

Symphonism with Jazz Influences from the Perspective of the Clarinet and Saxophone

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Abstract: *The study addresses a less researched field in the European space and, very little, in the local musicological research - symphonic jazz and symphonism with jazz influence. The collaboration between the authors of the study was carried out in order to reveal the aspects of symphonic creation with jazz influence from the perspective of the clarinet and the saxophone, a family of aerophones with common roots. Historical reality reveals to us that the great European composers, such as Stravinsky, Rachmaninov, Ravel, Milhaud, etc. were particularly interested in the practice and theory of jazz music, many of them being influenced by the pioneer of symphonic jazz, George Gershwin. Moreover, Stravinsky composed and dedicated the concert, analyzed in this study, to the jazz clarinetist, Woody Hermann, the composer personally working with the jazz Big band to which he added several instruments typical of the symphony orchestra.*

Keywords: *Symphonic Jazz Composition; Instrumentation & Orchestration; Stravinsky and Jazz;*

Introduction

As the title of the study describes, we will highlight aspects of symphonism with the influence of jazz in which the clarinet and saxophone family is at the center of the creations of some reference composers in universal creation. Considering the previous scientific research of the field between us, we concluded that a collaboration that would harmonize the interpretative technique of clarinets and saxophones and the compositional technique with a specific symphonic jazz can end with a subject of general interest, quite little explored in the academic scientific approach.

1. The new clarinet from the end of the 18th century, a pretext for a landmark concert creation by the Mozartian genius

There is a recorded moment in the history of music when Mozart created the *Concerto for Clarinet and Orchestra in A major K.622*. It seems that this concerto, written by Mozart for the clarinetist Anton Stadler in 1791, especially the third part of the concerto, was also Mozart's last composition before he died.

Anton Stadler, a good friend of Mozart, is considered both the performer and co-inventor of the instrument called the basset clarinet, a clarinet with an extended range in the lower part by a third. It seems that, when he started it, this instrument was sometimes called the "bass clarinet", but it was not related to what we know today as the bass clarinet. Since we do not propose a complete analysis of the concerto, we present only the first syntactic unit (a phrase) of each part of the concerto, accompanied by some analytical aspects specific to Mozart's style. The thematic material generating the first theme is what makes a musical work easily recognizable, for this reason the generating idea, which is the basis of a musical creation, represents the *loci topici* moment that Sigismund Toduță speaks about in *The Musical Forms of the Baroque in the Music of Johann Sebastian Bach*. The first part – Allegro is in the form

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of a Sonata. In the example below we see the notation for the basset clarinet in A, so for the effect to be A major, the clarinet is written on an ascending minor 3rd (in C major):

Fig.1 First phrase from first part of Mozart's Clarinet Concerto

We observe in the syntactic unit (phrase 1) presented above the heterogeneous character of the component motifs, the phrase having an open character through the semicadence. From the point of view of orchestral technique, we observe in m3 the realization of the chord in a wide position, this aspect being important in the process of learning the incipient techniques of orchestration. Another detail is related to the writing on a common staff of the cello with the double bass, a solution constantly existing in the *Concerto grosso* of the Baroque and taken over here.

Part II – Adagio is in rounded binary form³:

Fig.2 Fragment from the second part of Mozart's Clarinet Concerto

The motifs in F1 are melodically homogeneous, the amplification of the D major arpeggio being achieved both melodically and rhythmically, the phrase having a closed character. We observe the achievement of the specific accompaniment by swinging to the upper third (v1), respectively to the lower fourth (v2) to achieve the chord.

Part III – Allegro is in the form of a sonata rondo⁴.

Fig.3 Fragment from the third part of Mozart's Clarinet Concerto

³ The rounded binary form implies the inclusion in section B of a syntactic unit from section A.

⁴ William E. Chapin. 1998. *Classical Form*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 235. Retrived November, 4, 2024, from <https://search.worldcat.org/title/567929606>

The first syntactic unit (phrase 1) has an anacrusic character and is composed of 2 symmetrical motifs, motif 2 being also made anacrusic.

The motifs are heterogeneous from a melodic-rhythmic point of view. The thematic material of the component motifs is different, cell 1 of m2 being made by gradually walking in the opposite direction (descending) compared to cell 1 of m1.

