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The Basset Clarinet Revived

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Colin Lawson

The basset clarinet revived

Grosse
Musikalische Akademie.

Heute Mittwoch den 20ten Februar 1788. wird
im Kais. Königl. National = Hof = Theater
Herr Stadler der ältere,
Klarinetist, in wirtlichen Diensten Sr. Majestät des Kaisers,
die Ehre haben in einer

großen musikalischen Akademie
zu seinem Vortheile auszuführen:
Ariadne auf Naxos,
eine Kantate
mit den Worten des Herrn von Beethoven, in die Musik gesetzt vom Herrn Reichart, Königl. preussischen Kapellmeister.
Die Rolle der Ariadne wird Mad. Lange, und die der Oreste Mlle. Eur singen.
Vorher aber:

- 1) Eine große Symphonie vom Hrn. Kapellmeister Haydn.
- 2) Wird Herr Stadler ein Konzert auf der Bass = Klarinet spielen.
- 3) Singt Mlle. Eur eine Arie von Anfossi.
- 4) Spielt Herr Stadler eine Variation auf der Bass = Klarinet; einem Instrumente von einer neuen Erfindung, und Vervollständigung des k. k. Hof = Instrumentenmachers, Theodor Lotz; dieses Instrument hat zwey tiefe Töne mehr, als die gewöhnliche Klarinet.

Die Eintrittspreise sind wie bey den National = Schauspielen.
Die Käufer von der Kantate sind bey dem Logenmeister und bey der Kasse zur 12. St. zu haben.

Der Anfang ist um 7 Uhr.

1 Concert programme, 20 February 1788; National Hoftheater, Vienna: the earliest known reference to a basset clarinet

More than 35 years after the first modern performance of a reconstructed text of Mozart's Clarinet Concerto, the basset clarinet has recently become known to a much wider audience. The most commonly used instrument is an extended boxwood clarinet or one of the commercially available Boehm-style models.

Development of the basset clarinet in the 18th century arose from a unique collaboration of player, composer and manufacturer, all of whom were intimately acquainted with the basset horn, to which the instrument is closely related. With registers in different tonalities a 12th apart, the clarinet had been unusual among

woodwind instruments in having its lowest note a major 3rd above the tonic of its principal register rather than a tone or semitone below. While overcoming this limitation, the basset clarinet of Anton Stadler (1753–1812) inspired its own considerable repertory by Mozart and others. Various contemporary sources give some indication both of Stadler's own approach to the clarinet and of the character and design of his newly-invented instrument.

The similarities of Stadler's playing to vocal timbre are reflected in a valuable review in the *Literarische Fragmente* (Graz, 1785) of J. F. Schink. At a benefit concert for Stadler on 23 March 1784 part of the Serenade in B flat K361 had been performed, almost certainly for the first time: 'I have never heard the like of what you contrived with your instrument. Never should I have thought that a clarinet could be capable of imitating a human voice so deceptively as it was imitated by you. Indeed, your instrument has so soft and so lovely a tone that no-one with a heart can resist it.' Stadler's own scheme of musical education, the so-called 'Musick Plan' drawn up for Count Festetics on 10 July 1800, recommends that the essentials of music should be learned through singing, whatever the quality of one's voice. His versatility as a clarinetist also incorporated an enthusiasm for the then problematic chalumeau register, reflected in his appointment to the Kaiser's Harmonie as second clarinet in 1783, some five years before the appearance of the basset clarinet. Much new biographical material has recently been discovered, which amplifies details of his personal and professional life.¹ However, the non-appearance of the clarinet tutor that had been promised in the 'Musick Plan' is a particular frustration in any assessment of Stadler as a practitioner.²

His career developed at a time when clarinet playing styles showed a remarkable variety of technical and aesthetic awareness. An early Austrian pre-eminence has yet to be fully explained, though single-reed instruments had been known there throughout the 18th century. Chalumeaux had been included in the Vienna opera orchestra quite regularly between 1706 and the mid-1730s, and were retained by Gluck in the 1760s and by Gassmann and Starzer in the following decade. Further evidence, recently brought to light, shows that clarinets were used before 1769 in Salzburg military bands.³ As late as 1795 J. E. Altenburg wrote of the clarinet in this role: 'Its sharp and penetrating sound is of good service, particularly in the military music of the infantry, and it sounds much better from

afar than from close up.'⁴ It is thus not impossible that Mozart was aware of the instrument when he wrote from Paris in 1777, 'Ah, if only we had clarinets . . .', which refers to a very different tradition. Exceptionally, a nine-movement Divertimento in D completed by Michael Haydn in August 1764 has two concertante movements that include a solo A clarinet; they exploit the technical possibilities of the instrument throughout its compass in a progressive fashion. This indicates the availability of an earlier virtuoso who, since Michael Haydn continued to write clarino-type parts as late as the 1770s, was probably a visitor to Salzburg. By 1784–5, C. F. Schubart's *Ideen zu einer Aesthetik der Tonkunst* offered a Viennese appreciation of the clarinet not specifically associated with Stadler, in which he characterized the instrument as overflowing with love, whilst praising its indescribable sweetness of expression. Schubart added that the best clarinets were made in Nuremberg, Munich, Hamburg, Berlin and Vienna. The homogeneous but distinctive quality of Viennese clarinets incorporates in particular an enlarging of the tone-holes at the lower end of the instrument which enhances the tone of the chalumeau register.⁵ In addition, the Austro-German tradition was among the first to embrace the modern practice of playing with the reed against the lower lip: supporting evidence for this is the mouthpiece stamp on an extant clarinet by Stadler's collaborator, Theodor Lotz.⁶ The anonymous commentator 'M', writing in an article 'Über die Klarinett' (*Allgemeine musikalisches Zeitung*, ix, 1808), urged any clarinetists still playing in the French manner (reed uppermost) to switch, asking how it was possible to cultivate a soft and expressive tone when a vibrating reed was in contact with the teeth. Some six years earlier J. G. H. Backofen's *Anweisung zur Klarinette . . .* (Leipzig, c1802) shows a knowledge of both methods, but fails to express a preference.

In today's recreation of late-18th-century sonorities, national differences in both performance practice and instrument design need to be taken into account.⁷ For example, English conditions could scarcely be further removed from the Viennese tradition represented by Stadler; characteristic of the prevailing amateur scene is the unsophisticated if versatile instrument (played with reed above) implied in the *Compleat Instructions for the Clarinet* published by S., A. & P. Thompson (London, c1785):

The Clarinet is considered as the life of every martial band; and as an indispensable accompaniment to other wind instruments in concerts, where its tones, judiciously man-

aged, are exhilarating and animating beyond almost any other. And though it may have some disadvantages as a solo instrument, yet a judicious player may make it something more than barely agreeable, even without accompaniment.

If the clarinet parts in Haydn's 'London' symphonies provide a fairer professional comparison, it is nevertheless significant, in view of Stadler's achievements, that John Marsh in *Hints to Young Composers of Instrumental Music* (London, c1806) remarks that 'the low notes, being very weak, are only proper to be used in mere accompaniment'.

