

## CHAPTER 8

### THE CLARINETS

#### 8.1 Introduction

It is evident from the first symphony onward that Shostakovich had a special preference for the tone colour and characteristics of the clarinets. The clarinets' role in the woodwind section of the symphonies exceeds that of any other woodwind and encompasses that of soloist, accompanist, harmonic supporter, and tone colour blender. Clarinet accompaniment figures are common in Shostakovich's symphonies and are often ingeniously arranged to contribute colour and character to the background texture.

Shostakovich uses the two most common clarinets, the B-flat and the A clarinet, consistently throughout the symphonies. According to Blatter (1980:103) the B-flat clarinet is the main woodwind although both are equally important in the orchestra. He continues to state that the B-flat clarinet is preferred to the A clarinet, when both are available, in performing works in flat keys. The A clarinet, on the other hand, serves best in sharp keys. Lawson (1995:34-35) discusses this very issue with references to various authors and composers. He claims that each clarinet player recognises the difference in response between the two instruments: the B-flat tending to brilliance, the A towards mellowness, although there may not be a difference in tone-quality discernible to player or listener. He continues to state that composers seem to have a different perception of the instruments too, for example Dvořák who simply selected the clarinet most appropriate to the tonality of the composition. Berlioz reckoned that the choice of clarinet should always be the responsibility of the composer, supporting the view that each clarinet had its own distinctive tone colour and purpose.

Shostakovich's choice of clarinet is clear from the first symphony onward. His choice was based on tone colour, and in many instances on register, as there are passages in the symphonies that would be more conducive to one clarinet for key purposes, yet Shostakovich chooses the other clarinet, most probably for its colour. In these instances where the music is very chromatic Shostakovich chooses to use accidentals instead of key signatures.

The A clarinet is mostly used in its lower register, probably for the benefit of the lowest note and warmer tone colour. Shostakovich also shows gratifying sensitivity toward the intonation of the clarinet and clarinet player by giving the instrument being changed to, for example from the B-flat clarinet to the A clarinet, a few notes to play preceding an exposed solo, allowing the instrument to warm up. This is a very conspicuous instance where Shostakovich's individualism and perfectionism in orchestration can be observed.

The B-flat clarinets only are used in Symphonies No. 2, 3 and 6, whereas the A clarinets alone are used in Symphony No. 15. The other symphonies make use of both the B-flat and A clarinets, sometimes together in one movement or one clarinet per movement. In some instances the E-flat clarinet player or bass clarinet player is required to change to either a B-flat or an A clarinet, when needed.

## 8.2 Register

Shostakovich uses the dramatic chalumeau and throat tones regularly, and repeatedly exploits the lowest note of the chalumeau register. The A clarinet is mostly used in its chalumeau register which reveals Shostakovich's preference for a darker and deeper dimension to the woodwind section. A large portion of Shostakovich's symphonies is scored for the clarino register of the clarinets, compared with the seldom used high register.

Shostakovich is conservative in his use of the A clarinet which is kept in the lower chalumeau and throat register for more than half of the symphonies, and is gradually scored higher from Symphony No. 9 when it is given more exposed parts in the clarino and high registers. Clarinet solos are usually written over a wide range that spans the chalumeau and clarino registers. The composer also emphasizes the contrast between the low and high registers of the clarinet by using two and sometimes three clarinets together an octave, tenth or twelfth apart, creating the illusion of two or three entirely different instruments. He also uses the A and B-flat clarinets together, in different registers, where he will invariably give the lower part to the A clarinet. The widest gap in register between the clarinets, two octaves apart, is found in the fourth movement of Symphony No. 7 and the third and fourth movement of Symphony No. 10. Dynamic level indication also plays an important role in the tone quality of each register. Shostakovich shows a

clear preference for the *piano* dynamic level for the chalumeau and throat register, and *forte* for the high register.

Symphony No. 1 is reputed among clarinet players as the “clarinet concerto” according to Herbert Klein (principal clarinet player for the New Arts Philharmonic Orchestra of Pretoria) due to its number of clarinet solos and the characteristic way in which Shostakovich wrote for the clarinet section. The following example is representative of Shostakovich’s explicit choice of using the A and B-flat clarinets together, in an exposed solo, and in varied registers (Ex. 8-1). In this bold display of tone colour the composer starts the lively solo for the first clarinet in B-flat in the chalumeau register in m. 31, whereafter it quickly changes into the clarino register. It then dwindles down to the throat register where it is joined by the second clarinet in A in m. 35. The solo continues in this relay-like manner between the B-flat and A clarinets. The melodic material for the A clarinet repeats that of the B-flat clarinet and answers it an augmented fourth higher than that of the first clarinet. Shostakovich typically supports the end of the phrase of the first clarinet with a note in unison from the second clarinet in mm. 35, 39 and 41. He cunningly wants to create the impression of a clarinet solo played by one clarinet player. The sounding pitches are: G-flat/F-sharp in m. 35, C in m. 39 and A in m. 41. The solo is supported by the characteristic *tremolo* strings enhanced by a touch of interest from the cymbals.