The phrase has an open character through a semi-cadence (IV - V)

I mentioned this concerto for Mozart's basset clarinet, because there was an association between the modern bass clarinet and Stadler's "bass clarinet", which are totally different.

2. The bass clarinet and the new instrument – the saxophone – invented by the Belgian Adolph Sax, a pretext for new creations by the great European composers

In this context, in 1838 - approximately 50 years later - we must remember the initiative of the Belgian Adolph Sax (the inventor of the saxophone), who brought improvements to the bass clarinet instrument, the shape he designed being taken over by future instrument builders. A. Sax also manufactured brass instruments from the *ophicleide* family and, thus, developed a new instrument that was a combination of the bass clarinet and a brass instrument from the *ophicleide* family. The new instrument called saxophone was patented in 1846 and had 7 categories, from sopranino to bass.

There is a misconception, even among music educators, many making the mistake of associating the saxophone with jazz music. As we can see, the saxophone was used in the classical music genre, at least 60 years before the emergence of the incipient jazz style, „Dixieland”, where the first brass bands that included the saxophone appeared.

The first work dedicated to the saxophone - made by a world-renowned composer - was *Rapsodie pour orchestre et saxophone* by Claude Debussy in 1901. This rhapsody for saxophone by Debussy was born within a project of an American saxophonist, probably the first female saxophonist, Elise Hall⁵. The American musician contacted Debussy, Vincent D'Indy and composer Andre Caplet, a close friend of Debussy, in 1901 in order to make compositions dedicated to the saxophone. Debussy completed the version of the rhapsody for saxophone and piano in 1911, after his death the composer Jean Roger-Ducase orchestrated the rhapsody in 1918. The premiere of the orchestrated version took place only in 1919, but the saxophonist who had commissioned the work was no longer available and was replaced by someone else.

As part of the project commissioned by the saxophonist Elise Hall, the composer Vincent D'Indy composed the work *Choral Varie Op.55* in 1903.

Also in 1903, Debussy's collaborator, the composer Andre Caplet composed *Légende, symphonic suite for chromatic harp, alto saxophone and strings* and in 1905 *Impressions d'automne, Elegy for alto saxophone, oboe, 2 clarinets, basson, harp, organ and 2 cellos*.

A series of compositions by European composers of "academic" music dedicated to the saxophone followed. Darius Milhaud composed the *Scaramouche* suite in 1937. The first version was for two pianos and, due to the popularity of the work, he made the version for alto saxophone and orchestra in the same year.

A historical detail that shows the rapprochement of European composers in the academic music genre with those in the jazz genre, there is an arrangement of this suite for Bb clarinet

⁵ James Bennet II. 2017. *The Incredible Story of Elise Hall's Saxophone and Debussy's Trainwreck Commission* | WQXR Editorial". New York Public Radio. Retrived March, 17, 2025, from <https://www.wqxr.org/story/incredible-story-elise-hall-saxophone-and-debussys-trainwreck-commission/>.

and orchestra that Milhaud made at the request of the American jazz clarinetist, Benny Goodman.

This is an arrangement for 5 saxophones with alto soloist.