Even within Vienna the Mozart-Stadler collaboration must be seen as wholly exceptional for its date; the clarinet parts of Haydn and early Beethoven illustrate the limitations recognized by most composers for the instrument. The first documented link between Mozart and Stadler is an advertisement in the *Wienerblättchen* for the 1784 concert already mentioned, though it seems likely that Stadler was the clarinetist singled out for the praise by Mozart in a letter of October 1781, following a performance of the Serenade K375. Schink's review of the Serenade K361 indicates that Stadler played the first clarinet; the basset-horn players are presumed to have been the visiting Bohemians Anton David and Vincent Springer. Among the considerable publicity generated by this duo, the performance in 1782 at Ludwiglust 'on largely unknown instruments which they call basset horns' was cited by C. F. Cramer in 1783,⁸ and they won fulsome praise from J. N. Forkel in his 1784 *Musikalischer Almanach*.⁹

Their names have also been associated with Mozart's ensemble music for clarinets and basset horns, the instrumental resources of which prepared his idiomatic handling of the basset clarinet. Of two masonic benefit concerts organized for David and Springer in October and December 1785, Mozart and Stadler performed in the first, while the second was advertised as including 'Partitas composed by Brother Stadler for 6 wind instruments, at which the Hon. Brother Locz will play the great 8ve bassoon'.

Theodor Lotz (1748–92)—first clarinet, viola player and instrument maker at Pressburg from 1781 until 1783—was credited by C. F. Cramer with the improvement of the basset horn in 1782.¹⁰ Having moved to Vienna in 1784, he was appointed Royal Instrument Maker to the Kaiser in 1788. A programme for a concert on 20 February of that year at the Royal and Imperial Theatre associates him with the earliest reference to the basset clarinet: together with the performance of

Reichardt's cantata *Ariadne auf Naxos*, four items were advertised including '[2] Herr Stadler will play a concerto on the *Bass-Klarinet*' and '[4] Herr Stadler will play a variation on the *Bass-Klarinet*, an instrument of new invention and manufacture of the Royal and Imperial Instrument Maker, Theodor Loz. This instrument has two more low tones than the normal clarinet' (see illus.1). While its extended compass at once suggests kinship with the basset horn, the newness of the invention clearly differentiates the two instruments. However, the basset horn was also occasionally known as bass clarinet before that term acquired its later specific meaning. (The term basset clarinet has been generally adopted because 'bass clarinet'—a term used by Stadler of his extended soprano instrument—today denotes an instrument pitched an octave lower than its soprano counterpart.) Forkel's 1784 *Almanach* remarks of the basset horn, 'this instrument is still largely unknown; it is said to be a kind of bass clarinet'.¹¹ In 1791 H. Bossler noted the effectiveness of 'the so-called bass clarinets' as replacements for the bassoon.¹² (19th-century examples of such terminology will be noted in due course.)

The development of the lowest register of the basset horn is of particular relevance to a discussion of the basset clarinet. The earliest type of basset horn, with bent tube modelled on the cor anglais, borrowed the 'box' or *Buch* from instruments such as the rackets to achieve an extension from written *e* down to the tonic *c*. Neither the simplest instruments with five keys (pre-1770 and equivalent in development to the three-keyed clarinet) nor some six- and seven-keyed basset horns by the supposed inventors A. and M. Mayrhofer are furnished with any intervening notes. A six-keyed basset horn of this design is described by J. G. L. von Wilke in his *Musikalisches Handwörterbuch* (1786) and a seven-keyed version by E. L. Gerber in his *Historisch-biographisches Lexicon* (1790–92). However, surviving instruments testify to the provision of a key for *d* by the 1780s, though even as late as c1810 the conservative *Vollständige Theoretisch-practische Musikschule* by J. Froehlich remarked that this note was not always present. The more-readily constructed shape of two limbs joined at an angle by a knee is described in the *Musikalisches Lexicon* (1802) by H. C. Koch and almost certainly constitutes one of the improvements widely attributed to Lotz. Eight-keyed models of this type were constructed in the 1780s and continued to be described much later: for example, see G. Schilling's *Universal-Lexicon der Tonkunst* in 1840. Significantly,

Backofen remarked (c1802) that the finest basset horns known to him were of Viennese manufacture. In addition to the instruments in G and F used by Mozart, basset horns in E, E \flat and D were listed by J. G. Albrechtsberger in 1790.¹³ A hint that basset horns in A were also manufactured at various periods is provided by the smallest of the surviving Mayrhofer specimens, together with a much later example c1815 by Strobach of Carlsbad.¹⁴

Evidence for Stadler's early involvement with the basset horn is given by his letter of 1781 to Ignatz von Beecke seeking employment at Wallerstein and offering trios with his brother Johann and Raymund Griesbacher, the maker of the basset horn shown in illus.2. The attribution to the Stadlers of the additional keys for *c* \sharp and *d* \sharp has some definite basis even though surviving instruments of the period have only *c* and *d* keys, including examples by Lotz in Berlin, Nuremberg, Prague and Konstanz. Albrechtsberger mentions an exceptional basset horn with a chromatic extension (for *d* \sharp , *d*, *c* \sharp and *c*) and four-octave range developed by the Stadler brothers of Vienna.¹⁵ Mozart's attitude to this improvement at first shows restraint; the second basset-horn part of the Serenade K361 has one *c* and a single passage in the Trio I of the first Minuet requires *d* and *e* \flat . If the basset horns normally used by David and Springer were seven-keyed instruments in G,¹⁶ they must have been newly equipped for the 'F' parts of K361, possibly with instruments belonging to the Stadlers. Basset horns with a fully chromatic extension survive only from the 19th century and were manufactured by Heinrich Grenser by c1810.¹⁷ On a rectangular *Buch* *c* \sharp was more difficult to add than *e* \flat , and there are later specimens with only three basset keys (that is, *c*, *d* and *e* \flat), such as the instruments by Griessling and Schott in the Bate Collection, Oxford, and the Horniman Museum. That *c* \sharp was the last of the basset keys to be added on Stadler's instrument may be inferred from his *terzetti*, the lowest voice of which contains instances of a bracketed *ossia c* \sharp ' when *c* \sharp appears. Mozart's own lowest basset-horn parts often require only the diatonic extension available to players other than Stadler, and a few more are confined to *c*, *d* and *e* \flat . The inaccessibility of autograph material of the *notturmi* K436–9, 439*a* and 549, and the loss of the original versions of the *Divertimenti à 3* K439*b* seriously inhibit further conclusions about the development of the extension, as well as the dating of virtually all these works.

The Lotz basset clarinet can be associated with



2 Basset horn in F (Vienna, after 1800) by Raymund Griesbacher (1752–1818) (London, Royal College of Music)

Mozart's Quintet fragment in B flat, K516c, 93 bars of a movement which Nissen believed to have been originally complete.¹⁸ Basset notes occur only in bar 55, from which point *d* appears seven times, occasioning notation in the bass clef an octave below pitch, as in Mozart's basset-horn writing. (Albrechtsberger makes a distinction between this convention and the use in clarinet parts of the term *chalumeau* to qualify notation an octave higher than the sound.) Einstein dated this Quintet 1787 on the basis of a related eight-bar Andante Rondo fragment, the neighbouring sketches of which are known to derive from that year. It has further been noticed that an autograph score of the G minor String Quintet K516 (1787) had its opening staves originally prepared by Mozart for a clarinet quintet ('Clarinetto in B') and that the clefs and staves were amended by him.¹⁹ The two-note extension by Lotz has been widely claimed to have been to *d* and *e*_b on the additional evidence of the 89-bar Rondo fragment K581a, the A clarinet part in which contains a single *e*_b in bar 59; however, as an obvious sketch for the finale of the Clarinet Quintet of 1789, whose reconstructed text implies the definite availability of *c*, *d* and *e*_b, K581a must be discounted in the argument. Indeed, there is no proof that Stadler's B_b clarinet was ever extended chromatically, and this was almost certainly the instrument used by him in the 1788 concert. A clarinet with diatonic extension, like the basset horn in common use, was known to Backofen c1802:

Another more recent and excellent invention is this, that clarinets with *d* and *c* are now being made in Vienna; this greatly improves the clarinet, because in addition to the great advantage which low *c* brings, which until now it missed so much in its favourite key of C, it now has three complete octaves, in which every clarinettist can play easily.