Example 8-1: Symphony No.1, fourth movement, mm. 31-45

6 Allegro molto  $\text{♩} = 176$

(B) solo

C1.

(A) *p* *f* *dim.* [solo] *p*

Timp.

P-ttl *pp* *mp dim.* *pp*

Archi *p* *div.* *pp* *uris.*

31

Cl. (B) (A) **8**

P-tti *f dim.* *mp dim.* *p* *pp*

Archl

36

Cl. (B) (A) **9** *muta in B*

P-tti

P-no **8** *f legato*

41

Archl

*p*

41

The following example from the first movement of Symphony No. 7 shows typical writing for the clarinet in the warm chalumeau register at a *piano* dynamic level (Ex. 8-2). The extremely exposed solo, with only a *pizzicato* note here and there from the strings, descends toward its lowest note in mm. 559 and 561 and slows down to end the solo at a *pianissimo* dynamic level in mm. 562-563. The atmosphere in the “Leningrad” symphony often becomes hauntingly melancholic with solos of this nature interspersed between bold *tutti* sections.

Example 8-2: Symphony No. 7, first movement, mm. 548-563

The musical score for Example 8-2, Symphony No. 7, first movement, mm. 548-563, is presented in two systems. The first system (mm. 548-563) features a Clarinet (Cl.) solo in the chalumeau register, marked *pp*. The strings play a *pizzicato* accompaniment, with a *morendo* marking. The tempo is marked  $\text{♩} = 88$ . The second system (mm. 555-563) shows the Clarinet (Cl.) solo continuing, marked *riten.* and *pp*. The piano (P-no) plays a *pp secco* accompaniment. The strings continue with *pizz.* accompaniment, marked *p*. The tempo is marked  $\text{♩} = 92$  and the dynamic is *pp*. The score includes various dynamic markings such as *pp*, *pp secco*, *p*, and *pp*, and performance instructions like *riten.*, *morendo*, and *pizz.*. The measures are numbered 548, 549, 555, and 563.

Shostakovich chose to use only two A clarinets in his last symphony, No. 15. Example 8-3 from the third movement emphasizes the tone quality of the clarinets' extreme registers so that they sound like two different instruments. It is a solo for the first clarinet, with the second clarinet, bassoon and woodblock as part of the simple accompaniment. In this instance the second clarinet is purely part of the harmonic support with its sustained notes in the chalumeau register while the first clarinet's solo ventures into the clarino and high register in a variety of articulation markings. The increase in the dynamic level from m. 113 helps the first clarinet to articulate the high notes in mm. 114-115 with greater ease. The dynamic indications also follow the natural line of the phrase. The small nuances in dynamic levels are typical examples of Shostakovich's attentive writing style that enhances the playability of the woodwind parts.

Example 8-3: Symphony No. 15, third movement, mm. 106-130

$\text{♩} = 112$

Musical score for measures 106-110. The score includes parts for Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Fag.), Horn (Cor.), Trumpet (Tr-be), Trombone (Tr-nl), Tuba, Timpani (Timp.), and Woodwinds (Legno, T-ro). The key signature is B-flat major. The time signature changes from 2/2 to 3/4 at measure 107. Measure 106 is marked with a first ending bracket (I) and a measure number 93 in a box. Dynamics include *p* and *mf*. The woodwinds play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes.

Musical score for measures 110-114. The score includes parts for Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Fag.), and Woodwinds (Legno). The key signature is B-flat major. The time signature changes from 3/4 to 2/2 at measure 111. Dynamics include *p*, *cresc.*, and *mf*. The woodwinds play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes.

Musical score for measures 114-130. The score includes parts for Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Fag.), and Woodwinds (Legno). The key signature is B-flat major. The time signature changes from 2/2 to 3/4 at measure 115. Dynamics include *f*, *dim.*, and *mf*. The woodwinds play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes.



94

Cl. I  
Cl. II  
Fag.  
Legno

118

Cl. I  
Cl. II  
Fag.  
Legno

122

95

96

Cl. I  
Cl. II  
Fag.  
Tr-be  
Tr-ni  
Timp.  
Cäst.  
Legno  
T-ro  
V.c.  
C-b.

126

\*) Ноты, над которыми стоит крестик (+), нужно исполнять по обручу [примеч. автора].

