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Ferdinando Sebastiani, Gennaro Bosa and the Clarinet in Nineteenth-Century Naples

Until recently, the virtuoso clarinetist Ferdinando Sebastiani (1803-1860) had been all but forgotten since his death. Born in the southern Italian town of Capua, he studied at the *Real Collegio* in Naples (later the *Conservatorio di San Pietro a Majella*).¹ Sebastiani later held the positions of principal clarinet at the *Teatro San Carlo* and *Reale Cappella Palatina*, as well as teaching at the *Conservatorio*. He died in Naples, five years after the publications of his *Método per clarinetto*.² Sebastiani's use of the reed-above, or maxillary, embouchure confirms the existence of a 'golden age' of this technique amongst nineteenth-century Italian players, particularly those from the south.

The current vogue for historical performance has been characterised by a standardisation of various elements, which did not obtain at the appropriate historical periods. For example, a limited range of historical instruments is routinely copied, denying the modern listener the range of timbres evident in earlier epochs. This state of affairs has arisen partly as a result of the exigencies of globalisation

and the discipline imposed by the microphone. These observations apply as much to instrumental technique as to historical equipment and musical style.

One area in which historical clarinetists have been insufficiently assiduous is that of embouchure or reed position. Described as 'the most important development in playing technique since the eighteenth century' this subject has received only scant attention in comparison with other aspects of the instrument's development.³

In the latter part of the twentieth century, scholars made explicit connections between the reed-above embouchure and Italian clarinetists.⁴ Rey M. Longyear's research into the symphonic repertoire between 1720 and 1840, particularly the works of Niccolò Zingarelli, narrows the Italian focus to Naples.⁵ Acknowledging the importance of source material from outside Austria, Germany and France in constructing an understanding of the clarinet in the Romantic period, a later study by Longyear provided the catalyst for research trips to

¹ This institute became part of the *Collegio Napoletano* in 1817. Moving to the monastery of *San Pietro a Majella* in 1826, the institute became known as the *Conservatorio di San Pietro a Majella*; see Teresa Chirico, 'La scuola di musica del Real Orfanotrofio Provinciale di Reggio Calabria e le istituzioni musicali napoletane', *Nuova Rivista Musicale Italiana* XXII (1988), p. 482.

² Ferdinando Sebastiani, *Método per clarinetto* (Naples, 1855).

³ Nicholas Shackleton, 'Clarinet, §II, 4 (ii): The clarinet of Western art music; The mouthpiece and reed', *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* ed. S. Sadie and J. Tyrrell (2001).

⁴ See Raymond Meylan, 'À propos du développement de l'instrumentation au début du dix-neuvième siècle', *Acta musicologica* 42 (1970), p. 71, n. 1. Meylan had held the position of principal flute in the orchestra of the Pomeriggi Musicali in Milan between November 1954 and October 1958. At that time the principal clarinetist was Ferruccio Gonizzi, also Professor at the Conservatorio in Parma. Gonizzi played reed-above and Meylan remembers his soft staccato in the finale of Mendelssohn's Symphony No. 4 in A (*Italian*), private correspondence with Raymond Meylan, January 1999.

⁵ Rey M. Longyear, 'Introduction', *The Symphony 1720-1840. Series A* (New York, 1980) VIII: p. xviii.

Naples in 1996 and 1998.⁶ The present author's PhD research into organological, iconographical and documentary evidence confirms that despite its near extinction today, the reed-above embouchure was in fact the more popular of the two reed positions used in the clarinet's formative years.⁷

In addition to functioning as an important source for players wishing to reconstruct the reed-above embouchure, Sebastiani's *Método* provides evidence of his use of a clarinet with thirteen keys. Moreover, this instrument was the result of Sebastiani's collaboration with the Neapolitan maker Gennaro Bosa, probably during the 1830s.⁸ The appearance of various types of clarinet with thirteen keys marked a significant stage in the instrument's organological development. Iwan Müller's thirteen-keyed clarinet was certainly a pioneering accomplishment, and achieved eventual prominence as the Müller-system.⁹ Developed during the early part of the nineteenth century, such instruments were made in the 1820s in the workshops of Gentellet in Paris, Brelet in Lyons, J.G.C. Bischoff in Darmstadt, B. Schotts Söhne in Mainz and Griessling and Schlott in Berlin. The organological development of Müller's thirteen-keyed clarinet, however, has been well-documented.¹⁰ In evaluating material from nineteenth-century documentary and organological sources in the light of the Bosa/Sebastiani collaboration, this article offers some remarks concerning a hitherto neglected aspect of the development of the clarinet in the nineteenth century.

REED POSITION AND THE THIRTEEN-KEYED CLARINET

Beginning with the publication of Müller's *Gamme pour la nouvelle Clarinette inventée par lui* in c1812, the portrayal of the reed-below embouchure on a far greater number of clarinets with more advanced keywork suggests that this technique found favour more quickly with professional players.¹¹ This thesis is confirmed in reports by Christian Friedrich Michaelis and Gottfried Weber which call for the adoption of the reed-below technique amongst dilettante players¹².

In his *Méthode pour la nouvelle Clarinette à 13 Clefs et Clarinette-Alto* of c1821, Müller himself offers the following comments on the issue of clarinet reed position:

A large number of people are mistaken that the quality of timbre and tonguing depends upon the way of holding the mouthpiece in the mouth, whether to rest the reed near the upper or lower lip. It is only a matter of habit, for one can produce a beautiful timbre and excellent articulation from either method. Therefore one can play the clarinet well without being obliged to put the reed below rather than on top.¹³

None the less, Müller subsequently presents three reasons for preferring the reed-below embouchure.¹⁴ Chief amongst these is the claim that the reed-below embouchure assists the player in operating the key-work for the right thumb which enabled the player to slur between f/c" and g#/d#", and between e/b' and f/c#", possibly the

⁶ Longyear, 'Clarinet Sonorities in Early Romantic Music', *The Musical Times* CXXIV (1983), p. 225.