The Rondo K581a, based on a theme later used in Ferrando's aria 'Ah, lo veggio' (*Così fan tutte*), has also some thematic similarity with the first movement of the Clarinet Quintet, suggesting that it pre-dates the entire work and not merely the finale. An arbitrary use of soprano, alto, tenor and bass clefs in the clarinet part within a space of 15 bars has been interpreted as a joke at the expense of Stadler, perhaps inspired by the *Bass-Klarinet* itself.²⁰ A much less restrained attitude to the basset notes is implied within K581, 'Stadler's Quintet'.²¹ The loss of the autograph seems to have been the responsibility of the clarinettist,²² and reconstruction of the text has taken place from the versions for normal clarinet published by André and

by Artaria in 1802. Contemporary Artaria editions for alternative forces offer some important hints, while an analogous model is given by Mozart's concerto. Contexts such as ex.1 and ex.2 leave little doubt that *e*_b, as well as *c* and *d*, was available to Stadler at the first performance on 22 December 1789. Less certain is *c*#, whose only likely occurrence lies within an ambiguous passage in the development section. The tessitura and

Ex.1 K581, mvt 1, bar 187

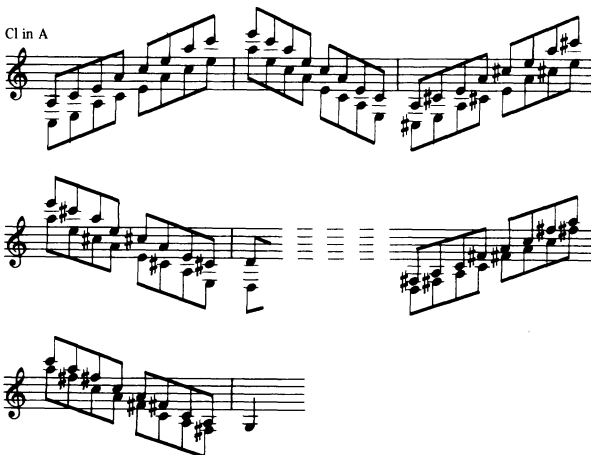


Ex.2 K581, mvt 4, bars 55–6



contour here suggest the kind of radical reconstruction recently proposed but by no means universally accepted.²³ The upper limit elsewhere in the Quintet is *d*''', even in the wide ranging Variation I of the finale. Ex.3 compares the conventional version (upward stems) with this reconstruction (downward stems), which is manifestly not the only solution. It may be significant that the basset clarinet's fully chromatic extension, first ascribed to Stadler in Gerber's *Lexicon* and claimed by him after the death of Lotz in 1792, is said to date from the year 1790. Thus the basset clarinet in A as well as the basset horn may initially have had *e*_b only

Ex.3 K581, mvt 1, bars 99–102, 109–110



added to the diatonic extension. Seven occurrences of *d* in the second clarinet part of 'Ah, lo veggio', whilst an interesting feature showing the influence of K581*a*, scarcely advance the argument, particularly since the writing here is for B \flat clarinet.

The solo part of the Clarinet Concerto K622 reveals a freedom of usage which is anticipated neither by the Quintet nor by Mozart's own basset-horn writing. Sources for the considerable reconstruction demanded here are Mozart's autograph sketch K621*b* for basset horn in G, a review of an early edition of the Concerto in *Allgemeine musikalisches Zeitung* [AMZ] (1802), and the internal musical evidence. A 199-bar sketch of the first movement—held in the Rychenberg-Stiftung, Winterthur—is reproduced in *W. A. Mozart: Neue Ausgabe sämtlicher Werke* [NMA] (v/14/4) with Einstein's dating of 1789 (K584*b*) properly advanced to 1791. Notable in particular for a sudden change of tonality from G to A at bar 180, its orchestration lacks the bassoons present in K622, and has further small differences at bars 98*f* and 195*f*. For the clarinet version the solo part was obviously retained in its entirety; the alterations in bars 94–7 (ex.4) were probably suggested by Stadler.²⁴

Ex.4 K621*b*, bar 94

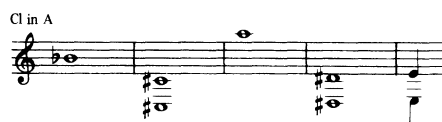


Mozart's initial choice of instrument may appear somewhat recondite; however, the basset horn in G achieved more popularity during the 18th century than extant repertory might suggest, and only after 1800 became almost as little known as the basset clarinet. As late as 1829 Gottfried Weber was still aware of it as a rarity.²⁵ This instrument was chosen by Gerber in 1790 to illustrate the range of the basset horn, and Mozart used it together with two clarinets in A in his Notturmo K437—his only work involving single reeds in the key of G major. The sketch K621*b* suggests that the basset-horn in G was also extended chromatically by Stadler, or at least that the idea was in his mind; this is not actually confirmed by Albrechts-

berger, who in comparing the instruments in F and G merely noted that the former was older and more common. The recasting of K621*b* from G to A major was certainly less radical in terms of tone colour than would have been a transition from basset horn in F to the popular solo B \flat clarinet. The clarinet in A, though universally described as gentle and soft in tone (qualities which the basset extension would exaggerate), had yet scarcely been exploited as a solo instrument, for which role it was generally reckoned inferior to its B \flat counterpart. Mozart's acute sensitivity to the timbre of different clarinets is well illustrated by his many basset-horn parts (notably in *Die Zauberflöte*) which in terms of range rather than colour are playable on clarinets.

The AMZ review, which has been attributed to the journal's editor Friedrich Rochlitz,²⁶ discusses the Breitkopf edition of c1801. An aesthetic appreciation of the Clarinet Concerto with some appraisal of its technical difficulties, it includes examples of the basset clarinet text and concludes that 'Perhaps it would have been just as well to have published it in the original version and to have marked these transpositions and alterations in smaller notes'. If this preference for today's editorial procedure shows considerable foresight, equally significant is the author's claim to have seen Mozart's text in score, thus raising our hopes for its eventual rediscovery. During the last 40 years a number of clarinettists and scholars have contributed to a full reconstruction; however, some ambiguities remain, as in ex.5*a* and 5*b* where transposition seems desirable only in the latter context. The broken arpeggio in ex.6 has also aroused suspicion; while in ex.7 the rising arpeggio to *g'''* takes the solo line a minor 3rd higher than Mozart's upper limit else-

Ex.5*a* K622, mvt 1, bar 216



Ex.5*b* K622, mvt 2, bar 95



Ex.6 K622, mvt 3, bar 84



Ex 7 K622, mvt 3, bar 91



Ex.8 K622, mvt 3, bar 145 (NMA)



where. The transposition at ex.8, by which the *NMA* distorts the melodic contour, should almost certainly take place four bars later.

Of the circumstances surrounding the work's première, Nissen relates that Mozart 'composed a clarinet concerto in October, gave the composition to Stadler and travelling money [to get him] to Prague and made certain that he would make use of it there'. The first performance was presumably part of Stadler's concert on 16 October 1791.²⁷ The basset clarinet obbligato in 'Parto, parto' (*La clemenza di Tito*), performed by Stadler in Prague on 6 and 30 September, exploits his versatility without the extremes of virtuosity in the concerto, confining the basset range to *c* and *d*, and again suggesting a difference in design between B \flat and A instruments. Stadler's immediate success, reported by Mozart in a letter of 7/8 October, was the beginning of the aria's long history of popular acclaim. It almost certainly influenced the Latin parody 'Cor sincerum amore' after the aria 'Non temer, amato bene' K505, in which the obbligato piano part was transcribed for basset clarinet—probably by Stadler himself.²⁸ This transcription offers a valuable clue as to his provision of repertory for the new instrument.