### 8.3 Allocation of solo material to the A and B-flat clarinets

Shostakovich ensured that every symphony (with the exception of Symphony No. 11 and 14) contains a solo for the first clarinet or first and second clarinets together. The distribution of the B-flat and A clarinets is as follows: the B-flat and A clarinets are scored in Symphonies No. 1, 4, 5, 7-12 and 13; only the B-flat clarinets are used in Symphonies No. 2, 3 and 6; and only A clarinets are used in Symphony No. 15. The B-flat clarinet has the bulk of the solos from Symphonies No. 1 to 8; thereafter the A clarinet dominates the number of noteworthy solos from Symphonies No. 9 to 15. One can assume that toward the middle of his symphonic writing career Shostakovich developed a fondness for the A clarinet along with increased confidence in its characteristics and capabilities.

As early as the first movement of Symphony No. 1 there are solos for the B-flat clarinet that are full of character. Shostakovich's life during the composition of this symphony (completed 1924-25) was stressful due to frequent illness, depression, and trying to deal with his father's death two years earlier. These sufferings are reflected in his First Symphony. In a letter to his girlfriend Tatyana Glivenko he writes that he had begun to compose a symphony. He adds that he had been to see Tchaikovsky's *Sleeping Beauty* "about ten times", and that he is immersed in Dostoyevsky (the famous Russian writer of *From the House of the Dead*). (MacDonald 1998:1.) This symphony is an early example of Shostakovich's ability to fuse the opposing characters of light and dark, and tragedy and humour.

The following extract (Ex. 8-4) is the second solo entry for the first clarinet with a memorable tune in the low clarino, throat and chalumeau registers. Layton (1993:199) suggests the whole symphony teems with character-archetypes that remind one of Stravinsky's puppet ballet *Petrushka*. On listening, the clarinet solo of Symphony No. 1 quite easily lends itself to visual interpretation as described by Layton. It also epitomises Shostakovich's ability to manipulate the clarinet into a light-hearted character.

Example 8-4: Symphony No. 1, first movement, mm. 58-66

8 Allegro non troppo  $\text{♩} = 160$

Fl.

Cl. *I solo* *p*

Fag.

Archi *pp*

58

9

Fl.

Cl. *I*

Fag. *I* *p*

Archi *p*

63

Shostakovich chose a B-flat clarinet solo to open Symphony No. 3, the “First of May” (Ex. 8-5). The lengthy doleful solo at a *piano* dynamic level has no accompaniment for the first six bars, after which it is joined by an accompaniment of *pizzicato* cellos and double basses for seven bars in mm. 7-13, 21-27 and 29-34. The second clarinet enters as a solo duet with the first clarinet in mm. 15-38. Shostakovich places full attention on the clarinets as the scant bass accompaniment flits in and out of its supporting role a few bars at a time. The clarinet section plays an important role in this symphony with two other significant solos.

Symphony No. 3 has elicited opposing ideas as to the merit of its thematic content. Layton (1993:301) lauds the symphony which abounds with strong thematic ideas: “... around forty of them at a conservative estimate, in a single twenty-seven-minute movement – no wonder so many of Shostakovich’s fellow composers were jealous of his talent.” MacDonald (1990:61) disagrees with Layton and cites Symphony No. 3 to have “an uncharacteristic lack of ideas”. Admittedly, the author agrees with MacDonald in that, in spite of its thematic content, it is an arduous symphony to listen to.

Example 8-5: Symphony No. 3, mm. 1-38

Allegretto  $\text{♩} = 100$  1

Piccolo

2 Flauti

2 Oboi

2 Clarinetti (B)

2 Fagotti

4 Corni (F)

2 Trombe (B)

3 Tromboni e Tuba

Timpani

Triangolo

Tamburo

Piatti

Cassa

Allegretto  $\text{♩} = 100$  1

Violini I

Violini II

Viole

Violoncelli

Contrabassi

1

Cl.  
V-c.  
C-b.

morendo

2

Cl.  
V-c.  
C-b.

15

p

3

Cl.  
V-c.  
C-b.

21

p

4

Cl.  
V-c.  
C-b.

28

p

5

Cl.  
V-c.  
C-b.

34

p

There is a marked similarity between the clarinet solo that opens Symphony No. 3 (Ex. 8-5) and the clarinet solo that begins the second movement of Symphony No. 9 (Ex. 8-6). In both cases the first clarinet starts the solo without accompaniment, is later joined by a spartan accompaniment consisting of cellos and double basses, and is coupled with the second clarinet for the remainder of the solo. Shostakovich, however, scored the solo in Symphony No. 3 for B-flat clarinets, whereas he uses the A clarinets for a portion of the second movement of Symphony No. 9. There is no relation in programme between the two symphonies.