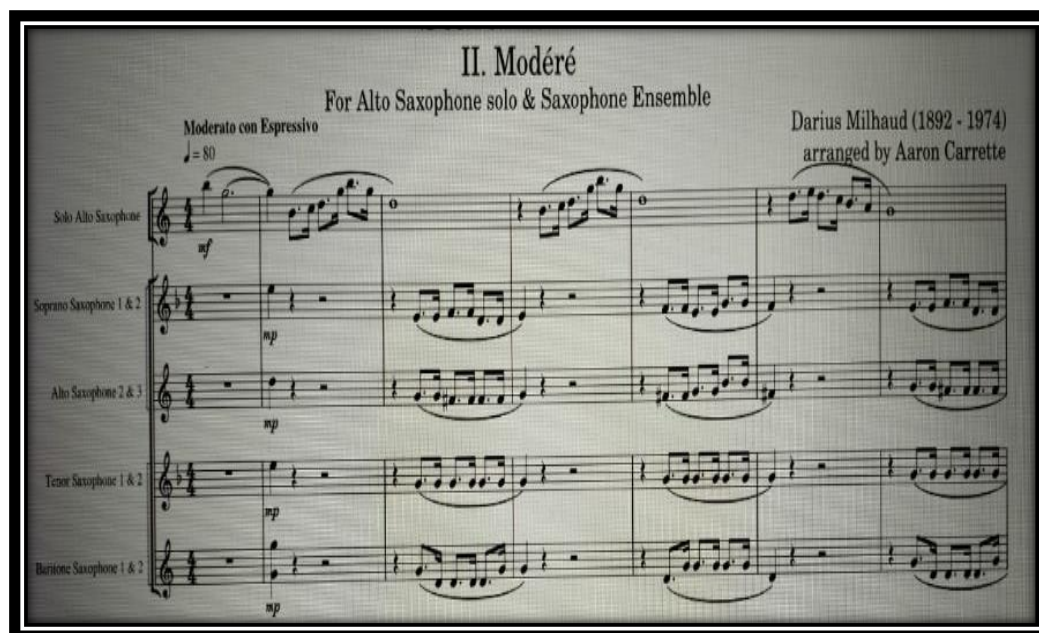


Fig.4 Arrangement for 5 saxofones, frag.from second part from *Sax.concerto* by D.Milhaud

In a (serial) study published in the online magazine „No14plusminus” - *Jazz as a musical symbiosis* – I emphasized the fact that almost all the great jazz pianists of the world had as a basis classical piano studies, therefore a piano technique formed by studying the universal piano repertoire.

It seems that we encounter a similar situation among clarinetists and saxophonists in jazz music. It seems that almost all the great jazz saxophonists – from the classics Lester Young or Charlie Parker to John Coltrane Lee Konitz, Dexter Gordon, Paul Desmond, Stan Getz, Gerry Mulligan, Michael Brecker, etc. previously studied classical clarinet.

At the same time, although it is an instrument associated with the classical music genre, the clarinet was a basic instrument of the first early jazz bands – in the *New Orleans*, *Dixieland* or *Chicago* styles – this fact being also due to the influence of musicians of Jewish origin, those who performed *Klezmer music*, a culture in which the clarinet plays a particularly important role.

3. Artie Shaw, musician who demonstrated that jazz and symphonic music can be performed simultaneously with high professionalism

One of the great jazz clarinetists who studied and constantly concerned himself with the perfection of classical technique was Artie Shaw, whose real name was Arthur Jacob Arshawsky. Considered a rival of the famous Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw was also concerned with the art of musical composition with classical, symphonic influences. Thus, in 1935, his work *Interlude in B flat* for solo clarinet, string quartet and rhythm section prefigures the *Third Stream* style, the fusion between the classical genre and jazz in which improvisational work is constantly found. Continuing this concept of stylistic and musical genre fusion, in 1940 he created *Concerto for Clarinet*, a work that remained famous also due to its inclusion in the film *Second Chorus* (1940) by Fred Astaire, where the solo composer sings together with his orchestra. Artie Shaw's concerto is more of a rhapsody in a single movement/part.

