

## CHAPTER 7

### THE E-FLAT CLARINET

#### 7.1 Introduction

The E-flat clarinet belongs to the family of small clarinets: amongst which the D and E-flat clarinets are the ones mostly used in the symphonic repertoire of the 20th century. The E-flat clarinet has all the characteristics of the A and B-flat clarinets; but with brighter, more penetrating qualities in the higher range. Both instruments are often called for in scores, the only difference being that the E-flat clarinet is more at home in keys employing flats, while the D clarinet is more suited for keys employing sharps. The lack of availability of the D clarinet means that many famous passages written for it, such as in Richard Strauss's *Till Eulenspiegel*, are routinely played on the E-flat clarinet, losing all the "key" advantages. According to Tchaikov (in Lawson 1995:47) Mahler, Strauss, Stravinsky, Schoenberg, Ravel, Shostakovich and Britten provide the backbone of the E-flat clarinetist's orchestral opportunities. Each of these composers understood the capabilities of the instrument and exploited them in their own individual way.

Shostakovich does not include the D clarinet, and makes use of the E-flat clarinet in his symphonies. Perhaps the unavailability of the D clarinet in Stalin-ruled Russia restricted Shostakovich to the use of the E-flat clarinet, even at challenging passages employing many sharps. Shostakovich has also limited his use of the E-flat clarinet to seven symphonies: Symphonies No. 4-8, 10 and the second movement of Symphony No. 13. It is interesting to note that these are the symphonies that place the highest dynamic demands on woodwind instruments and players.

The solo profile of the E-flat clarinet is far more modest than anticipated, as will be discussed in more detail during this chapter. The melodic presence of the instrument's penetrating tone quality in the *tutti* sections is uncompromisingly exposed. Shostakovich often writes very fast technical passages for the instrument using the whole compass of its range. True to

Shostakovich's style, the dynamic expectations are also very challenging and surely taxing on the player. During this chapter the author will refer to the sounding pitch in the examples.

## 7.2 Register

It is evident that Shostakovich preferred the bright and lively tone of the E-flat clarinet. It is used mostly in its clarino register, and almost as much in the high register. Most solo passages are also scored for the clarino register although a much wider spectrum is used as melodies meander through the range, from chalumeau to high. Even in *tutti* parts the chalumeau and throat register is very seldom used, except to initiate an ascending melody or to end a descending melody. Shostakovich used the E-flat clarinet in its high and extreme high register mostly in Symphonies No. 5, 7 and 8. However, Shostakovich did not exploit the extreme ends of the E-flat clarinet's range. It would be significant to add at this point that the dynamic level scored for the E-flat clarinet in *tutti* sections is an overwhelming *fortissimo* throughout the seven symphonies, which signifies the composer's intent on a hard and penetrating, or even shrill tone.

The following example illustrates Shostakovich's very brief and rare use of the chalumeau register of the E-flat clarinet in a fairly exposed setting (Ex. 7-1). The three notes scored in unison for the E-flat clarinet and flute in mm. 265-266 must be of some significance because it has a *forte* dynamic level indication while the other instruments have the marking *mezzoforte tenuto* (indicated in the previous page of the score). The combination of the lowest three notes of the flute and the chalumeau register of the E-flat clarinet makes for a warm but penetrating sound.

## Example 7-1: Symphony No. 5, fourth movement, mm. 264-273

 $\text{♩} = 100-108$ 

Fl. *a2*  
*f*

Ob. *a2*

Cl. pico. *f*

Cl. *a2*

Fag.

C-fag.

Cor. IV *mf*

Timp. 264

124

Fl. *a2*

Ob. *a2* *cresc.* *f*

Cl. pico.