⁷ Ingrid Pearson, *Clarinet Embouchure in Theory and Practice: the Forgotten Art of Reed-Above*, PhD thesis, University of Sheffield, 2001.

⁸ Sebastiani, *Método*, pp. 17-26. A reproduction of the illustration of Sebastiani and his clarinet first appeared in my chapter 'Playing historical clarinets' in *The Early Clarinet: A Practical Guide* by Colin Lawson (Cambridge, 2000), p. 46.

⁹ The earliest depiction of this clarinet appears in Iwan Müller, *Gamme pour la nouvelle Clarinette inventée par lui* (Bonn, c1812). See also Martin Harlow, 'Two Early Concertos for Iwan Müller's Thirteen-Keyed Clarinet', *Galpin Society Journal* LIX (2006), pp. 29-42.

¹⁰ See Nicholas Shackleton and Albert Rice, 'César Janssen and the transmission of Müller's 13-keyed clarinet in France', *Galpin Society Journal* LII (1999), pp. 183-194 and more recently Albert Rice 'Müller's Gamme De La Clarinette (c1812) and the Development of The Thirteen-key Clarinet', *Galpin Society Journal* LVI (2003), pp. 181-184.

¹¹ See those charts contained within Müller, *Gamme*; John Hopkinson, *A New and Complete Preceptor for the Clarinet* (London, c1814); Franz Thaddäus Blatt, *Methode complete de clarinette pour apprendre à jouer de cet instrument avec facilité et perfection...* (Mainz, c. 1827-28); Gottfried Weber, 'Einiges über Clarinett und Bassetthorn', *Caecilia* 11/41 (1829), pp. 35-57 and Philippe Berr, *Méthode de Clarinette à 6 et à 13 Clefs d'après celle de Vanderhagen...* (Paris, 1831).

¹² Christian Friedrich Michaelis, 'Über die Klarinette', *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 10 (1808), cols. 369-375, 385-391 and Weber 'Einiges über Clarinett und Bassetthorn'.

¹³ Müller, *Méthode pour la nouvelle Clarinette à 13 Clefs et Clarinette-Alto* (Paris, c1821), p. 23.

¹⁴ 'For preferring the reed supported by the lower lip', Müller, *Méthode*.

most controversial feature of his design.¹⁵

He infers that reed-above players are more reliant on the thumb of the right hand to support the instrument, and therefore have difficulty in maintaining a reliable playing posture whilst negotiating the use of such keys.¹⁶ Despite this opinion, the presence of thumb-keys on clarinets documented in nineteenth-century methods by reed-above practitioners, of which Sebastiani's is a salient example, confirms that these features were certainly capable of existing simultaneously. In this light, Müller's plea for the use of the reed-below embouchure is somewhat ambiguous and may well have been heeded most by less-experienced clarinetists.

Johann Georg Heinrich Backofen's discussion of reed position in his 1824 tutor also centres on the Müller-system instrument, and draws similar conclusions to those of Müller himself. Backofen cites the supposed problem of reed-above players being unable properly to both support the clarinet and operate the thumb-keys.¹⁷ His remark that at least half of all German clarinetists were still using the reed-above embouchure at the beginning of the second quarter of the nineteenth century provides evidence that the reed-below embouchure was not by then as widespread as has been previously assumed.¹⁸

Possibly the most sophisticated use of thumb-keys was made by the Simiot firm with their 'hinge' keys for the notes f#/c#" and less often, e/b'. The presence

of a thumb-lever for the e/b' key on a mid-nineteenth century clarinet in B_♭ from the Simiot and Brelet workshop suggests that reed-above players were able to cope with keywork thus positioned, given that the majority of contemporary French-language documentary sources advocated the reed-above embouchure.²⁰ Organological confirmation of this is manifest in the thirteen-keyed clarinet by Bosa depicted in Sebastiani's *Método*.

Not all Müller-system clarinets resemble the instrument in Müller's tutor, however, incorporating either the placement and configuration of the thirteen keys and their tone holes, or the use of the key and branch for the right-hand thumb.²¹ Amongst clarinet makers, César Janssen was particularly important in making the thirteen-keyed clarinet viable, the subject of a study by Nicholas Shackleton and Albert Rice.²²

Janssen's modifications to the Müller-system instrument included removing the thumb-keys. He replaced them with moving rollers at the extremity of the keys, controlled by the little fingers of both hands, to assist the little fingers in sliding between these keys. This feature survives on two clarinets by Baumann.²³ Janssen's influence is also evident in a clarinet in B_♭ by Gentellet.²⁴ Granted that documentary evidence by Müller himself clarifies his intention that these thumb-keys be used with the reed-below embouchure, was Janssen was catering for players who still used the reed-above embouchure? In the light of his period of study with

¹⁵ This feature is well illustrated in his method, see Müller, *Méthode*, p. 1, figs. 1-2. None the less, some fifteen years later, the reed-below player Frédéric Berr provides evidence that the difficulties associated with these keys had been experienced by practitioners of either reed position; see Frédéric Berr, *Traité Complet de la Clarinette à quatorze Clefs* (Paris, 1836), p. 2.

¹⁶ A tutor published in Paris in c. 1836 suggests that Müller himself may have had to bite into the mouthpiece in order to support the clarinet whilst operating these thumb-keys, see Berr, *Traité*, p. 8.

