone colors.

The fermata before the *Allegro vivace* is marked *pianissimo,* but Rosengren starts the fermata note as softly as possible, then *crescendos* to about *mezzo piano.*

From six measures before ㉞, each phrase has a different dynamic marking and should be played as indicated. Seven measures before ㊱ the clarinet has a tied trill for six measures. Rosengren starts the trill at *piano* and *crescendos* through, ending the crescendo around a *mezzo forte* or *forte*. The subtle changes in dynamics are very important to Rosengren's interpretation because previous melodic material returns with these variations in dynamics.

At ㊸ Rosengren starts to slowly *diminuendo* and *rallentando*. He says the *rallentando* should start slowing down seven measures after circle forty-three ㊸. Rosengren ends the *Concerto calando-poco a poco diminuendo* as written. Nine measures after ㊸ there are three Oxenvad breath markings, but Rosengren only pauses for the last marking, six measures from the end (see fig. 4.32). The two *poco crescendo/diminuendos* five measures from the end need to be heard but Rosengren keeps the dynamic changes within the context of the ending character.

Figure 4.32 Last five measures



Rosengren's is the only Scandinavian interpretation of Nielsen's *Clarinet Concerto* discussed in this document. Even though in some ways his interpretation is like that of Drucker and Verdehr, Rosengren has his own unique style. His overall impression of the *Concerto* is that of a very serious piece of music, which is thoroughly composed, with the composer clearly indicating how to play the music.

Like Drucker, Rosengren plays all the articulations, dynamics, expressions, and tempos as written by Nielsen. What sets Rosengren's interpretation apart is that he tries to play every marking according to Nielsen's interpretation, not his own. Another element that makes his rendition unique is that he does not play the *Concerto* as a twentieth-century composition; rather, he stylistically plays the piece as a neoclassical work with romantic aesthetic and modern technical demands. Rosengren also does not overplay loud dynamics—he keeps the level appropriate for the style. Rosengen's approach to the *Concerto* is very expressive, and stays true to Nielsen's markings, making his recording one of the best.

CHAPTER 5

John Bruce Yeh

Biography

In the last half of the twentieth century, Stanley Drucker's interpretation of the Nielsen *Clarinet Concerto* continued to color other performers' ideas about the piece. One of these was a young man who had not intended to become a professional clarinetist at all. Today that man, John Bruce Yeh is currently serving as acting principal clarinet of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. He is also the director of Chicago Pro Musica, faculty at Roosevelt University's Chicago College for the Performing Arts, and faculty of Midwest Young Artists in Fort Sheridan, Illinois. Yeh joined the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in 1977, having been appointed solo bass clarinet of the orchestra at the age of nineteen by Sir George Solti.[73] After two years with the CSO Yeh was appointed assistant principal and solo E-flat clarinet.[74] He has served as guest principal clarinet for the Philadelphia Orchestra, as well as for the Seoul Philharmonic in Korea.[75] Yeh has also been a prize winner at both the 1982 Munich International Music Competition and the 1985 Naumburg Clarinet Competition in New York.[76]

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[73] John Bruce Yeh, "Meet the Performers," The Chicago Symphony Orchestra, www.cso.org/main.taf?cso.artistid=jyeh&cso.submit.CSOPerfBio=1&erube_fh=cso (accessed February 23, 2009).

[74] Ibid.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Ibid.

Yeh was raised in Los Angeles and attended college at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) in premedical studies. While at UCLA he won the Frank Sinatra Musical Performance Award. In 1975 Yeh started his studies at the Juilliard School of Music. He also attended music school in Aspen, Marlboro, and Tanglewood. Yeh is very passionate about music education. He has served on the faculty of DePaul University for twenty-six years, and in 2004 he joined the faculty at the College for the Performing Arts at Roosevelt University.[77] Yeh has also taught masterclasses at many universities and conservatories across the United States.[78]

As a performer Yeh appears frequently at festivals and on chamber music series around the world. His latest venture is the formation of Birds and Phoenix, an innovative quartet dedicated to the musical exploration of bridging Eastern and Western musical cultures. The quartet consists of two clarinets, an erhu,[79] and a pipa.[80] Their debut performance was in September 2006.[81]

Yeh continues to solo with orchestras. With the Chicago Symphony Orchestra he has performed such concertos as the American premiere of Elliott

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[77] Ibid.

[78] Ibid.

[79] A Chinese two-stringed bowed musical instrument often called the "Chinese violin" or "Chinese two-string fiddle."

[80] A plucked Chinese string instrument often called the Chinese lute.

[81] John Bruce Yeh, "Meet the Performers," The Chicago Symphony Orchestra, www.cso.org/main.taf?cso.artistid=jyeh&cso.submit.CSOPerfBio=1&erube_fh=cso (accessed February 23, 2009).

Carter's *Clarinet Concerto* with Pierre Boulez conducting in 1998, and in 1993 he performed Carl Nielsen's *Clarinet Concerto* with conductor Neeme Järvi.[82] In 2004 Yeh was featured on Leonard Bernstein's *Prelude, Fugue, and Riffs* when the CSO joined forces with the Hubbard Street Dance Company conducted by David Robertson. Yeh has made more than a dozen solo and chamber music recordings that have received worldwide critical acclaim.[83] Among these, Yeh has made two commercial recordings of the Nielsen *Clarinet Concerto*. The first recording is with the Chicago Chamber Orchestra under the direction of Dieter Kober on the Centaur Label, and the other recording is with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra with Neeme Järvi conducting. This recording is on the CSO CD set *Soloists of the Orchestra II: From the Archives, vol. 15*.[84]

Before Yeh ever dreamed of playing with the CSO or making critically acclaimed albums, he took private lessons more as a hobby. In high school he purchased the sheet music for Nielsen's *Clarinet Concerto* while he was studying with clarinetist and UCLA professor, Gary Gray. Yeh did not perform the *Concerto* at this time, but he said, "he played at it (Nielsen's *Clarinet Concerto*) for years,"

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[82] Ibid.

[83] Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations and information in this chapter are taken from: John Bruce Yeh, interview by author, Chicago, Ill., January 21, 2009.

[84] John Bruce Yeh, "Meet the Performers," The Chicago Symphony Orchestra, www.cso.org/main.taf?cso.artistid=jyeh&cso.submit.CSOPerfBio=1&erube_fh=cso (accessed February 23, 2009).

meaning he roughly learned the piece. When Yeh was first learning the *Concerto,* he heard the Stanley Drucker recording. Yeh said for a long time Drucker's recording was really the only recording available, but in 1971 Yeh heard another recording of the *Concerto* by the London Philharmonic Orchestra's principal clarinetist, John McCaw. This made the Drucker, McCaw, and Cahuzac's performances the only commercial available recordings. Yeh said the Cahuzac recording was viewed more as a historical recording rather than a reference recording because of the rough recording quality. When Yeh moved to New York to attend the Juilliard School of Music, he studied the Nielsen *Clarinet Concerto* with teacher Joseph Allard, who was the clarinet, bass clarinet, and saxophone instructor. Although Yeh studied the *Concerto* at this time, it was not in the forefront of his studies. It was not until Yeh's first year with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra that he really learned the *Concerto*. In 1979 Mehli Mehta, the director of the American Youth Symphony, invited Yeh to come back to Los Angeles and perform the Nielsen *Clarinet Concerto* with AYS. An Indian conductor and violinist, Mehta had organized AYS in 1964 and directed the orchestra department at UCLA from 1964 to 1976. He is the father of world-renowned conductors Zubin and Zarin Mehta,[85] and he had taught Yeh everything he needed to know about playing in an orchestra. Yeh was principal of AYS before he attended the Julliard School.

The year 1979, when Yeh performed the Nielsen *Concerto* with the American Youth Symphony, was also the same year Zubin Mehta was the director

[85] Noël Goodwin, "Mehta, Zubin," In *Grove Music Online*, *Oxford Music Online*, www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/18269 (accessed April 1, 2009).

and principal conductor of the New York Philharmonic. This relationship led to the use of Stanley Drucker's recording as an influence on Yeh's performance with the AYS. Yeh's second performance of the *Concerto* was in 1985 with the Chicago Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Dieter Kober. Kober has an interesting connection to the *Concerto* because he was married to Bodil Oxenvad, the daughter of Aage Oxenvad.[86] Yeh had the opportunity to meet Bodil, and she gave him a copy of the manuscript. After the recording with Kober, Yeh performed the *Concerto* many times, by memory, with the Chicago Chamber Orchestra. The recording was released in 1987 on Centaur Records, Inc.. The second commercial recording Yeh made of the *Concerto* was with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, under Neeme Järvi, the third conductor with whom he performed the piece. Järvi knew the piece inside out. He and Yeh performed the *Concerto* in a five-run performance in 1993. Yeh's next performance of the *Concerto* was with the South Bend Symphony Orchestra in South Bend Indiana with Maestro Tsung Yeh. Most recently, Yeh performed the Nielsen *Concerto* with the Roosevelt University Symphony Orchestra with conductor Stephen Squires.

Yeh describes the Nielsen *Concerto* as being "dramatic and bittersweet, but at the same time manic-depressive." Yeh said this description characterized the manner of Oxenvad, who was manic-depressive, and since the *Concerto* was written for him, it seems to fit. The dramatic range thus relates to this type of personality. Knowing this historical background about the *Concerto* and for whom it was written is very important. Yeh said since the *Concerto* was written for Oxenvad and he gave

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[86] The clarinetist Nielsen wrote the *Concerto* for.

the premiere performance, it is pertinent to really understand Oxenvad's personality to truly understand the *Concerto*. Yeh describes the *Concerto* as a work that is all inclusive of Nielsen as a composer during the late period in his life. Historically, this piece was written between the two world wars, and Yeh thinks Nielsen's wartime state of mind might have played a part in describing the influential manner of the work. "Not only that," Yeh added, "but Nielsen's *Fifth Symphony* also foreshadows the *Concerto*." These aspects in the *Concerto* are what make the work unique. All these aspects play an important part in the *Concerto.* Yeh partially views the *Concerto* as a programmatic piece, rather than a work that does not follow any kind of storyline. The influences of Oxenvad's personality, the world context at the time the piece was written, and the *Fifth Symphony* foreshadowing the *Concerto* color his performance of the piece.