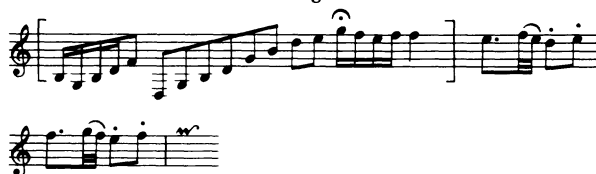
Works for basset clarinet by other composers can all be linked to Stadler's activities. On 23 December 1805 and 31 March 1806 programmes at the court theatre included 'an aria by Paer sung by Madame Campi, accompanied by Stadler on a clarinet with modifications of his own invention'.²⁹ This was Soffia's aria 'Una voce al cor mi parla' from Act 2 of Paer's *Sargino* (1803), the obbligato for which was later performed on a conventional clarinet by such virtuosos as Baermann, Crusell, Friedlowsky, Hermstedt and Willmann.³⁰ The solo part of a Clarinet Concerto in B \flat held in the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Vienna (5856) has interpolated cadenzas in another unidentified hand, which include *c* and *d*; the work is listed in Supplement

xv (1782–4) of the Breitkopf catalogue, with the ascription Michel. Though this was the name used by the Parisian virtuoso Michel Yost, it seems more likely on stylistic grounds that the work is by the German Joseph Michl;³¹ Gerber (*Lexicon*, 1790–92) mentions clarinet concertos by him and (1812–14) lists the alternative names Michel and Michl. The first movement cadenza has a diatonic scale from *c'* to *c*, notated in the bass clef, and the same upper limit of *g'''* as the main Allegro moderato.³² In the Romance and Rondo allegretto, the opportunity for *Eingänge* is used to introduce basset notes (exx.9 and 10). Such use of a basset clarinet for existing works was clearly another area of Stadler's activity, and this may have been the very concerto performed by him in 1788.

Ex.9 Michl, Concerto: Romance



Ex.10 Michl, Concerto: Rondo allegretto



Closely related to Mozart's works is the unfinished Clarinet Concerto in D major by Süßmayr in the British Library (Add.32181). In his letter of 7/8 October 1791 Mozart wrote to Constanza: 'Do tell Süßmayr to get on with something for Stadler, for he has begged



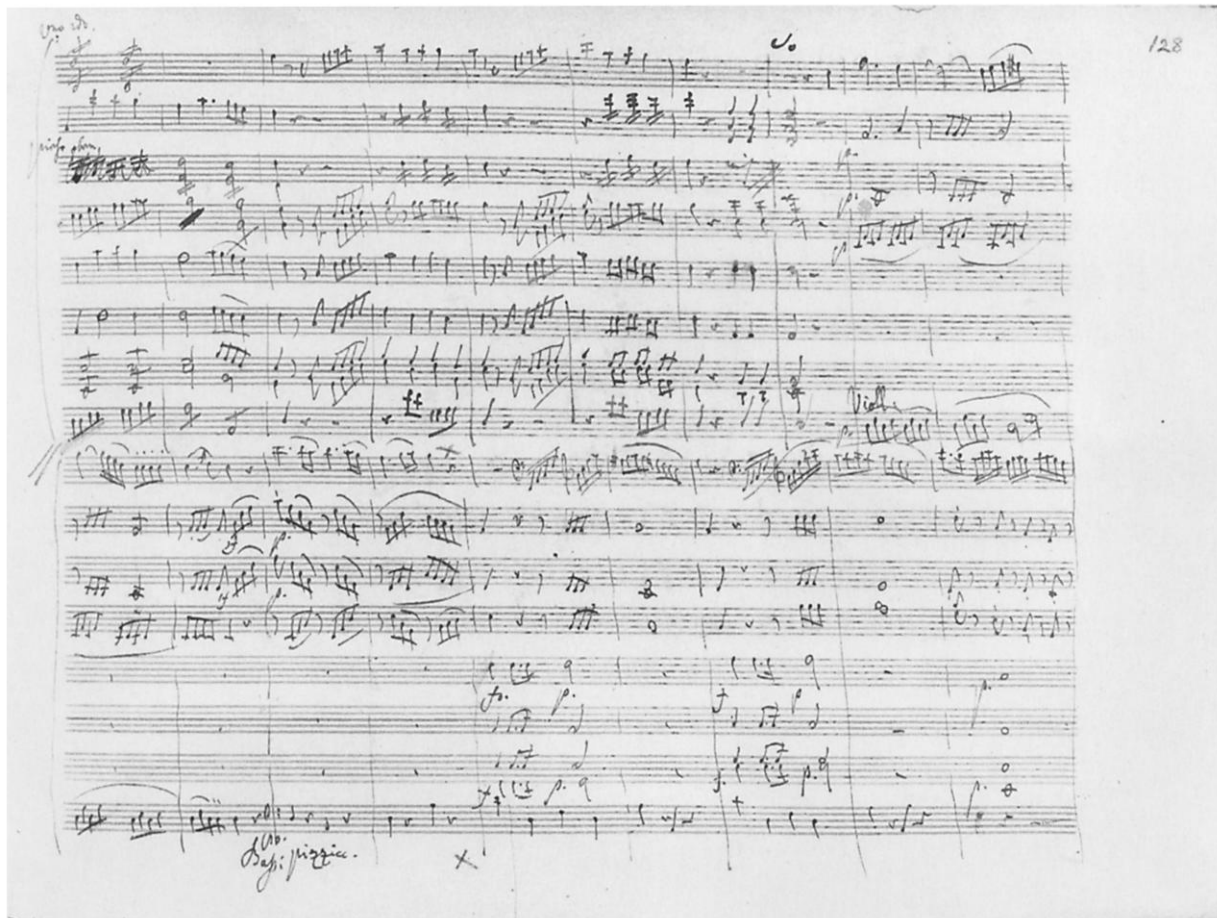
3 Clarinet Concerto sketch by Süssmayr (British Library, Add. ms. 32181)

me very earnestly to see to this'. Süssmayr's two sketches are scored for basset clarinet, oboes, horns and strings; the second is dated January 1792 (see illus.3). The first sketch continues into a development after the solo exposition, though this is mainly a single solo line with some added detail for the violin or bass parts. A clearer and more fully-scored version involved revision of the solo figuration, but was abandoned shortly after the introduction of a new closing theme in the solo exposition a little way into the development.

Though basset writing is restricted to *c* and *d*, Süssmayr notably exceeds Mozart's upper limit in a scalic passage to *c'''* (see illus.4). There is reason to suppose that Stadler's own repertory incorporated such passages, since an announcement for a Hanover concert of 1795 stated that Stadler would play 'on a clarinet of his own invention which has a distinctive softer tone and range of four full octaves'.³³ The

effectiveness of this part of the compass was still a matter of controversy in 1808, when the *AMZ* article praised Mozart's appreciation of the clarinet's beauty of tone, approving his virtual avoidance of *f'''* and *g'''*, and proceeding to criticize the extremes of tessitura favoured by the virtuoso and composer Franz Tausch.

Use of the term *Bass-Klarinet* for both basset horn and the Lotz invention has already been noted. The term *Bassettklarinet* dates from as early as 1796 when J. F. von Schonfeld described the Stadler brothers as 'accomplished artists both on the ordinary clarinet and also on the basset clarinet, on which difficult instrument they have perfected control of tone-production, nuance, expression and facility'.³⁴ It has been plausibly suggested that the careful distinction made between the two instruments implies a comparison between clarinet and basset horn, whose greater technical difficulties arose in part from the relatively



narrower bore.³⁵ The inclusion in Schonfeld's discussion of Johann Stadler, whose involvement with the basset clarinet is not reported elsewhere, lends support to this supposition. Similar terminology recurs in a dictionary entry of 1822 by Gottfried Weber, '*Basset-horn, eigentliche Basset-Clarinetten, auch Bass-Clarinetten oder Clarinettenbass genannt*',³⁶ and in his article of 1829.³⁷ He questions the use of the term basset horn for what is really a clarinet, surmising that the similarity of shape or sound is the cause. The use of basset clarinet to signify basset horn is also found in August Gathy's *Musikalisches Conversations-Lexicon* (Leipzig, 1835).