¹⁷ Johann Georg Heinrich Backofen, *Anweisung zur Klarinette, nebst kurzen Abhandlung über das Basset-Horn* (Leipzig, 1824), p. 6.

¹⁸ Backofen, *Anweisung* (Leipzig, 1824); see T. Eric Hoeprich, 'Clarinet reed position in the 18th century', *Early Music* 12/1 (1984), pp. 48-55.

¹⁹ See Nicholas Shackleton and Albert Rice, 'César Janssen and the transmission of Müller's 13-keyed clarinet in France', *Galpin Society Journal* LII (1999), pp. 183-194.

²⁰ Shackleton collection, Cambridge/Edinburgh, UK, NJS 206.

²¹ Private correspondence with Albert Rice. In fact very few specimens survive with this last feature, see Shackleton and Rice, 'César Janssen', p. 189. It should also be mentioned here that with the advent of the thirteen-keyed clarinet, arose the popularity of the thumb-rest, which was added to the back of the lower joint to assist the player in supporting the instrument's extra key-work. An illustration of the thumb-keys on the Müller-system clarinet appears in his method, see Iwan Müller, *Méthode*, p. 1, figs. 1-2.

²² Shackleton and Rice, op.cit., pp. 189-190.

²³ Shackleton collection, Cambridge/Edinburgh, U.K., NJS 473 and Fiske Museum, Claremont, California, U.S.A., No. W201.

²⁴ Edwardsville, Illinois, U.S.A., No. 70:605.

Xavier Lefèvre at the Paris Conservatoire, it is highly probable that Janssen was himself a reed-above practitioner. Given this proclivity, his version of the thirteen-keyed clarinet may well have been motivated by a deliberate attempt to make the instrument more accessible to other reed-above players. Other French makers including Lefèvre, Baumann and Simiot also made thirteen-keyed clarinets without thumb-keys.

CLARINET REED-POSITION IN ITALY

From a purely theoretical standpoint, in nineteenth-century Italy, the reed-above embouchure allowed practitioners more closely to imitate the human voice. Advocates of the technique claimed it gave the player a greater variety of tongued articulation, more flexibility in moving between registers, a more precise staccato, better projection of sound and the ability to control the altissimo register with accuracy. Whilst tongued articulation was clearly the most desirable method, the chest and throat were also used as occasional articulatory means.

The earliest Italian-language mention of reed position known to this writer is found in the anonymous *Metodo Facilissimo per Imparare a ben Suonare il Clarinetto...*, published in Florence in 1816.²⁵ This document clearly illustrates the reed-above embouchure in both fingering charts. In support of this embouchure, the text instructs the player to cover the teeth with the lips, 'the upper lip should be more folded over the teeth since it is required to control and press the reed'.²⁶ More explicit details concerning articulation are translated from Amand Vanderhagen's *Méthode Nouvelle et Raisonnée*

pour la clarinette, published in 1785, including the use of mixed methods, mentioned above.²⁷

Despite a decrease in the use of the technique, works for the reed-above embouchure continued to be published throughout the nineteenth century, including sources in French issued during the 1830s.²⁸ The influence of Lefèvre's 1802 *Méthode de Clarinette* was felt throughout the century, particularly in Italy, suggesting something of the lineage of reed-above playing passing from French to Italian players.²⁹

The decline of the use of the reed-above technique in French-speaking areas began with the adoption of the reed-below embouchure from the 1830s by players trained at the Paris Conservatoire, particularly during the tenure of Frédéric Berr, professor of clarinet, between 1831 and 1838.³⁰ The subsequent popularity of the reed-below position is reflected in French-language methods for clarinet published subsequent to those of Berr.³¹ Contemporary with Sebastiani's *Método*, Luigi Bassi published possibly the earliest Italian-language edition of Lefèvre.³² Bassi's depiction of reed position is ambiguous on the charts for both six- and eleven-keyed clarinets and his text refrains from explicitly mentioning reed position. However, his replication of Lefèvre's instructions implies a preference for the reed-above embouchure.³³ Subsequent Italian editions of Lefèvre's tutor were published by Benedetto Carulli and Romeo Orsi, and bear witness to this preservation of the reed-above technique amongst a predominantly Italian body of players.³⁴ Later advocates included Ferdinando Busoni, father of the composer/pianist Ferruccio,

²⁵ *Metodo Facilissimo per Imparare a ben Suonare il Clarinetto, con Quelle Intelligenze Necessarie...* (Florence, 1816).

²⁶ *Metodo Facilissimo*, pp. 2-5. In using documentary sources to ascertain reed position, one should avoid taking any illustrative representations too literally. Only works with both textual and illustrative reference to reed position are truly reliable as indicators of embouchure practices.

²⁷ Amand Vanderhagen, *Méthode Nouvelle et Raisonnée pour la clarinette...* (Paris, c1785), pp. ii-iii.

²⁸ Including Vanderhagen, *Nouvelle Methode de Clarinette en deux parties par A. Vanderhagen/ Clarinettenschule in zwei Abtheilungen von A. Vanderhagen* (Leipzig, c1836) and Claude-François Buteux, *Méthode de clarinette d'après celle composée par Xavier LeFèvre* (Paris, 1836).

²⁹ Xavier Lefèvre, *Méthode de Clarinette* (Paris, 1802).

³⁰ See Frédéric Berr, *Traité* (1836) and *Méthode Complète de Clarinette* (Paris, c. 1836).

