Clarinet performance practices for Alberto Ginastera's "Variaciones concertantes": Solutions for orchestral auditions and performances

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CLARINET PERFORMANCE PRACTICES FOR ALBERTO GINASTERA’S “VARIACIONES CONCERTANTES”: SOLUTIONS FOR ORCHESTRAL AUDITIONS AND PERFORMANCES

By

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ABSTRACT

The principal clarinet part of Alberto Ginastera’s Variaciones concertantes (1953) requires the performer to execute a number of exposed passages that are considered impractical by many clarinetists as published. The Boosey & Hawkes edition of Variaciones concertantes was published for the B-flat clarinet. On account of this clarinet choice, the part exceeds the traditional upper range of the instrument in the third variation (Variazione in modo di Scherzo per Clarinetto). Moreover, it requires very awkward fingering patterns in passages because they are written in the Phrygian mode of C-sharp. To avoid some of these technical obstacles, many professional clarinetists alter the exposed passages in a number of ways. These alterations include playing certain measures down an octave or transposing specific passages so they can be played using an A clarinet, C clarinet, or D clarinet. No standard performance practice for these passages has developed, however, either in auditions or in orchestral settings. I am going to propose solutions to the problems clarinetists encounter in Variaciones concertantes in order to facilitate its performance.

In order to illuminate the specific problems that confront clarinetists who perform this work, I will place Variaciones concertantes in the wider context of Ginastera’s oeuvre. I will do this by examining how Ginastera composed for the clarinet in his other orchestral works, focusing on changes that emerge over the course of his career. I will also investigate Ginastera’s musical education and experience to identify factors and influences that may have affected the way he wrote for the clarinet. After establishing
possible influences and a stylistic context, I will explain the musical structure and processes of Variaciones concertantes, and study the third variation in the context of the entire work.

Excerpts from the third variation appear to have been requested more frequently on orchestral clarinet auditions in the United States since the year 2000. Because of the relatively recent appearance of these excerpts on auditions, there are no standard performance practices set for this work as there are for many works from the Classical and Romantic periods. A survey of professional clarinetists in major symphony orchestras in the United States and examination of commercially available recordings of Variaciones concertantes reveals a range of solutions for practical and feasible performance practices. Using these performance practice solutions, I will produce a number of alternative readings of the part for performers’ reference. These alternative readings, along with my performance practice solutions, will be useful to clarinetists who intend to audition or perform the music.
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INTRODUCTION

What I consider the supreme challenge in the orchestral literature, the Alberto Ginastera’s *Variaciones concertantes*, Variation [3]¹, is not wildly non-traditional – awkward is the first word that comes to my mind … but to say that that the variation sounds brilliant does not mean that it is well written for the clarinet. The pity is, that with a few slight changes, it would be much more playable, and would sound just as brilliant.²

–Henry Gulick, former Professor of Clarinet, Indiana University

Henry Gulick was one of the first to describe some of the challenges clarinetists face in Alberto Ginastera’s *Variaciones concertantes*, op. 23 (1953). The principal clarinet part of this work requires the performer to execute a number of exposed technical passages that are nearly unplayable by most clarinetists as written. Most of these passages do not have a standard performance practice in auditions or in an orchestral setting. The clarinet part of *Variaciones concertantes*, as published by Boosey & Hawkes for the B-flat clarinet, exceeds the traditional upper range of the instrument and also requires very awkward fingering patterns in passages because they are written in the Phrygian mode of C-sharp. To avoid some of these technical issues, many professional clarinetists alter the solo passages in a number of ways, including octave displacement or transposition so they can be played using an A clarinet, C clarinet, or D clarinet. The alterations are typically made only to the third variation since this is where the first clarinetist will find the most difficult technical sections in the entire piece. There are some technical

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¹ Mr. Gulick refers to the variation featuring the clarinet as “Variation 4” since it is printed and labeled as the fourth section in the score. However, it is actually the third variation after the statement of the main theme and will be referenced as such throughout this document.

challenges contained in the final variation, but none that are at the same level of difficulty as those found in the third variation.

The original manuscript score for this work was written by Ginastera in concert pitch, meaning that parts for transposing instruments needed to be extracted and transposed appropriately before publication.\(^3\) Boosey & Hawkes printed the entire part for B-flat clarinet, the most commonly used type of clarinet, but this choice resulted in a number of technical problems for the solo passages in the third variation. The practice of printing clarinet parts in B-flat was a standard procedure for Boosey & Hawkes during the middle of the twentieth century, and a number of other pieces that were printed by them during the same decade as *Variaciones concertantes* exhibit similar issues. These problems are less troublesome in other pieces because most of the extremely difficult passages occur during orchestral tutti sections and are not as exposed as the passages in *Variaciones concertantes*. Other works by Ginastera from this time period that have comparable problems are *Pampena No. 3* (1954) and the Violin Concerto (1963). For the original instrumentation of Aaron Copland’s *Appalachian Spring* (1944), Boosey & Hawkes provided alternate parts so that the clarinetist could choose to use B-flat or A clarinet for the most difficult passages in the ballet. It is unclear why this convention was not used for other works that contain similar difficulties. Had an alternate part been provided with the set of parts for *Variaciones concertantes*, a number of the problems that arise in its performance would be avoided.

\(^3\) Elizabeth Blaufox, Assistant Manager at Boosey & Hawkes Rental Library, e-mail message to author, October 29, 2010.
Since 2000, excerpts from this piece have been requested more frequently on orchestral auditions in the United States. The principal clarinet audition for the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra (2008) and the principal clarinet audition for the North Carolina Symphony (2010) both included excerpts from this work on their lists. Other orchestras have begun to include this work on their audition lists as well. There are no standard performance practices for these excerpts as there are for many works from the Classical and Romantic periods because these excerpts have only been requested on audition lists within the last decade. When a clarinetist takes an audition for an orchestra, he is expected to perform excerpts on the appropriate clarinets based on standard performance practices.

Many of the passages within Variaciones concertantes are nearly unplayable by most clarinetists as written for B-flat clarinet, but each of the transposition options leads to a new problem. In order to make the entire variation playable without exceeding the traditional range of the clarinet and without omitting pitches, some type of instrument change or alteration to the part must be made. The commercially available recordings of the piece reveal a variety of responses to these challenges. Furthermore, conversations with various professional clarinetists in the United States who have performed the work also reveal their suggestions and ideas. Based on this information, I will create alternative alternate versions that incorporate their ideas along with supplemental excerpts that may be useful when performing the work with two clarinetists in an orchestral setting. These alternate versions, along with my own performance practice suggestions based on study of the score, will be valuable for clarinetists who are learning the work and for established orchestral clarinetists who wish to consider alternative ways of performing it.
CHAPTER 1

Ginastera’s Life, Works, and Compositional Style

Alberto Ginastera (1916–83) was an Argentine composer. He began his musical studies at age seven and enrolled at the Conservatorio Williams in Buenos Aires at twelve. His first three works, Piezas infantiles (1934), Impresiones de la puna (1934), and Concierto argentine (1935) were all withdrawn by the composer.4 It is surprising that Ginastera would withdraw these works, particularly since Piezas infantiles and Impresiones de la puna both won composition prizes. Ginastera’s fourth composition, the one-act ballet Panambi (1934–37), is labeled as opus 1. He wrote this composition while he was working toward his professor’s diploma at the Conservatorio Nacional de Música of Buenos Aires, which he completed in 1938.

Ginastera remained in Argentina, composing a number of works through 1945. He was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1942. His international travel was postponed until after World War II. After the war ended, Ginastera departed for the United States. He resided in New York and attended composition classes taught by Aaron Copland at the Berkshire Summer Music Festival at Tanglewood. During his time in the United States, many of his earlier works received their U.S. premieres. His music was generally well liked by the American audiences and his name became recognized outside

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of Argentina.\(^5\) He remained in the United States through 1947, when he returned to Argentina to teach at the Conservatorio Nacional de Música of Buenos Aires.