The lack of evidence concerning other basset clarinet players raises the question of its overall popularity. Koch, *AMZ* (1802) and later writers refer to it as rare rather than unique. Backofen adds to his comments about its lack of widespread use: 'For now, I

will pass over the great advantages of the preceding and of this new invention, in order to talk about these clarinets when they come into normal use'. Though these expectations were denied, another piece of evidence indicates that the basset clarinet was not confined to Stadler. In the *Kaiserliche Wiener Zeitung* of 2 April 1803 Franz Scholl advertised

his newly designed and considerably improved wind instruments, a portion of which are of his own invention. His clarinet (in B \flat or C) extended two tones lower, that is to low c, which since one has the tonic note for cadences, always produces a good effect. . . . Scholl has received a patent on his invention from his Imperial Majesty the Kaiser.³⁸

Scholl's instrument was perhaps equivalent to the Lotz design and the basset clarinet known to Backofen, with the probability that Stadler had a monopoly both on chromatic basset horns and basset clarinets. There is no evidence that Stadler had a basset clarinet in C,



4 Süssmayr sketch, bars 112–125

Mozart's quintet fragment K580b being scored for a normal clarinet.

A detailed but ambiguous description of Stadler's instrument appears in Friedrich Bertuch's *Journal des Luxus und der Moden* (1801):

Herr Stadler, ein grosser Künstler auf mehreren Blasinstrumenten, präsentirte sich in einer von den Akademien, welche im Augarten von Dilettanten ausgeführt werden, auf einer Klarinette mit Abänderung von seiner Erfindung, welche darin besteht, dass es nicht, wie gewöhnlich, bis an das Ende zur Öffnung gerade fortläuft. Durch den letztem vierten Theil ungefähr ist eine Querrippe angebracht, von welcher aus erst die weiter hinausgebogene hervorragende Öffnung geht. Der Vortheil dieser Änderung besteht darin, dass das Instrument hiedurch noch mehr Tiefe erhält, und in den letzten Tönen mit dem Waldhorn Ähnlichkeit hat.

Herr Stadler, a great virtuoso of several wind instruments, presented himself at one of the concerts performed by amateurs in the Augarten. He played a clarinet with modifications of his own invention. His instrument does not, as is usual, run straight down to the bell. About the last

quarter of its length is fitted with a lateral ridge from which the projecting bell flares out yet further. . . .

Like Mozart and Stadler, Bertuch clearly regarded the instrument as a type of clarinet rather than basset horn, implying a straight bore without a knee. The analogy with the sound of the horn may derive not only from its tone quality but also from the incorporation of a metal bell as on the basset horn. There seems little difficulty in accepting 'querrippe' as the *Buch* from the basset horn, perhaps (if the proportions are regarded literally) needing only two rather than the customary three tubes contained within. In short, Bertuch lends support to the probability that the basset clarinet was closely modelled on the basset horn, whilst being identifiable as a clarinet.

Early confusion arose when J. Schwalldopler in his *Historisches Taschenbuch* (1805) substituted 'querpipe' for the less common 'querrippe' in his abbreviation of Bertuch's text, a variant retained in Gerber's paraphrase of 1812–14.³⁹ The original term approaches

more closely what might be expected of Stadler's invention, and seems unlikely to have been a mere misprint for the more familiar word. Substitution of 'querpipe' is surely responsible for the fanciful description of Wilhelm Schneider in his (somewhat unreliable) *Historische-Technische Beschreibung der musikalischen Instrumente* (Neisze and Leipzig, 1834) in view of the late date ascribed to the development of the instrument:

Stadler, Hofmus. in Wien, machte 1801 an der Clarinette noch die Abänderung, dass er das unterste Ende, nemlich den Schalltrichter, verlängerte und seitwärts bog, wodurch er noch die 4 tieferen Töne der kleine Octave, nemlich dis, d, cis, c gewann. Es scheint jedoch, das diese Erfindung nicht sehr verbreitet ist, da man wenig solche Instrumente sieht.

Stadler, royal musician in Vienna, made some modifications to his clarinet in 1801; he lengthened and bent the bell sideways and thus added four low notes, that is, *d**, *d*, *c** and *c*. It seems, however, that this invention was not very widespread, since few such instruments may be seen.

Heinrich Welcker's *Musikalische Tonwerkzeuge* (Frankfurt, 1855) has a free interpretation of Gerber:

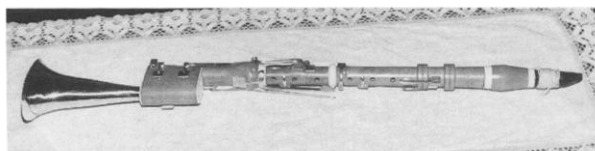
Der Hofmusikus Stadler in Wien verlängerte (um 1790) das Instrument und bog es, nach Art der krummen Flöte des Midas an der Schallstürze etwas seitwärts. Obgleich mit diesem grösseren Format noch die vier tiefen Töne dis, c[sic], cis, c gewonnen wurden, so fand diese Gattung doch keine Verbreitung.

The Viennese court musician Stadler (around 1790) lengthened the instrument and bent it sideways somewhat at the bell, in the same way as the bent flute of Midas. Although

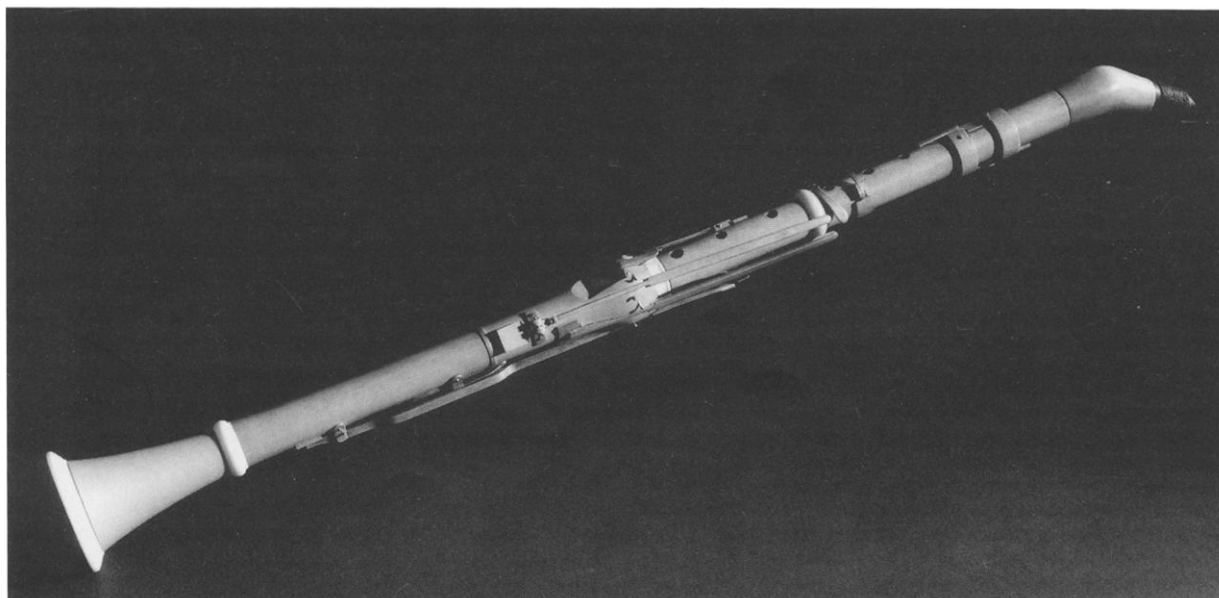
this larger format enabled the production of *d**, *c* [sic], *c** and *c*, this type did not find widespread use.