³¹ Including J. Ennès Berr, *Nouvelle Méthode de Clarinette à 6 et 13 Clefs* (Paris, 1839); X. Schneider and Detouches, *Nouvelle Méthode de Clarinette* (Paris, c. 1840); Hyacinthe Klosé, *Méthode pour servir à l'enseignement de la Clarinette à anneaux mobiles; et de celle à 13 clés...* (Paris, 1843); Jean Georges Kastner, *Méthode élémentaire pour la Clarinette* (Paris, 1844) and Klosé, *Méthode de Clarinette à 6 et à 13 clés, et à anneaux mobiles d'après F. Berr. Revue modifiée et augmentée par H. Klosé* (Paris, c1880).

³² Luigi Bassi, *Metodo per clarinetto composto espressamente per il Conservatorio di Parigi da Lefevre e adottato dal R. Conservatorio di Milano* (Milan, c1855).

³³ Bassi, *Metodo*, p. 6.

³⁴ Benedetto Carulli, *Metodo per Clarinetto* (Milan, c1860) and Romeo Orsi, *Metodo per Clarinetto* (Milan, c1890).

feature	Método specimen	No. 21 in Bb	No. 136 in A	No. 263 in A	No. 522 in Eb	No. 527 in Bb	No. 528 in Bb	No. 529 in A	No. 530 in C	No. 531 in C
material	ebony	ebony	boxwood	boxwood	boxwood	boxwood	boxwood	boxwood	boxwood	boxwood
keys	13	13	13	11	12	13	13	13	13	13
mouthpiece	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
stamps	NA	upper-case style	cursive style	cursive style	cursive style, including mouthpiece beak side	cursive style	cursive style including mouthpiece beak side	cursive style	cursive style	cursive style
barrel	integral	separate	separate	integral	separate	integral	separate	separate	separate	separate
pad design	saltspoon	saltspoon	flatter	flatter	flatter	flatter	flatter	flatter	flatter	flatter
f/c" modus operandi	hole integrated into expanded lower joint profile	hole integrated into expanded lower joint profile	hole integrated into expanded lower joint profile	hole integrated into expanded lower joint profile	hole integrated into expanded lower joint profile	raised hole	raised hole	raised hole	raised hole	touchpiece in place of hole, which is relocated lower down
f#/c#" key	short touchpiece, for use by RH thumb	short touchpiece, for use by RH thumb	medium-length touchpiece	long touchpiece, LH little finger operation	long touchpiece, LH little finger operation	medium-length touchpiece	medium-length touchpiece, plus branch for operation by RH thumb	medium-length touchpiece	medium-length touchpiece	medium-length touchpiece
front g#/d#" key	mounted into expanded joint profile, vertical pivot motion	mounted into expanded joint profile, vertical pivot motion	rod and pillar mount, horizontal pivot motion	mounted into expanded joint profile, vertical pivot motion	mounted into expanded joint profile, vertical pivot motion	rod and pillar mount, horizontal pivot motion	rod and pillar mount, horizontal pivot motion	rod and pillar mount, horizontal pivot motion	rod and pillar mount, horizontal pivot motion	rod and pillar mount, horizontal pivot motion
side g#/d#" key	in between e/b' and f#/c#" keys, operated by RH thumb	in between e/b' and f#/c#" keys, operated by RH thumb	in between e/b' and f#/c#" keys, shorter than e/b' key but longer than f#/c#" key	NA	NA	in between e/b' and f#/c#" keys, shorter than e/b' key but longer than f#/c#" key	in between e/b' and f#/c#" keys, shorter than e/b' key but longer than f#/c#" key	in between e/b' and f#/c#" keys, shorter than e/b' key but longer than f#/c#" key	in between e/b' and f#/c#" keys, shorter than e/b' key but longer than f#/c#" key	in between e/b' and f#/c#" keys, shorter than e/b' key but longer than f#/c#" key
brille	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	for RH 3 and 4
thumb rest	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	metal, fixed to back of lower joint

Table 1. Details of Naples clarinets.

whose *Scuola di Perfezionamento per il Clarinetto* appeared in 1883, and Carlo Della Giacoma, who, in 1904 published his *Metodo per clarinetto*.³⁵

One of the earliest monographs devoted exclusively to the clarinet was published in 1887 by Riccardo Gandolfi.³⁶ Aware of Frédéric Berr's reform of reed position in France, Gandolfi suggests that Giovanni Bimboni was amongst the first Italian clarinetists to 'adopt the German system of the inverted mouthpiece with the reed below', conforming to evidence presented by Bimboni's tutor.³⁷ Likewise Charles Day's catalogue of musical instruments exhibited in 1890 at the Royal Musical Exhibition, mentions both reed positions, remarking that many Italian and Spanish players were still employing the reed-above embouchure.³⁸

In 1943 Temistocle Pace's extensive commentary on the clarinet and saxophone appeared.³⁹ This source contains the most thorough biographical account of the various schools of Italian clarinet playing during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as well as providing a reliable overview of the reed-above technique as used in Italy. Pace cites the launeddas, with its upward-facing idioglot reed, as the historical precedent for the reed-above inclination of the earliest clarinets.⁴⁰ He accounts for the increasing popularity of the reed-below embouchure during the nineteenth century in terms of aesthetics.⁴¹

'LA SCUOLA NAPOLETANA' AND FERDINANDO SEBASTIANI

Evidence of a 'golden age' of reed-above playing is reflected in those didactic works published by the Neapolitan virtuoso clarinetists Sebastiani, and Gaetano Labanchi, his successor at both the *Teatro San Carlo* and the *Conservatorio di San Pietro a Majella*.⁴² Whilst Sebastiani mentions both reed positions, he links the use of the reed-above embouchure with a greater degree of 'colouring (of articulation) that gives the clarinet its beauty'.⁴³ A link between articulation and reed-position was first made by Roeser in 1764, then implied by Lefèvre in 1802 and some eight years later by Joseph Fröhlich.⁴⁴

