NEW DIRECTIONS FOR CLARINET, by Phillip Rehfeldt
(Volume 3 of 'The New Instrumentation' series, edited by Bertram Turetzky and Barney Childs)
University of California Press, 1978 (£10.50)

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The period from the mid 60s to the early 70s was an exciting time for a clarinettist in England with an interest in contemporary music. The instrument seemed to be surging forward on the crest of a wave. Good, demanding music was being written to extend the player, and the player was developing new techniques for composers to take up and exploit. Then the bubble burst and The Player began turning more and more to 18th century boxwood clarinets. One or two had matched The Player squeak for squeak whilst neglecting to develop their own individual squeaks; some lived in The Player's shadow (and still chase it); others talked of gimmicks and continued to practise their 19th century orchestral parts.

This curious and mixed state of affairs seems to have passed away. Sure, most people can manage some sort of multiple squawk and almost flutter tongue in case some 'contemporary' job comes in, but the heart isn't in it. Even the new generation of composers-to-be seems to have lost any inquisitiveness and sense of adventure in writing for the instrument. The so-called gimmicks have generally not been pursued and integrated into the musical language to any great extent. They are kept as special effects imposed on the music like bad 17th century ornamentation.

However, do not despair. All is not lost, thanks to the driving force of many jazzmen (jazzpersons). After all, most 'new' techniques came from jazz anyway. Has anyone heard the gliss to top C ending Artie Shaw's Clarinet Concerto? Goodman's growls? Dolphy's multiphonics? Herbie Mann's vocalising? William O. (Bill) Smith's compositions of the early 60s? It's all there.

Much of it is also there in the 'straight' American scene, thanks partly to the fight for survival and recognition that goes on in academic circles where most performers seem to want/need to be. The maxim 'publish or perish' has thrown up a few worthwhile dissertations on performance techniques, and the contemporary clarinet scene is reasonably healthy in the hands of some determined players and — more importantly — player-composers.

Phillip Rehfeldt, one of the determined players and a leading contemporary music performer with an academic post, has gathered together in a compact book (135 pages) most of the innovative, post-1950 clarinet techniques. And, despite the unfortunate drawing of an obsolete clarinet on the front cover, this monograph is a thoroughly worthwhile addition to the shelves of players and composers alike.[1]

A third of the book is taken up with chapters on 'monophonic fingering possibilities' and 'multiphonics'. The former includes 15 pages of fingerings and in fact catalogues many of the 'dodges' used by players to vary intonation and dynamics, putting them forward as valid alternatives for coloristic variety or microtonal variation. Parts of the anatomy — e.g. ankles, knees, thighs — are brought into use which, although producing the required effect (flattening notes), might raise some questions in the minds of the audience. It must be remembered that many microtonal fingerings give a very uneven sound quality, and a quarter-tone scale, for instance, is impossible with any uniformity of tone colour. Composers must also remember that many of the 'fingerings' (squeeze bell between thighs, for example) need time to be manipulated. But effects such as the opening of Berio's *Sequenza VII* for oboe are equally possible on the clarinet.

The chapter on multiphonics takes us much further than Bruno Bartolozzi's pioneering and in some ways infuriating book.[2] Rehfeldt divides them into eight categories, which although not always distinct, are useful; there is also a section for bass clarinet. The categories include: 'good at all dynamic levels with all articulations — speak immediately'; 'generally can be attacked accurately but extremely soft';

'need increased pressure, generally shrill'. The fingering charts are mostly very reliable. I tried all the author's mono and multiphonic fingerings on a clarinet quite different from his and found the results generally to be pretty close. The main reason for this is that, unlike with Bartolozzi, the multiphonics are for the most part obtained purely by fingerings, not by strange embouchure changes. Thus they tend to be less affected by personal ability and physique. However, you do need to have good diaphragm control. Again it must be remembered that many fingerings are complex and some need time to speak: e.g. category 2 often needs time for upper pitches to accumulate.

The catalogue of additional effects briefly mentions a number of other techniques: glissando, portamento, pitch bends, vibrato, smorzato, flutter tongue, slap tongue, throat tremolo, vocal sounds (while playing), breath sounds, hand pops, mouthpiece alone, mutes, key rattles, etc. They are, on the whole, neatly described, although the lengthy differentiation between glissando and portamento falls down when the examples for each both use the word glissando for Rehfeldt's definition of portamento . . . I was also slightly confused by his statement that an improved glissando could be achieved by 'lessening the pressure of the jaw on the reed while increasing the grip on the mouthpiece'.

There is a useful chapter on electronic amplification and auxiliary devices. Clarinet with electronics is much more exploited in the States than here. Of 45 pieces listed, 42 are from the USA and one each from England, Canada and Japan. The two can be very well integrated as in Roger Hannay's *Pied Piper,* where in the opening section electronic-sounding multiphonics are deliberately chosen in order to blend with the taped sounds. Of course one drawback for us is the lack of access to equipment frequently available to the academic performer in America.

The appendices include thorough and extensive multiphonic charts by William O. Smith which he began to compile in 1960. There is an extensive bibliography of works with a strong bias towards American music, which I found very interesting and informative. We have difficulty keeping abreast of repertoire from the other side of the Atlantic, and this catalogue is a good starting point.

This soft cover, spiral-bound book (which can by the way, sit comfortably on a music stand) retails here at £10.50 and is good value with an abundance of useful music examples. But there are some careless oversights. An annoying feature is that, despite the author's laudable intention to name keys by the note they produce in the lowest register, this does not always happen: the Smith charts are particularly bad for this, sometimes reverting to numbers of which there are varying systems. Some fingerings are actually wrong and one has to assume that a key has been missed off the fingering. The fingerings in the music examples have not been brought into line with the author's policy and we therefore have quite a muddle of numbers. Key 14 means two different things, only one of which is (wrongly) explained by the author. Keys 1 and 2 are found at the top of the instrument in one example and key 3 at the bottom in the next, etc.

The floppy, seven-inch record supplied with the book is square and hence alarming to place a stylus on. 33 brief examples are squashed on one side, several given wrong references in the text, and the multiphonic on band 14 comes out as a fourth (G — C) whereas the chart shows it as a fifth (F sharp — C sharp). Which is wrong? Perhaps some of the effects which I couldn't obtain are similarly mistakes in the chart. Side Two contains a dreadful piece called *All Things Fancy* which purports to demonstrate many (seven) of the techniques and devices in the book (over 25). If it was excluded the examples on Side One could be usefully extended.

Despite these criticisms and some others (high notes should not produce a painful lower lip; a more relaxed lip and a firmer diaphragm is needed the higher you go; extensions to low C for bass clarinet are for musical, not acoustical, reasons), I think the book accomplishes its aims in presenting, in compact form, the latest information on the new techniques required of a clarinettist. This is done in the usual thorough American way, leaving few fingerings uncatalogued (did you know the pitches obtained by putting the mouthpiece on the lower joint, or the range of the mouthpiece without the rest of the instrument?) and I would recommend it to all who are seriously interested in the subject.

NOTES:

[1]Rehfeldt's book is part of a series which has so far also produced books on the double bass (by Bertram Turetzky) and the flute (by Thomas Howell). For reviews of these see *Contact 12* (Autumn 1975), p. 43 and *Contact 13* (Spring 1976), pp. 43-44. (Ed.)

[2]Bruno Bartolozzi, trans. Reginald Smith Brindle, *New Sounds for Woodwind* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967).