Ginastera continued to write compositions while living in Argentina and he started to travel out of the country on a regular basis. He began writing commissioned works for organizations outside of Argentina, notably *Pameana No. 3*, op. 24 (1954) for the Louisville Orchestra and the Piano Concerto No. 1, op. 28 (1961) for the Serge Koussevitzky Music Foundation at the Library of Congress.\(^6\) A number of his works won awards, including one from the Argentine Academia de Artes y Ciencia Cinematográficas for *Facundo: el tigre de los llanos* (1952), and the 1957 Cinzano Bicentenario Prize for *Variaciones concertantes*, op. 23 (1953). Ginastera gained a strong reputation as a composer outside of Argentina during the 1950s. He received many commissions and his music was performed regularly in the United States and Europe through the rest of his life.

In July 1967, Ginastera’s two-act opera *Bomarzo*, op. 34, was banned by the city of Buenos Aires due to its focus on sex, violence, and hallucination.\(^7\) He responded by prohibiting all future performances of his works at municipal venues in Buenos Aires until the ban on *Bomarzo* was lifted. The city’s ban remained in effect only until 1971, and *Bomarzo* finally received its Argentine premiere at Teatro Colón on April 29, 1972. Before the ban was lifted in 1971, however, Ginastera moved out of the country and settled in Geneva. This was his primary residence for the remainder of his life. He began

\(^5\) Schwartz-Kates, xix.

\(^6\) Ibid., 9.

\(^7\) Ibid., xxii.
having health problems in 1981 and passed away on June 25, 1983 in Geneva. He left six commissioned compositions unfinished at the time of his death, including the Piano Sonata No. 3, op. 55, String Quartet No. 4, an opera titled Barrabás, a ballet titled Minotauro, and an orchestral-choral work titled Solsticio.

Ginastera’s deeply rooted connection to Argentine culture is apparent in the vast majority of his works. In Ginastera’s early music, the most frequent display of Argentine cultural reference was through the use of Argentine folk songs or folk song-like melodies, and through the use of scales or modes that characteristic of music local to regions of the country. His early works use pentatonic scales that are characteristic of music from the Andes and the northwest region of Argentina. The melodies in his early works can are based on traditional Argentine folk songs, or are newly composed using elements unique to Argentine folk songs. The melodies in his works typically ascend from the tonic pitch at the beginning and then descend back to the tonic at the end. They frequently use stepwise motion and contain very few large intervallic leaps.

A second technique that links Ginastera’s melodies to the folk music of Argentina is his use of bimodality. As Schwartz-Kates indicates, it is very common to find melodies that shift between the relative major and minor modes of the scale both in the folk music of Argentina and in Ginastera’s compositions. For example, the main theme for Variaciones concertantes begins in the Phrygian mode based around the tonic pitch of E,

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8 Ginastera completed one movement of this work and it is published by Boosey & Hawkes as an individual piece.

9 Schwartz-Kates, 92-94.

10 Ibid., 26.
while subsequent sections of the theme are more closely related to the key of E minor. Ginastera outlines the tonic in the accompanying harp part, which plays an arpeggiated pattern based on the open strings of the guitar (E-A-D-G-B). These two elements work together to create a melody and harmonic structure that emulates the traditional folk music of Argentina.

Ginastera was aware of the close relationship between Argentine folk music and his own music. In one of his works, Doce preludios americanos (Twelve American Preludes), op. 12 (1944)\textsuperscript{11}, Ginastera titled the movements “In the First Minor Pentatonic Mode” and “In the First Major Pentatonic Mode.”\textsuperscript{12} In his vocal music, he frequently used texts that were extremely emotional and dramatic. This is very similar to the literary themes found in the text of Argentine folk songs. In Ginastera’s later works, he used chromaticism to help portray the emotions that were found in the text.\textsuperscript{13}

Ginastera himself divided his works into three large stylistic parts. The first part he called “objective nationalism” (1937–47), where his music represented an idealized symbol of Argentina through direct links to Argentine culture and music. The second was called “subjective nationalism” (1947–57), where he continued to use Argentine subjects but was not as direct about the link to source materials. The third part was called “neo-expressionism” (1958–83), where he used a wide variety of compositional styles and the use of Argentine materials became quite limited.\textsuperscript{14} This self-labeled division shows

\textsuperscript{11} In the title of this work, “American” is referring to South America. It is common for people of Argentina to refer to themselves as Americans.

\textsuperscript{12} Schwartz-Kates, 26.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 28.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 23.
Ginastera’s conscious use of Argentine culture and material in his music and also that he considered himself a nationalistic composer for at least twenty years.

**Ginastera’s Use of Clarinet in Orchestral Works**

Ginastera included at least two clarinets in the scoring of all of his orchestral works and ballets. His works through 1961 are typically scored for two B-flat clarinets, with the exception of a few works that call for a third clarinetist on bass clarinet.\(^{15}\) With the exception of *Variaciones concertantes*, the works prior to the Piano Concerto No. 1, op. 28 (1961) contain clarinet parts that are quite approachable. The extreme altissimo register of the clarinet is used in moderation and many of the fast passages are divided by beats or measures between the two clarinets to alleviate their technical difficulty.

*Variaciones concertantes* is unique in Ginastera’s oeuvre, and his writing for the clarinet is very different here from that in his other works. The first clarinet part is extremely demanding, particularly in the third variation (*Variazione in modo di Scherzo per Clarinetto*) and the final variation (*Variazione finale in modo di Rondo per Orchestra*). The second clarinet part is simpler, as they are in his earlier works; only a few brief technical passages in the final variation are challenging, and these passages are not exposed. The specific challenges and demands for the first clarinet part will be discussed in Section 3.

The two works with clarinet that immediately follow *Variaciones concertantes*, *Pampeana no. 3* (1954) and the Harp Concerto (1956), revert back to Ginastera’s earlier, \(^{15}\) The scores for *Panambi* and the ballet suite from *Panambi* (1934–37), Psalm 150 (1938), and *Ollantay: tres movimientos sinfónicos* (1947) each call for a dedicated bass clarinet player.
less problematic style of composition for the two clarinets. These works use rhythmic
division between the two clarinets in fast passages to ease technical issues and there are
fewer notes in the upper altissimo register of the instrument. The first clarinet part
ascends to altissimo concert A-flat in the Harp Concerto, but this only occurs during
extremely loud tutti sections and is not exposed.

Beginning with the Piano Concerto in 1961, Ginastera began to write for the E-flat clarinet in many of orchestral works. The Piano Concerto and the subsequent Violin
Concerto, op. 30 (1963), contain separate parts for E-flat clarinet. Ginastera uses this
instrument to play most of the high range parts, leaving the two B-flat clarinets mostly
playing in the clarion register and lower. For the works after the Violin Concerto,
Ginastera wrote parts that required the second or third clarinetist to double on E-flat
clarinet rather than having a dedicated E-flat clarinet part and player. Music from
“Bomarzo,” op. 34a (1967–70), Estudios sinfónicos, op. 35 (1967), Popol Vuh, op. 44
(1975), and Glosses sombre temes de Pau Casals, op. 48 (1977) each contain a part that
requires doubling on E-flat clarinet. The E-flat clarinet is used somewhat sparingly in
these works; it appears to be mostly used as a way of expanding the range of the clarinet
family and not as much for providing a different timbre. The E-flat clarinet almost always
plays in the altissimo or upper clarion range in these works, leaving the lower range to
the B-flat clarinets.

It is interesting to note that the division between Ginastera’s earlier and later
styles of composing for clarinet relates to the stylistic periods that he divided. Ginastera
stated that his nationalistic period ended in 1957. This is one year after the Harp
Concerto, the last work that is in Ginastera’s simpler style of composition for two
clarinets. The first piece that he wrote in the neo-expressionism style that used clarinets was the Piano Concerto, which was also the first work that used the E-flat clarinet. It is possible that the use of the E-flat clarinet may be one of his neo-expressionistic style traits, along with the changes he made to tonality and form.