The solo in the second movement of Symphony No. 9 is mostly scored in the clarino register although it spans the chalumeau and the high registers. This is a good example of Shostakovich's self-assurance in writing for the A clarinet in the clarino and higher register compared with its subdued role in the lower register in the earlier symphonies. It is also an excellent example of the clarinet's ability to display its vast differences in the quality of the registers, as seen between the first and second clarinet from m. 30, with the first clarinet projecting its solo effortlessly. Shostakovich changes the role of the clarinets with ease and achieves symmetry in this section: firstly the clarinets are soloists in mm. 1-52, then he uses them as part of the accompaniment to a flute solo between mm. 52-91, and to close the section he uses the clarinets as soloists once again in mm. 91-98.

MacDonald (1990:179) describes Shostakovich's tone as "clownish" in both the first and second movements of Symphony No. 9, and writes that the clarinet's first theme is "wan and 'sad face'". The author agrees with MacDonald about the "clownish" atmosphere in the first movement, but disagrees about the second movement. It is devoid of wit and the opening melancholic mood is carried throughout the movement.

Example 8-6: Symphony No. 9, second movement, mm. 1-99

28 Moderato  $\text{♩} = 208$   
I solo

2 Clarinetti (A)

Violoncelli

Contrabassi

*pizz. vibrato*

*p*

*pizz. vibrato*

*p*

Cl. I

29

V-c.

C-b.

II

Cl. I

30

II solo

*p*

V-c.

C-b.

21

Cl. I

II

*cresc.*

*dim.*

*p*

V-c.

C-b.

81



31

Cl. I

V.c.

C-b.

41

Detailed description: This system contains measures 31 and 32. The Clarinet I part (Cl. I) has two staves, both marked with a first fingering (I). The music features a melodic line with slurs and dynamic markings of *pp.* and *p.*. The Viola (V.c.) and Contrabass (C-b.) parts are shown below, with the C-b. part starting at measure 41. The key signature has one flat and the time signature is 2/4.

32

Fl.

Ob.

Cl. I

Cl. II

Fag.

V.c.

C-b.

51

*p* *cresc.* *f*

*mf*

*cresc.* *mf*

*f*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 33 through 36. It includes parts for Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet I (Cl. I), Clarinet II (Cl. II), Bassoon (Fag.), Viola (V.c.), and Contrabass (C-b.). The Flute part starts at measure 51 and features a dynamic progression from *p* to *cresc.* to *f*. The Oboe part has a dynamic marking of *mf*. The Clarinet I and II parts both have *cresc.* markings. The Bassoon part has a dynamic marking of *f*. The Viola and Contrabass parts are shown below. The key signature has one flat and the time signature is 2/4.

Fl.

Ob.

Cl.

Fag.

61

*p cresc.*

*p cresc.*

*p cresc.*

*p cresc.*

*p cresc.*

Detailed description: This system contains measures 37 through 40. It includes parts for Flute (Fl.), Oboe (Ob.), Clarinet (Cl.), and Bassoon (Fag.). The Flute part starts at measure 61 and has a dynamic marking of *p cresc.*. The Oboe, Clarinet, and Bassoon parts also have *p cresc.* markings. The Viola and Contrabass parts are shown below. The key signature has one flat and the time signature is 2/4.

Fl. I 33

Cl. I

Fag. I

71

*f* *dim.* *mf* *p*

Fl. I 34

Cl. I

Fag. I

81

*dim.* *p* *pp*

Fl. I

Cl. I

Fag. I

*p* *riten.* 35 *a tempo*

Cl. I, II muta in B

Archl

*pp* *con sord. sul G al* *pp* *con sord. arco* *pp* *con sord. arco* *pp*

91

The first clarinet in A also jump-starts the third movement of Symphony No. 9 in a vivacious fast solo, which displays the virtuoso character of the instrument. *Staccato* utterances from the bassoons complement the playful atmosphere of the clarinet before it is joined in mm. 9-17 by the piccolo, flutes and oboes, resulting in a brief solo for the woodwinds. This symphony reflects the paradox of Shostakovich's personality and his artistic versatility as the contrast between the movements changes from the jolly first movement to a melancholic second movement and a playful third movement. The fourth movement is slow and tragic and the fifth and final movement is witty.



Example 8-7: Symphony No. 9, third movement, mm. 1-21

III

49 Presto  $\text{♩} = 126$   
I solo

2 Clarinetti(A)

2 Fagotti

Picc.

Fl.

Ob.

Cl. I

Fag. 5

50

*f dim.*

*f dim.*

*cresc.*

*f*

*cresc.*

*f*

*cresc.*

*f*

10

Musical score for measures 14-16, featuring woodwinds and strings. The instruments are Pico., Fl., Ob., Cl., and Fag. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

16

51

Musical score for measures 17-20, featuring woodwinds and strings. The instruments are Pico., Fl., Ob., Cl., and Fag. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Musical score for Cor. instruments, featuring two parts. The score includes dynamic markings such as *senza sord.*, *p cresc.*, and *senza sord. III*.