Section I

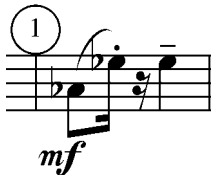
If Nielsen's *Concerto* can be considered a characterization of Oxenvad's manner, Yeh views Section I (the beginning until the *Poco Adagio* fourteen measures after ⑪) as descriptive of that manner. Contrast is a crucial element because it depicts the manic and depressive sides of Oxenvad's nature. As part of his attention to contrast, Yeh distinguishes between two- and three-note thematic cells or motives. Many of the cells return throughout the *Concerto*, with the driving force behind them being the opening thematic cell at ①.[87] The pace of the snare drum acts as a momentous force throughout the piece. Like Drucker, Verdehr, and

[87] The first clarinet entrance of the *Concerto.*

Rosengren, Yeh views much of the clarinet and snare duet material as a dialog rather than a solo clarinet with snare drum accompaniment.

The thematic cell that drives the *Concerto* is first heard in the basses and cellos, then stated by the upper strings, and finally in the clarinet part at ① (see fig. 5.1). This thematic idea reappears throughout the entire work. The theme is sometimes presented in its original form or in inversions.

Figure 5.1 Thematic cell



Yeh says this thematic cell needs to be played "bounce-like," with the clarinetist thinking of a jolly man bouncing as much as he can. "One might describe emphasizing beat two as kicking the mud off their boots," he said. This analogy means to put extra weight on the second beat. Within the opening clarinet phrase that starts at ①, Yeh says the manic aspects already come to fruition seven measures after ①. In this measure, the orchestra's entrance is characterized by a persistent driving force that does not fit the feel of the "bounce-like" opening. Yeh describes this measure as the first manic occurrence. Like Drucker, Verdehr, and Rosengren, Yeh does not breathe where indicated five before ②. Instead, he takes a breath between the eighth note E and the thirty-second note F two measures before ② (see fig. 5.2). To ensure not taking a breath when marked, Yeh takes a breath between the quarter note and eighth note seven measures after ① (see fig. 5.3).

Figure 5.2 Six measures before ②

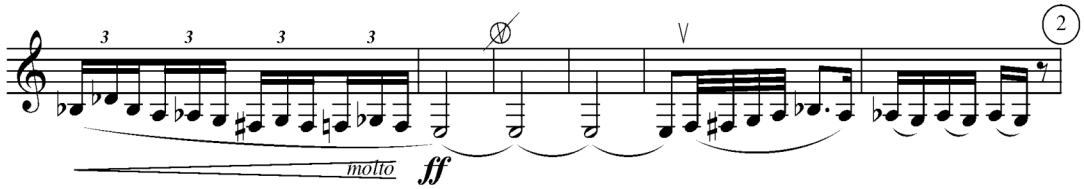
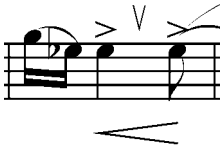


Figure 5.3 Seven measures after ①



Yeh says the next phrase, seven measures after ②, is also an important thematic cell because it returns throughout the *Concerto* (see fig. 5.4). Yeh plays all the high D's with the open D fingering (see fig. 5.5 and 5.6).

Figure 5.4 Second thematic cell, seven measures after ②

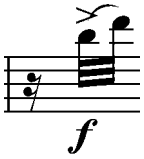


Figure 5.5 Seven measures after ②

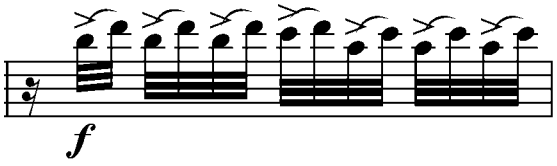


Figure 5.6 Open D fingering



By using the open D fingering Yeh says the clarinetist can play the unaccented notes lighter. The thematic cell is heard with different pitches ten and eleven measures after ② (see fig. 5.7) and seven measures before ③ (see fig. 5.8).

In the score, the thematic cell seven measures before ③ is marked without accents, but Yeh adds weighted accents to the low E's (see fig. 5.9). Since contrast is an important factor in the *Concerto*, Yeh again distinguishes between the two-note and three-note cells. Adding accents to the two-note cells seven measures before ③, allows for contrasts between the three-note cells that follow.

Figure 5.7 Ten measures after ②

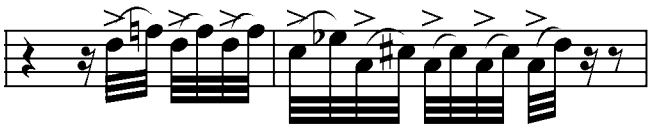


Figure 5.8 Seven measures before ③

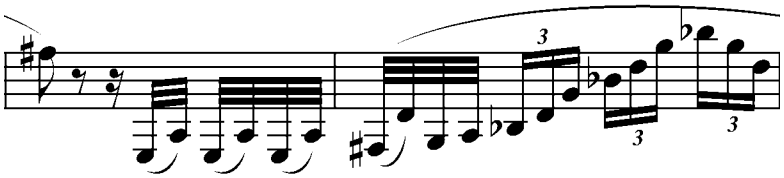
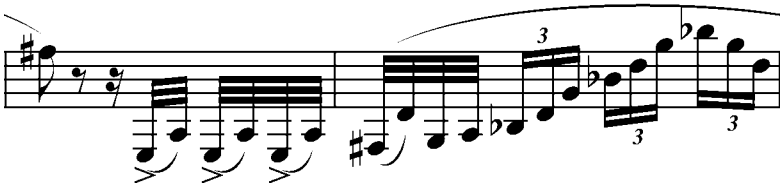
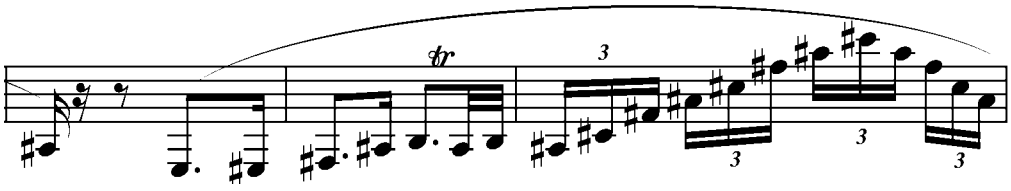


Figure 5.9 Seven measures before ③ with accents added by Yeh



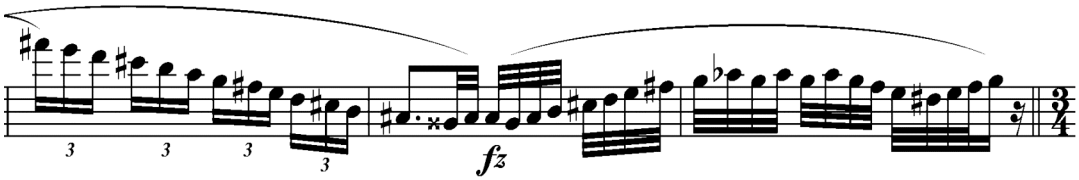
Three measures before ③ the performer must show contrast between the two-note and three-note cells, but in this phrase the two-note cell is expanded. Since the two-note cells are written with slur marks, Yeh does not use accents to increase emphasis, but he uses the trill to build energy leading into the three-note cells (see fig. 5.10).

Figure 5.10 Three measures before ③



Seven and eight measures after ③ Yeh outlines the cell division between the three-note and four-note cells by pulsing the eighth-note beat (see fig. 5.11).

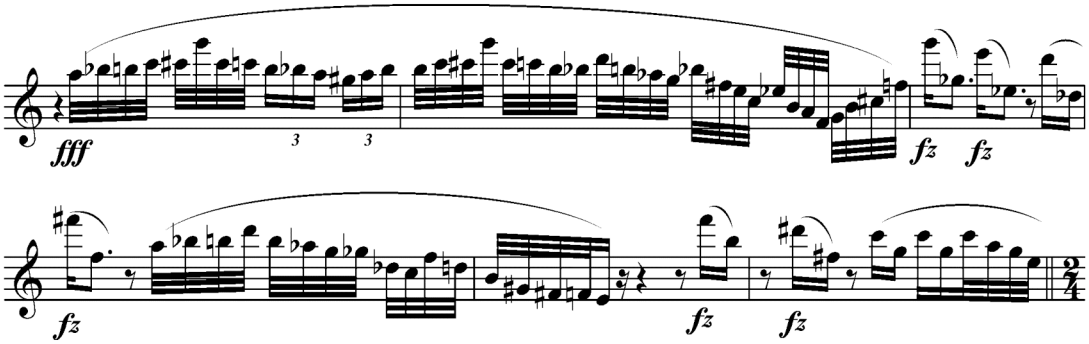
Figure 5.11 Seven measures after ③



Like Drucker, Verdehr, and Rosengren, Yeh views the snare drum part as an essential aspect of the *Concerto*. He believes the snare part should be present even when playing the *Concerto* with the piano reduction. He says it is stated in the piano reduction that the snare drum part needs to be present, even if that means the piano player plays the snare drum rhythm on the piano lid. In the *Concerto*, the first duet between the snare drum and the clarinet appears at seven measures before ④. It must be audible to the audience that the snare drum enters on beat one and the clarinet enters on beat two, six measures before ③. Through this portion of the music, Yeh continues to distinguish between the divisions of different rhythmic cells. Six measures before ④ he clearly plays the four-note and three-note motives rhythmically differently by pulsing the first note of each triple grouping. Four measures before ④ the snare part is heard between the two-note clarinet cells,

almost acting like a dialog between the clarinet and the snare. The same idea occurs two measures before ④. Yeh likes to think of the dialog more as a question and answer with the clarinet asking the questions and the snare drum answering. Six measures before ④ the clarinet part is marked *triple forte*. Rather than trying to play at this precise dynamic marking, Yeh plays loudly and fully, while he uses the contour of the notes to display the musical shape. He says the clarinet is also playing relatively high, so the notes will be heard regardless. By playing the contour of the clarinet line, Yeh says one gains the ability to phrase the *sforzando* marked notes at ④. This musical phrasing ideal of playing the contour of a musical line is one of Yeh's general musical philosophies. He never plays two notes in a row at the same dynamic level (see fig. 5.12).