The unclear distinction between basset horn and basset clarinet is evidenced by the scarcely-known basset horn in A and by various instruments whose tube has a knee but no *Buch*, or an extension but no knee.⁴⁰ In this latter category is the pair of seven-keyed clarinettes d'amour in the Paris Conservatoire, which are thought to date from before 1780. Their completely straight main bore, ending in a large, flared—rather than bulbous—bell, incorporates an extension to *d* and *c* thus indicating that Lotz was not the first to combine elements of clarinet and basset horn.⁴¹ Any problem of nomenclature posed by these instruments is less significant than their anticipation of the Lotz *Bass-Klarinet* within a design some way removed either from contemporary clarinets or basset horns. Stamped ^{AS} and ^{AS}, they have been assumed to be in A_b (at *a'* = 420), though it seems at least possible that 'AS' was the maker and that G was their original pitch. They prove that the basset clarinet design in illus.5 has some early antecedents, even if illus.6 seems closer to the solution adopted by Lotz and Stadler.

6 Basset clarinet in A by Rudolf Tutz, Innsbruck 1978.



5 Basset clarinet in A by Daniel Bangham and Edward Planas, Cambridge 1984.



The degree of mechanical sophistication on the main part of Stadler's clarinet remains an open question, the only possible evidence deriving from an announcement in the Berlin *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* (January 1792).⁴² The author's lack of empathy with Stadler's ability and enterprise may be partly attributable to local bias, while comments on his instrument's mechanism are not necessarily based on an actual sighting: 'Herr Stadel, clarinettist from Vienna. A man of great talent and recognized as such at court, where he has already been heard on various occasions. His playing is brilliant and accomplished, and he has acquired a precision which bears witness to his assurance. Overall, however, his playing lacks that ingratiatingly soft tone and tasteful delivery with which Herr Tausch . . . so often delights his listeners. Herr Stadel has extended his instrument by the addition of keys; however, the benefit from the added keys, which make the instrument almost overloaded with keys [. . . *wodurch das Instrument nun fast mit Klappen überladen wird* . . .] would not appear to be considerable.

Stadler's extra keys are thus specifically related to the extension. Nevertheless, it remains doubtful whether Stadler's clarinet was based on the widely-used five-keyed design discussed by Backofen and even by Froehlich. In his favourite chalumeau register, clear production of *b*, *c#* and *e♭* was particularly difficult, though for many clarinettists additional keys to facilitate such notes were regarded as hazardous in relation to both technique and maintenance. However, as early as 1768 J. K. Rohn in *Nomenclator Artifex, et Mechanismus* stated that 'The clarinet . . . usually has three keys . . . sometimes six.' In the *Encyclopédie* supplement of 1776 F. D. Castillon remarked that 'At the time of writing there is in Berlin a musician who plays a clarinet with six keys, on which he plays all the modes. It has already been shown that four keys cause difficulties. How much worse it must be with six!' The limited range of available tonalities by comparison with flute or oboe was much commented upon. Thomas Attwood's exercise book from his studies with Mozart exhibits a particularly cautious approach: 'The Clarinette must allways be written in C or in F', but (illustrating clarinets in C, B♭, A and B) 'The clarinett is very usefull instead of the oboes when the Key has a number of Flats or Sharps'. Theorists agreed that above all D major should be avoided, partly because of the problem of mobility between the long *e/b'* and *f#/c#'* keys at the side of the instrument, a difficulty discussed by Backofen and at the heart of the alterations by Mozart given in ex.4. Mozart's Piano Quintet K452

assumes the possibility of a single upward slur between these notes (see ex.11), while Stadler's third solo Caprice has the more difficult downward movement (see ex.12).

An important early example of clarinet parts in D is the overture to *La clemenza di Tito*, where they are notated without signature. The invention of a *c#'* / *g#'* key, widely attributed to Xavier Lefèvre in 1790, was praised in Vandenbroek's treatise as 'very necessary to make the instrument more perfect and in tune', even though he blames the mechanism for difficult passages cited elsewhere.⁴³ Lefèvre's own *Méthode de clarinette* (1802) states that without the new key, *c#'* is indistinguishable from *d'* and that the clarinet deserves such an improvement (see illus.7). As an alternative, clarinets were sometimes provided with a double hole (left hand 3), and Koch regarded this as essential on good instruments to avoid a dull and poorly-tuned note.⁴⁴ In Mozart's clarinet writing *c#'* has less emphasis than *b*, though both are featured in ex.13 from the Serenade K388 (1782). The problem of *b* was rarely discussed in tutors, with the very flat fingering T . . . / . oo or, less frequently, the sharp T . . . / o . . offered without comment. Even allowing for the flexibility of embouchure recommended by Lefèvre to correct poor

Ex.11 K452, mvt 1, bar 37 and bar 75

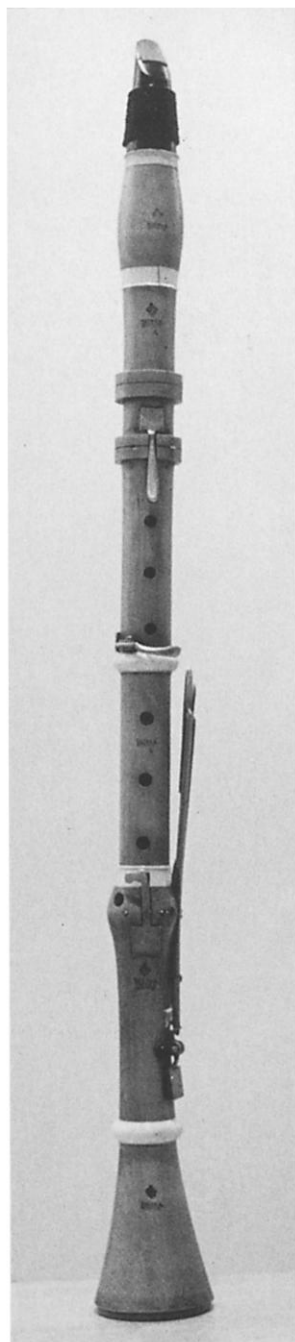


Ex.12 Stadler, Caprice no.3

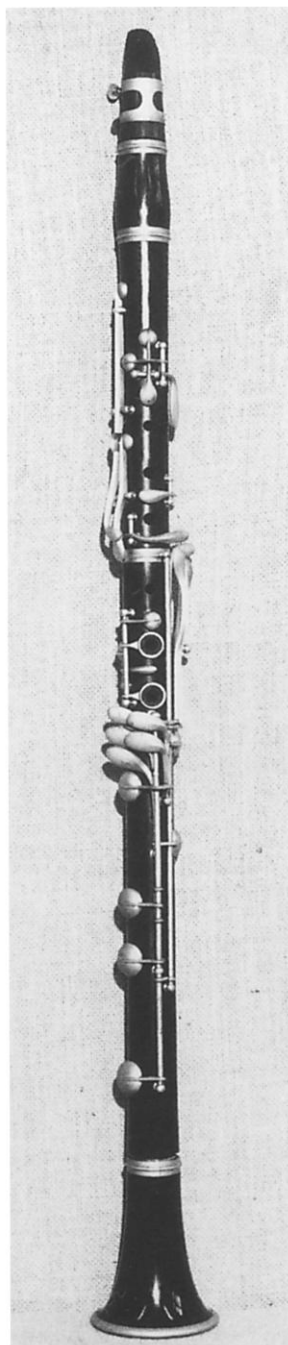


intonation, one might regard Mozart's writing in ex.14 as presupposing either mechanism or a double hole for *b*, particularly since the semitone below it tended to sharpness.