In contrast to his more famous reed-above contemporary Ernesto Cavallini, Sebastiani made few tours, spending most of his career in the south of Italy, where opportunities were fewer than in the prosperous north.⁴⁵ However, Sebastiani's appearances in Paris and Vienna in 1828, during which he performed his own compositions, met with considerable acclaim.⁴⁶ In addition, his associations with the composers Fioravanti and Mercadante are reported to have inspired their composition of solos for Sebastiani's performance.⁴⁷

Sebastiani's own compositions for clarinet demonstrate that his abilities as a player were

³⁵ Ferdinando Busoni, *Scuola di Perfezionamento per il Clarinetto* (Hamburg, 1883) and Carlo Della Giacoma, *Metodo per clarinetto* (Todi, 1904/R1998). See Ingrid Pearson, 'Verfolgt von Klang der Klarinette seines Vater - über Blatt-Position, Ferruccio Busoni und die Klarinette im Italien des 19. Jahrhunderts', *Tibia* 24 (1999), pp. 605-611.

³⁶ Riccardo Gandolfi, *Appunti Intorno al Clarinetto Compilati ad Uso delle Scuole del R. Istituto Musicale di Firenze* (Florence, 1887).

³⁷ Gandolfi, *Appunti Intorno*, p. 7, see Giovanni Bimboni, *Método Graduato e Progressivo per Clarinetto Sib*, (Florence, c1850).

³⁸ Charles Russell Day, *Descriptive Catalogue of the Musical Instruments recently exhibited at the Royal Military Exhibition, London, 1890* (London, 1891), p. 102.

³⁹ Temistocle Pace, *Ancie Battenti* (Florence, 1943).

⁴⁰ Pace, *Ancie Battenti*, p. 113.

⁴¹ Pace, *ibid.*, p. 114.

⁴² Labanchi's tutor also favours the reed-above embouchure, although he portrays a more advanced model of clarinet, not unlike that of his reed-below contemporary Carl Baermann. See Labanchi, *Metodo Progressivo per Clarinetto* (Naples, 1886), pp. 12-13. See Carl Baermann, *Vollständige Clarinett-Schule...* (Frankfurt, 1864-75; rev. edn, Offenbach, 1917), unpaginated fingering chart and Temistocle Pace, *Ancie Battenti*, p. 42. The thumb lever on this instrument provides an alternative fingering for f#/c#.

⁴³ Sebastiani, *Metodo*, p. 7.

⁴⁴ Lefèvre, *Méthode* and Fröhlich, Joseph, 'Clarinett-Schule', *Vollständige Theoretisch-praktische Musikschule für alle beyen Orchester gebräuchliche wichtigere Instrumente...* (Bonn, 1810-11), 2: pp. 7-35.

⁴⁵ An excellent background to the musical climate of Naples in 1830 appears in Rey M. Longyear, 'An historical note from a musical backwater: Naples 1830', *Music and Man* II (1978), pp. 247-254.

⁴⁶ Fétis, *Biographie*, 8; p. 1. Amongst the works he performed were a concerto and a set of variations on a theme by Rossini; see Weston, *More Clarinet Virtuosi*, p. 236.

⁴⁷ See Carlo Schmidl, *Dizionario Universale dei Musicisti* (Milan, 1938), p. 491.

certainly on a par with those of Cavallini. Despite composing a considerable numbers of works for his instrument, most of Sebastiani's clarinet music remains in manuscript. His œuvre for solo clarinet includes three concertos with orchestra, other works with orchestra based on themes by Rossini, operatic fantasias on works by Rossini, Verdi and Bellini with piano accompaniment as well as several miniatures for clarinet and piano.

In addition to continuing the legacy of Lefèvre, of whose legacy reed position is possibly the most important part, Sebastiani's *Método* marks a significant and deliberate attempt to preserve his pedagogical beliefs, as well as a codification of the reed-above technique. At the time of its publication, in 1855, Sebastiani's *Método* reports that many of his pupils 'have, both in public and in private, shown that the standard of playing ... in Naples is in a state of splendour, comparable with that of other European conservatoires'.⁴⁸ Much of his approach to teaching others to play the clarinet can be gleaned from the following remark: 'For the time being I am satisfied by the enjoyment of my beloved pupils, to whom I dedicate the present method. I am sure that they will profit from this passive instruction; when then they will be acknowledged, also as masters, I they try to teach in a way to be sure the people can learn, to still consult the optimal methods of other clarinetists, especially that of Lefèvre'.⁴⁹

Amongst Sebastiani's explicit directions concerning the reed-above embouchure are the following remarks:

The mouthpiece, covered by the reed is introduced between the lips, which must cover both sets of teeth, preventing them from touching the mouthpiece or the reed. I have known people who rest their teeth on the mouthpiece but it is a big mistake because of the wear and tear both on your teeth and the mouthpiece. Besides, for a good vocal timbre it is indispensable that the teeth touch neither the reed nor the mouthpiece. It is necessary to decide on the best method of holding the mouthpiece, with the reed above or below. I am persuaded by the reed above for which I present the most convincing reasons....It is clear that the reed is weaker than the mouthpiece, therefore it must be consigned to the strongest part of

the lips, which is certainly the upper lip, more stable and not subject to any movement. It is clear that the tip of the tongue plays an important role in the sound of the clarinet, its flexibility enables a more natural and quick execution. With the reed below, the tongue comes to play only on the tip of the mouthpiece, and acts on the tip of the reed with hardship and without speed.... With the reed below one can only achieve *battuto* not *picchettato*, *staccato* and the other types of colourings of articulation which give the clarinet its beauty. Finally, the reed produces a sound with its oscillations which become more sonorous when they are not obstructed by anything and when allowed to vibrate freely. Having the reed below means leaning on the fleshy bits of the mouth but if the reed is above it has the entire cavity of the palate in which to oscillate without impediment. Therefore the reed should be placed above.⁵⁰