Musical score for Archi instruments, featuring five parts. The score includes dynamic markings such as *senza sord.*, *arco*, *p*, *cresc.*, and *div.*

17

The first movement of Symphony No. 10 holds beautiful solos for the clarinets in A, including the following solo toward the end of the movement (Ex. 8-8). The first clarinet begins the solo unaccompanied in mm. 573-578 and is joined by the second clarinet after seven bars in mm. 579-615, in a duet, which spills over into a waltz-like melody in thirds from m. 590 coupled with a light *pizzicato* string accompaniment. Shostakovich's technique of using the first clarinet as a soloist for a few bars before the second clarinet joins it can be seen as typical of his writing style for the clarinets throughout the symphonies (see Ex. 8-5 and Ex. 8-6).

Example 8-8: Symphony no. 10, first movement, 566-619

$\text{♩} = 108$

The musical score for Example 8-8, Symphony No. 10, first movement, measures 566-619, is presented below. The score is in 3/4 time with a tempo of 108 beats per minute. The key signature is one flat (B-flat major/D minor). The score includes parts for Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Fag.), Contrabassoon (C-fag.), Trumpet (Tr-ni), Tuba, and Strings (Archl).

Measures 55 and 56 are marked with boxed numbers. The Clarinet part begins a solo in measure 56, marked *mf*. The Bassoon part has a *f espr.* marking in measure 56. The Trumpet and Tuba parts play a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes, marked *p*. The String part has a *mf* marking in measure 56. The score ends at measure 619.

I riten.

Cl. *dim.* *p* II *dim.*

577

57 *a tempo* *pp*

Archi *pp* *pizz.* *pp* *pp* *pizz.* *p* *pp*

590 *p* *pp*

Cl. *p* *pp*

Archi *p* *pp* *pp* *pp* *p* *pp* *pp*

596 *p* *pp*

Cl. *p* *pp* *cresc.*

59

Archi *p* *pp* *p* *pp* *p* *pp* *p* *pp* *p* *pp* *p*

602 *p* *pp* *p*

Example 8-9 Symphony No. 8 Fourth movement (mm. 74-111)

The musical score is divided into two systems. The first system (measures 74-81) features the first clarinet (Cl.) and the string section (Archi). The clarinet part begins at measure 59 with a melodic line marked *mf dim.* and *P dim.*. The string section consists of five staves (Violin I, Violin II, Viola, Cello, and Double Bass) with various dynamics and articulations like *arco*, *pp*, and *P dim.*. The second system (measures 82-89) continues the same parts, with the clarinet part marked *P dim.* and the string section marked *arco* and *pp*. The score is in G major and 4/4 time.

Shostakovich uses the B-flat clarinets at the end of the fourth movement of Symphony No. 8 to paint a melancholic atmosphere in a solo which is continuously drawn toward the dark colours of the throat and chalumeau registers (Ex. 8-9). The first clarinet's solo emerges amongst fuzzy *frullato* tones by four flutes in m. 75 to chromatically meander downward with a quintuplet rhythm before taking an upward turn at the end of the phrase to an F in m. 79 (the sounding pitch is E-flat). Typical of his considerate writing style, Shostakovich overlaps the last note of the first clarinet's solo with the first note of the second clarinet's solo in m. 79 and vice versa in m. 81. This is to create a seamless transition between the two instruments and to create the elusion of one continuous clarinet solo.

The syncopated accented unison notes by the clarinets in the chalumeau register from mm. 84-94 form part of the harmonic accompaniment to the melody in the cellos and double basses and the first violins. The first clarinet resumes its tragic solo from mm. 94-97. After four bars of rest for the first clarinet Shostakovich reintroduces the clarinet solo from m. 102, this time in an ascending melody with wider interval leaps that immediately signifies a more positive ambiance. The author speculates that perhaps Shostakovich is trying to restore a sense of hope before the end of the movement and to prepare the listener for a different atmosphere in the next movement, which is joined *attacca*. The ease with which the clarinet deals with the low register at a *pianissimo* dynamic level is clearly evidenced in this example.



Example 8-9: Symphony No. 8, fourth movement, mm. 74-111

$\text{♩} = 50$

The musical score is divided into two systems. The first system covers measures 74 to 111. It includes parts for Flute (Fl.) with four staves (I, II, III, IV), Clarinet (Cl.), and Arches (Archi) with four staves. The Flute part has a measure number 120 in a box. The Clarinet part has a section marked 'I solo' starting at measure 77, with dynamic markings *pp* and *pp* and fingering numbers 5. The Arches part has dynamic markings *pp ma espress.* and performance instructions 'arco' and 'pp ma espress.'. The second system covers measures 112 to 111, featuring Clarinet (Cl.), Violin II (V-niII), Viola (V-le), Violoncello (V-c.), and Contrabass (C-b.). The Clarinet part continues with the 'I solo' section, marked *pp* and with fingering numbers 5. The other parts (V-niII, V-le, V-c., C-b.) have long, sustained notes. Measure numbers 74, 77, and 111 are indicated at the bottom of the staves.