Ginastera did not write any orchestral works that are similar in large-scale structure to Variaciones, nor did he write any clarinet parts that required the same level of technical ability before or after this work. This makes Variaciones unique in Ginastera’s oeuvre and also in realm of clarinet orchestral repertoire in regards to technical demands. Some of the biggest challenges to orchestral clarinetists were avoided in Ginastera’s later works through his specified use of the E-flat clarinet.
CHAPTER 2

Structure and Form of Variaciones concertantes

“These variations have a subjective Argentine character. Instead of using folkloristic material, I try to achieve an Argentine atmosphere through the employment of my own thematic and rhythmic elements. The work begins with an original theme followed by eleven variations, each one reflecting the distinctive character of the instrument featured. All the instruments of the orchestra are treated soloistically. Some variations belong to the decorative, ornamental or elaborative type, others are written in the contemporary manner of metamorphosis, which consists of taking elements of the main theme and evolving from it new material.”16

The title Variaciones concertantes may be translated as “Concerted Variations.”

Ginastera composed an original theme and wrote eleven variations based on this theme. Each of these variations features either a single instrument or a family of instruments and the final variation is composed for the entire orchestra. He calls two of these variations “interludes,” one for the strings and one for the winds; these separate the central set of variations from the theme and its reprise (variation ten).

The work’s twelve movements have the following order: Tema per Violoncello ed Arpa (Theme for Cello and Harp), Interludio per Corde (Interlude for Strings), Variazione giocosa per Flauto (Playful Variation for Flute), Variazione in modo di Scherzo per Clarinetto (Variation in the manner of Scherzo for Clarinet), Variazione drammatica per Viola (Dramatic Variation for Viola), Variazione per Oboe e Fagotto (Variation for Oboe and Bassoon), Variazione ritmica per Tromba e Trombone (Rhythmic Variation for Trumpet and Trombone), Variazione in modo di Moto perpetuo

16 Program note for Variaciones concertantes as provided by Alberto Ginastera.
per Violin (Variation in the manner of Perpetual Motion for Violin), Variazione pastorale per Corno (Pastorale Variation for Horn), Interludio per Fiati (Interlude for Winds), Ripresa dal Tema per Contrabasso (Reprise of the Theme for Double Bass), and Variazione finale in modo di Rondo per Orchestra (Final Variation in the manner of Rondo for Orchestra).

Each of these sections are labeled and numbered with roman numerals in the parts and score. The first theme, the interlude for the strings, and the variations for the flute and trumpet/trombone are specifically marked attacca at the end. The remaining sections all end with fermatas on the final notes or rests. Ginastera does not give any text directions regarding the duration of these fermatas, nor does he specify if there should be a break between these sections or if they should be performed attacca like the sections that do not end with fermatas. The published score and parts have double measure lines printed between each numbered section, including those that are marked attacca. However, the work does not contain a double bar line until the end of the final variation. In music that is divided into movements, each movement typically ends with a double bar line. The lack of double bar lines indicates that all of the sections should be connected into one large work.

Each of the variations in this work are thematic variations, using the melody from the first section of the work (Tema per Violoncello ed Arpa). The idea of thematic variations is not a new one; sets of variations exist from as early as the fourteenth century.17 Theme and variations were also used commonly as a form in the slow

movement of many symphonies during the Classical and Romantic periods. Each variation has a specific tempo indication provided and the titles of each variation indicate a mood or style. This set of variations is different from older works by the fact that it is a freestanding set of theme and variations, not part of a larger work. Many other significant twentieth century composers also wrote sets of theme and variations for orchestra around the same time as Ginastera, including Arnold Schoenberg (1926–28, and 1943), Anton Webern (1940), and Igor Stravinsky (1964). Shortly after writing this work, Ginastera entered his self-titled neo-expressionism phase. During this time, he did not compose any other sets of variations, nor did he use somewhat traditional formal structures as he did in Variaciones and in earlier works.

The theme contains a number of folk-like elements, but is not itself an Argentine folk song. The first five measures of the main theme contain a gradual ascent and then a descent back to tonic, which is common in many Argentine folk songs. Also, a mixture of modes is found within the melody. The first three measures allude to a scale based around the Phrygian mode with a tonic pitch of E, while the fourth and fifth measures are more closely related to a form of E minor.

Links to some sections of the principal theme can be found quite easily in each of the variations. However, connections between the principal theme and the melodic line in each variation are often obscured. Example 1 shows the main theme in its entirety. The main theme can be broken down into three main sections: the beginning through rehearsal number 1 (henceforth known as the A section), rehearsal number 1 through rehearsal number 2 (henceforth known as the B section), and rehearsal number 2 through rehearsal number 3 (henceforth known as the C section). In most of the variations,
Ginastera usually disguises at least one section of the primary theme within the harmonies or obscures the relationship between the main theme and the variation slightly. In each variation, the spot where the B section of the primary theme is used can usually be found easily since there is a tonal shift in the theme that is also present in each of the variations. The A and C sections are not always as evident, and in some variations, it is completely hidden or absent altogether. Note that the second half of the A section and the first half of the C section are inversions of the first four measures of the theme, which descend from the tonic pitch and then ascend back to the starting pitch.

Example 1. Alberto Ginastera's Variaciones concertantes, cello part, beginning through [3].
Two parts of *Variaciones concertantes* are titled “interlude,” though they are based on the material found in the main theme as well. *Interludio per Corde* is primarily based on the first five measures of the theme, while the *Interludio per Fiati* contains a majority of the theme. Examples 2 and 3 show specific measures where the melodic connection between the interludes and the main theme can be identified.


Example 3. Alberto Ginastera's *Variaciones concertantes*, melodic line, [59] - [65].
Example 2 shows the expanding interval moving away from the tonic note of E. This is also present in the first five measures of the main theme. The melodic line highlighted in example 3 follows the basic melodic contour of the principal theme from the beginning through rehearsal number 2, but the melody is heard in a number of different instruments and is sometimes masked by opposing intervallic motion within the harmonies. This makes the link to the main theme not as clear in this interlude as it is in the melodies located within the variation sections. When viewed in this way, the two interludes are technically variations just as much as the other variations that are formally titled as such.

**Comparison of the Principal Theme to its Appearance in *Variazione in modo di Scherzo per Clarinetto***

Like many of the other variations in *Variaciones concertantes*, the melodic connection between the principal theme and the melodic line in the clarinet variation is not always evident. For the first half of the variation through rehearsal number 21, the main theme is mostly represented through intervallic expansion. Example 4 shows the violin parts at the beginning of the variation. The tonic is the sounding pitch B. This is similar to the first two measures of example 4, which consists of a gradually increasing interval away from the tonic note.
This intervallic expansion is seen on a larger scale throughout the movement. The first solo section for the clarinet, between rehearsal numbers 16 and 17, focuses primarily on the tonic note of B. There are a number of grace notes on the pitch C, which are reminiscent of the half-step interval found in the first measure of the theme. The second solo section, found between rehearsal numbers 18 and 19, has an emphasis on the note D. This is related to the leap to scale degree three that is seen in the second measure of the theme. The tutti section between rehearsal numbers 20 and 21 heavily focuses on the note E, related to the fourth scale degree from the tonic found in the fourth measure of the main theme. Example 5 shows the representation of interval expansion as it is found in the clarinet variation.


Example 5: Alberto Ginastera's Variaciones concertantes, melodic relationship between A section of theme and A section of clarinet variation.
The *espressivo* section of the clarinet variation between rehearsal numbers 21 and 22 is related to the B section of the principal theme. There are additional notes added to maintain the constant eighth note pulse, but all of the notes from the theme are present during this section. Example 6 marks the notes that are directly related to the main theme as they are found in the clarinet part.

![Example 6](image)

Example 6. Alberto Ginastera's *Variaciones concertantes*, melodic relationship between B section of theme and B section of clarinet variation.

The intervallic expansion downward found in the C section of the theme is on a large scale, much like the upward expansion at the beginning of the variation, though more hidden because of the complex rhythms. The first clarinet part between rehearsal numbers 25 and 26 is based around the tonic pitch of B and a descending whole step to the pitch A. This correlates with the first descending pitch found in the second measure of the C section of the main theme. The clarinet part contains a descending third to scale degree six in the fourth measure after rehearsal number 26, which correlates to the second descending pitch in the C section of the main theme. Finally, the clarinet part starting at rehearsal number 28 consists of a pattern beginning with descending fourths to scale
degree five, which matches the final descending interval in the second measure of the C section from the main theme. The remainder of the theme is represented through the general ascent of the clarinet melodic line starting at rehearsal 28, which ultimately leads back to the tonic pitch of B in a higher range. Example 7 shows this relationship in detail.