Figure 5.12 Six measures before ④



The *a tempo ma tranquillo* section at ⑤ is drastically different from the musical material before ④ because of its lyrical quality. At the *poco rallentando* two measures before ⑤ the orchestra transforms the music into the new contrasting section. Yeh says some clarinetists opt to start the *poco rallentando* before

indicated, usually starting four measures before ⑤. Yeh does not agree with this idea. He says the tempo should not change drastically at ⑤. The tempo can be a bit slower, but the important change is the feel of the music, not the tempo. Yeh says if the *poco rallentando* is started too early, the only outcome will be a drastically slower tempo at ⑤. Yeh views the tempo at ⑤ as playing on the "backside of the beat" of the established tempo—having a relaxed feeling. To create a feeling of *tranquillo*, Yeh lets the bassoons lead the *espressivo* aspect at ⑤. He says the clarinet part should fit inside their motion, while still being prominent. To create prominence, Yeh makes sure the clarinet sound is clear and pure, while allowing for the intervals in the bassoons to be heard (see fig. 5.13). Yeh uses the side D-flat and left hand B-flat fingerings to create a smoother sound (see fig. 5.14 and 5.15) for the first three measures after ⑤.

Figure 5.13 ⑤ until three measures after

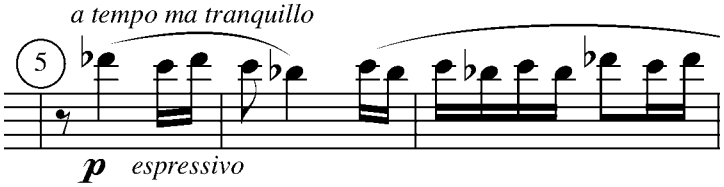


Figure 5.14 Side high D-flat fingering

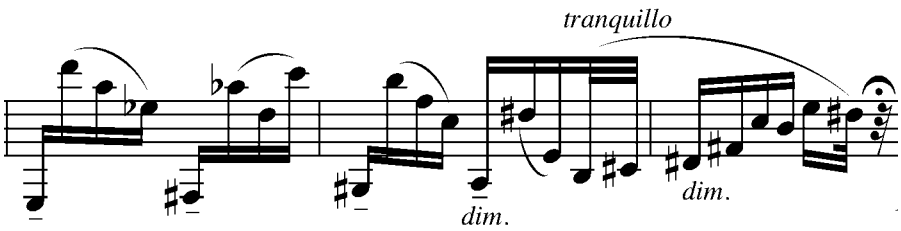


Figure 5.15 Side B-flat fingering



Two measures before ⑥ the orchestra *rallentandos*, but at ⑥ the clarinet needs to play *a tempo* as marked. When the clarinet enters at ⑥ Yeh uses the accented E to surprise the audience and to change the character of the melody line. Four measures after ⑥ Yeh stretches the lower, tenuto-marked notes. Yeh took several lessons with his mentor, Harold Wright[88] who he studied the *Concerto* with. Wright pointed out that the lower notes are not beamed in the same direction as the other sixteenth notes. Rather, the lower notes are by themselves and they should be played as such. When he arrives at the *tranquillo* marking five measures after ⑥, Yeh plays slower, then rallentandos to the fermata (see fig. 5.16).

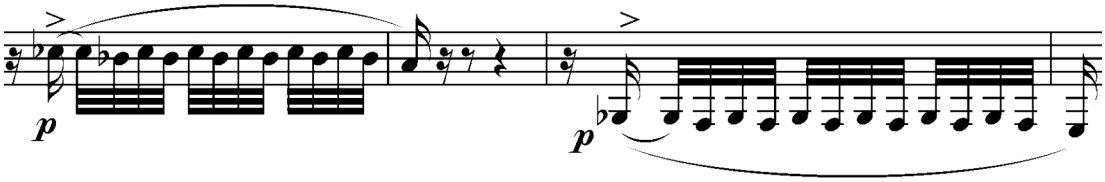
Figure 5.16 Four measures after ⑥



Eight and six measures before ⑦ Yeh plays each measure *piano* (see fig. 5.17). Yeh says keeping the clarinet part very soft allows the orchestra to create a surprise five measures before ⑦ by playing *forte* He describes the soft dynamics as, "sounding like something is smoldering, getting ready to explode." This is a nice moment to let the orchestra direct the dynamic changes rather than the clarinet.

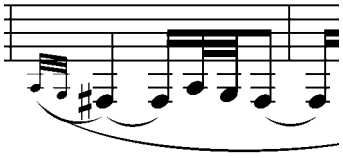
[88] Notated clarinetist and pedagogue who was principal clarinetist of the Boston Symphony from 1970 to 1993.

Figure 5.17 Eight, seven, and six measures before ⑦ with Yeh's dynamic markings



Five measures before the first cadenza is an extremely hard section for the orchestra to play, Yeh said, because in this transition in particular it is very difficult for the string players to find their notes. To his recollection, Yeh said the orchestra part of the Nielsen *Clarinet Concerto* is probably the most difficult compared to other clarinet concertos. Because of the difficulty, he said one should not expect the orchestra to be able to follow the soloist one hundred percent of the time. Instead, he suggests the clarinetist check every downbeat to make sure everything is lined up with the accompaniment. Yeh mentioned that some conductors he has worked with have had great success conducting seven measures after ⑥ until the first cadenza in eight rather than in four. This helps keep things together after ⑦, especially when the phasing become asymmetrical and legato. Five measures before the first cadenza Yeh plays the grace notes before the beat rather than on the beat (see fig. 5.18). Yeh plays these measures as written, and if done correctly, he says the clarinet perfectly melts into the first cadenza.

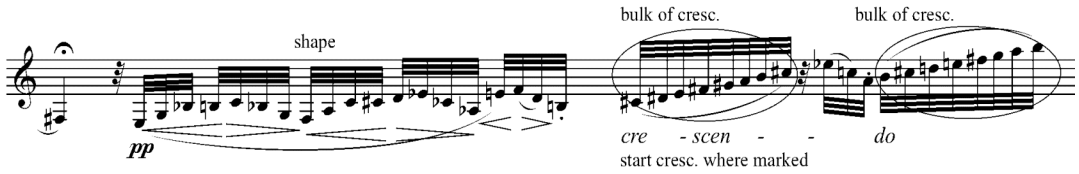
Figure 5.18 Five measures before the first cadenza or twelve measures after ⑦



First Cadenza

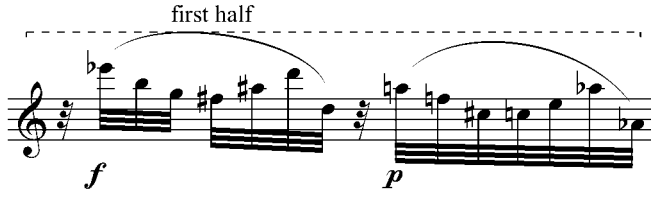
Yeh does not start to *crescendo* and *accelerando* directly at the beginning of the cadenza. He waits to *crescendo* until it is marked in the music, which is about halfway through the first line. When Yeh starts to *crescendo*, he also gradually starts to *accelerando* to the second line of the cadenza, even though it is not marked in the music. Yeh outlines the contour of the music to add expression and excitement. In figure 5.19 I have circled the motives where most of the *crescendo* and *accelerando* should happen, according to Yeh, and I have added *crescendos* and *diminuendos* showing the contour of the first line of the cadenza.

Figure 5.19 First line of the first cadenza



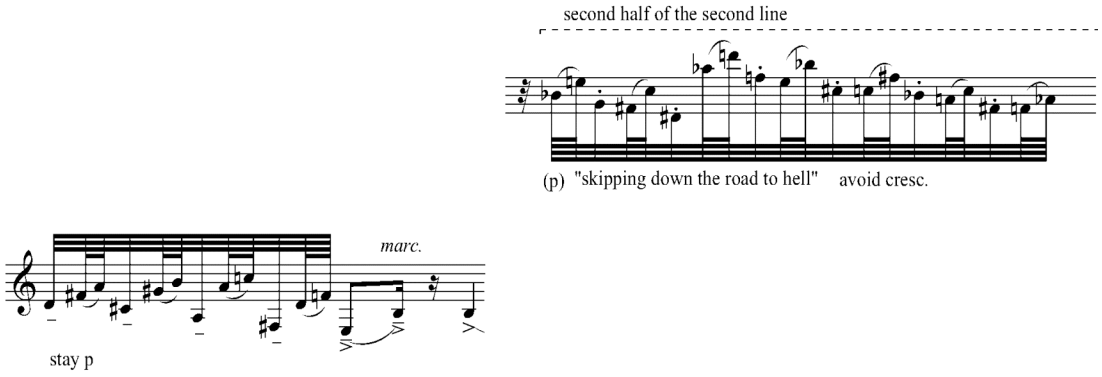
The first half of the second line of the cadenza Yeh does not take drastically out of tempo, but he does play the dynamics that are marked (see fig. 5.20).

