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An analysis of Géza Frid’s Concerto for Clarinets, Op. 82 (1972): Rediscovered repertoire by a Hungarian, Jewish, Dutch composer

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MP 705  
Lecture Recital (in partial fulfillment for DMA degree)

**Géza Frid, Concerto for Clarinets Op. 82 (1972):**  
*Rediscovered repertoire by a Hungarian Dutch, Jewish composer*

1. **Why this composer and piece are deserving of attention**  
   a. **Géza Frid (1904-1989)** Hungarian Dutch composer, pianist of Jewish descent  
      i. Highly regarded in the Dutch musical scene of the 20th century  
         1. The Concertgebouw Orchestra of Frid’s hometown Amsterdam, has performed the music of Géza Frid eleven times during a 56 year period.  
         2. City of Amsterdam Music Award  
         3. 1990 Béla Bartók prize posthumously awarded “Internationally renowned musician of Hungarian descent”

2. **Who was Géza Frid?**  
   a. **Musical development**  
      i. Star student of Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály  
      ii. Travels with Bartók searching for folksongs  
      iii. 1924 Exams in Piano and Composition  
   b. **Life Events**  
      i. Moves from Hungary to the Netherlands (1929), marries (1937), Arthur is born (1939)  
      ii. German occupation of Holland; (’40-45)  
         1. Travel and work forbidden  
            a. Musician’s resistance  
               i. Clandestine concerts for food  
               ii. Poem “Between Four Walls”  
      iii. Life after WWII  
         1. Tours as pianist and accompanist  
            a. Zoltán Székely.  
            b. Erna Spoorenberg (1925-2004)  
            c. Luctor Ponse  
               i. Bartók’s Sonata for 2 Piano’s and Percussion, London Symphony Orchestra, Doráti conducting  
   c. **Writings (portions translated)**  
      i. *Around the World in 80 Years*  
      ii. *Eye to Eye With...*  
      iii. *Mens en Melodie*  
   d. **Frid the Composer**  
      i. Géza Frid’s music mostly performed mostly only during his lifetime.  
      ii. 116 pieces; often uses folk idiom of Hungary  
         1. Musical style  
            a. Striking sense of rhythm  
            b. Creativity rooted in the folk idiom of native Hungary  
            c. Inspired by Bartók, Debussy and Ravel.  
         2. Chamber works with clarinet

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1943  
Between Four Walls  
Trapped, in anguish of soul,  
By small and large worries,  
Spiritually broken, without hope.
a. Serenade for Winds Op. 4 (1928)
b. Rhapsodie Op. 42 for clarinet and piano
c. Metamorphosen Op. 54a (1963)
d. Sextet Op. 70 (1965)

3. Orchestral Suite, Opus 6
   a. Paris by Pierre Monteux,
   b. Amsterdam Concertgebouw Orchestra
c. New York, Boston, BSO

iii. Awards
1. Dutch awards
   a. 1949 Paradou Op. 28
   b. 1954 Etudes Symfoniques Op. 47
c. Variations on a Dutch Folksong, Opus 29 for choir and orchestra
d. Sonata for Violin and Piano, Opus 50
e. Third String Quartet, Opus 30
   f. Fourth String Quartet, Opus 30a
2. 1990 Béla Bartók prize
   a. posthumously awarded
      “Internationally renowned musician of Hungarian descent”.

iv. Frid Renaissance
   1. 4 CD’s
   2. Eindhoven Composer Focus Weekend

3. Foundations crucial to this research
   a. Leo Smit Foundation promotes music of composers persecuted during WWII.
      www.LeoSmit.org
   b. Géza Frid Foundation draws the attention of the public to the extensive and varied oeuvre of
      the composer Géza Frid. www.gezafrid.com

4. Goal of this research
   a. Introduce and promote this hitherto unknown work to the worldwide clarinet community

5. Concerto for B-flat, A, E-flat and bass clarinets
   a. Deserves attention!
      i. Effective and interesting piece
      ii. Significant addition to the standard clarinet repertoire
      iii. Situation today
         1. Scholarly discussions of Géza Frid’s concerto are nonexistent
         2. No recordings Frid’s Concerto for Clarinets
   b. Background
      i. Composed in 1972
      ii. Dedicated to George Pieterson, principle clarinet with the Concertgebouw Orchestra
      iii. Uses four clarinets, A, B-flat, E-flat and Bass
      iv. String orchestra
      v. Frid wrote his own piano reduction which we use today.
      vi. Concerto is Informed by folksongs’ rhythm and melodic line
         (Frid accompanied Bartók on his search for authentic Hungarian folk songs and
dances)
   c. Performances
i. Amsterdam Concertgebouw, George Pieterson, clarinet; Dutch Chamber Orchestra; David Zinman, conductor; February 24, 1975

ii. Recording was broadcast via the Dutch World Service
   1. Unavailable for purchase

iii. Michael Bryant, English clarinetist and researcher, shared a recording of the broadcast of Frid’s Concerto.

   d. Reviews

      i. “He combined the professionalism of four master clarinetists in one!”

      ii. “…played with complete technical control”

      iii. “…a lively and convincing work, due to the virtuoso performance of the soloist, as well as the creative and masterful and transparent style of the composer.”

      iv. “A kind of artistic circus routine....nicely and playfully musical, whereby the composer bets on the talent of a performer like George Pieterson, to whom the work was dedicated, and who is at the moment, the Netherlands best clarinetist.”
### Figure 1 Form