Cl. *a2* *cresc.* *f*

Fag. *a2* *f*

C-fag. *f*

Cor. III *mf* II *mf*

269



A representative example of the E-flat clarinet in a wide range is found early in the first movement of Symphony No. 7 (Ex. 7-2). This is a typical example of Shostakovich's writing for the woodwind section as a unit in a *fortissimo marcato* dynamic level, as well as his use of woodwind ranges. (The E-flat clarinet normally plays in unison with the flute and sometimes with the oboe.) In this example the range of the E-flat clarinet spans the A of the chalumeau register in m. 16 to the written high G natural (sounding B-flat) of the high register in mm. 19-20. The majority of the material, however, is written in the clarino register.

Example 7-2: Symphony No. 7, first movement, mm.13-21

 $\text{♩} = 116$ 

The musical score is for the first movement of Symphony No. 7, measures 13-21. It is written for a full orchestra. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo is marked as 116 beats per minute. The score shows a complex orchestration with many woodwinds and strings playing in a 'ff marc.' (fortissimo marcato) dynamic. The woodwinds include Piccolo, Flute, Oboe, Clarinet in G, Clarinet in Bb, Bass Clarinet, Bassoon, and Contrabassoon. The brass includes Cor Anglais, Trumpet, Trombone, Trumpet and Tuba, and Timpani. The strings include Violin, Viola, Cello, and Double Bass. The score is written in a standard musical notation with various dynamics and articulations.

Instrument parts shown:

- Pico.
- Fl.
- Ob.
- Cingl.
- Cl. ploc.
- Cl.
- Cl.b.
- Faç.
- C-fag.
- Cor.
- Tr-be
- Tr-ni e Tuba
- Timp.
- Archl.

Pico.

Fl.

Ob.

Cingl.

Cl. pice.

Cl.

Cl.b.

Fag.

C-fag.

Cor.

Tr-be

Timp.

Archi

18



The top end of the E-flat clarinet's high register is well displayed in the tumultuous ending of the third movement of Symphony No. 8 (Ex. 7-3). In spite of the full *tutti* the E-flat clarinet is starkly audible with its sustained and repeated high G's (sounding B-flat) in the *fff crescendo* dynamic level, which is compounded by accents and ending with *sffff*. Shostakovich's attention to detail is evident in the percussion section in this example, where he calls on the timpani to provide the only melodic movement amidst the wall of sound from the *tutti*. He also specified the cymbal roll to be played with the timpani mallets from m. 493, that adds to the massive climax in m. 501. After merely three bars rest for the *tutti*, apart from a snare-drum solo, the beginning of the fourth movement is joined *attacca* with the *tutti* playing *fff crescendo sforzando*.

## Example 7-3: Symphony No. 8, third movement, mm. 491-504

$\text{♩} = 152$

Pico.  
 Fl.  
 Ob.  
 Cingl.  
 Cl. ploc.  
 Cl.  
 Cl. b.  
 Fag.  
 Tr-be  
 Cor.  
 Tr-ni e Tuba  
 Timp.  
 P-tti I  
 Archl.

491.



498

tutti

### 7.3 Allocation of solo material to the E-flat clarinet

There are surprisingly few significant solos scored for the E-flat clarinet. When listening to the symphonies one is always aware of the E-flat clarinet's distinctive tone; its presence seems deceptively more prominent than its small number of solos would let one believe. There are only five solos for the E-flat, all written in second movements, of which the solo from the second movement of Symphony No. 6 is the most momentous. The first solo appears in the second movement of Symphony No. 4, thereafter the second movement of Symphony No. 5, the opening of the second movement of Symphony No. 6, the second movement of Symphony No. 7 and the second movement of Symphony No. 8. The dynamic indication level for solos is predominantly *piano*.

Shostakovich's first solo for the E-flat in the second movement of Symphony No. 4 displays the lyrical characteristics of the instrument mostly in its clarino register with a *piano legato* melody (Ex. 7-4). This example also shows the ease and fluidity with which the E-flat clarinet handles large intervals in either of the clarino and high registers. The understated string accompaniment lends its characteristic sustained notes and *pizzicato* articulation as support, overlapped by the bassoon in m. 54 and joined by three clarinets in m. 56.