Figure 5.20 First half of the second line of the first cadenza



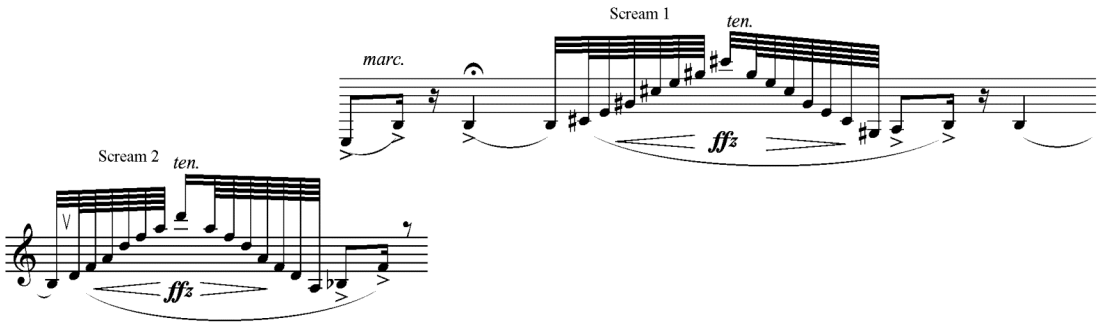
The second half of the second line of the cadenza, Yeh describes as sounding like a person, “skipping down the road to hell.” Then as the phrase continues, he makes it change in character to sound like the person is descending into the depths of hell. To create this atmosphere, Yeh avoids *crescendoing* through the second half of the second line until directly before the *marcato* marking in the third line of the cadenza. If he *crescendos* at all before the *marcato* marking, it is very subtle. Yeh does not view this as a *crescendo*, but as a broadening of the lower notes. By resisting to *crescendo*, the *molto fortissimo sforzando* marking on the third line is more effective (see fig. 5.21).

Figure 5.21 Second half of the first line of the first cadenza



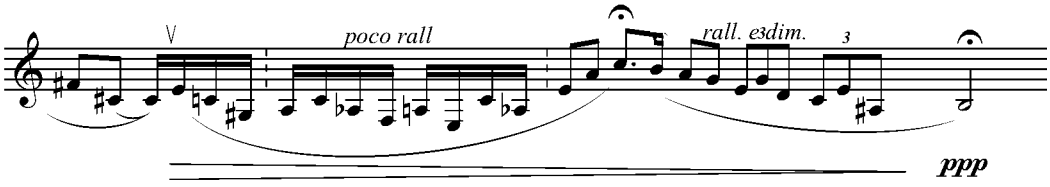
For full effect, Yeh plays everything *piano* other than the *molto fortissimo sforzando* figures. Yeh likes to call the *molto fortissimo sforzando* figures “screams,” as they should catch the audience by surprise. The second “scream” or *molto fortissimo sforzando* figure should be phrased the same as the figure before (see fig. 5.22).

Figure 5.22 Second half of the third line and the beginning of the fourth line of the first cadenza



Yeh plays the *quasi rallentando* phrase in the fourth line of the cadenza as if it is melting away by *diminuendoing* to *pianissimo*. Yeh says that the *passionato fortissimos* in the fifth line of the cadenza should sound like bursts of energy that completely change the feel, generating increasing intensity until the seventh line of the cadenza. Yeh plays the seventh line of the cadenza as marked. The *molto rallentando diminuendo* Yeh says must be played in a *parlando* or speaking style (see fig. 5.23).

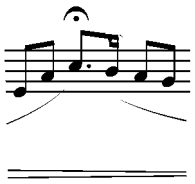
Figure 5.23 Last line of the first cadenza



The quarter note equals seventy-two tempo marking, after the fermata in the seventh line of the cadenza, should sound like a nostalgic version of the *grazioso* section, seven measures after ⑥. On the last line, or ninth line, of the cadenza there are two eighth notes leading to the first fermata. These two notes Yeh said should

resemble a ray of sunshine mixed in with the haunting sounds of the rest of the cadenza (see fig. 5.24). From this point to the end of the first cadenza, the clarinet should melt into *pianississimo*. Yeh said this is the first time Nielsen writes a *pianississimo* dynamic marking, so he makes sure to play as softly as possible.

Figure 5.24 First fermata on the last line of the first cadenza



The *Tempo I* after the cadenza should sound familiar because it is returning material from the opening of the *Concerto*, but Yeh says that this time the melody sounds different—almost having a diabolic quality. The *a poco accelerando* nine measures before ⑨ is hard to pace. Yeh says here the clarinetist must follow the conductor, or the orchestra will not be with the soloist. Yeh also suggests, when memorizing this section, clarinetists should divide the music into thematic cells rather than a long melodic line because it is hard to stay with the orchestra (see fig. 5.25). Yeh plays all the articulations that Nielsen wrote between the *Più allegro* at ⑨ and ⑪. Between ⑩ and ⑪ there is one thirty-second rest four measures after ⑩. Yeh views the rest as a breath marking, and since Yeh finds it unnecessary to breathe he inserts a G-sharp in its place (see fig. 5.26).

Figure 5.25 Ten measures before ⑨

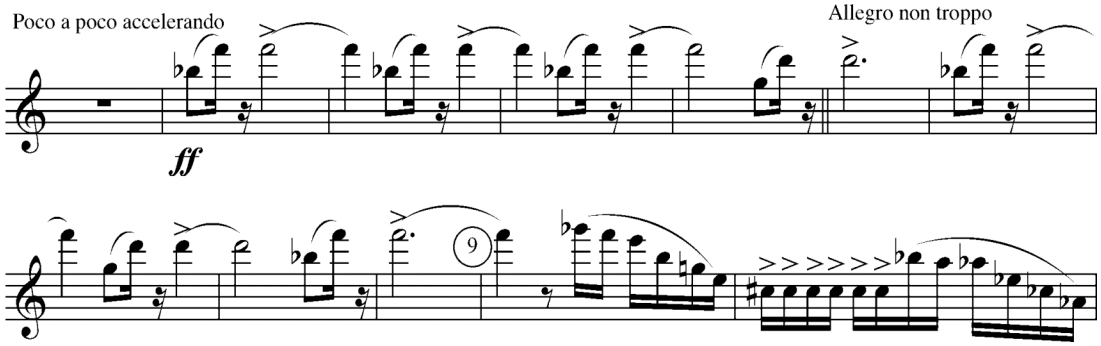
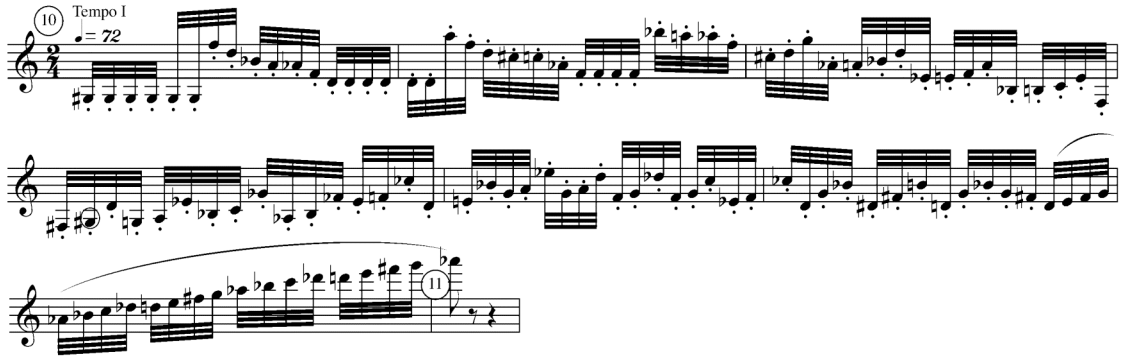


Figure 5.26 ⑩ to ⑪

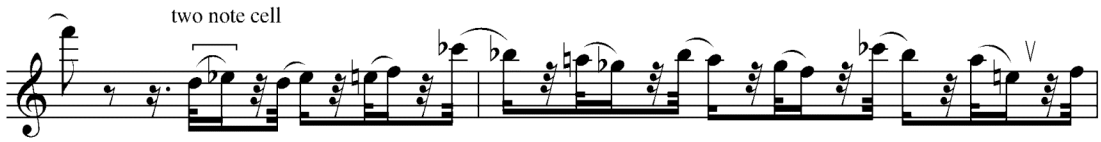


Section II

If Section I of the *Clarinet Concerto* highlights contrast, Section II (the *Poco Adagio* fourteen measures after ⑪ through ⑳) is "the very expressive, depressive" part of the piece, according to Yeh. "It is almost the deep depressive part of the *Concerto*," he added. The section should be played with very free rubato. Yeh makes sure the phrasing with the strings, particularly the violas, is organic. He generally takes most of the suggested breath markings between ⑫ and ⑱.