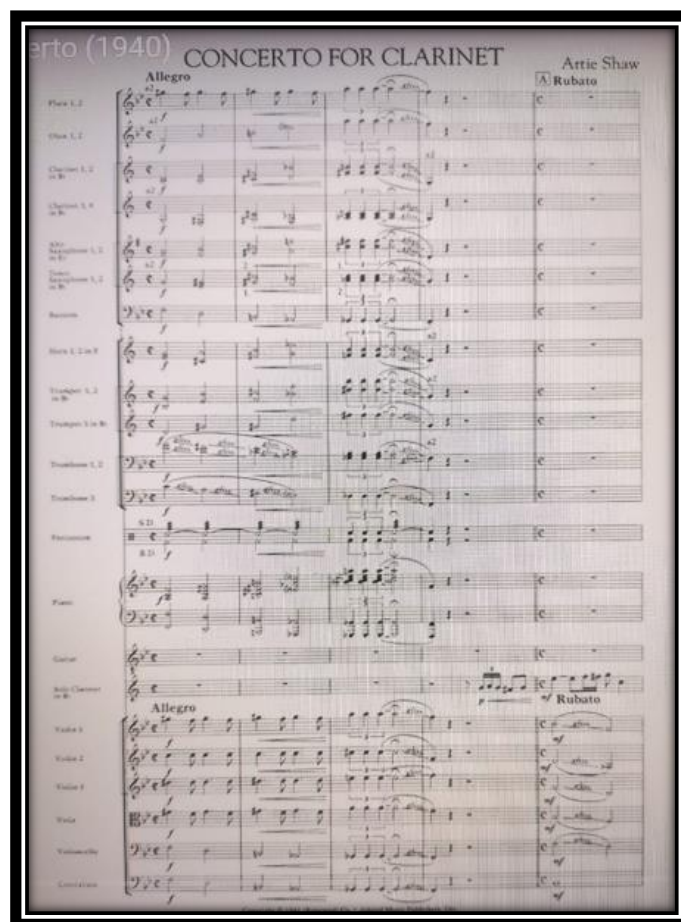


Fig.5 First page from the *Concerto for Clarinet* score by A.Shaw

Artie Shaw's work ends with the famous "altissimo C", a fragment in the super-high register that ends with B flat in the third octave, the upper limit of the range.



Fig.6 *Altissimo C* from the end from the A. Shaw *Clarinet concerto*

4. The clarinet - the instrument that opens the musical discourse of Gershwin's rhapsody, a work through which a new concept the symphonic jazz is born

The 20th century records a historical musical moment, some consider it revolutionary. George Gershwin, carries out the first symphonic jazz project, „harmonizing” two musical genres: symphonic music and 1920s jazz, which mainly manifested the *Ragtime* and *Dixieland* styles. The *Swing-Big band* style was in the making.

In 1924, at *Aeolian Hall* in New York, a historic event took place, a concert entitled *An Experiment in Modern Music* with the aim of encouraging and valorizing American compositional art. In this context, George Gershwin presented the work *Rhapsody in blue* for the first time, this moment representing the birth of a new musical genre of synthesis between European symphonism and jazz as it was known in the 1920s.

Even though the solo instrument of Gershwin's rhapsody is the piano, the work is easily recognizable by anyone through the clarinet solo with which the rhapsody begins. The so-called "dirty glissando" or "smear" technique:

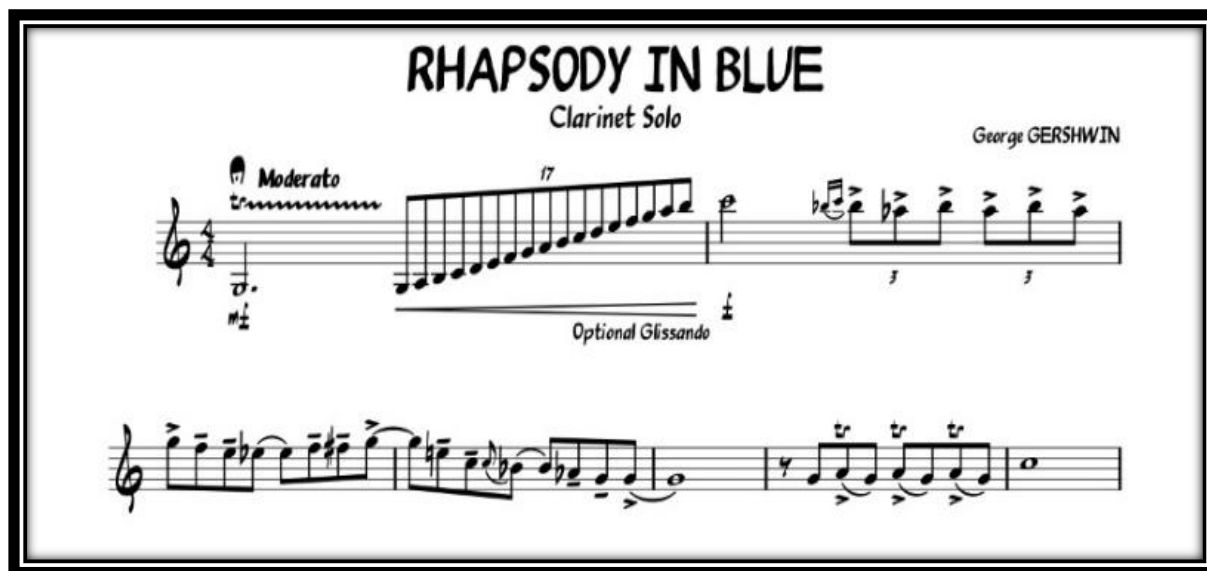


Fig.7 The clarinet solo from the opening of Gershwin's rhapsody

In the book *How to understand musical creation in the key of the art of improvisation through European compositional art, the cultured creation of jazz and film music*⁶ - I emphasized the fact that almost all the world's great jazz pianists had as their basis classical piano studies, therefore a piano technique formed through the study of the universal piano repertoire.

