

James Rae. *18 Concert Etudes for Solo Clarinet.* Universal Edition, 2017. \$19.95

Born in England in 1957, James Rae studied clarinet, bass clarinet, piano and composition at the Guildhall School of Music. Since leaving the Guildhall, he has pursued a highly successful and varied career in music. His work falls into three categories: performing, writing music and teaching. As a composer, he is one of Europe's most published writers of educational wind music. He has over 120 publications to his credit, published mainly by Universal Edition. Rae is currently saxophone professor for the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain.

In his preface to this collection, Rae states that these etudes were written with the serious clarinet student in mind. He relates that these studies overlap but go beyond the level of another of his works, *12 Modern Etudes*. He adds that the pieces in *18 Etudes* can also be used in concerts or recitals, hence providing variety to other accompanied works.

The etudes are clever, engaging and enjoyable to play. Each offers a different musical style. Many of the etudes have challenging rhythms, especially if one is to play them at the fast metronome markings. The composer uses tonal keys and traditional harmonies but he frequently writes perfect fourths and fifths. The phrasings are diverse, dynamic changes are frequent and staccato and *tenuto* markings are meticulously clear. The performer is never left guessing. What is also laudable is that the spacing between the lines on each page is much greater than scores of most other publishers. This adds to the clarity.

As in other studies by Rae, each etude has a title. The first "Valse" has a bright tempo, quarter = 148. This is followed by "Ragtime" which is rapid with straight eighth notes. The next "Lento espressivo" is one of the few with a relaxing pace. Following is "Jazz Waltz" with a very bright waltz tempo and swingin' eighth notes. Fun! "Lacrimoso" is slow, followed by "Ballad" which is jazzy with lazy grace notes. "Andante" is next and it is mostly

soft with trudging sixteenth notes. If you have fallen asleep, "Funky!" will certainly awaken your attention. It is syncopation-plus and it includes bends, lip-ups, doits and falls. A big-band jazz saxophone player would love this one! Continuing, Rae adds another swing, but more technique on "Giocoso" and "Veloce." "Meccanico" imitates machine music and "Leggiero" provides a bit of exercise for the tongue. "Adagio" has slow quarter notes but each is followed by five grace notes – perhaps imitating a harp. "Vivo" and "Furioso" are the *pieces de resistance* which may humble some. But that really depends upon the tempo (the finale is marked *Presto* (quarter = 136+). Four and six notes per beat are the main menu and a couple of arpeggios have six notes on half of a beat... *à la Capriccio Espagnol!* I highly recommend this one if you are looking for a variety of pieces that are interesting and challenging!

– Robert Chesebro

SOLO CLARINET WORKS

Márton Illés. *Harom akvarell klarinétrel Drei Aquarelle für Klarinette.* Breitkopf & Härtel, 2014. Duration: 5' €13.80

Marton Illés (b. 1975) is a Hungarian composer who has studied and worked mostly in Germany. His orchestral and chamber music works are regularly performed in the most prestigious concert halls in Europe. *Drei Aquarelle für Klarinette (Three Watercolors for Solo Clarinet)* was a commission for the Felix Mendelssohn Music Conservatory Competition in Berlin in 2015. The piece frequently uses extended playing techniques in an idiomatic way, notably multiphonics, multiphonic trills and "false fingerings" producing microtonal pitches. The middle movement has very fast passages in extremely soft dynamics. The piece was originally written for the German-system clarinet but it can be equally well performed on the Boehm system clarinet. The score gives fingerings for both systems, with many fingering tables and other indications. This may seem awkward at first, but once you get accustomed to it, it is clear and precise. Illés's *Harom akvarell* is technically

challenging but is also a very effective concert piece which has had a lot of performances already. You can find a good video recording of its premiere on the composer's website.

– Mikko Raasakka

Zequinha de Abreu. *Tico-tico no fubá* for clarinet solo. Arranged by Florent Héau. Gérard Billaudot, 2014. \$9.10

This solo clarinet arrangement of Abreu's very popular pop/jazz/Latin tune is fun and easy to play. I especially like the grace notes in the middle section – very cute! Excellent as an encore or for students. Good for practicing articulation and varieties of articulations.

The layout is clear and easy to read, but I think the tempo markings are a misprint, and should be *half note* equals 96 and 120 respectively, not quarter note.

– Sean Osborn

Juan de Dios López-Maya. *Variations on a Theme by José Ángel Montero* for unaccompanied E-flat clarinet. Cayambis Music Press, 2016. Duration: 3'30" \$14.90

Venezuelan composer and musicologist Juan de Dios López-Maya received his Ph.D. in humanities at the Universidad Central de Venezuela and preliminary degrees from the Universidad Central de Venezuela and the Instituto Universitario de Estudios Musicales. His catalog includes many works for various chamber ensembles. Many of López-Maya's compositions have been performed and recorded by Venezuelan ensembles.

This piece was inspired by the works of Venezuelan composer José Ángel Montero (1832-1881). He is mostly known for operatic and religious music. *Variations on a Theme by José Ángel Montero* for unaccompanied E-flat clarinet is a collection of variations based on Montero's compositional style. The form is an introduction followed by four variations: Moderato scherzando, Moderato, L'istesso tempo and Allegro.