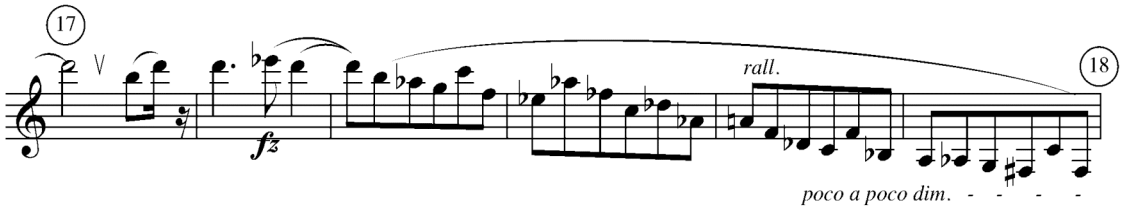
Yeh plays section ⑫ to ⑭ very expressively, using rubato and dynamic contour to add expression. To Yeh, the *Più mosso* at ⑭ sounds like Nielsen's *Fifth Symphony* because many of the musical gestures sound like references to wartime. Here, the rhythmic material is reminiscent of a machine gun. When the clarinet enters five measures after ⑭ in the *molto espressivo* section, Yeh plays with an expressive intensity reflecting doom. Yeh said he once heard someone describe this section as the squeaking of the rails on a streetcar. Yeh thinks of the two-note note thematic cells five measures after ⑯ more like grace notes, rather than playing the precise rhythm. He plays the second note of the cell very short, as if it has a staccato marking (see fig. 5.27).

Figure 5.27 Five measures after ⑯



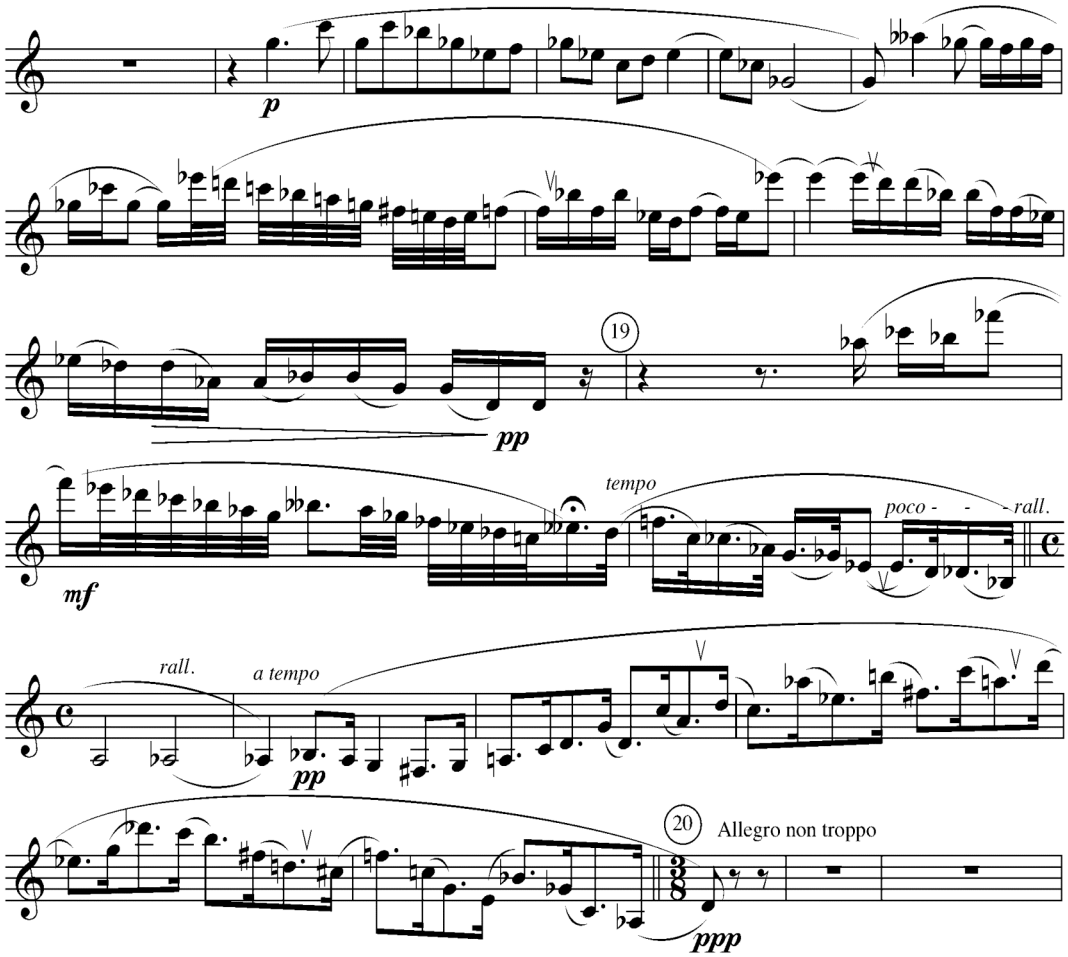
Four measures before ⑰ Yeh says the dotted half note should be played softly enough to allow the snare drum to come through. Three measures before ⑰ continuing to ⑰ Yeh expects the snare to stay out of the way. Like the duet section seven measures before ④, Yeh views the section starting five measures after ⑯ as a dialog between the clarinet and snare drum. Between ⑰ and ⑱ the clarinet part is unaccompanied, allowing Yeh the liberty to play the *poco a poco diminuendo rallentando* with lots of rubato. He says ⑰ to ⑱ (see fig. 5.28) should sound like, "an exhausted sigh of relief." When the basses enter after ⑱, the orchestra creates a desolate atmosphere that the clarinet expands on five measures after ⑱.

Figure 5.28 ⑰ to ⑱



Nine measures before ⑲ Yeh says is the most difficult section to coordinate because of the amount of rubato needed, "to play it right." Four measures before ⑲ he uses lots of rubato that leads into two measures before ⑲. From this point he "floats down" to the *pianissimo* the measure before ⑲. At the *a tempo* five measures before ⑳ Yeh takes the opportunity to add contrast and rubato to mold the "happy go lucky" character, but six measures before ⑳ he says, that "the low woodwinds snap you back into the reality of doom." Five measures before ⑳ Yeh phrases the melody as if it is a "flight of fancy." Yeh describes the nature of this section as a place where "the melody gives you hope that it is possible to bring yourself out of the desperate depression that is created throughout the piece" (see fig. 5.29).

Figure 5.29 Ten measures before ⑲ to the *Allegro non troppo*



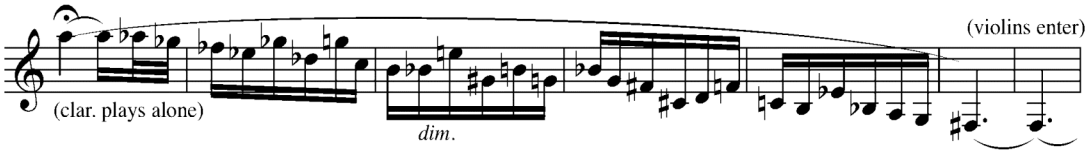
Section III

The contrast and emotion build up in the first sections of the Nielsen *Clarinet Concerto* intertwine further in Section III of the piece. Yeh describes the waltz portion that begins Section III (⑳ continuing to the *Allegro vivace* eight measures before ㉞) as "uplifting, giving the hope of happiness, that at the same time has a dark gloomy undertone." All of the melodic material in this section should sound like a "physiological rollercoaster," according to Yeh. He says that to

fully understand the *Concerto*, "You must physiologically ride the rollercoaster on the *Concerto*–bring out all the twists and turns."

In the beginning of Section III, or "the waltz," Yeh says the clarinet needs to sound happily until six measures before ⑳ "when the manic side of the piece comes out, building intensity." To set up the clarinet entrance thirteen measures after ㉒ Yeh asks the basses to bring out every eighth-note beat twelve measures after ㉒. Nine measures before ㉓ Yeh says the clarinet cannot drastically slow down because the line is shared line with the violins when they enter four measures before ㉓, but the line should have a relaxed feel (see fig. 5.30).

Figure 5.30 Nine measures before ㉓



At ㉓ Yeh plays with a floating quality. He does not push the tempo, but he does let the tempo roll ahead naturally. This is one of Yeh's musical interpretations—"When the musical line is descending, let the tempo naturally roll down," he said. By doing so, he avoids having a metronomic feel and also lets a natural "push and pull" be created.

At ㉔ Yeh said the violins need to play highly expressively to maintain the intensity established by the clarinet. From ㉔ through ㉘ Yeh phrases the melodic intensity by playing the melodic contour. Four measures before ㉔, marked *fluente,* Yeh does not speed up the tempo, but he does push ahead.

One of Yeh's interpretations of the Nielsen *Concerto,* and other clarinet pieces, is to use color changes to add expression and drama since the clarinet can only play one note at a time. Throughout this entire section, he uses color changes as a way to bring excitement. He says the clarinet line between ㉕ and ㉖ is a prime example of a place to do this. Yeh brings out the breath accents one measure before ㉖, then he changes the color of the clarinet line to match the character of the orchestra by resembling the sound of a violin using a fast bow.

Eight measures before ㉗ Yeh describes the character of the passage as "dark and heavy to thick and gauzy." Here, Yeh softly plays the clarinet's long held notes to allow the snare drum to be in the forefront. Two measures before ㉘ Yeh plays the D with the open D fingering (see fig. 5.31). When the bassoon enters six measures after ㉙, Yeh describes this section as "sounding like a dumpy clown." When the clarinet enters at ㉚ Yeh likes to imitate the bassoon solo that came before. Since this melody is first presented in the bassoon part, the clarinetist plays the melody stylistically the same. Most notes between ㉚ and ㉛ in the clarinet part have a tenuto marking. Yeh interprets the tenuto markings to mean, play each note with full value and plenty of shape. The transition into ㉜ should be led by the bassoon. Yeh says it really helps to hear the bassoon on the three sixteenth notes before ㉜ (see fig. 5.32).