Sebastiani's espousal of a clarinet with thirteen keys is conservative for its time. In recounting the instrument's history, he writes:

Finally the number of keys became thirteen, and clarinets of this design are now quite widely used. I take care to deal with this model in the present method. To these thirteen keys some others can be added. However, these would not be the equivalent of the thirteen aforementioned keys, and would serve only to facilitate the execution... In fact, I directed the manufacturer G. Bosa of Naples in the construction of clarinets, I have advised him of the modifications which will appear in the fingering charts, where I will show the advantages I obtained with them.⁵¹

GENNARO BOSA AND HIS CLARINETS FOR SEBASTIANI

Documentary evidence concerning the life and activities of the musical-instrument maker Gennaro Bosa is scant. According to the 1836 edition of Raffaele Liberatore's *De'saggi delle Manifatture Napolitane Esposti nella Solenne Mostra* Bosa was active as a maker in Naples, working from premises at 9 Calata di S. Tommaso d'Aquino.⁵² His reputation extended further south, as the 1836 consignment of wind instruments for the Royal Orphanage in Reggio Calabria testifies.⁵³ The 1834 edition of Liberatore's commentary on Neapolitan manufacturers equates

⁴⁸ Sebastiani, *Método*, p. 4.

⁴⁹ Op. cit. p. 5.

⁵⁰ Op. cit., p. 7.

⁵¹ Op. cit. p. 5.

⁵² Raffaele Liberatore, *De'saggi delle Manifatture Napolitane Esposti nella Solenne Mostra del 1836* (Naples, 1836), p. 79.

⁵³ William Waterhouse, *The New Langwill Index: A Dictionary of Musical Wind Instrument Makers and Inventors* (London, 1993), p. 41.

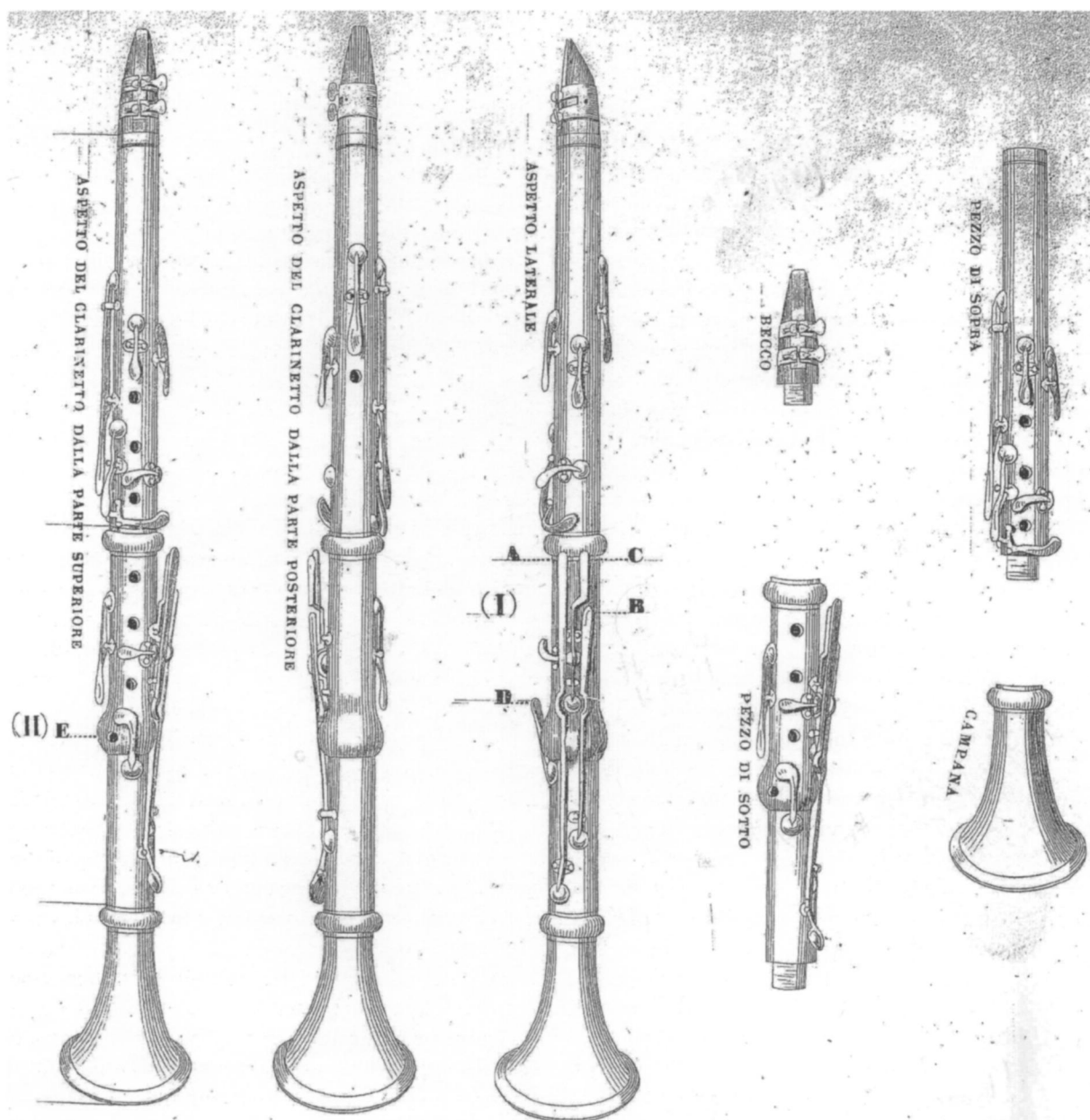


Figure 1. Sebastiani's *Método 'Forma del Clarinetto e di questi pezzi e composto'*, p. 26.