#### Diagram of Concerto for Clarinets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Movement</th>
<th>Clarinets Used</th>
<th>Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Allegretto risoluto</td>
<td>A</td>
<td><strong>Short Introduction</strong> m. 1 -14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Sonata form</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Exposition</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Theme A m. 15</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Theme B m. 33</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Closing Theme m. 41</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Development</strong> m. 59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cadenza with “tremelo speciale” m. 108</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Recapitulation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Theme A m. 125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Theme B m. 131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Closing Theme (augmented) m. 135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Andante cantabile</td>
<td>A</td>
<td><strong>3 part song form</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bass</td>
<td>Theme A: m. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Theme B: m. 29</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Theme A: m. 47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Allegretto pesante</td>
<td>B-flat</td>
<td><strong>Sonata Form</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Exposition</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Theme A: m. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Theme B: m. 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E-flat</td>
<td><strong>Development</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>String pizzicato fugue with E-flat counter melody m. 70</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Recapitulation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A</td>
<td>From Movement 1: m. 112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bass</td>
<td>From Movement 2: m. 126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B-flat</td>
<td>Fugato: m. 138</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Figure 2 Rhythmic drive**

Dynamic and motoric motive from *Allegretto risoluto*

**Figure 3 Interval Expansion**

*First movement, m. 128 interval expansion*

*Third movement m. 90*
Figure 4 Pick-up Motives

(All score excerpts from Géza Frid, Concert voor clarinetten en strijkorkest. Amsterdam: Donemus, 1973.)

The theme from the first movement is expanded in the last movement in a fugato. The rhythm is a mirror image at first then continues in running sixteenths in a fugato.

Climax of pickup motives
Figure 5 Extremes - Cadenza
Figure 6 Golden Ratio

Mens en Melodie
“The Golden Ratio and Form Relationships in Art”.
• pleasing to the eye in visual art
• practical application in music
• Ratios of the golden ratio
  The ratio of (a) to (b) is equal to the ratio of (b) to (a) + (b)
• Multiply the number of measures (or the number of metric units) by 0.618.

Ernő Lendvai related golden ratio to Bartóks music
• Bartók followed this principle to the minutest detail of the piece.

Frid suggests composers use formula to decide length of pieces
• Frid adopted this formula in his own compositions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Golden Ratio in the Concerto</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Allegretto risoluto</td>
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<tr>
<td>II. Andante cantabile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. Allegretto pesante</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 7 Accent Patterns

Dactyl (Lower notes) and iamb (upper notes) accent patterns in measure 60-70, first movement

Accent Patterns

- Long
U Short
UU Dactyl ‘mer ri iy’
U Trochee ‘hap py’
U Iamb ‘a way’
UU Anapest ‘seven teen’

Iamb, dactyl, trochee and anapest accent patterns in third movement, measures 20-25
Figure 8 Harmonic Language

Octatonic

First movement from measure 89, drawn from OCT$_{01}$ collection

Hexatonic

First movement, measure 49, F-sharp—A-sharp
A subset of hexatonic set (014589)

First movement, measure 45, B—D
A subset of hexatonic set (014589)
Hexatonic continued...

First movement, measure 135, E-flat—A-flat—C—E (0148)
A subset of hexatonic set (014589)

First movement, measure 138, G-sharp—C-sharp—E—A (0158)
A subset of hexatonic set (014589)

Second movement, measure 1-8
Melody (horizontal) and harmony (vertical) are members of hexatonic set (014589)
Hexatonic continued...

Second movement last chord
C-sharp—E—G-sharp—C (0148)

First movement last chord A—E—A—E—C—G-sharp (0148)
A subset of hexatonic set (014589)

Last movement last chord
B—D-sharp—F-sharp—A-sharp (0158)
Figure 9 “Tremelo Speciale”

(Whole Cadenza see Figure 5)

Figure 10 Clarinet Systems

German versus French System

German System
- holes spaced similarly to recorder holes
- ‘Oehler system’
- cylindrical to the bottom F/C hole
- more resistance and firmer tone
- smooth sound, always even, with no bad notes
- fingering is awkward and the lowest two notes are very flat

French System
- designed in the 1850’s
- ‘Boehm system’
- fluid fingerings
- expanded lower flare going up to G/D hole and sometimes further
- freer blowing and a tone that sometimes can seem a bit ‘thin’
- inequalities between notes
- lower notes are in tune
- fingering is more fluid.
Clarinet Systems continued....

**Inspiration from the Past and Hopes for the Future**

**Géza Frid** was an extraordinarily talented musician, composer and writer. His music is deserving of more recognition and should be programmed more regularly.

His Concerto for Clarinets in particular offers an attractive and meaningful addition to the clarinet repertoire; contemporary clarinetists need to master all four instruments featured in this work and the preparation of this piece will contribute to a clarinetist's fluency and capability on each instrument.

**George Pieterson** recently passed on in April 2016. His personable clarinet teaching and performances have inspired many clarinetists over the years, the author included.

A revitalization of Géza Frid’s Concerto which he championed, will hopefully be a small tribute of his teaching to a generation of professional clarinetists in the Netherlands and beyond.
Bibliography


Discography

Frid, Géza. Concerto for Clarinets. George Pieterson, B-flat, A, E-flat and Bass clarinets; Nederlands Chamber Orchestra, David Zinman, conductor, recorded 1975. Featured on “Dutch Concert Rostrum,” Radio Netherlands, The Dutch International Service, Bob Ellis, host, 2002; radio program recorded by Peter Vloeimans, Leeuwarden, the Netherlands. (exact address unknown); Michael Bryant, privately owned reel to reel recording shared on CD with author.