Figure 5.31 Open D fingering (overblown G)

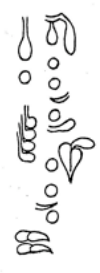
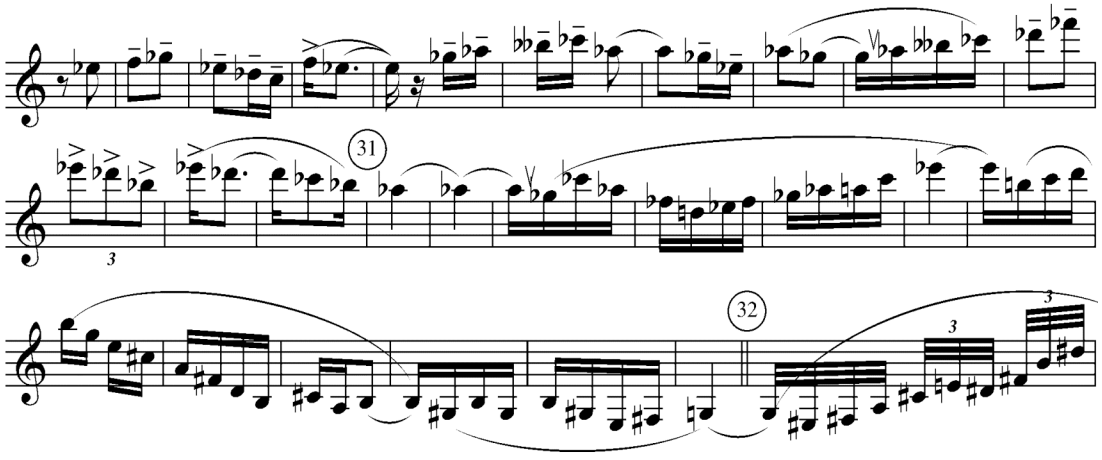


Figure 5.32 ㉚ to ㉜



At ㉜ it is again very difficult to line up the strings, snare drum, and the solo clarinet part, so Yeh suggests subdividing. Between ㉜ and the first fermata, Yeh plays many open-fingered notes. He plays the high D, C-sharp, and E as such (see figs. 5.33, 5.34, and 5.35). By playing these notes with open fingerings, the soloist is able to keep the clarinet line smooth, he said, because there are no partial or register changes.

Figure 5.33 Open high D fingering



Figure 5.34 Open C-sharp fingering



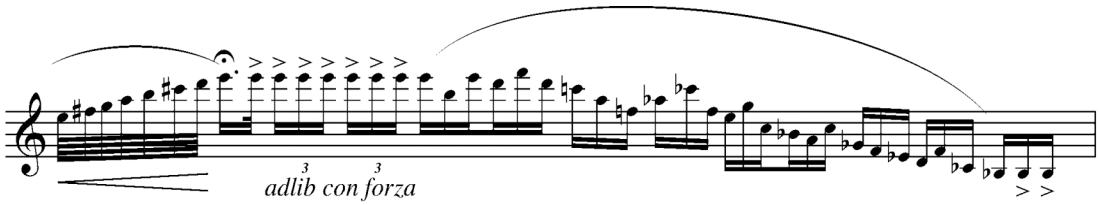
Figure 5.35 Open E fingering



Second Cadenza

The first fermata after ㉜ is the start of the second cadenza. By this point in the *Concerto,* Yeh says the clarinet should sound, "agitated beyond belief," especially on the repeated E's after the second fermata (see fig. 5.36).

Figure 5.36 Second fermata with "agitated" repeated E's



After the second fermata, Yeh says "you can distort the rhythm." Harold Wright told Yeh, that the low accented notes do not need to be played with the exact

rhythm as notated. After the *segue* marking on the second to last line of the second cadenza, Yeh plays the rhythm more strictly. He takes a breath at the end of the second to last line of the cadenza (see fig. 5.37). From the last line of the cadenza on page eight of the clarinet part, Yeh pushes ahead, leading to the *Adagio* marking four measures before ㉝, but about halfway through the first line of the cadenza on page nine of the clarinet part, the *diminuendo rallentando* marking should be used to create a feeling of exhaustion. Two measures before ㉝ there is a controversy over whether to play the last two A-flats as A-naturals. Yeh chooses to play two A-naturals instead of the printed A-flats (see fig. 5.38).

Figure 5.37 Third line of the second cadenza

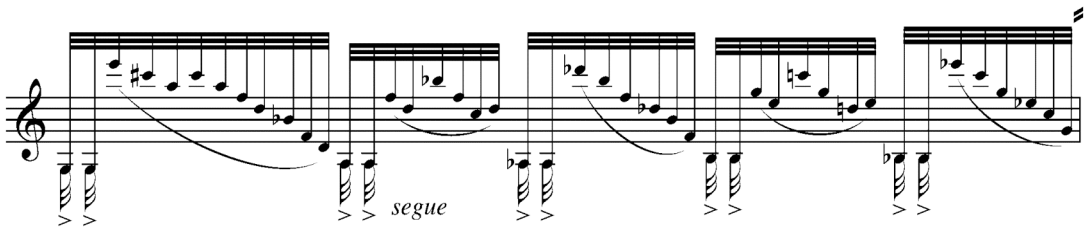
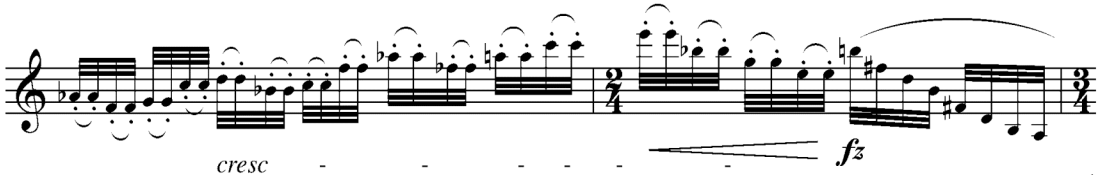


Figure 5.38 Two measures before ㉝



From the *più vivo* marking to the *Adagio* marking at ㉝ Yeh plays very light and lively while creating an agile sound. When the clarinet enters four measures after ㉝, Yeh said, "The clarinet should sound heavier, like when violins use pressure on the bow while pulling slowly."

Section IV

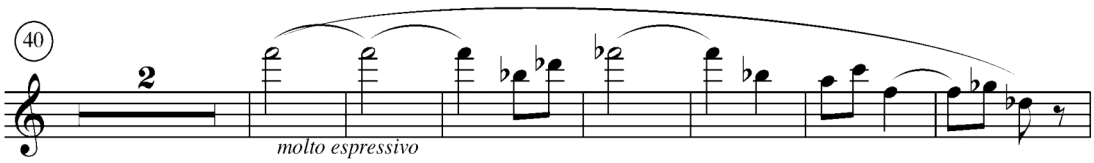
Section IV (*Allegro vivace* eight measures before ㉞ until the end) of Nielsen's *Clarinet Concerto* continues a sense of extreme contrasts. The character of this section should be that of a feeling of fun and excitement that at any time could change to war. Glimpses of happiness are interjected by heavy, dark qualities. Stylistically, the four transition melodies all need to be played smoothly because the melodic lines are written with slur markings. Yeh uses a few nontraditional fingerings to ensure smoothness in the section. As the ending of the *Concerto* unfolds, the color of the clarinet should get darker to match the mood.

The *Allegro vivace* eight measures before ㉞ should sound "happy and fun," according to Yeh. At ㉟ the clarinet line should also have a happy, fun quality, but the line changes to "dark and heavy," Yeh said. The feelings of tension that are created at ㉟ should die away by ㊲. At ㊳ Yeh says the melodic material returns and the tone color should change, adding dark expression from ㊳ to the end of the *Concerto*. Yeh says the climatic tension continues to build until three measures after ㊵. He makes the clarinet sound like a "scream,"[89] without distorting the sound. The melodic material at ㊶ is happy, relaxed, and expressive, making the melody before

[89] When Yeh says "scream: three measures after ㊵ he means to play over expressively without distorting the sound.

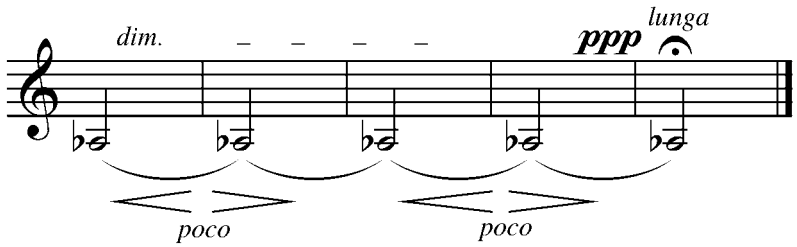
almost seem like "it was just a dream," Yeh said, "but then reality comes crashing in again" (see fig. 5.39).

Figure 5.39 ㊵ to nine measures after



The *poco meno* at ㊸ should sound very "heavy and thick," and Yeh outlines the contour of the music, making the clarinet sound like it is gradually expiring. Yeh says this ensures not to overplay the *poco crescendo/diminuendo* markings five measures from the end of the *Concerto*. He says the ending should sound like "a battle between the violins and the clarinet, but then, the clarinet fades away to nothingness" (see fig. 5.40).