the quality of clarinets by Bosa with those made in Vienna, London or Paris.⁵⁴ Given Liberatore's mention of developments in clarinet design by Müller, Janssen and Guerre, it could be assumed that Bosa had been making clarinets since the 1820s. Bosa's collaboration with Sebastiani, known at the time as a clarinetist of repute, was certainly well-established at the time of Liberatore's report.⁵⁵ Liberatore also describes a clarinet in B \flat by Bosa

made from ebony with an ivory mouthpiece, ivory rings and shell-shaped keys made of silver.⁵⁶ Another player to influence Bosa's craftsmanship was the oboist Giovanni Battista Belpasso, one of Sebastiani's performing and teaching colleagues in Naples.⁵⁷ Little more is known about Bosa although other surviving instruments include flutes, an oboe and a cor anglais.⁵⁸

Documentary evidence in support of the

⁵⁴ Liberatore, *De'saggi delle Manifatture Napolitane Esposti nella Solenne Mostra del 1834* (Naples, 1834), p. 87.

⁵⁵ Liberatore, op. cit., p. 88. This collaboration is also mentioned in Pace Ancie Battenti, p. 41.

⁵⁶ Instruments by Bosa are rare, but a flute with similar shell-like keywork was offered for sale in the U.S.A. in May 2006.

⁵⁷ Waterhouse, *The New Langwill Index*, loc.cit..

⁵⁸ Waterhouse, *ibid.*. The cor anglais is in the collection of the Royal College of Music, London; RCM 326 CA/2.

survival in Naples of clarinets by Bosa appears in Ettore Santagata's 1930 catalogue *Il Museo Storico Musicale di San Pietro a Majella*.⁵⁹ Santagata lists eleven clarinets, including eight with thirteen keys. Of these instruments, nine survive in the recently reconditioned *Museo Storico Musicale* collection at the Naples *Conservatorio*.⁶⁰ Founded in 1925, the collection houses about 140 instruments, mainly of Western-European origin, and is an amalgam of specimens from the four Neapolitan conservatoires; *Poveri di Gesù Cristo*, *Pietà dei Turchini*, *San Onofrio a Porta Capuana* and *Santa Maria di Loreto*.

The thesis offered above, that thumb-keys presented few obstacles to reed-above practitioners, is manifest in the organological evidence of the Bosa/Sebastiani collaboration. Figure 1 is from Sebastiani's *Metodo*. Entitled 'The structure of the clarinet and the four pieces of which it is composed', the clarinet is shown, from left to right, in superior, posterior and lateral views, followed by superior views of the four component parts. Müller's influence is noticeable in the use of a metal ligature.

Bosa's design includes a shortened touchpiece so that the right-hand thumb can operate the key for f#/c#" (B in Fig. 1) as well as an additional key for g#/d#" (C), which appears to have been able to be operated either by the right-hand thumb or the left-hand little finger. This design enables the player to slur between e/b' and f#/c#", using keys A (left-hand little finger) and B (right-hand thumb), as well as between f/c" and g#/d#" by alternating hole E (rh little finger) and key C (lh little finger). Sebastiani also recommends the use of key C, rather than key D, as a trill key.

The majority of thirteen-keyed clarinets from the mid-nineteenth century include a key for f/c". Although both Bosa and Sebastiani were aware of this development, the clarinet depicted in the *Método* leaves the hole E.⁶¹ Sebastiani's preference for mouthpieces made from wood, ebony or grenadilla, instead of ivory or metal, contrasts with the material reportedly used by Bosa in the mid 1830s.⁶²

THE NAPLES CLARINETS

Amongst the *ad hoc* selection of clarinets examined on a recent visit to Naples were several different

designs. A total of nine clarinets were examined; one in E^b, two in C, and three each in B^b and A. Table 1 presents a summary of the features of these instruments. On this occasion, more detailed observations are not possible due to the shortage of time spent with the instruments as well as their current condition. None the less, the following are offered as preliminary remarks.

It was somewhat surprising to find, in Naples, only one instrument corresponding to that portrayed in Sebastiani's *Método*.⁶³ Figure 2 (see colour section) shows the front view of this instrument's lower joint, including the maker's stamp between the first and second holes. Figure 3 (see colour section) presents a similar view of the lower joint, showing clearly the extra g#/d#" key, a feature on all of the surviving thirteen-keyed Bosa clarinets, notice also the shorter touchpiece for the f#/c#" key. Whilst the *Método* depicts an instrument with an integral barrel, only two of the surviving Naples instruments display this characteristic. Is the instrument portrayed in the *Método*, therefore, intended primarily for students or players with less need to utilise the tuning adjustments facilitated by a separate barrel?

In contrast to the previous instrument, a cursive-style stamp appears on the other eight instruments examined. Figure 5 (see colour section) shows this design of stamp as it appears on the bell of a clarinet in C. Herbert Heyde has suggested something of the irregularities in stamping practices amongst various makers at this time.⁶⁴ Given the status of Naples as a centre of reed-above clarinet playing in nineteenth-century Italy, the presence of a stamp on the beak side of two of the mouthpieces (Nos. 522 in E^b and 528 in B^b) confirms that by the time of the Bosa/Sebastiani collaboration such marks were more commercially-driven than indicators of performing practices.