An overall assessment of the number of keys on the basset clarinet must take account of (1) Mozart's confidence in the chalumeau register, (2) Stadler's progressive approach and (3) the disposition of basset horn players to add one or two keys to improve the



7 Six-keyed clarinet in A (Vienna, c.1800) by Caspar Tauber (1758–1827), showing a C[#]/g[#] key; collection of Nicholas Shackleton



8 Basset clarinet in B flat (anon, later 19th century); Bate Collection, Oxford

lower notes. The handling of a more complex instrument, with its increased risk of leakage from key-pads, was a challenge that Stadler was clearly well-

Ex.13 K388, mvt 1, bar 191



Ex.14 K622, mvt 1, bar 115



equipped to tackle; both he and Backofen lay some emphasis on the importance of instrument maintenance. By 1808 the *AMZ* writer recommended at least nine keys to avoid dull and scarcely useable chalumeau notes which otherwise result, citing Mozart's Clarinet Concerto as evidence and addressing the usual counter-argument by stating that his own new clarinet had been played daily for nine months without needing a single repair.

The popularity of 'Parto, parto', which continued to be printed with its basset notes, ensured that awareness of the extended clarinet never really died out. Tangible evidence is a mid-19th-century instrument by Johann Gottlieb Bischoff surviving at Darmstadt (Kg 61:116); this has 16 keys and includes a fully chromatic extension. A later model in the Bate Collection (x48), probably built specifically to play *La clemenza di Tito*, is anonymous and almost certainly of French origin. A replacement bottom joint has been designed along the principles of the Boehm system, rather than the simple system of its top joint. An additional right-hand key, positioned as for *e_b* on the full Boehm, sounds *d*; while the usual *f/c''* left-hand key sounds *c* (illus.8). Among 19th-century theoretical works, references in books by C. F. Pohl on the Viennese Tonkünstler-Societät (1871) and on Haydn (1875–82) were important reminders of Stadler's invention. However, the concerto remained far less known than either 'Parto, parto' or the Quintet; for example, the first London performance, by Thomas Willmann in 1838, prompted the following review in the *Musical World*: 'there is nothing M André could not have written himself. . . . The finale . . . affords evident traces of haste and inexperience.' In 1916 Oscar Street noted that the concerto had not been played at a Philharmonic concert since that occasion, he himself having heard but a single performance.⁴⁵ His own

knowledge of Stadler's clarinet derived solely from 'Parto, parto'.

In 1930 the extended clarinet was again mentioned in Roland Tenschert's article and in greater detail in the original German text of Oscar Kroll's book on the clarinet, which was in preparation by 1939. Also from that year, and a testament to the confusion sometimes caused by the basset notes, is Tovey's reference to one of the quintet fragments, which 'breaks off soon after Mozart has betrayed a manifest absence of mind as to the downward compass of the instrument.' As early as 1941 future members of the Galpin Society were aware of the *AMZ* review,⁴⁶ though not until 1967 was it reprinted. Other landmarks were George Dazeley's seminal article 'The Original Text of Mozart's Clarinet Concerto' (*Music Review*, ix, 1948) and first performances of the reconstructed concerto (1951) by Milan Kosterhyr's pupil Josef Janous and of the quintet (1956) by Jiří Kratochvíl.⁴⁷ The inspiration of Alan Hacker's basset clarinet to contemporary composers and the manufacture of speculative boxwood instruments in the 1970s bring us to the threshold of the current revival of interest.

Colin Lawson lectures in music at Sheffield University and is the author of a book on the chalumeau. A well-known exponent of the early clarinet, he has played with many of the leading period orchestras and is a member of Classical Winds and Cristofori.

¹K. M. Pisarowitz, 'Beitragsversuche zu einer Gebrüder-Stadler-Biographie', *Mitteilungen der Internationalen Stiftung Mozarteum*, xix (1971), pp.29–33

²'Clarinet Schule kommt bald von mir selbst heraus', the final item in his list of recommended musical works; see E. Hess, 'Anton Stadlers "Musik Plan"', *Mozart-Jahrbuch* (1962), pp.37ff

³K. Birsak, 'Salzburg, Mozart und die Klarinette', *Mitteilungen der Internationalen Stiftung Mozarteum*, xxxiii (1985), pp.40–47. As early as 1761 the Polish Count Oginsky played a five-keyed clarinet at the Vienna residence of Prince Paul Anton Esterházy; see P. Weston, *Clarinet Virtuosi of the Past*, (London, 1971), p.167.

⁴J. E. Altenburg, *Versuch einer Anleitung zur... Trompeter-und Pauker-Kunst* (Halle, 1795), p.12

⁵N. Shackleton, 'Clarinet', *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London, 1980), iv, p.435, where an illustration of an early Viennese clarinet (P. Paur, c.1760) is reproduced.

⁶E. Hoepfich, 'Clarinet reed position in the 18th century', *EM*, xi (1984), pp.48ff

⁷For an exceptionally fine account of French tradition, see D. P. Charlton, *Orchestration and Orchestral Practice in Paris, 1789 to 1810* (diss., U. of Cambridge, 1973).

⁸C. F. Cramer, *Magazin der Musik* (Hamburg, 1783), pp.179ff

⁹J. N. Forkel, *Musikalischer Almanach für Deutschland auf das Jahr 1784*, (Leipzig, [1785]), p.150

¹⁰Cramer, *op cit*, p.654

¹¹Forkel, *op cit*, p.150: 'Dieses Instrument ist bey uns noch ganz unbekannt; es soll aber eine Art von Bass-clarinet seyn'.

¹²H. Bossler, 'Berichtigungen und Zusätze zum den Musikalischen Almanachen auf die Jahre 1782, 1783, 1784', *Musikalische Korrespondenz der Teutschen Filarmonischen Gesellschaft für Jahr 1791*, eds. H. Bossler and J. F. Christmann, no.6 (9 February 1791), cols.41f; see A. R. Rice, 'The Clarinette d'Amour and Basset Horn', *GSJ*, xxxix (1986), pp.97ff

¹³J. G. Albrechtsberger, *Gründliche Anweisung zur Composition* . . . (Leipzig, 1790), p.427

¹⁴The latter has instead of a *Buch* a straight tube ending with a sharp bend towards the player and a globular bell; for illustrations see F. G. Rendall, *The Clarinet*, rev. P. Bate, (London, 3/1971), pl.vi (a, g) and p.129.

¹⁵'die Brüder Anton und Johann Stadler, K. K. Kammermusici haben durch ihre Erfindung auch das tiefe und bassmässige Cis, D und Dis hinzufügen lassen; folglich geht es jetzt in der gehörigen Ordnung durch vier ganze Octaven . . .'

¹⁶P. Weston, *More Clarinet virtuosi of the past*, (London, 1977), pp.81, 246.

¹⁷For example, see the 15-keyed instrument in Zurich (no.2685), illustrated opposite p.33 in Friedrich Jakob, *Die Instrumente der Zürcher Musikkollegien und der Allgemeinen Musikgesellschaft Zürich*, (Zurich, 1973).