Example 7-4: Symphony No. 4, second movement, mm. 44-65

The musical score for Example 7-4, Symphony No. 4, second movement, mm. 44-65, is presented in two systems. The first system (mm. 44-55) features the E-flat clarinet (Cl. picc.) playing a solo melody in the clarino register, characterized by large intervals and a piano legato texture. The string accompaniment (Archi) provides support with sustained notes and pizzicato articulation. The tempo is marked as 144. The second system (mm. 56-65) continues the solo melody, with the string accompaniment providing support. The score is written for the E-flat clarinet (Cl. picc.) and the string ensemble (Archi).



115

Cl.picc.

Cl.

Fag.

Arch.

54

116

Ob.

Cl.picc.

Cl.

Fag.

Arch.

60



The solo from the second movement of Symphony No. 5 is a mere five bars long and accompanied by *staccato* horns which complement the playful *staccato* melody of the E-flat clarinet (Ex. 7-5).

Example 7-5: Symphony No. 5, second movement, mm. 15-19

$\text{♩} = 138$

Fl.

Cl.  
picc.

Cor.

The solo from the second movement of Symphony No. 8 (Ex. 7-6) is very similar to the solo from Symphony No. 5 (Ex. 7-5) in that it is also a sheer seven bars in length and serves more as a reprieve to a lengthy solo for the piccolo. The piccolo solo is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. The lively articulated solo for the E-flat clarinet is scored mostly in the clarino high register and is a perfect match in tone quality for the piccolo solo.

Example 7-6: Symphony No. 8, second movement, mm. 90-98

$\text{♩} = 144$

Picc.

Cl.  
picc.

Tr-be

Cor.

V-nl I

V-nl II

V-le

This musical score is for the piece "The Rose Tree" (Op. 10, No. 15) by Johannes Brahms. It is a full orchestral score, likely for a concert band or orchestra. The score is written for the following instruments:

- Pico.** (Piccolo)
- Gl. pica.** (Glockenspiel)
- Fag.** (Fagott)
- C-fag.** (C-Fagott)
- Tr-be** (Trombe)
- Cor.** (Corni)
- V-nl I** (Violini I)
- V-nl II** (Violini II)
- V-lo** (Violoncelli)

The score is in 3/4 time and features a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The tempo is marked "Allegretto". The score is divided into four measures, with the first measure starting at measure 15. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings (e.g., *f*, *p*, *sf*).

Shostakovich exploits the agility of the E-flat clarinet and the technical flair of the player in the energetic solo that initiates the second movement of Symphony No. 6 (Ex. 7-7). The E-flat clarinet bursts into its solo at a very fast pace with the first and second violins picking quickly at their *pizzicato* accompaniment from mm. 1-23, whereafter the cellos and double basses continue the stringed support of the E-flat clarinet from m. 23 with mostly sustained notes. Two clarinets add harmonic interest from m. 9 with *staccato* and held notes. The first clarinet and the E-flat share a brief solo moment from mm. 13-15 with a melody in minor thirds.

Shostakovich began this symphony in 1939, and it took six months to complete. He wrote little else during that year except the film score *The Great Citizen* (Part 2), an operetta *The Silly Little Mouse*, and the re-orchestration of Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov*.



Example 7-7: Symphony No. 6, second movement, mm. 1-35

## II

84 Allegro  $\text{♩} = 104$

Clarinetto piccolo (Es) *solo* *p*

2 Clarinetti (B)

Clarinetto basso (B)

Violini I *senza sord. pizz.* *p*

Violini II *senza sord. unis. pizz.* *p*

Viole

Violoncelli

Contrabassi

Cl. piccolo

Cl.

Cl. b.

Arch.

Cl. piccolo

Cl.

Cl. b.

Archi

13

35

Cl. piccolo

Cl.