Example 7, Alberto Ginastera’s *Variaciones concertantes*, melodic relationship between C section of theme and C section of clarinet variation.

The connections between the main theme and the melody in the clarinet variation are not immediately noticeable. However, it is important to keep this relationship in mind when performing the work. It is helpful to understand the structure of the movement so that it can be performed effectively for the audience. It is also important to make sure that the materials from the theme are highlighted in performance.
CHAPTER 3

Publication Issues Related to *Variaciones concertantes*

When Ginastera composed *Variaciones concertantes* in 1953, the full Böhm system clarinet was in regular use in South America. The full Böhm system clarinet contains extra key work that allows the clarinetist to play down to a written E-flat, one half-step below the lowest possible written E on the standard Böhm system clarinet. The advantage of using this type of clarinet is that the performer can play parts that are written for both B-flat and A clarinets on one instrument by using a full Böhm B-flat clarinet and transposing the A clarinet parts down one half-step. With the addition of the low E-flat key, the entire range of the A clarinet becomes playable on the B-flat clarinet.

The fact that the full Böhm system was prevalent in South America during the 1950s may be why *Variaciones concertantes* was printed for B-flat clarinet despite the technical issues this created. The work was premiered on June 2, 1953, by the Orquestra de la Asociación “Amigos de la Música” in Buenos Aires, the ensemble to which this work was dedicated.18 It can be assumed that the first set of parts were created with this group in mind, and that the copyist may have realized that the clarinetist would likely be playing on a full Böhm instrument and therefore would not use an A clarinet even if the part were transposed that way. In this context, it would have been easier for the clarinetist to have the part written in B-flat regardless of the technical problems that may arise.

Outside of South America, Italy, and the United Kingdom, the use of the full Böhm clarinet did not gain popularity, and it is very rarely seen in professional settings.

18 Schwartz-Kates, 62.
today. Many clarinetists use both the B-flat and A clarinets regularly in orchestras rather than using the full Böhm instrument and transposing the A clarinet parts. There are special circumstances that may force the clarinetist to transpose or use a full Böhm clarinet, such as the low written E-flat in the second movement of Ottorino Respighi’s *Pini di Roma* and in the third movement of Johannes Brahms’s Symphony No. 4, but these examples are few and far between. It is generally accepted that clarinetists will perform the works on the clarinets that are requested in the part unless it creates an unplayable situation or the specific clarinet is not available for use by the musician.

In a discussion post on the Woodwind.org Clarinet Bulletin Board on May 5, 2009, David Niethamer (Principal clarinetist of the Richmond Symphony) stated that “a colleague played [*Variaciones concertantes*] for Ginastera, who told her he expected the clarinetist to transpose it to a more convenient clarinet from the printed [B-flat] part.”¹⁹ This means that while the part is published for the B-flat clarinet, the composer authorized clarinetists to transpose the part if necessary. Unlike other pieces where clarinetists will generally perform the works on the clarinets that are requested in the parts by the composer, Ginastera’s authorization means that it should be an acceptable performance practice for each clarinetist to play the piece using their preferred clarinet(s) assuming that they are not altering the sounding pitches in any way.

Whether mindful or regardless of Ginastera’s remarks, clarinetists frequently transpose this work in live performances and on recordings. An examination of the commercially available recordings of *Variaciones concertantes*, a survey of current

orchestral clarinetists who have performed the work, and hearing the piece performed live by various professional orchestras reveals the use of many different clarinets other than the B-flat clarinet. Some of these alterations can also be seen in the actual part; upon examination of one rental clarinet part from Boosey & Hawkes, specific markings from previous performers indicating that they transposed the third variation to A clarinet were not completely erased by the publisher. The performance materials for this work are not available for purchase and are not included or explained in any excerpt books, so evaluation of performance practices for this work is complicated by difficult access to rental materials. This evaluation and documentation of modern performance practices is necessary to assist auditioning clarinetists as well as those who wish to learn alternative ways to perform this work.

Specific Difficulties for Clarinetists in Variaciones concertantes

The problems found in Variaciones concertantes are very unique and require special attention. Ginastera composed differently for the clarinet in this work than in any of his other compositions. His other orchestral works that use the clarinet do not contain the same extensive range nor do they require the same amount of technical skill as Variaciones concertantes. This is not to say that his other works are somehow easier or simpler; rather, his orchestration and the distribution of complex rhythmic figures changed in his later works. In works such as the Piano Concerto No. 1, op. 28 (1961), Violin Concerto, op. 30 (1963), and Glosses: Sombre temes de Pau Casals, op. 48 (1978), he uses the E-flat clarinet extensively rather than writing for the B-flat clarinet in the altissimo register as he did in Variaciones concertantes. Multiple examples can be
found within these three works where Ginastera divided complicated technical passages between the two B-flat clarinets rather than having one or both clarinets play the entire part. These changes make the clarinet parts in his later works considerably easier to execute than the clarinet part for *Variaciones concertantes*.

The majority of the first clarinet part for the *Variaciones concertantes* does not contain insurmountable challenges for most professional clarinetists. Most of the variations in the work feature other instruments, to which the clarinet contributes accompaniment.20 The only section of the work that has been requested on orchestral auditions in the recent past is the third variation, which is typically requested in its entirety. This excerpt serves a function similar to the excerpts from Igor Stravinsky’s *L’oiseau de feu* (*Danse de l’oiseau de feu*) and Dmitri Shostakovich’s Symphony No. 9 (movement 3). Excerpts of this type are frequently used by audition committees to evaluate the technical facility of the auditioning clarinetist.

The technical difficulties in *Variaciones concertantes* can be overwhelming for the clarinetist, particularly since standard performance practices have not yet been established as they have been for the excerpts by Stravinsky and Shostakovich. One issue with *Variaciones concertantes* is the way that the part is published by Boosey & Hawkes, which makes the situation different than the Stravinsky and Shostakovich excerpts that can be performed as printed. In order to determine the type of performance practices to suggest for this work, it is important to identify the passages that are the most troublesome in the current printed edition.

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20 This is not including the final variation, which is scored for the entire orchestra. Both clarinet parts contain a number of technical challenges in the final variation, although the challenges are not the same degree of difficulty nor are they as exposed as the ones encountered in the third variation.
Ginastera does not use key signatures in *Variaciones concertantes*. A harmonic analysis of *Variazione in modo di Scherzo per Clarinetto* reveals that this variation is primarily based on the tonic pitch of B and in a mode similar to Phrygian. The clarinet part is therefore notated with the tonic pitch of C-sharp. As published, the first clarinet part for this variation is completely feasible for performance from the start of the variation though rehearsal number 23. The first problem arises two measures before rehearsal number 24. These two measures consist of an extremely fast run from chalumeau G-sharp to altissimo supérieur C-sharp (see example 8). This passage is completely exposed when performed in an orchestral setting; the first clarinetist is the only person who plays during these two measures.

![Example 8](image)

Example 8. Alberto Ginastera's *Variaciones concertantes*, Clarinet I part, two measures before [24].

These measures present two exceptional difficulties for clarinetists. The first arises from the part’s range. The top note in the scale, the altissimo supérieur C-sharp, extends beyond the standard range of the modern clarinet. Most fingering charts and studies indicate altissimo C the highest reasonable or feasible note on the clarinet, one
half-step lower than the C-sharp that is printed in the B-flat clarinet part.\textsuperscript{21} Because this note extends beyond the traditional range of the clarinet, no method books train clarinetists to achieve facility in this register. This is a problem because many clarinetists are not able to achieve this note with consistent success, particularly not in the context of this passage.