¹⁸E. N. Nissen, *Biographie W. A. Mozarts*, (Leipzig, 1828), Anh. p.17, no.4

¹⁹S. Newman, 'Mozart's G minor Quintet (K.516) and its relationship to the G minor symphony (K.550)', *Music Review*, xvii (1956), p.292

²⁰W. A. Mozart: *Neue Ausgabe sämtlicher Werke [NMA]* viii/19/2 has a facsimile of the passage (p.xviii) but does not reproduce the range of clefs in its text. See also R. Tenschert, 'Fragment eines Klarinetten-Quintetts von W. A. Mozart', *Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft*, xiii (1930–31), p.221

²¹Thus styled in a letter from Mozart to Michael Puchberg (8 April 1790).

²²Letter from Constanze Mozart to the publisher André, 31 July 1800: 'For works of this kind you should apply for information from the elder Stadler . . .'

²³G. Kroll and K. Birsak, 'Anton Stadler's "Bassettklarinette" und das "Stadler-Quintett KV.581"', *Oesterreichische Musikzeitung*, xxiv (1969), pp.3–11; this article reproduces an illustration of a modern German-system basset clarinet by Hammerschmidt.

²⁴O. Jahn, *W. A. Mozart*, iii, p.296, fn.48 (via Sigismund Neukomm) is the source for the following Stadler–Mozart dialogue, referring to an awkward passage such as this, which Stadler asked to be altered: 'Have you the notes on your instrument?' 'Certainly they are on it.' 'Provided they exist it is your concern to produce them.'

²⁵G. Weber, 'Über Clarinett und Bassetthorn', *Cäcilia*, xi (1829), pp.53f

²⁶E. Hess, 'Die ursprüngliche Gestalt des Klarinettenkonzerts KV.622', *Mozart-Jahrbuch* (1967), pp.18–30. The review is reproduced complete in *NMA* v/14/4, *Kritische Bericht*, d/8–11. Of contemporary editions by Sieber and André, the latter may be the earlier and the original source for the transcription, which is identical in all three publications.

²⁷R. Procházka, *Mozart in Prag* (Prague, 1892), p.174, fn.47

²⁸Discussed by Dieter Klöcker in his recording *Geistliche Arien für Sopran, konzertierende Klarinette und Orchester*, EMI 1C/065–30 992 (1980).

²⁹C. F. Pohl, *Denkschrift aus Anlass des hundertjährigen Bestehens der Tonkünstler-Societät in Wien* (Vienna, 1871), p.67

³⁰Weston, *op cit*, p.357

³¹Correspondence from Albert R. Rice. The concerto by Kozeluch (A-Wn 5853) has cadenzas for a normal clarinet and not—as stated by Shackleton and Weston—for basset clarinet.

³²This cadenza is (somewhat inaccurately) reproduced in P. Poulin, 'The Basset Clarinet of Anton Stadler', *College Music Symposium*, xxii/2/(1982), p.79, with a misattribution of the concerto to Franz Tausch.

³³Hannoversche Anzeigen (1795), nos.72 and 73. At his concert on 12 September Stadler played both basset clarinet and basset horn. See Rice, *op cit*, p.111. Concerts featuring the basset clarinet were also given by Stadler in Berlin, Hamburg and St Petersburg.

³⁴J. F. von Schonfeld, *Jahrbuch der Tonkunst von Wien und Prag* (1796), p.58: 'Stadler, Hrn Gebrüder, bei der kais. Hofmusik, sind ausgezeichnet geschickte Künstler sowohl auf dem gewöhnlichen Klarinet, als auch auf dem Bassettklarinet, als welche schwer zu traktierende Instrumente sie von Seite des Tons, der Delikatesse, des Ausdrucks und der Leichtigkeit vollkommen in ihrer Gewalt haben.'

³⁵Rice, *op cit*, p.104

³⁶G. Weber, 'Basset-horn', *Allgemeine Encyclopädie der Wissenschaften und der Kunst*, ed. J. S. Ersch and J. G. Grüber (Leipzig, 1822), viii, p.49

³⁷Weber, 'Über Clarinett', p.52, fn. See also C. Lawson, 'The Clarinet and Basset Horn in 1829', *Clarinet and Saxophone*, vii/2 (1982), pp.10-13

³⁸Poulin, *op cit*, p.79

³⁹E. L. Gerber, *Neues historisch-biographisches Lexicon* (Leipzig, 1812-14), iv, p.248

⁴⁰For example, the anonymous (German), early-19th-century, seven-keyed A (or possibly A₁) clarinet (Royal College of Music, London, no.84) with no extension but which is angled at the barrel and at the middle socket. The anonymous eight-keyed basset horn in F (RCM 87) is angled at the barrel and at the globular bell-socket, having a diatonic extension but no *Buch*. The apparently straight basset horn by August Grenser dated 1784 (and illustrated in A. Baines, *European and American Musical Instruments* (London, 1966), no.642) has been incorrectly repaired: originally furnished with a knee, the instrument is cat. no. MM553 in the Musikhistoriska Museet, Stockholm. See C. Karp, *GSJ*, xxvi (1973), p.153

⁴¹The reference numbers for the two instruments are E.190.C543 and E.2194; they are illustrated in the Musée des Beaux Arts catalogue *Instrument de Musique 1750-1800: 3-20 July 1982*, p.63. I am grateful to Nicholas Shackleton for drawing my attention to these instruments.

⁴²Ed. J. F. Reichardt and F. A. Münzen, xv (1792) p.118.

⁴³O. Vandenbroek, *Traité général de tous les instruments à vent* (Paris, c.1795), pp.45f

⁴⁴Though not documented in 18th-century tutors and fingering charts this feature is present on a number of German and Austrian instruments, including *clarinettes d'amour* by Gehring, clarinets by the Grensers and some basset horns: for example, the Griesbacher in illus.2.

⁴⁵O. Street, 'The Clarinet and its Music', *PRMA*, xlii (1915-16), p.95

⁴⁶G. Melville-Mason, *Clarinet and Saxophone* x/3 (1985), p.22 [correspondence]

⁴⁷J. Kratchovil, 'Betrachtungen über die Urfassung des Konzerts für Klarinette und des Quintetts für Klarinette und Streicher von W. A. Mozart', *Internationale Mozarts-konferenz: Prague 1956*, pp.262-71; *idem*, 'Ist die heute gebräuchliche Fassung des Klarinettenkonzerts und des Klarinettenquintetts von Mozart authentisch?', *Beiträge zur Musikwissenschaft*, ii (1960), pp.27-34; *idem*, 'Otázka puvodního znění Mozartova Koncertu pro klarinet a Kvintetu pro klarinet a symfóce', *Hudební věda*, i (1967), pp.44-70; A. Hacker, 'Mozart and the Basset Clarinet', *MT*, cx (1969), pp.359-62: this article reproduces an illustration of a Boehm-system instrument by Edward Planas; K. Birsak, 'Bemerkungen zum Bau von "Bassetklarinetten"', *Mozart-Jahrbuch*, (1968-70), pp.29-33


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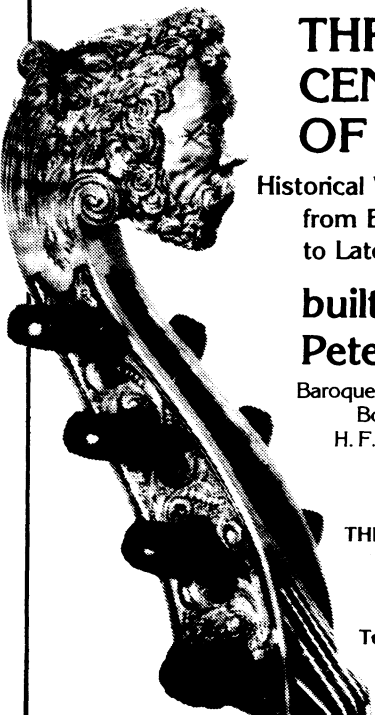
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