It seems that a similar situation is encountered among clarinetists and saxophonists in jazz music. It seems that almost all the great jazz saxophonists – from the classics Lester Young or Charlie Parker to John Coltrane Lee Konitz, Dexter Gordon, Paul Desmond, Stan Getz, Gerry Mulligan, Michael Brecker, etc. previously studied classical clarinet.

What is less known is the fact that although Gershwin did not orchestrate *Rhapsody in Blue* – this was done by Ferde Grofe – the composer was also an orchestrator of *The second Rhapsody* and the famous *Concerto in F major* for Piano and Orchestra, which served as an example for Maurice Ravel in creating his own concerto in G major⁷.

At the premiere of Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, great European composers of reference such as Stravinsky and Rachmaninov were present as spectators, inspired by the concept of classical-jazz fusion that Gershwin created at the symphonic level.

⁶ Florin Florentin Răducanu. 2022. *How to understand musical creation in the key of the art of improvisation through European compositional art, the cultured creation of jazz and film music*. București: Editura muzicală Grafoart, p. 33.

⁷ Idem. „Ravel and Gershwin a relationship with mutual influence through the cryptocode of jazz music theory”. *Revista Muzica a Uniunii Compozitorilor și Muzicologilor din România*. Retrived June 10, 2023, from <https://ucmr.org.ro/revistele-ucmr/revista-muzica/revista-muzica-nr-5-2021/>

5. Igor Stravinsky in a lesser-known creative position in which he reconcile the orchestration and wind instruments of the jazz orchestra – the Big Band – with the stylistics and instrumentation specific to European symphonism.

There is an event in the life and work of Igor Stravinsky that is emphasized in Western musicology – less mentioned in the domestic musicological approach – an aspect that reveals the interest that the great European composers had in the collaborations with jazz musicians in America. Stravinsky composed the *Ebony Concerto* in 1945, dedicated to the jazz clarinetist Woody Hermann.

The composer himself worked on rehearsals with Hermann's jazz orchestra, the premiere taking place in 1946 at *Carnegie Hall*, the jazz Big Band, to which various instruments were added, being led by the conductor Walter Hendl. Previously, in 1918, Stravinsky composed – inspired by the incipient Ragtime jazz style – *Ragtime for eleven instruments* (flute, clarinet in A, english horn F, trumpet Bb, trombone, percussions, cymbalom, violin1, violin 2, viola, double bass) a work in which the composer also includes the cymbalom⁸, which is due to his friendship with the Hungarian virtuoso Aladar Racz.

If we analyze Stravinsky's score, we notice that *Ebony Concerto* was designed for a Big Band jazz orchestra to which he added the bass clarinet, along with saxophones, French horn, guitar, and brings in a unique combination between the Big Band structure (with a rhythm section specific to the jazz genre) and the harp, thus creating a combination in instrumentation never seen before.

In jazz Big Band the standard structure is:

- 5 saxophones (2 alto, 2 tenor, 1 baritone)
- 4 trumpets
- 4 trombones
- Piano
- Guitar
- Rhythm section (double bass and drums).

Stravinsky keeps the Big Band structure, but also adds the bass clarinet alongside the saxophones, adds another trumpet and reduces the trombones to 3. It is interesting that the bass is not written in the strings section (with bow) but is written immediately below the guitar, on the instruments with struck strings (piano) and plucked strings (harp).

Saxophones are transposing instruments. Soprano - Bb, is written with an ascending major second (like the soprano clarinet and trumpet), Alto - Eb, is written with an ascending major sixth, Tenor - Bb, is written with an ascending major ninth, Baritone – Eb, is written with an ascending thirteenth.

The Bb bass clarinet is notated like the tenor saxophone (a new ascending note). The form of the first movement - Allegro moderato - is sonata/sonatina with an introduction, without proper development that overlaps with the Codetta. The tonal plan is atypical, not respecting the classical sonata⁹ plan.