Cl. b.

Archi

19

36

senza sord.

*p*



12<sup>a</sup>

Pico.

FL.

Cl.  
picc.

Cl.

V-c.

C-b.

25

*mp* *cresc.*

*a2* *cresc.*

37

Pico.

FL.

Ob.

C. ingl.

Cl.  
picc.

Cl.

Fag.

C-fag.

*a2* *ff*

*ff*

*a2* *f marc.*

*a2* *f marc.*

*a2* *f marc.*

*mf* *marc.*

*mf* *marc.*

Archi

*arco*

*arco* *press. cresc.*

*div. in 4 senza sord.*

*p cresc.*

*press. cresc.*

*div.*

*mf*

30



#### 7.4 The E-flat clarinet in combination with other instruments

In Shostakovich's symphonies the use of the E-flat clarinet is clearly much more defined in its role as team player than that of soloist. Shostakovich liked to blend the tone colour of the E-flat clarinet with one or more instruments in unison or octave unison with very pleasing effect. Herein lies the true value of the instrument and its contribution to the Shostakovich sound. Blatter (1980:102), and indeed most orchestration books, affirms that no other woodwind or brass instrument offers such a variety of tone colour possibilities. In spite of their distinctive tone colour, clarinets blend with other instruments more readily than any other woodwinds.

As has already been ascertained earlier in this chapter, Shostakovich wanted a penetrating tone from the instrument by using mostly its clarino and high registers. The majority of the E-flat clarinet's material is scored in full *tutti* sections, where it doubles mostly the flute in unison and occasionally the oboe, clarinet and violins. The reason for Shostakovich using the E-flat to double the flute in unison is probably the excessive dynamic level demands he places on the woodwinds in *tutti* sections. He therefore has to reinforce the flute with the E-flat clarinet when the flute is scored in its mid-high register.

Shostakovich rarely uses the percussion in combination with the E-flat clarinet: there are only isolated instances of the xylophone adding to the tone colour.

There are a few fleeting moments when Shostakovich combines the E-flat clarinet with one or two instruments in a solo passage with delightful effect. One can also trace the development in the composer's writing as he becomes more adventurous in his combination of the E-flat clarinet with other instruments. The first solo combination occurs in the first movement of Symphony No. 4 (Ex. 7-8) for the E-flat clarinet and piccolos, doubling at the octave. The first movement of Symphony No. 7 (see Ex. 7-9) contains a solo between the E-flat and two B-flat clarinets in unison, followed in canon, by two oboes and a cor anglais in unison. Possibly the most striking example of an unusual combination is from the second movement of Symphony No. 13 when Shostakovich combines the E-flat clarinet with the bass voice in a very exposed octave unison solo (see Ex. 7-10).

Shostakovich uses the combination of E-flat clarinet and piccolos to share the characterful *staccato* solo in octave doubling in the first movement of Symphony No 4 (Ex. 7-8). This particular section in the symphony is typical of Shostakovich's orchestration that portrays sudden changes in temperament. The agitated *tutti* section preceding the example discussed takes an immediate change of character to lightness and even humour. It is also an example of Shostakovich's paradoxical nature – the ability to suddenly change from serious to humorous. The piccolos add a bright timbre to what is essentially a display of reeds, the accompaniment consisting of single and double reeds. The skill required from all players in this excerpt is uniformity of articulation, especially with the *staccato* notes, and perfect intonation between the piccolos and E-flat clarinet as the melody ascends into the high register from m. 491. Shostakovich gradually deepens the lower harmony by adding the two bassoons from mm. 489-490, the bass clarinet from mm. 493-498, and then the contrabassoon with a third bassoon from mm. 498-504.



## Example 7-8: Symphony No. 4, first movement, mm. 477-508

51 *p ma marcato*

Picc.

Cl.picc.

Cl.

Cl.b.

Tr-be

Cor.