Cl. I  
Cl. II solo  
pp  
V-ni II  
V-le  
V.c.  
C-b.  
79

Cl. I  
Cl. II  
pp  
cresc.  
p  
cresc.  
arco  
p espress.  
V-ni I  
V-ni II  
V-le  
V.c.  
C-b.  
81  
121  
cresc.

Cl. I  
Cl. II  
mf  
mf  
Archi  
p  
86

122

Cl. I

Cl. II

Archi

91

94

Cl. I

Archi

95

123

Fl. I *frull.*  
 Fl. II *sf* *frull.* *pp*  
 Fl. III *sf* *frull.* *pp*  
 Cl. I *solo* *pp*  
 Cl. II *solo* *p*

Archi *pizz.* *p*

Fl. I *sf* *frull.* *pp*  
 Fl. II *sf* *frull.* *pp*  
 Fl. III *sf* *frull.* *pp*  
 Cl. I *mf*  
 Cl. II *p*  
 Cl. b. *p*

*muta in Piccolo II*

*riten.*

Archi

*allacca*

### 8.3.1 Accompaniment to clarinet solos

Shostakovich characteristically used the string section as accompaniment to clarinet solos throughout the symphonies, with *pizzicato* articulation the most favoured. *Pizzicato* articulation lends the perfect subtle accompaniment to woodwind solos and clearly complements the tone colour of the clarinets too. The composer very often leans toward the deep and dark tones of the bass instruments, particularly the cellos and double basses that are also often written with *pizzicato* articulation (see Examples 8-5, 8-6, 8-8). He utilises *tremolo* strings as accompaniment approximately three times in Symphonies No. 1 and 5 (see Ex. 8-1).

Shostakovich frequently uses the bassoon with or without contrabassoon as accompaniment to clarinet solos (see Examples 8-6 and 8-7). The accompaniment to clarinet solos in Symphony No. 4 is supplied exclusively by the bassoons and contrabassoons. Bassoon and contrabassoon accompaniment is often written with *staccato* articulation, which closely imitates the *pizzicato* articulation of the cellos and double basses.

The accompaniment to the short clarinet solos interspersed in the third movement of Symphony No. 13 is the most unusual because it includes castanets, wood block, harp and sustained notes from the cellos and double basses.

The clarinets are often given centre stage with many bars of unaccompanied solo bars written into solos. There is not a discernible difference in the nature of the accompaniment of clarinet solos between the early and later symphonies.

### 8.3.2 Articulation in the clarinet solos

Given the colourful character of the clarinet's tone palette and its technical agility, coupled with the large number of solos, the composer's articulation preference for the clarinet in solo passages was investigated. Symphony No. 1, most aptly coined as the "concerto for clarinet" because of its vast number of solo passages, has the most variety of articulation markings scored with the solos, ranging from *legato*, *legato* and *staccato* together, and a combination of *legato*, *staccato* and *non legato* in a solo. This shows the detailed enthusiasm for the orchestration of the

woodwinds with which Shostakovich approached his symphonic writing career in his first symphony.

Thereafter the overwhelming articulation marking is *legato*, with *staccato* entering into solos only in Symphonies No. 4, 9 and 15. One can therefore conclude that Shostakovich preferred the smooth lyrical quality of the clarinets to prevail throughout the symphonies, mostly regardless of their programmatic content. The exception is the use of *staccato* in Symphony No. 15 whose programme suggests a toy store with puppets or mechanical toys. MacDonald (1990:242) describes the programmatic content of Symphony No. 15 as an “allegorical nursery”, similar to the first half of Symphony No. 1 in which, according to MacDonald, Shostakovich evokes an “allegorical circus”. The use of *staccato* articulation along with ensemble-like scoring for the woodwinds certainly leads the listener to attach a seemingly lighter character to the symphony, previously heard in Symphonies No. 1 and 9.

A *piano* dynamic level can be seen as typical of Shostakovich’s writing style for woodwind solos.

#### 8.4 The clarinets in combination with other instruments

Shostakovich’s use of the clarinets in combination with other instruments played a multifaceted role, of which the most important is its link between instruments in the upper and lower registers of the orchestra. In its high register the clarinets are often used in *tutti* sections, in octaves, to double either the flute and/or oboe in unison, or to double the second violins’ parts. Its lower register is used extensively to double the bass clarinet, bassoon, double bassoon, horns and violas at the octave.