The introduction is a dialogue between the trumpets and saxophones with a *riff*¹⁰, the debut being of the Bb trumpet section:

⁸ Stravinsky acquired a cymbalom during his stay in Switzerland, where he met the Hungarian virtuoso Aladar Racz.

⁹ Douglas M. Green, 1979, *Form in Tonal Music: An introduction in analysis*. U.S. Holt: Rinehart and Winston, p. 137.

¹⁰ A melodic-rhythmic ostinato structure that accompanies - in jazz - an improvisational discourse.

Dedicated to Woody Herman
EBONY CONCERTO
IGOR STRAVINSKY

Allegro moderato (♩ = 88)

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Fig.8 First page score from *Ebony Concerto* by I.Stravinsky

Theme I, in E minor, is enunciated by the trumpets:

Fig.9 Second theme score from *Ebony Concerto* by I.Stravinsky

After a transition/bridge performed by piano and trumpets, the second theme, in Eb major, is intoned by the solo instrument, the clarinet:

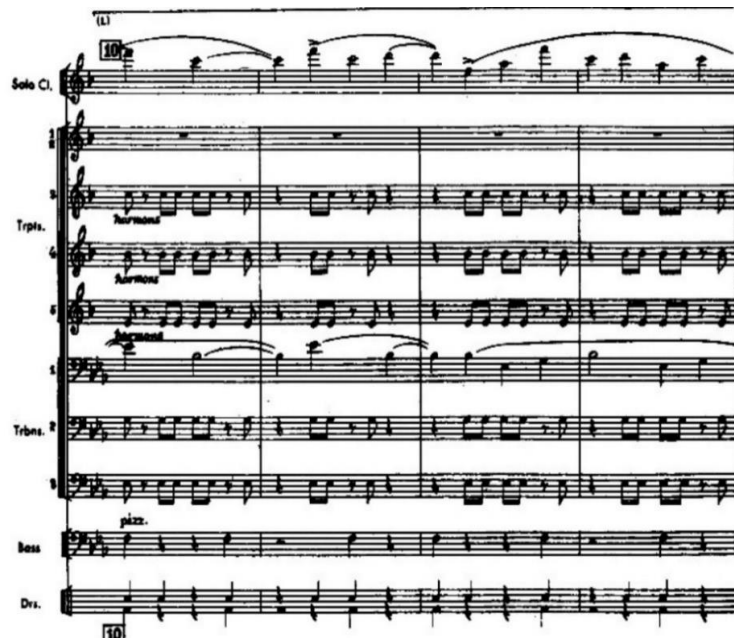


Fig.10 Codetta score from first part of *Ebony Concerto* by I.Stravinsky

The *Codetta* of the *Exposition* also has the role of a short *Development* (in fact, this sonata has no real *Development*, having a form closer to that of an atypical sonatina):

Fig.11 Short *Development* from first part of *Ebony Concerto* by I.Stravinsky

The *codetta* is performed with the motif from the Introduction presented by the trumpet section, followed by an improvisational clarinet solo:

The musical score for Figure 12 shows an improvisational moment of the clarinet in the Codetta. The score is written for a large ensemble, including Solo Clarinet, Bass Clarinet, Trumpets 1-4, Trombones 1-3, Piano, Guitar, and Bass. The clarinet part is marked with a '16' and a '17' indicating the start of the improvisation. The music is in a complex, improvisational style with many accidentals and dynamic markings.

Fig.12. Improvisational moment of the clarinet in the *Codetta*

After the rehearsal (da capo) - which also includes theme I - the second volta represents the *Reprise* that exposes the second theme in Bb major by trumpet 1 (in the *Exposition*, theme II was in Eb major):

The musical score for Figure 13 shows the second volta which represents the Reprise. The score is written for a large ensemble, including Baritone 1, French Horn, Trumpets 1-4, Trombones 1-3, Piano, Guitar, Alto Saxophone, Tenor Saxophone, Baritone Saxophone, French Horn, Trumpet 1, Piano, Harp, Tuba, and Drums. The music is in a complex, improvisational style with many accidentals and dynamic markings.