Figure 5.40 Last five measures



Yeh described the *Concerto* as "dramatic and bittersweet, but at the same time manic-depressive." With these characteristics, Yeh's interpretation expands on the idea of Nielsen depicting Oxenvad's manner while incorporating the historical time period. Unlike Verdehr, Yeh strongly believes that it is important to know the

historical background in order to best perform the *Concerto*. Not only does Yeh feel the performer needs to know a bit about Nielsen's life and compositional style, he thinks it is also imperative to know of Oxenvad's manic-depressive mental state. The opening thematic cell at ① is the driving force of the entire *Concerto*. The thematic cell at ① expands, showing all the necessary components of the entire piece: contrast, drama, and driving intensity. These three elements are expressed through the *Concerto* by the use of color changes, the construction of different thematic cells, the dialog between the clarinet and snare drum, and emotional expressive phrasing. Yeh's interpretation is very descriptive and emotional, showing all the elements of dramatic bittersweet contrast.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusions of the Various Performance Approaches

This document examined the interpretations of and philosophies about Carl Nielsen's *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra* through interviews with four leading clarinetists. The interpretations of Stanley Drucker, Elsa Ludewig-Verdehr, Håkan Rosengren, and John Bruce Yeh have been a very interesting study, mainly because of their different approaches to the piece rather than their similarities. Each clarinetist has a distinct interpretation that is expressed through melodic contour, phrase structure, organization of sections, stylistic performance practices, form, tempi, rubato, articulations, dynamics, interaction with other instruments, changes in editorial markings, and the general overall style.

While overall each clarinetist views the *Concerto* as extremely original, expressive in nature, and undeniably ranked with Mozart's *Clarinet Concerto* in importance, each performer interprets the Nielsen *Clarinet Concerto* in different ways. Stanley Drucker, who made the first commercially available American recording, describes the *Concerto* as a motivically driven piece that is extremely original in nature through the incorporation of the snare drum as an equal musical line. Elsa Ludewig-Verdehr views the *Concerto* as a piece whose musical and emotional content is expressed through contrasting material that she believes is inherent in the human experience. Håkan Rosengren's significant recording, conducted by Esa-Pekka Salonen, and Rosengren's interpretation of the *Concerto,* reflect their belief that the concerto is a neoclassical work with a romantic aesthetic.

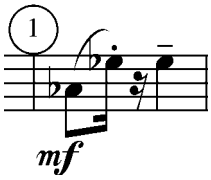
Their performances show it to be a very serious piece composed with embedded indications explaining how to interpret the drama of the music. John Bruce Yeh views the *Concerto* as a dramatic, bittersweet work with manic-depressive undertones expressed through contrast, drama, and driving intensity.

To best incorporate these overall views into their performances of the *Concerto*, Drucker, Rosengren, and Yeh feel it is imperative to know some historical background about the piece and Nielsen in general. Rosengren and Yeh find it important to not only know background information about Nielsen, but more importantly, the nature of Aage Oxenvad. Nielsen wrote the *Concerto* for Danish clarinetist Oxenvad, interweaving his personality into the piece. Yeh says the *Concerto* is a "picture of Oxenvad, showing his manic-depressive nature." Verdehr does not think it is imperative to know any historical background of the piece because her interpretation of the work is through her own experiences that she expresses through Nielsen's composition.

All interviewees agree the opening motive, which reappears throughout the piece in its original state, in inversions, and in quotations, is the driving force of the *Concerto*, but each clarinetist plays the motive differently (see fig. 6.1). Drucker accentuates the interval of the perfect fifth by adding a weighted accent to the eighth note in beat one, then he diminuendos through the rest of the measure while singing through the tenuto quarter note. Verdehr articulates the first eighth note like Drucker, but she clips the sixteenth note that follows the eighth note, then plays the tenuto note with a slight accent. Rosengren interpreters the tenuto marking to be played as a "singing quality accent." He plays the first note firmly, lifting the second

note to correctly articulate the quarter-note E-flat with a singing accent without adding weight. Yeh says the opening motive should be played "bounce-like" by playing the first beat like Drucker, then slightly accenting beat two while playing the quarter note fully.

Figure 6.1 Opening motive



The *Concerto* is unquestionably through-composed, transitioning between different expressive sections. Drucker, Rosengren, and Yeh divide the piece into four sections, while Verdehr views the work in three sections with a coda. The four sections are *Allegretto un poco*, *Poco adagio*, *Allegro non troppo-Adagio*, and *Allegro vivace*. Verdehr's sections are *Allegretto un poco*, *Poco adagio*, and *Allegro non troppo-Adagio* as before, but she views the *Allegro vivace* more as coda material. She also recommends making two cuts in the *Concerto* to keep the forward momentum going. With the cuts, she views the work in three sections that are generally fast-slow-fast.

The melodic contour and phrase structure of the work is played very expressively by all four clarinetists, each playing the macro and micro melodic contour, and giving attention to the snare drum part. Verdehr, Rosengren, and Yeh incorporate crescendos and diminuendos, outlining the contour of every musical phrase with macro and micro phrase structure. They also include rubato where

appropriate. Generally, Drucker elongates the melodic lines, showing less of the micro phrase structures than the others, and without the use of rubato. When it comes to the snare part, all the clarinetists view the snare drum's entrances as important phrase elements. This is because they all agree that the snare drum part is more duet material than accompaniment. Yeh phrases the melodic line with the snare drum as a dialog between the two players. All four clarinetists agree that the snare drum part is an essential element of the piece, and that it needs to be played when performing the *Concerto* with the piano reduction.

While the soloists' approach to the snare drum part is unified, their perspective on other aspects of the piece's phrasing vary. The thirty-second note rest four measures after *Tempo I* at ⑩ (see fig. 6.2), for instance, is phrased differently depending on the player. Drucker does not slow down when approaching the rest, nor does he accelerando after playing it. Verdehr barely slows down to approach the rest, but she takes a quick breath, accelerating back to tempo. Rosengren slows down to approach the rest, then quickly accelerandos back to tempo. Yeh views the rest as a place to take a breath if needed, which he doesn't, so he eliminates the rest altogether by replacing it with a low G-sharp. In another place where the musicians' interpretation varies, the second measures of ⑰, Drucker, Verdehr, and Yeh take the opportunity to stretch the tied high D while Rosengren plays the rhythm exactly as written (see fig. 6.3).

Figure 6.2 ⑩ to ⑪

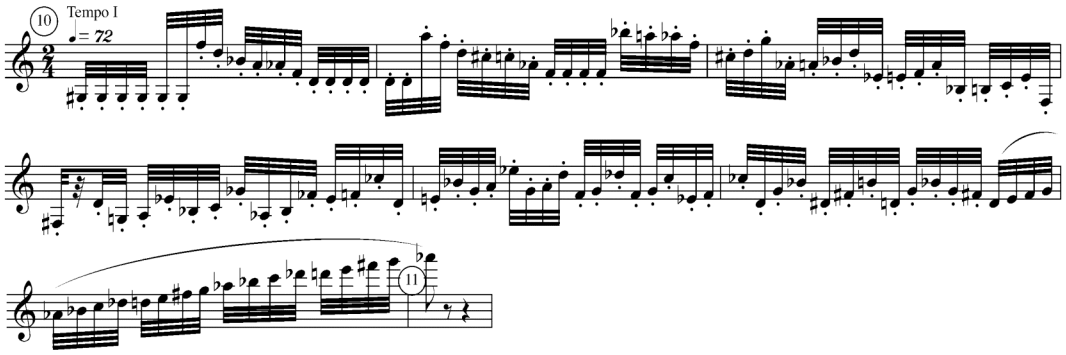
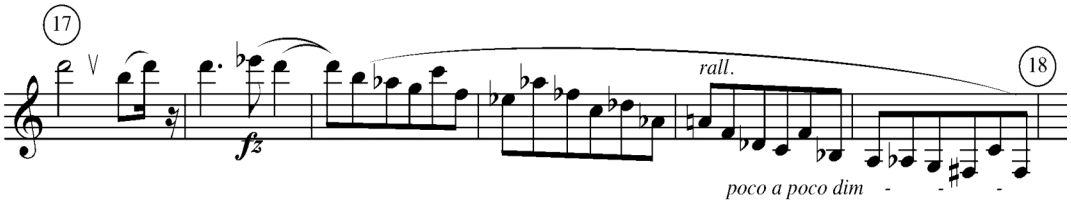


Figure 6.3 ⑰ to ⑱



Generally, Drucker, Verdehr, Rosengren, and Yeh all play the articulations and dynamic markings printed in the clarinet part, while they all also take the editorial breath marks with a grain of salt. The breath mark five measures before ② is not taken by the four clarinetists (see fig. 6.4). Drucker, Rosengren, and Yeh relatively do not change the dynamic or articulation markings, but they might add weight to a note or not take a dynamic marking literally. Verdehr makes some changes to the printed part according to Loui Brown's article in the December 1974 issue of *The Clarinet* discussing the inconsistencies between the clarinet part and the score of the *Samfundet Til Udgiveles Af Dansk Musik, 3. Serie Nr. 32* edition of the *Concerto*. Some of these some of the changes include the *mezzo forte* dynamic at ① should be a *mezzo piano*, only the first two notes are staccato at ㉑, and the final

dynamic marking on the last measures of the piece should be *quadruple piano* instead of a *triple piano*. Verdehr also changes the articulation four measures after ⑨ by accenting the first six notes in that measure, then slurring the rest (see fig. 6.5). Drucker makes an articulation change as well. He regroups the *agitato* accented triplets in the second cadenza, changing the notes that will get accented (see fig. 6.7).