In exposed settings the traditional combination of clarinets and flutes, and clarinets and oboes are used extensively throughout the symphonies. These combinations are in many cases scored as solos, with and without accompaniment. Shostakovich, however, was also partial to the clarinets combined with instruments of a lower register. He utilises the combination of clarinets and bassoons from as early as Symphony No. 1 through to the last, Symphony No. 15. Here too, the composer employs this combination as part of an accompaniment figure as well as in exposed solos for the two instruments. The combination of clarinets and bass clarinet is used in all the

symphonies in which Shostakovich makes use of the bass clarinet (see Chapter 9). The fourth movement of Symphony No. 11, for example, has a solo for the clarinet and bass clarinet. In many instances the clarinets are combined with the bassoons and less frequently with the contrabassoon. It is important to note that Shostakovich maximises the use of woodwind combinations throughout the symphonies, particularly those with a more mellow timbre, unlike the piccolo, E-flat clarinet and oboe.

In keeping with his preference for warm timbres, Shostakovich makes use of the combination of clarinets and violas which recur frequently throughout the symphonies as part of an accompaniment figure or even as soloists. The clarinets are used fairly extensively in combination with the bass voice and chorus in Symphony No. 13, probably due to its ability to blend unobtrusively with the voice.

The clarinets' most prominent function, apart from their solo position, is that of accompaniment to other solos. In many cases the clarinets supply the only accompaniment figure to various solos. The low register is mostly used for these accompaniment figures. The clarinets are often combined with other woodwinds to form the accompaniment of horns solos in Symphonies No. 4-13, and 15.

Symphony No. 11 depicts the events of the 1905 revolution with musical material drawn from revolutionary and prison songs of that period. It is not surprising that the clarinets are constantly combined with lower instruments, resulting in an effect that creates an atmosphere of pending rage and despair. The B-flat clarinets are combined in a solo in octave doubling with the bassoons in the second movement of Symphony No. 11, "Ninth of January" (Ex. 8-10). The melancholy atmosphere is compounded by the accompaniment consisting of violas, cellos and double basses. Ironically the tempo indication to this movement is *Allegro*.

Example 8-10: Symphony No. 11, second movement, mm. 1-26

## II. 9 января

Allegro  $\text{♩} = 176$   
[27] senza sord.  
*p* senza sord.

Viole  
Violoncelli  
Contrabassi

[28] (B) I. II a2  
*p*  
I. II a2  
*p*

Cl.  
Fag.  
V-le  
V-c.  
C-b.

Cl. I. II a2  
Fag. a2  
V-le  
V-c.  
C-b. 13

Cl. I. II a2  
Fag. a2  
V-le  
V-c.  
C-b. 18



Cl. I, II a2  
Fag. a2  
V-le  
V-o.  
C-b. 23

Evidence of Shostakovich's precise and delicate orchestration is heard in the following extract from the third movement of Symphony No. 4 (Ex. 8-11). The clarinet is combined with two harps (playing in unison) only once during the fifteen symphonies in this lightly orchestrated passage. The harps and clarinet share a short unison descending melody from mm. 499-503 amidst string accompaniment and a flute solo. The effect of the combination gives the clarinet's *staccato* a fragile quality.

Example 8-11: Symphony No. 4, third movement, mm. 493-505

♩ = 126  
Picc.  
Fl. p espress.  
Cl. p  
C-fag.  
Cor.  
Arpe  
Archi p espress. arco arco p

498

The image shows a page of a musical score, measures 500 to 505. The score is for a woodwind section and strings. The instruments are Flute (Fl.), Clarinet (Cl.), Arpeggiated Piano (Arpe), and Strings (Archi). The Flute and Clarinet parts are in the upper staves, and the Arpeggiated Piano and Strings are in the lower staves. The Flute and Clarinet parts are in G major (one sharp). The Arpeggiated Piano part is in B-flat major (two flats). The Strings part is in B-flat major (two flats). The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, slurs, and dynamics. The Flute part has a first ending bracket labeled 'I' and a second ending bracket labeled 'II'. The Clarinet part has a first ending bracket labeled 'I' and a second ending bracket labeled 'II'. The Arpeggiated Piano part has a first ending bracket labeled 'I' and a second ending bracket labeled 'II'. The Strings part has a first ending bracket labeled 'I' and a second ending bracket labeled 'II'. The score is marked 'riten.' (ritardando) at the end of the second ending. The page number '500' is written at the bottom left of the score.