The second issue with this passage is the awkward finger patterns required in the run, particularly in the second beat of the measure before rehearsal number 24. The scale used in this run is a C-sharp Phrygian scale, which is typically only learned as a two-octave scale from chalumeau C-sharp to altissimo C-sharp if it is studied at all. The third octave C-sharp Phrygian scale contains a number of difficult finger combinations that make it incredibly difficult to connect the notes fluidly. The indicated tempo of this variation is 132 beats per minute with the dotted quarter note receiving the pulse, meaning that this passage must be played extremely fast. Combining this with the challenge of producing the altissimo supérieur C-sharp makes these two measures a treacherous spot for orchestral clarinetists.

After the passage shown in example 8, the variation presents a number of other technical challenges in the subsequent solo passages. The next difficult excerpt is between rehearsal number 25 and rehearsal number 26. This passage contains a number of cross fingerings and large leaps that can present significant technical problems for the clarinetist (see example 9). This section is accompanied only by a steady eighth-note

\textsuperscript{21} Fingering charts provided in standard tutors for Böhm system clarinets, including the Klosé and Bärmann methods for clarinet, only extend through altissimo C. One recent exception is Kalmen Opperman’s \textit{The New Extended Working Range for Clarinet} (2004), which contains some fingering suggestions for the altissimo supérieur register.
composite rhythm in the pizzicato strings, leaving the principal clarinet part highly exposed.

The cross-fingering patterns found in almost all of the eight measures are among the most challenging parts of this excerpt. Because the part is printed for B-flat clarinet, there are a number of places where the clarinetist is required to go quickly between clarion G-sharp and F-sharp, which requires raising a finger on one hand while lowering a finger on the other hand in order to play the proper pitches. The fourth and seventh measures of this excerpt are terribly awkward as written; the finger coordination that is necessary to perform these measures accurately and cleanly is incredibly difficult, if not impossible, for the vast majority of clarinetists.

A second challenge found in this excerpt is the frequent crossing of the break between the clarion and the altissimo register, which is made even more difficult when this break is slurred across. These slurred octave intervals are seen in the third and fourth
measures of example 9. The acoustical construction of the clarinet makes it so that slurring down over the break from the altissimo into the clarion register of the instrument is extremely challenging using traditional fingerings. The article written by de Kant suggesting performance practices for this work provides some alternate fingerings that may be of assistance to clarinetists for these specific intervals. However, de Kant’s fingerings are provided with the assumption that the clarinetist had transposed the part and is playing it on the A clarinet, so these suggestions are not useful if the part is performed as printed.

Between rehearsal numbers 26 and 27, the clarinet part becomes slightly more manageable and contains no major issues if performed as printed for the B-flat clarinet. Rehearsal number 27 through rehearsal number 28 is scored only for strings and timpani. Beginning at rehearsal number 28, the clarinet part once again becomes quite difficult and is almost completely unplayable as written on the B-flat clarinet using traditional fingerings (see example 10). The accompaniment during this excerpt consists of a sustained tremolo in the upper strings for all four measures and pizzicato notes in the low strings on beats one and four of the last two measures. The first clarinetist is once again the only person playing the melodic line.

Most of the challenges faced in example 10 are quite similar to those found in example 9. The third and fourth measures contain a slur that goes over the break between the altissimo and the clarion registers between C-sharp and G-sharp and between C-sharp and B, much like the problem of the octave slurs seen in example 9. The other notes in the passage, G-sharp and F-sharp, contain cross-fingerings that were also noted in example 9. The register and cross-fingering issues are considerably more problematic here because of the repetition of these difficult intervals.

The first two measures of example 10 also present a difficult challenge for the clarinetist. Each grouping of six notes contains some type of technical challenge, some of which involve cross-fingerings and some of which involve difficult coordination in the left hand. This coordination is especially difficult in second grouping of six notes found in the first measure of the example. Combining the awkwardness of the first two measures with the register and cross-fingering issues of the second two measures is likely to create an extreme problem for any clarinetist, particularly if the variation is performed at the metronome marking of \( \downarrow = 132 \) that was requested by the composer.
Examples 8, 9, and 10 show some of the extreme technical issues that are created by playing the part as it is printed for the B-flat clarinet. This is why many clarinetists either transpose parts of the variation or the entire variation so that it can be performed on an alternate clarinet. A number of today’s orchestral clarinetists have developed creative solutions to alleviate the issues described. There are currently only two articles that discuss the idea of transposing or altering the clarinet part for this variation in order to ease the technical problems. Both of these articles, one by Gulick and one by de Kant, suggest the use of the A clarinet for the entire duration of the variation. This solves some of the technical issues present in the B-flat clarinet edition, but it also creates some new problems. The following section will discuss some of the solutions from professional clarinetists who successfully performed this work in auditions and in orchestral settings.

Proposed Solutions

There is no one simple solution to make Variaciones concertantes easily playable for all clarinetists. In order to solve its challenges, some type of alteration or adaptation must be made to the clarinet part. However, there is not one simple solution that will solve all of the problems in this work; each of the alterations creates different problems, some of which may be more manageable than others based on the individual strengths and weaknesses of the clarinetist.

Performers commonly make two alterations in performances of Variaciones concertantes. The first alteration involves transposition from B-flat clarinet to a different type of clarinet. As discussed earlier, Ginastera said that he expected the clarinetist to play it on the most convenient clarinet, not necessarily on the B-flat clarinet indicated by
the published score. Therefore it should be acceptable to transpose the part for any clarinet as long as it makes the part playable and comfortable for the musician while not altering any of the sounding pitches or creating an abrupt change in timbre when using a different clarinet for this variation than in the rest of the work.

The second type of alteration consists of modifying specific passages in the work through octave displacement or simplification of rhythms. Unlike the transposition alterations, Ginastera did not make a statement approving any other type of change to the work to make it easier to perform. While these types of alterations may be necessary for some clarinetists in performance situations in order to perform the work, these would not be considered acceptable in orchestral auditions since the clarinetist would not be demonstrating the technical skills that this excerpt would be selected to display. In some recordings made by professional orchestras, the clarinetist plays the measure before rehearsal number 24 one octave lower to alleviate the range problem. This solution may be acceptable to some clarinetists and conductors, but it will not be accepted by everyone; therefore, it is advisable to not make such alterations.

There are some recordings available in which alterations or transpositions are not made to the three main problematic sections of the variation. In the 1968 recording by the Boston Symphony Orchestra conducted by Erich Leinsdorf, the excerpts in examples 9 and 10 are played as printed on the B-flat clarinet. The end result is not ideal; the rhythms are not steady throughout, certain notes do not speak, and the intonation is problematic due to the use of alternate fingerings in an attempt to avoid crossing the break between the altissimo and clarion registers. This recording serves as an example why one should not feel required to perform the work as printed for B-flat clarinet unless that option truly
is the most comfortable one. Based on the reputation and caliber of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and its clarinet players, it is clear that the B-flat clarinet was not the best choice for this particular clarinetist since many of the passages were not executed cleanly.

The following section describes possible alterations in *Variaciones concertantes*, the problems they solve, and the new problems they create.

1. *Transposing and using the A clarinet through the entire variation*. The issue of the awkward finger patterns in the altissimo range in example 8 is alleviated since it is now a D Phrygian scale; however, this makes the top note of the passage an altissimo supérieur D. This note is even more challenging to produce than the altissimo supérieur C-sharp required in the published B-flat clarinet part since it is beyond the altissimo C. This transposition eliminates the issue of cross-fingerings encountered in examples 9 and 10, but the issue of slurring between the altissimo and clarion registers of the instrument remains. This transposition is commonly heard on recordings and in live performances of the work. The clarinetists on the recordings made by the Richmond Sinfonia (David Niethamer) and the Cleveland Orchestra (Robert Marcellus) use this option. Based on the response from a survey of orchestral musicians, this transposition is also used by John Bruce Yeh of the Chicago Symphony in live performances.