Fig.13 The second volta which represents *Reprise*

The *Coda* brings the conclusion in Bb of the clarinet doubled isorhythmically by the saxophones and the motif from the introduction performed by the trumpets reappears:

Fig.14 Conclusion of the first part of Stravinsky's *Clarinet concerto*

To understand Stravinsky's unique approach, we must understand what the orchestration technique for Big Band consists of. In this sense, we propose as an example a personal work of one of the two authors of this study. *Jazz Fugue Blues* is a work intended for piano and later orchestrated for Big Band.

The orchestration technique for the Big Band contains the same general principles of orchestration for the symphony orchestra. If in the symphonic technique the unison is achieved, in some situations, with instruments from different categories - woodwind aerophones with brass aerophones, in the case of the Big Band technique things are simplified, because we only have brass aerophones.

Like the symphonic orchestration technique, the orchestration technique for Big Band involves creative skills in distributing sounds within vertical structures - chords. In the specific Jazz-Big Band orchestration, the first stage is the realization of the block chord voicing, chords plated by 5 and 6 sounds in various inversions.

We observe in our own work the technique of achieving unison (m.1-2) followed by the technique of achieving voicing in m.3-4 being G7(b9) – C7(#9) – B7(#9) – Bb7(#9):

♩ = 125

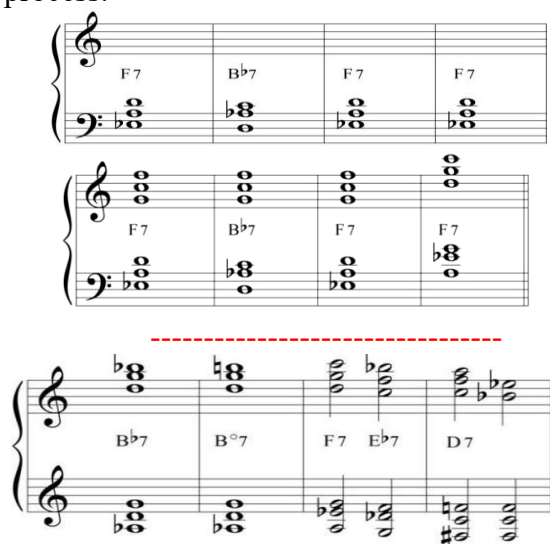
Fig.15 *Jazz Fugue Blues* (p.1) by Florin Răducanu

Another voicing technique specific to Big Band orchestration is the creation of creatively arranged fourth chords on brass instruments. Stravinsky uses this technique right at the end of the work. The saxophones and the clarinet perform the fourth chord(Bb-Eb-G-C-F):

The finale of the work is performed by the 5 trumpets, also with fourth chords. Trumpets 1,2,3 plays Bb-Eb-A & C-F-Bb chords:

From the point of view of clarinet technique, Stravinsky does not bring any new elements. A relevant aspect is the fact that he mainly uses the high register of the instrument, this being the specific of the jazz style of the Swing-Big band period. The conclusion is that Stravinsky treated the Jazz Big Band as a "classical" wind orchestra, the solo clarinet being framed in the same stylistic manner, although it was dedicated to a famous jazz clarinetist.

The co-author of this study, Florin Răducanu, thus demonstrates the technique of developing complex voicing. we can observe how a chord made with 3 notes (in the pianist's left hand) develops with 6 notes, this harmonic mechanism being a mandatory stage in the Big Band jazz orchestration process:



European "classical" music and jazz influenced each other, with composers from both musical genres taking on specific elements, in some cases merging them into a common language. A special contribution to the achievement of musical symbiosis was made by the American who emigrated from Tiraspol, Norman Granz. Having a special talent as an impresario and event producer, he created a project called "JAZZ AT THE PHILARMONIC" (JATP), which would last for a long time. The project is emblematic of the Bop period, especially for the aesthetic message it promoted, bringing jazz to concert stages, and was continued until the 1980s.

Music history records that in the 1920s jazz began to be partially popularized in Europe, Gershwin's compositional approach of classical-jazz symbiosis being a reference. Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* influenced many European composers. At the same time, many jazz musicians took elements from "classical" music, so in 1952, musician Gunter Schuller called the new musical style *Third Stream*. Schuller explains what this style is not: it is not jazz with a string ensemble; it is not jazz performed on "classical" instruments; it is not "classical" music performed by jazz musicians; it is not a "snippet" of Ravel or Schonberg inserted on a be-bop progression or the inverted process; it is not jazz in a fugato manner; it is not a fugue performed by a jazz musician; it is another option among many others, for creative musicians of our day.