Tr-ni

Timp.

51 *p*

Picc.

Cl.picc.

Cl.

Cl.b.

Fag.

51 *p ma marcato*

Picc.

Cl.picc.

Cl.

Cl.b.

491



53

Picc. I

Ob. I solo *f* *p*

Cl. picc. I

Cl. III

Cl. IV Cl. IV (A) muta in Cl. B

Cl. b. I

Fag. I

C-fag. III solo *p*

497

54

Picc. I *p*

Ob. I *f marc.*

Cl. picc. I

Fag. II

C-fag. III

504

Example 7-9: Symphony No. 7, first movement, mm. 274-298

[illegible]



Ob. <sup>a2</sup>

Cingl.

Cl.  
pico.

Cl. <sup>a2</sup>

T-ro

P-no

Archl

279

Ob. <sup>a2</sup>

Cingl.

Cl.  
pico.

Cl. <sup>a2</sup>

T-ro

P-no

Archl

284

32

Ob. *a2*

Cingl.

Cl. piccolo *a2*

Cl.

T-ro

P-no

Archl

289

Ob. *a2*

Cingl.

Cl. piccolo *a2*

Cl.

Cl. b.

Eag.

Cf25.

Tr-be

Tr-ne

T-ro

P-no

Archl

294

*I. II senza sord.*

*mf*

*I senza sord.*

*mf*

*div.*

*div.*

*f*



The most unusual combination with the E-flat clarinet is surely with bass voice solo found in the second movement of Symphony No. 13, "Humour" (Ex. 7-10). "Humour" is a song in praise of non-conformity, it invokes Mullah Nasruddin (an ancient Georgian folk hero) in a paean to tyrant-deflating laughter (see Appendix B for a full translation of text from the Russian). In this rare occurrence the E-flat clarinet, in its clarino register at a *forte* dynamic level, doubles the bass soloist two octaves higher for two phrases between mm. 98-105. The direct translation from the Russian is: "In houses where a hypocrite had left his wretched little footprints, Mullah Nasreddin's jokes would demolish" (Dr A. Krzychylkiewicz 2000). One could interpret Shostakovich's orchestration as deliberate in using the E-flat clarinet two octaves higher to symbolise the double side of hypocrisy. With the onset of the words "Mullah Nasreddin's jokes would demolish" from m. 106, Shostakovich changes the accompaniment into a waltz, colouring the music to the word "jokes" in m. 107. The E-flat clarinet assumes a secondary role from m. 106 as the bassoon and bass solo continue their duet. The E-flat clarinet, however, is alternating a triplet rhythmic figure with crotchets and quavers from mm. 106-110. The triplet rhythmic figure (mm. 106, 108, 109) "represents the people of Russia" (MacDonald 1990:231). The stark octave doubling accompaniment in mm. 99-106 from the string section accentuates the spacious mood of the solo.

$$d = 116$$

Cl. picc.

Basso solo

Coro

Вы-гля-де-ли.

В до-

Archi

92

39

Cl. picc.

Basso solo

- мах, где хан - жь на - сле - дил сво - и - ми но - га - ми

Archi

99

Cl. picc.

Fag.

Basso solo

щуп - лы - ми, всю пош-лость Ход - жа Нас-ред - дия сти - бал, как

Archi

105



## 7.5 Special effects and devices

Shostakovich does not use any special effects or devices for the E-flat clarinet in the symphonies.

## 7.6 Conclusion

The E-flat clarinet, prominently represented, plays an essential multi-faceted role in seven symphonies. Shostakovich exploits the instrument's penetrating quality by writing virtuoso passages for it using the whole compass of its range in a variety of dynamic levels. The clarino and high register of the E-flat is mostly preferred. There are five significant solos for the E-flat clarinet, which are typically accompanied by strings with the addition of the horns. Shostakovich exploits the E-flat clarinet's ability to blend with other woodwinds and strings to create innovative textures.