2. *Playing the B-flat clarinet part for the first two or three solo passages, then transposing and using the C or D clarinet for the remainder of the variation*. This transposition requires the player to switch clarinets in the middle of the
variation. Because there is a low concert D written two measures before rehearsal number 19, the C and D clarinets cannot be used throughout the entire variation. Clarinetists who wish to use the C or D clarinet to alleviate the problems in the second half of the work must change clarinets during the rests at rehearsal number 20 or 22 unless it is being performed in an orchestral setting, in which case the second clarinetist can potentially play the note that is out of the range of the C and D clarinets. If the clarinetist does switch in the middle, one problem that arises is that it requires the clarinetist to play on an instrument that has been sitting unused since the beginning of the work. Also, the change is quite fast so the clarinetist will have very little time to switch instruments and be ready for the next entrance.

In example 8, transposing for the C clarinet changes the scale to B minor ending on an altissimo B and transposing for the D clarinet changes to scale to A minor ending on an altissimo A, both of which still remain in the traditional range of the instrument. Using either of these two instruments also alleviates most of the cross-fingerings and many of the register slurs in examples 9 and 10. The main challenge with this option is attempting to match the timbre of the B-flat clarinet with the C or D clarinet during the variation since the higher clarinets are generally quite a bit brighter in color. Some clarinetists may also encounter difficulty obtaining a C or D clarinet if they do not own these instruments, making this option not feasible for everyone.

The transposition using the B-flat clarinet and switching C clarinet is not on any commercial recordings, but it is occasionally used in live performances.23

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23 A live performance using this transposition was used by John Moses with the Westchester Philharmonic.
In the 2006 Europa Sinfonia recording conducted by Wolfgang Gröhs, Dan Chis played the entire variation on C clarinet and altered the low D by playing an F instead, which still fit within the chord. However, this alteration may not be considered acceptable by some performers and does not remain true to what Ginastera wrote in the score. There are no commercial recordings where the D clarinet is used.

3. Playing the B-flat or A clarinet part through the entire variation and having the second clarinetist play the high run on an E-flat clarinet. This transposition requires the second clarinetist to play the second and third measures of example 8 (one measure before and the downbeat of rehearsal number 24) on the E-flat clarinet. If this option is used, the second clarinet player has to execute a G-sharp minor scale with an altissimo G-sharp as the highest note.

Two issues arise with the use of E-flat clarinet that are easily solved. Because both clarinet players have to play four measures before rehearsal number 24, the second clarinet part for that measure must also be transposed for E-flat clarinet and can be played by the second clarinetist. The second clarinetist is supposed to play for the eight measures between rehearsal numbers 24 and 25 while the first clarinet has rests. In order to allow the second clarinetist to switch from E-flat clarinet back to B-flat clarinet after rehearsal number 24, the first clarinet player will have to play the second clarinet part until the second player has changed.

One issue that is not as easily solved is matching of timbres and timing at the point where the E-flat clarinet player takes over the run from the first
clarinetist. Because the timbres are so different between the instruments, it is next to impossible to match the sounds and not create an audible “bump” in the sound. It is also very difficult to have the E-flat clarinetist join in the run at exactly the same speed as the first clarinetist did in the previous measure due to the septuplets, which are difficult to subdivide.

This alteration is used on a number of different commercially available recordings. The clarinet players in the Boston Symphony Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, and Richmond Sinfonia all use this method to perform the run with the correct pitches. In the survey of orchestral clarinetists, a number of respondents indicated a preference for this option when performing Variaciones concertantes for a live concert. James Gholson of the Memphis Symphony said that he would also transpose this passage for E-flat clarinet in an audition setting.

4. Playing the B-flat clarinet or A part throughout and transposing part of the altissimo run down one octave. This transposition involves transposing the second and third measures of example 8 (one measure before and the downbeat of rehearsal number 24). This removes the problem with the awkward fingering patterns in the altissimo register C-sharp minor scale and also the difficulty of the altissimo supérieur C-sharp. However, this alteration results in changing the pitches requested by Ginastera in the score and would not be acceptable in an orchestral audition. This transposition can be heard on recordings by the Cleveland Orchestra and the Europa Symphony. None of the surveyed orchestral clarinetists expressed approval of this alteration.
5. *Simplifying rhythms to remove some of the technical challenges.* With the idea that we should perform the music as the composer intended, simplifying the rhythms of a piece may sound like an irrational idea. However, if the part is not playable by the clarinetist using any of the aforementioned suggestions and she is required to play the work for a performance, there may be no choice in the matter. In example 9, measures three and four contain difficult register slurs that remain present regardless of on which clarinet one chooses to play them. If it is not possible to play these slurred pitches cleanly, simplification may be necessary. In the 1999 Royal Philharmonic Orchestra recording conducted by Enrique Arturo Deimecke, the clarinetist simplifies these measures by playing staccato eighth-notes that outline the chords. While this changes what Ginastera wrote, it may be a better decision than attempting to play the part as written knowing that it may not be executed successfully. None of the surveyed orchestral clarinetists expressed approval of this alteration.

The figure below outlines some of the aforementioned performance suggestions for ease of comparison. This chart shows each of the transposition possibilities and where specific changes must be made during the variation. Options 4 and 5 from the above list are not included on the chart since their alterations do not involve a change of instrument.
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Figure 11: Clarinet Transposition Options for Alberto Ginastera's *Variaciones concertantes*
All of the alterations outlined above are usable in an actual orchestra, but may not be appropriate for orchestral auditions. It is important to evaluate which methods will work in each setting. For example, the last option on the chart will not be usable in orchestral auditions since there will not be a second clarinetist there to play the necessary passage before rehearsal number 19. Currently, the only proposed performance practice in print is described by de Kant’s, who suggests using the E-flat clarinet as outlined in the penultimate suggestion on the chart. While this option will work in a performance setting, it will not work in an audition for the same reason as the last option on the chart.

This leaves only three possible options for performance in an orchestral audition: playing the part as printed for B-flat clarinet, transposing the part for A clarinet, or using a combination of B-flat and C clarinets. The choice is ultimately left up to the clarinetist and should be made based on the player’s comfort level. If the clarinetist does not feel comfortable performing on a C clarinet, she should not use one for this piece regardless of the technical problems it may alleviate. However, the clarinetist may feel more comfortable playing a C clarinet than attempting the altissimo supérieur D required if the A clarinet is used. This will be variable depending on the clarinetist’s strengths and weaknesses.

Along with comfort, timbre matching must be taken into consideration if clarinets are changed during the variation. Ginastera was not particular about which clarinet should be used in performance of the work, but that does not mean that he approved an abrupt change in timbre should the clarinetist choose to switch to a different instrument in the middle of the variation. Therefore, the selection must also be made based on the
individual clarinetist’s ability to match timbre and colors between the instruments as well as on comfort.
CONCLUSION

Clarinetists who perform Ginastera’s Variaciones concertantes or play excerpts from it during auditions will want to follow the performance practices or use standard alterations set by professional peers, since they will evaluate the quality of the performance. The performance practices suggested here are based on the recordings and live performance experience of professional clarinetists, and therefore represent some of the solutions that are being used today. Through transpositions or modifications of the difficult passages, the clarinet passages in Variaciones concertantes become much more accessible and practical for performance.

Based on my findings, the aspiring or professional clarinetist should perform this work taking into account his individual strengths and weaknesses. The clarinetist should select which transposition or option to use based on not only the availability of specific clarinets, but also on the player’s comfort level on these instruments. The performance practice shows that professional clarinetists currently use a wide variety of methods to execute the clarinet variation successfully. However, none of the professionals who responded to the survey made any mention of transposing parts down an octave or simplifying rhythms. A clarinetist who is learning the work should take this into consideration when choosing which clarinet(s) to use for the variation.

The excerpts from Variaciones concertantes are currently not included in any published excerpt books, so it is difficult for clarinetists to view the part unless it is performed or provided by an orchestra for an audition. The full score is written in concert pitch, so the clarinet part is written in C rather than in B-flat. Since it is difficult for
clarinetists to obtain a copy of this music, I offer alternate versions of the clarinet variation from this work in Appendix 1 of this document. Please note that these readings only contain the clarinet variation and are not designed for performance; they were created solely for the purpose of study.