Shostakovich chose the B-flat clarinets to be the first woodwind instruments to be combined with the Bass solo voice in the highly contentious first movement of Symphony No. 13, "Babi Yar" (Ex. 8-12). This is one example of the Soviet censorship in action: Shostakovich used the original poem written by Yevtushenko (the full English translation is quoted in Appendix B), but the words on the score do however not correlate with the translation of the original poem, bearing testimony to the forced changes Shostakovich, or his publishers, had to make to the score before it was distributed to the West. It would be interesting to hear the original version Shostakovich intended, especially in the light of the fact that he greatly disliked changing his original ideas. The words are vastly different, altering the rhythmic flow considerably.

The original and altered English translation of the Russian text at the beginning of the poem are shown below:

Original version	Altered version used in the score
<p>I feel as old today as the Jewish race itself. I feel now that I am a Jew. Here I wander through ancient Egypt. and here I hang on the cross and die, And I still bear the mark of the nails. I feel that I am Dreyfus.</p>	<p>I stand here at the source which proves to me our brotherhood. Here Russians lie, and Ukranians lie, with Jews in one soil. I feel that I am Dreyfus.</p>

The ominous atmosphere created by the accompaniment by the cellos and double basses is further intensified by the presence of the clarinets in mm. 31-36. The tone colours of the low strings and clarinets blend well as they bear witness to the heinous words sung by the Bass solo. Shostakovich then gradually layers potentially similar dark timbres as the clarinets with the addition of the bassoons, contrabassoon and horns from m. 36 onward.

## Example 8-12: Symphony No. 13, first movement, mm. 27-44

## Adagio [2]

Basso solo  
 тут стою, как буд-то у кри-ни-цы, да-ю-щей ве-ру в на-ше брат-ство мне. Здесь

V-c.  
 div.

C-b.  
 27

Cl.  
 I. II a2  
 mf

Basso solo  
 рус-ски-е ле-жат и у-кра-ин-цы, ле-жат с ев-ре-я-ми в од-

V-c.  
 unis.

C-b.  
 unis.  
 31

Cl.  
 I. II a2 [3]

Fag.  
 I  
 p f espr.

C-fag.  
 p f espr.

Cor.

Basso solo  
 -ной зем-ле. Мне ка-жет-ся, что Дрей-фус-э-то я. Ме-щан-ство-

V-ни II  
 arco  
 p espr. mf espr.

V-le  
 p mf espr.

V-c.  
 mf espr.

C-b.  
 35  
 mf espr.

Cl. *p cresc.* *f pesante*

Fag. *p cresc.* *f pesante*

C-fag.

Cor. *p cresc.* *f pesante*

Tr-be

Basso solo  
мой до-нос-чик и судь - я! Я за ре-шет - кой,

Archi *p cresc.* *f pesante*

39 *p cresc.* *f pesante*

Detailed description: This is a page of a musical score for a symphony orchestra and a solo bassoon. The score is written in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of seven systems of staves. The first system includes Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Fag.), and Contrabassoon (C-fag.). The second system includes Cor Anglais (Cor.) and Trumpets (Tr-be). The third system is for the Bassoon soloist (Basso solo), with Russian lyrics underneath. The fourth system is for the string section (Archi), consisting of Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass. The score features dynamic markings of *p cresc.* (piano crescendo) and *f pesante* (forte pesante). The page number 39 is located at the bottom left.

8.5 Conclusion

The musical score is arranged in systems. The first system includes Clarinet (Cl.), Bassoon (Fag.), and Contrabassoon (C-fag.). The second system includes Cor Anglais (Cor.), Trumpet (Tr-be), and Trombone III (III). The third system features a Bass solo with Russian lyrics: "я по-пал в кодь - цо, за - травлен - ный,". The fourth system is for the string ensemble (Arohi), with parts for Violin I, Violin II, Viola, and Cello/Double Bass. Performance markings include *p cresc.*, *ff*, *pizz.*, and *f*. The page number 42 is located at the bottom left.

Cl.

Fag.

C-fag.

Cor.

Tr-be

Basso solo

я по-пал в кодь - цо, за - травлен - ный,

Arohi

42

## 8.5 Conclusion

The role of the A and B-flat clarinets in the symphonies of Shostakovich encompass that of soloist, accompanist, harmonic supporter and tone colour blender. The composer is very explicit in his choice of clarinet. Shostakovich shows a deft understanding of the demands placed on clarinet players who have to change instruments by allowing sufficient time and warm up passages. Careful consideration is given to enhancing the natural quality of each register of the clarinet by scoring their parts in the most effective dynamic levels. There is a marked increase in the number of solos for the A clarinet from the middle of his symphonic career. The deep tones of the low strings, often articulated *pizzicato*, are the most preferred accompaniment to clarinet solos. Shostakovich continues his predilection for warm timbres by combining the clarinets with the violas and also the horns. The other prominent function of the clarinets in the symphonies is providing the accompaniment to various other instrumental solos.