Variations on a Theme by José Ángel Montero is a fantastic addition to unaccompanied E-flat clarinet repertoire. It can also be performed on B-flat clarinet.

It consists of an array of different musical characters. The introduction begins with a happy, straightforward melody followed by the jazzy first variation. The second variation is solemn in character, the third more lively. The final variation is an echo of motivic material found in the introduction.

Despite the short length of this work, López-Maya captures the spirit of Montero's music. This work is perfect for performers who are interested in learning more about South American music and is a wonderful addition to solo E-flat clarinet repertoire. I highly recommend this work for advanced high school students to professionals.

— Kristine Dizon

CONCERTO WORKS

Daniel Dorff. *Summer Solstice* – Concerto for Clarinet and Strings (piano reduction by composer). Published by Theodore Presser Company, 2017. \$18.99

I had the great pleasure of premiering this version, and have performed the full orchestral concerto as well. I love this piece, and recommend it highly to everyone. It is in the American symphonic language of midcentury neoclassicists and is extremely beautiful. The first movement opens with a tremolo landscape introduction with a long phrase in the high clarinet. The rest of the movement is taken up with a fun romp reminiscent of children playing in the summer sun, running through fields laughing and leaping, occasionally catching their breath. The coda increases the humor with large “hee-haw” leaps and hoedown rhythms in the piano, ending with a spectacular arpeggio up to double-high C.

The second movement opens quietly and contemplatively, and continues the deep exploration of beautiful sounds. Lush, expressive passages contrast with this contemplation and occasional forays into a lullaby before ending with the opening material. The third movement opens with slow and low material that makes up the bulk of the fast “triple time! ma energico” to come. The second theme is a slightly wobbly slower dance. The third is a jazzy theme that leads back to the first material

in a mad crescendo to the end.

This concerto manages to be tonal, expressive and beautiful without seeming cliché. At 18 minutes, it makes a great recital piece and is perfect for high school and college students as well as professionals. The parts are well laid out and easy to read. Highest recommendation.

— Sean Osborn

Lev Kogan. *Klezmer Dance Suite* for clarinet, strings, percussion and tuba. Arranged by Alan Kaufman. Cadenzas by Gene Kavadlo. Israel Brass Woodwind Publications/OR-TAV Music Publications, 2017. Score: \$19.95, score and clarinet part: \$35.00, set of parts for orchestra: \$70.00

Gene Kavadlo, longtime principal clarinet of the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra, is the mastermind behind this singular work for solo clarinet, strings, percussion (two players) and tuba. Kavadlo, already familiar with klezmer-style works by Lev Kogan (who studied with Aram Khachaturian), collaborated with arranger Alan Kaufman to transform five of Kogan's *Hassidic Tunes* for clarinet and piano into a more dynamic version with orchestra.

Kogan granted permission for the project and Kavadlo gave stylistically appropriate titles to Kogan's heretofore unnamed tunes. Kavadlo composed the introductory solo clarinet “Doina” (cadenza for listening) that foreshadows subsequent melodies. It leads to the first movement “Freylekh.” Similar, albeit on a smaller scale, introductory solo clarinet cadenzas by Kavadlo precede the next movements, “Khosid'l” and “Nigun.” The fourth movement “Kolomeyke” is led into by a duo cadenza for clarinet and violin. In contrast, the concluding “Bulgar” begins with orchestra.

Appropriate ornamentation is provided for the clarinet – mordents go to the upper neighbor note. In the written preface Kavadlo encourages the clarinetist to be inventive “to find their own voice” in the music through additional embellishment and stylistic performance. This flexibility extends to the score itself where single or multiple players on the string parts is

sanctioned, as is substitution of another bass instrument in place of tuba.

Kaufman's light orchestration is deft and captures the character of historic klezmer ensembles.

— Gregory Barrett

CLARINET AND ONE OTHER INSTRUMENT

Lowell Liebermann. *Elegy* for B-flat clarinet and piano, Op. 119. Theodore Presser Company, 2017. Duration: 8' \$9.99

Lowell Liebermann (b. 1961) is one of America's most frequently performed and recorded living composers. His musical style is unashamedly neoromantic with a strong penchant for polytonality. Liebermann's oeuvre contains a lot of interesting music for clarinet: several chamber music works and a concerto for clarinet and orchestra, written for and premiered by Jon Manasse in 2009. Manasse, with pianist Jon Nakamatsu, also gave the first performance of *Elegy* for clarinet and piano. Liebermann's *Elegy* begins with the clarinet's beautiful melodic line accompanied by the piano's (sometimes polytonal) tranquil, floating eighth notes. In the middle section, Liebermann uses the same melodic material but adds intensity with a faster tempo, stronger dynamics and a thicker piano texture. After a dramatic culmination led by the piano's left hand the piece calms down and regains the lyrical atmosphere. The technical challenge in the otherwise simple clarinet part is that it frequently uses the altissimo register (up to high A) in soft dynamics. Not a piece for beginners, but very effective for a clarinetist who has mastered the highest register. Liebermann's *Elegy* (or *Berceuse* as it is called on the composer's website) is an important addition to clarinet and piano repertoire.

— Mikko Raasakka

Theresa Martin. *Paragon* for B-flat clarinet and piano. Potenza Music, 2015. \$16.95

This seven-minute duo comes with a program note explaining Martin's idea of a perfect life, or a paragon of a life. It