The alternate versions are provided for two primary reasons. The first reason is to allow clarinetists to see the part prior to performing or auditioning on it. The line formatting and spacing are set to replicate those found in the printed part. The alternate versions also allow clarinetists to see each of the transpositions and options that were proposed by professional clarinetists through the performance practice survey. This will allow clarinetists to view each option prior to selecting the clarinet on which she will perform the variation. Viewing of these alternate versions will be helpful for clarinetists who wish to see what the part will look like when it is performed using different types of clarinets.
APPENDIX 1: Alternate Versions of the Clarinet Part for *Variaciones concertantes*

Pages 42–43: *Variazione in modo di Scherzo per Clarinetto* for B-flat Clarinet (as published)

Pages 44–45: *Variazione in modo di Scherzo per Clarinetto* transposed for A Clarinet

Pages 46–47: *Variazione in modo di Scherzo per Clarinetto* transposed for a combination of B-flat Clarinet and C Clarinet

Pages 48–49: *Variazione in modo di Scherzo per Clarinetto* insert for D Clarinet (to be read as a substitution for the C Clarinet section on pages 46–47).

Page 50: *Variazione in modo di Scherzo per Clarinetto* insert for 2nd Clarinet (in E-flat).

All alternate versions are printed with permission of the publisher.
IV. Variazione in modo di Scherzo per Clarinetto

Clarinetto I (B♭)

Vivace $\text{\textit{d} = 132}$

(Cl. II)

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IV. Variazione in modo di Scherzo per Clarinetto

Clarinetto I (A)

Vivace $\text{\textit{d} = 132}$

(Cor.)

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poco cresc.

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IV. Variazione in modo di Scherzo per Clarinetto

Clarinetto I (B♭ & C)

\[ 15 \textbf{Vivace} \quad \text{j = 132} \quad \text{in B♭} \]\n
(Cl. II)

\[ 16 \]

\[ 17 \]

\[ 18 \]

\[ 19 \]

(to C clarinet)

\[ 3 \]

(Cor.)

\[ 7 \text{ in C} \]

\[ 20 \]

\[ 21 \]

p expressivo

\[ 22 \]

poco cresc.

\[ 23 \]

p cresc.

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IV. Variazione in modo di Scherzo per Clarinetto

Clarinetto I (D)

(Vivace \( \frac{1}{4} = 132 \))

Clarinet in D

(Cor.)

\( p \) expressivo

\( \text{poco cresc.} \)

\( \text{f cresc.} \)

\( \text{ff} \)

\( \text{fff} \)

\( \text{mf} \)

\( p \)

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IV. Variazione in modo di Scherzo per Clarinetto

Clarinetto II (E♭ insert)

\[ \text{Vivace } \frac{4}{4} = 132 \]

(Cl. I)

[Music notation]

(to B♭ Clarinet (quickly))

(Play)

(Cl. I)

[in B♭] (Cl. I covers part until switch is made)

(Cl. I)

(back to part)
APPENDIX 2: Variaciones concertantes Performance Practice Survey and Results

NOTE: Responses from clarinetists that had not performed nor studied the work and did not complete any of the supplemental questions are not included in this appendix.

1. James Gholson, UMemphis/Memphis Symphony

Have you played Alberto Ginastera's "Variaciones Concertantes" for a live performance? Yes, I have performed it.

If you have performed this work, which clarinet(s) did you use for performing the [third] variation (Variazione in modo di Scherzo per Clarinetto)? For the passage at 23 I used the Eb clarinet

What factors influenced your choice of clarinet for the variation? Foremost was consistency, second was projection, third was not to be yelled at!!

Did you alter any of the passages of the clarinet variation in performance? Transcribed the passage for Eb clarinet.
Please describe how you overcame any obstacles you encountered in this work. (If possible, include any unconventional fingerings and mention specific range issues which may occur based on your choice of clarinet)

Slow practice with a metronome.

Would you perform the clarinet variation from this work differently in an audition than in a live performance? No. My rationale for playing it on Eb had to do with the seven bar rests on either side of this passage. If you have the option of an eb player, then I would choose that option. For auditions, I would bring an eb clarinet if asked for this passage.

Do you have any advice or suggestions for other clarinetists who will perform this work in the future? Develop a very stiff lower lip and strong reed balancing skills

Additional comments: I did peruse the Internet for discussions of the clarinet part... I ran across a very good article that had NO discussion of fingerings for the altissimo C#.

2. Benjamin Lulich, Principal Clarinet, Pacific Symphony (Orange County, California)

Have you played Alberto Ginastera's "Variaciones Concertantes" for a live performance? No, I have not performed it but I have studied the work.
If you have performed this work, which clarinet(s) did you use for performing the [third] variation (Variazione in modo di Scherzo per Clarinetto)? I've tried a lot of different things, but I still like Bb for the first half of the variation. I've tried it on A as well, but it's more to my liking on Bb. The second half is the tricky part... The easiest is using a D clarinet--if you can find one. After that I think C clarinet is the next best option. If you don't have either of those available, I still prefer the Bb over the A. I do own a C clarinet, so I plan to use the C if I ever get the chance to perform the piece.

What factors influenced your choice of clarinet for the variation? The Bb feels more comfortable to me, technically speaking. Of course, the first half of the variation should be played on the Bb or A for the low note. Then switching to C (or D) for the high scale and the ending. For the high scale, you only need to go for a high A on D clarinet (or high B on C clarinet). Technically, the ending is much easier on both D or C clarinets than Bb or A (especially the last 8 bars).

Did you alter any of the passages of the clarinet variation in performance? I would try to stick to what's on the page. The only spot of interest would be toward the end where the grace note/mordent notes are. At a fast tempo, I would probably try to fit the graces/mordents/trills in as straight sixteenths for those bars.
Please describe how you overcame any obstacles you encountered in this work. (If possible, include any unconventional fingerings and mention specific range issues which may occur based on your choice of clarinet)

Playing the high scale on C or D clarinet works well for overcoming the obstacle of the extreme high notes. I rarely play higher than High C, so only going up to A or B is much easier for me. Also, the last eight bars on C or D work well, so you don't need to use open D or C# 5 & 6 from the end.

Would you perform the clarinet variation from this work differently in an audition than in a live performance? Hmm, I think I would try to play it as similarly as possible. Especially when the adrenaline gets going, tempo will probably be pretty quick, especially the second half. My guess is it would be good to be able to kind of go on auto-pilot and not think about it too much (just to hit the notes). Just a guess, since I haven't performed it yet.

Do you have any advice or suggestions for other clarinetists who will perform this work in the future? Practice early and practice often! Other than trying different clarinets (C, D), I think this is the best advice. Getting it really under your fingers so that you don't have to think as much in performance or at an audition. It's a difficult piece, and one that needs lots
of practice! And try not to rush the technical passages. That's about all I've got :)

*Additional comments:* When there is a moment of relative respite, go for lyricism. (The section right before the trills).

3. **Daniel McKelway**, Assistant Principal and Eb Clarinet with the Cleveland Orchestra; Professor of Clarinet Baldwin - Wallace Conservatory

*Have you played Alberto Ginastera's "Variaciones Concertantes" for a live performance?* Yes, I have performed it.

*If you have performed this work, which clarinet(s) did you use for performing the [third] variation (Variazione in modo di Scherzo per Clarinetto)?* Bb clarinet. Once I switched to the Eb for the top of the scale and had the 2nd clarinet begin the scale

*What factors influenced your choice of clarinet for the variation?* Ease of fast notes

*Did you alter any of the passages of the clarinet variation in performance?* No
Please describe how you overcame any obstacles you encountered in this work. (If possible, include any unconventional fingerings and mention specific range issues which may occur based on your choice of clarinet)

Practice. Once I was informed by the Principal Clarinetist of the Cleveland Orchestra that I would be playing the work 9 minutes before the dress rehearsal

Would you perform the clarinet variation from this work differently in an audition than in a live performance? Less dynamic range for an audition.

Do you have any advice or suggestions for other clarinetists who will perform this work in the future? Practice slowly

Additional comments: Great solo !!

4. John J. Moses, Woodwind Doubler on Broadway, currently at WICKED

Have you played Alberto Ginastera's "Variaciones Concertantes" for a live performance? Yes, I have performed it.