Figure 6.4 Breath marking five measures before ②

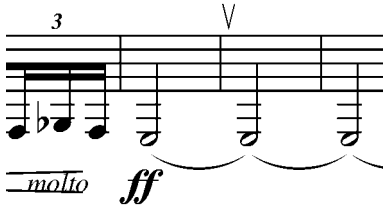


Figure 6.5 As printed in the clarinet part four measures after ⑨

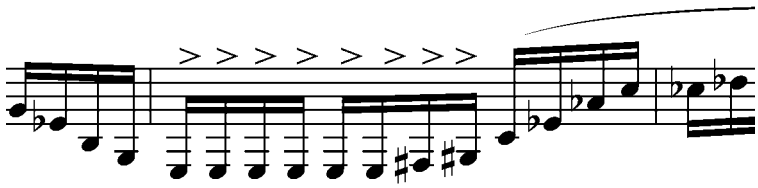


Figure 6.6 As Verdehr plays four measures after ⑨

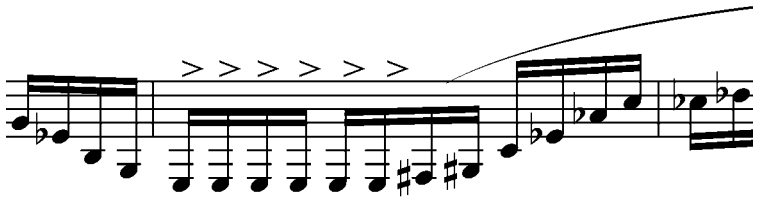


Figure 6.7 The *agitato* before the third fermata in the second cadenza as printed

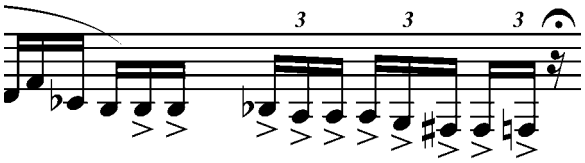
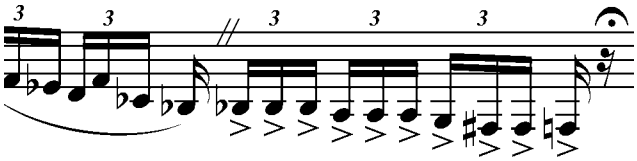


Figure 6.8 As Drucker regroups *agitato* before the third fermata in the second cadenza



There are many tempo changes throughout the entire *Concerto*, and generally Drucker, Rosengren, and Yeh play every tempo as marked. Verdehr, however, adjusts the tempos to a degree. She plays the *Allegro non troppo* at ⑳ at eighth note equals 158 instead of the marked eighth note equals 144, and she plays the *Meno* at ㉓ as eighth note equals 126 rather than the marked eighth note equals circa 116She also plays the *Un poco più mosso* at ㉙ at eighth note equals 120 and the *Allegro vivace* at quarter note equals 160. Drucker, Rosengren, and Yeh feel ⑳ in three, while Verdehr feels it in one.

When it comes to fingerings, the clarinetists again diverge. Verdehr, Rosengren, and Yeh play nontraditional fingerings throughout the piece, while Drucker usually uses traditional fingerings. Seven measures after ②, Drucker, Verdehr, and Yeh play the high D's with the open D fingerings, while Rosengren uses the regular high D fingering for the first high D, then switches to the open D fingering for the next two high D's. In the next measure Rosengren plays the rest of

the high D's with the regular high D fingering (see fig. 6.9). At ⑤ Drucker plays all the high D-flats with the regular high D-flat fingerings. Verdehr and Rosengren use side D-flat for the first note, then switch to the regular high D-flat fingerings. Yeh uses side D-flat for the entire passage (see fig. 6.10).

Figure 6.9 Regular high D-flat fingering



Figure 6.10 Side high D-flat fingering



Each clarinetist interprets Nielsen's first and second cadenzas differently, as is the nature of cadenza playing, but they generally all follow the markings on the printed part. Drucker, Verdehr, and Yeh view the rests in the first cadenza as places to pause or breathe, but the amount of time paused does not need to be exactly as indicated. Rosengren, meanwhile, only rests for as long as the rests indicate. The first line of the first cadenza, Verdehr, Rosengren, and Yeh all wait to crescendo until where marked in the music. When they all start to crescendo, they also accelerando. Drucker starts to crescendo three beats before marked. He also accelerandos when he starts to crescendo, even though an accelerando is not marked in the clarinet part (see fig. 6.11). Leading into the *marcato* marking on the third line of the first cadenza, Drucker, Verdehr, and Rosengren crescendo to *mezzo forte*

to the *marcato* notes, but Yeh does not crescendo so that the *molto double sforzando's* are more effective (see fig. 6.12).

Figure 6.11 First line of the first cadenza

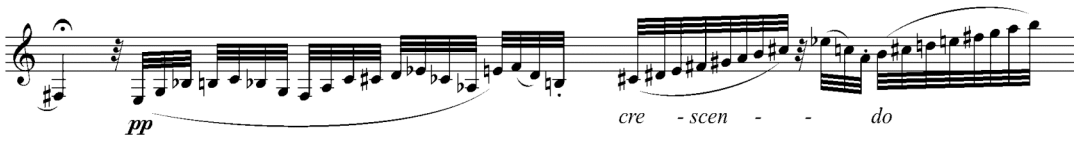
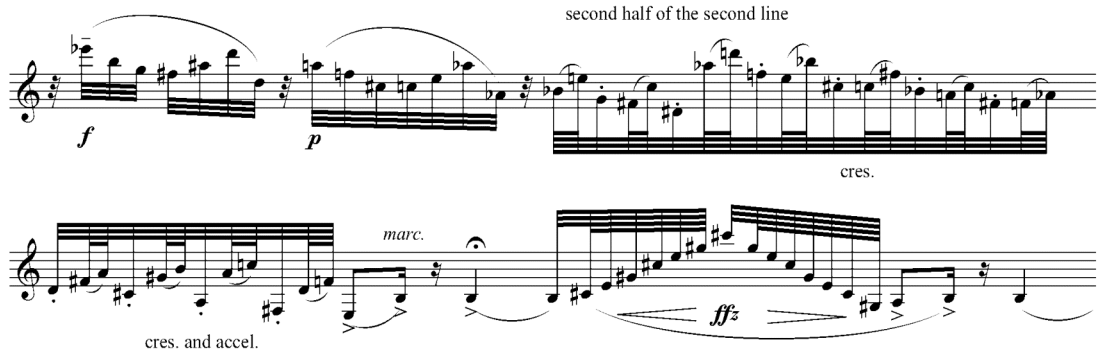
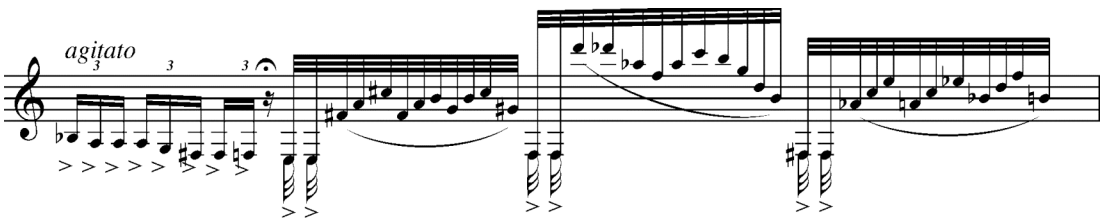


Figure 6.12 Second and third line of the first cadenza



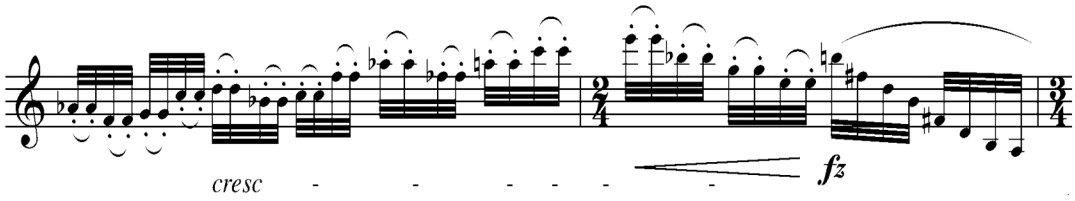
In the second cadenza, each clarinetist plays the musical figures differently, even though they all add length to the low accented notes see fig. 6.13).

Figure 6.13 The second line of the second cadenza



Drucker plays the first accented low note relatively short, but he plays the second accented low note as if it has a fermata written above it. He does not pause before playing the rest of the notes in the figure. Each figure is played around a *forte* dynamic level. Verdehr stretches both accented notes equally but then pauses before playing the rest of the figure. She plays the low accented notes *forte* but plays the rest of the figure *mezzo forte.* Rosengren's interpretation of the low accented notes is to not overly stretch the notes so the figure loosely resembles what Nielsen wrote. He plays the low accented notes *fortissimo* and without pause plays the rest of the figure *forte.* Yeh keeps the rhythm as written, but with each figure he progressively gets faster, with a starting dynamic of *mezzo forte* crescendoing to *fortissimo.* Two measures before ㉝, still in the second cadenza, Rosengren and Yeh play the last written A-flats as A-naturals, but Drucker and Verdehr play as printed in the clarinet part (see fig. 6.14).

Figure 6.14 Two measures before ㉝ with A-natural



From the first notes of the clarinet motive in Nielsen's *Clarinet Concerto*, through its two cadenzas, and on to the *triple piano* end, the piece poses challenges—as well as rewards—for accomplished musicians. Technically, Drucker, Verdehr, Rosengren and Yeh all say the *Concerto* is very difficult to play, but they agree that with practice everything in the piece can be played cleanly at the

tempos Nielsen intended. They all agree that the technical and expressive nature of the work should be a combination of classical, romantic, and twentieth-century style, with no one style-overpowering the rest. These elements of style are seen in each of the four soloists'—and all soloists'—interpretation of the piece through espressivo devices, accelerandos and ritardandos, accents, the use or lack of rubato, quasi cadenzas, and the aesthetic approach. Before any clarinetist ventures to learn to the Nielsen *Clarinet Concerto,* it would be beneficial to thoroughly understand the great clarinetists Drucker, Verdehr, Rosengren, and Yeh's interpretations, and their philosophies about the work. What these four musicians have learned and brought to the piece can then serve as a guide to help the newcomer develop his or her own interpretation. I hope this document will help to offer additional insight and understanding into four incredible interpretations of one of the most challenging concertos in the literature.

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