In this context we must also see Stravinsky's attempt to compose original music for a jazz ensemble.

Since - in practice - we have observed an ambiguity and a lack of clarity regarding transposition and reading with the C clefs (choral) and the technique of writing and reading scores for transposing instruments, at the end of this study we make some clarifications.

The Horbostel-Sachs instrument classification system, one of the most important treatises on orchestration - *Principles of Orchestration* by Rimsky Korsakov¹¹ - or the

¹¹ Rimsky Korsakov. 1964. *Principles of Orchestration*. New York: Dover Publications, pp.12-21.

contributions to the New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians by the organologist N. Schackleton, describe the following types of clarinets and saxophones:

Ab piccolo Clarinet	the G clef, is notated with a descending minor 6th.	Bb Soprillo sax.	the G clef, is notated with a descending minor 7th.
Bb sopran Clarinet	the G clef, is notated with an ascending major 2nd.	Eb Sopranino sax.	the G clef, is notated with a descending minor third.
Eb Sopranino Clarinet	the G clef, is notated with a descending minor 3rd.	Bb Sopran sax.	the G clef, is notated with an ascending major 2nd.
D Sopranino Clarinet (verry rarely)	the G clef, is notated with a descending minor 2nd.	Eb Alto sax.	the G clef, is notated with an ascending major 6th.
C Clarinet	G clef, non-transposing	Bb Tenor sax.	the G clef, is notated with an ascending major 9th.
A Clarinet	the G clef, is notated with an ascending minor 3rd.	Eb Bariton sax.	the G clef, is notated with an ascending major 13th.
Basset Clarinet in A (Stadler)	the G clef, is notated with an ascending minor 3rd.	Bb Bas sax.	the G clef is notated with a 2 octave and an ascending major 2nd.
Basset horn/corno di bassetto in F	the G clef, is notated with an ascending 5th.	Eb Contrabas sax.	the G clef is notated with 2 octaves and an ascending major 6th.
Alto Clarinet in Eb	the G clef, is notated with an ascending major 6th (like alto sax).	Bb subcontrabas sax.	the G clef is notated with 3 octaves and an ascending major 2nd.
Bass Clarinet in Bb and A	the G clef; The one in Bb is notated with an ascending major 9th (also tenor sax). There is also the writing in the F clef, with an ascending 2nd (German version) and in the F clef with an ascending 9th (Italian version). The one in A has a German version with the F clef and a minor third above and the Russian version with the G clef and a minor tenth above.		
Contrabass Clarinet in Bb	The G clef is notated with a 2 octave and an ascending major 2nd.		

Tabel 1. *The clarinet and saxophone family¹² and the notation system*

6. Conclusion

The 20th century is marked by the emergence and spread of a new musical genre, jazz. This new form of musical expression - which represents a symbiosis between various cultures of the world - had, in turn, various stylistic stages. Thus, after the incipient jazz styles - *Ragtime* and *Dixieland* - in the 1930s-1940s, the so-called *Swing-Big band* style appeared. The *Big band* ensemble includes a saxophone section, replacing the clarinet section, which is more specific to the fanfare or military band ensemble¹³. During the *Swing-Big band period*, there was a media outpouring, the promotion of this type of music representing a primary goal for show producers, this dance music representing a successful business. In this over-commercialized

¹² There are other experimental typologies, but those presented in the table are, for the most part, common in the symphony orchestra.

¹³ Felix Constantin Goldbach. 2010. *Incursiuni în creația camerală pentru clarinet în perioada clasică*. Târgoviște: Valahia Univeristy Press.

context, there were also musical personalities - such as Duke Ellington - who were also concerned with developing the artistic side of the style, creating concert music, not only entertainment music. Due to the media promotion of the *Swing-Big band* style, the saxophone was associated, in popular perception, with jazz. An important aspect of this study is that related to the classical/symphonic provenance of the saxophone which was later taken up in jazz ensembles. The study also contains details about Stravinsky's special interest in the genre of jazz music, the aforementioned aspects not being found in music history textbooks, for this reason, the musicological approach is auspicious for completing the information necessary for the general culture of any musician.

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