If you have performed this work, which clarinet(s) did you use for performing the [third] variation (Variazione in modo di Scherzo per Clarinetto)? I have performed it on Bb clarinet, also a transposed A
clarinet part, but I prefer my own special C clarinet part.

*What factors influenced your choice of clarinet for the variation?* Much easier on C clarinet.

*Did you alter any of the passages of the clarinet variation in performance?* No.

*Please describe how you overcame any obstacles you encountered in this work. (If possible, include any unconventional fingerings and mention specific range issues which may occur based on your choice of clarinet)*

Tried it on Bb clarinet for years, then gave it a shot on A clarinet, and finally decided that Ginastera wrote in C, so I tried it on my C clarinet and found it worked best.

*Would you perform the clarinet variation from this work differently in an audition than in a live performance?* I have performed the clarinet variation many times; for auditions, master classes, performances, etc. I always play it my own way first, then if a conductor or anyone asks for me to change it in any way, I accept the challenge.

*Do you have any advice or suggestions for other clarinetists who will perform this work in the future?* Listen to the few great clarinetist's
recordings, perhaps play along with them, then practice it over and over again until you have it into your hands and brain and soul. I have it memorized, but that's up to you?

Additional comments: I'm personally not overly impressed with some of the new faster versions I've recently heard of the Variations. They seem unnecessarily "flashy". The clarinet variation is one of many terrific variations, the piece is not about the clarinet player.

5. Ralph Skiano, Principal Clarinet, Richmond Symphony; Principal Clarinet, Des Moines Metro Opera; Principal Clarinet, Williamsburg Symphonia

Have you played Alberto Ginastera's "Variaciones Concertantes" for a live performance? Yes, I have performed it.

If you have performed this work, which clarinet(s) did you use for performing the [third] variation (Variazione in modo di Scherzo per Clarinetto)? Bb and A (in that order)

What factors influenced your choice of clarinet for the variation? I only own these!

Did you alter any of the passages of the clarinet variation in performance? no
Please describe how you overcame any obstacles you encountered in this work. (If possible, include any unconventional fingerings and mention specific range issues which may occur based on your choice of clarinet)

SLOW practice for one year before performance, more mouthpiece for extreme altissimo, some trick fingerings that only work for me ;) I also allow my cheeks to puff out at the top of the super high run...it seems to allow the tone to remain full and round all the way up.

Would you perform the clarinet variation from this work differently in an audition than in a live performance? No.

Do you have any advice or suggestions for other clarinetists who will perform this work in the future? Find fingerings that work with your horn on your mouthpiece and reeds. It's not a "one size fits all" situation. Practice the upper register fingerings blowing air, but with no tone at least half the time...this will allow you to do more reps without blowing out your lips. Find the "magic notes" you need to focus on to get through each lick.

Additional comments: it's probably not going to be as fast as you think ;)

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6. **Jonathon Troy**, Clarinetist/"President's Own" US Marine Corps Band

*Have you played Alberto Ginastera's "Variaciones Concertantes" for a live performance?* Yes, I have performed it.

*If you have performed this work, which clarinet(s) did you use for performing the [third] variation (Variazione in modo di Scherzo per Clarinetto)?* A Clarinet

*What factors influenced your choice of clarinet for the variation?* After struggling with the printed (Bb) part, a suggestion was made by my teacher, David Shifrin, to try the movement on the A Clarinet. He provided me with a handwritten part from his files. After going back and forth between the original and the transposed copy, I found the movement much easier to play on the A Clarinet.

*Did you alter any of the passages of the clarinet variation in performance?* No.

*Please describe how you overcame any obstacles you encountered in this work. (If possible, include any unconventional fingerings and mention specific range issues which may occur based on your choice of clarinet)*

For me, the most difficult part of the movement was ensuring that the highest note, a concert B-natural and a written D-natural, came out clearly.
A lot of practice and careful reed selection improved consistency, but there is always risk involved with that passage! I'm not sure there is a "conventional" fingering for high D-natural, but I used: LH: 2,3 RH:1,2 + C-sharp/F-sharp pinky key

_Would you perform the clarinet variation from this work differently in an audition than in a live performance?_ In an audition, I would probably move the tempo down just a bit to ensure accuracy.

_Do you have any advice or suggestions for other clarinetists who will perform this work in the future?_ My advice is to find a method that is most comfortable for the player. Try many methods and see which brings the most success, as opposed to just playing it one way because a teacher or a colleague does.

_Additional comments: [none]_

7. **Paul Votapek**, Principal Clarinet, Naples Philharmonic Orchestra

_Have you played Alberto Ginastera's "Variaciones Concertantes" for a live performance?_ Yes, I have performed it.
If you have performed this work, which clarinet(s) did you use for performing the [third] variation (Variazione in modo di Scherzo per Clarinetto)? A clarinet. I actually transposed the whole piece for A clarinet. I find the last variation to work better on the A as well.

What factors influenced your choice of clarinet for the variation? The last line is easier.

Did you alter any of the passages of the clarinet variation in performance? For the last measure of the run up to the high d (on the A clarinet), I have the e-flat clarinet play.

Please describe how you overcame any obstacles you encountered in this work. (If possible, include any unconventional fingerings and mention specific range issues which may occur based on your choice of clarinet)

Years of slow practice (ha ha). That and having the e-flat play that run

Would you perform the clarinet variation from this work differently in an audition than in a live performance? Obviously, I wouldn't be able to use the e-flat clarinet, so I would probably play at least the first page on the b-flat. To be honest this never came up on any auditions I took. Most of my auditions were between 1986 and 1998. I've spent minimal time practicing those runs though hitting a high c sharp seemed easier than the d.
Do you have any advice or suggestions for other clarinetists who will perform this work in the future? In performance, have the e flat play that run and save a lot of worry. It's actually a fun solo to play if you don't have to play that. Make sure your voicing is worked out for all the large skips to the highest register.

Additional comments: Best wishes to Thomas on your dissertation. And best wishes to anyone working on this. It's such a great piece and I enjoy playing it every time. I will actually be playing it for the fourth time this next year. I am looking forward to it and will have the e-flat play the run once again. Sincerely, Paul Votapek

8. John Bruce Yeh, Acting Principal Clarinet, Chicago Symphony Orchestra

Have you played Alberto Ginastera's "Variaciones Concertantes" for a live performance? Yes, I have performed it.

If you have performed this work, which clarinet(s) did you use for performing the [third] variation (Variazione in modo di Scherzo per Clarinetto)? Clarinet in A

Did you alter any of the passages of the clarinet variation in performance? No

Please describe how you overcame any obstacles you encountered in this work. (If possible, include any unconventional fingerings and mention specific range issues which may occur based on your choice of clarinet) If I recall correctly, I fingered high C the "regular way" (T,R,1,Akey/1,Ebkey) and the high D by overblowing the standard D an octave below (T,R,2,3/1,Ebkey)

Would you perform the clarinet variation from this work differently in an audition than in a live performance? I once, in April 1977 for the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, had to play it in an audition on the Bb clarinet (fingering the High C# (T,R,Akey/top 2 side keys). But this was before I ever thought of, or saw a part for A-clarinet.

Do you have any advice or suggestions for other clarinetists who will perform this work in the future? Play it on A-clarinet. And take in plenty of mouthpiece and reed!

Additional comments: [removed; contained personal contact information for Mr. Yeh.] A follow up e-mail from Mr. Yeh contained the following
information: now, trying the passage again, the high "D" on A-clarinet usually comes out better fingered totally open (no fingers down at all)
September 7, 2010

Thomas Kmiecik
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**SCORES OF ALBERTO GINASTERA’S COMPOSITIONS CONSULTED**

*Danzas del ballet Estancia, op. 8*. New York: Boosey & Hawkes, Inc., 1960. The score for a full orchestral piece that demonstrates Ginastera’s use of clarinet in works that are similar in style to *Variaciones concertantes*.


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Variaciones concertantes, op. 23. New York: Boosey & Hawkes, Inc., 1954. The published study score for this work.

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