Figure 6 (see colour section) presents three views of the keys operated by the left-hand little finger and right-hand thumb. From left to right, the keys produce e/b', the middle one is an alternative key for g#/d#", and the other a key for f#/c#" The instrument on the left, also shown previously, corresponds to the depiction in Sebastiani's *Método*. The similarity between the length of the touchpieces on the two

⁵⁹ Ettore Santagata, *Il Museo Storico Musicale di San Pietro a Majella* (Gianinni, Naples, 1930), pp. 124-6. This information is also appears in Lyndesay Graham Langwill's *An Index of Musical Wind Instrument Makers*, (Edinburgh, 1960, rev., enlarged 3rd edn, 1972), p. 16.

⁶⁰ Renato Meucci reports that a fire in 1976 destroyed part of the Naples collection. Personal communication.

⁶¹ Sebastiani, op. cit., p. 26.

⁶² Sebastiani, op. cit., p. 6.

⁶³ Naples, *Museo Storico Musicale*, *Conservatorio Di San Pietro a Majella*, No. 21.

⁶⁴ Herbert Heyde, 'Makers' stamps' in *The New Langwill Index*, W. Waterhouse (London, 1993), pp. xiii-xxviii.

boxwood specimens suggests that all three keys can be operated by the left-hand little finger. The middle specimen has a thumb branch on the f#/c#" key, the only Naples instrument with this feature, shown in Figure 7 (see colour section).

A change in the design of keywork is evident by comparing the 'saltspoon' pads on Nos. 21 in B^b (Figure 4, see colour section) and 263 in A and 522 in E^b with the remaining clarinets, which seem to be more recently-made specimens.

A *brille* on the lower joint of one of the C clarinets provides confirmation of Liberatore's report that Bosa was aware of contemporary developments in clarinet manufacture, see Figure 9 (see colour section). The inclusion of this feature contrasts Sebastiani's preference for the use of the f/c" hole. Is the thumb rest contemporary with the keywork or was it added to help the player in supporting the instrument, despite it being made from boxwood, lighter than ebony? Does the sophistication of the keywork suggest that this is the latest clarinet by Bosa? Or is the variety amongst the Bosa instruments indicative of a similar diversity amongst the maker's client base?

CONCLUSION

Considering the well-documented survival of the reed-above embouchure in Italy into the nineteenth century, the Bosa/Sebastiani relationship provides vital organological evidence. The significance of their collaboration inheres in its position as one of very few extant nineteenth-century Italian clarinets

associated with a known virtuoso player. The use of thumb-keys by Italian reed-above virtuosos such as Sebastiani contradicts beliefs that this embouchure was not compatible with such keywork. Indeed, Sebastiani's espousal of the reed-above embouchure can only fully be understood through an investigation of the instrument he used, which brings us closer to an understanding, in both theory and practice, of this elusive practice.

The question remains whether, within the context of performing practices of the nineteenth century, the technique is merely conservative in its conscious retrospection or whether it permits expressive possibilities which would otherwise be unavailable. Such evidence concerning the reed-above embouchure serves to remind us, with our current fetish for standardisation located within a climate of historically-informed performance, of the richness and diversity we seem all too willing to jettison. Indeed, what degree of historical awareness informs our music making if we are rigidly selective in our willingness to embrace the techniques of past eras?

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INGRID ELIZABETH PEARSON

Ferdinando Sebastiani, Gennaro Bosa and the Clarinet in Nineteenth-Century Naples.



Figure 2. Clarinet in B \flat , no. 21, lower joint, frontal view showing maker's stamp. This instrument corresponds to the illustration in Sebastiani's 1855 tutor.



Figure 3. Clarinet in B \flat , no. 21, lower joint, showing extra g#/d#" key and shorter touchpiece for f#/c#" key.



Figure 4. *Clarinet in B \flat , no. 21, upper joint, frontal view, note 'saltspoon' pads.*



Figure 7. *Clarinet in B \flat , no. 528, view of thumb lever on f#/c#" key*



Figure 6 (above). *L to R, Clarinets in B^b, nos. 21, 528 and 527, showing, from left to right, keys for e/b', g#/d#" and f#/c#".*

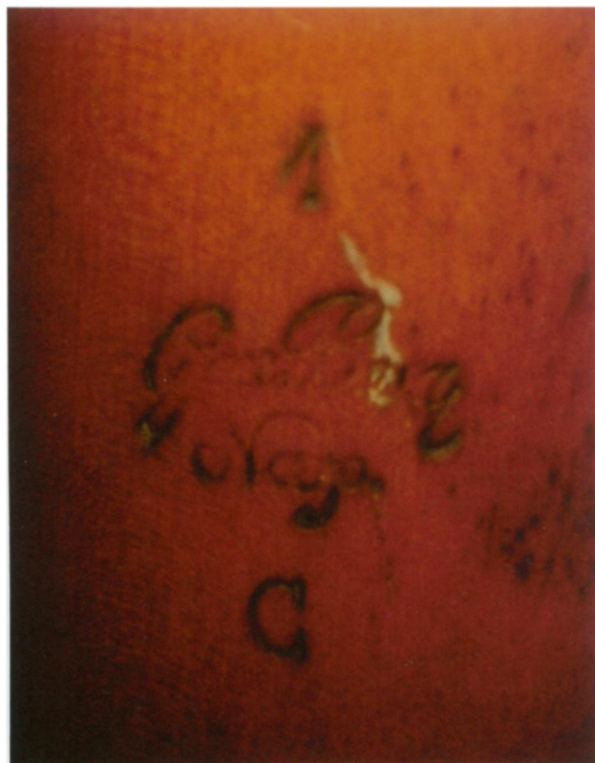


Figure 5. *Clarinet in C, no. 530, cursive-style stamp on bell.*

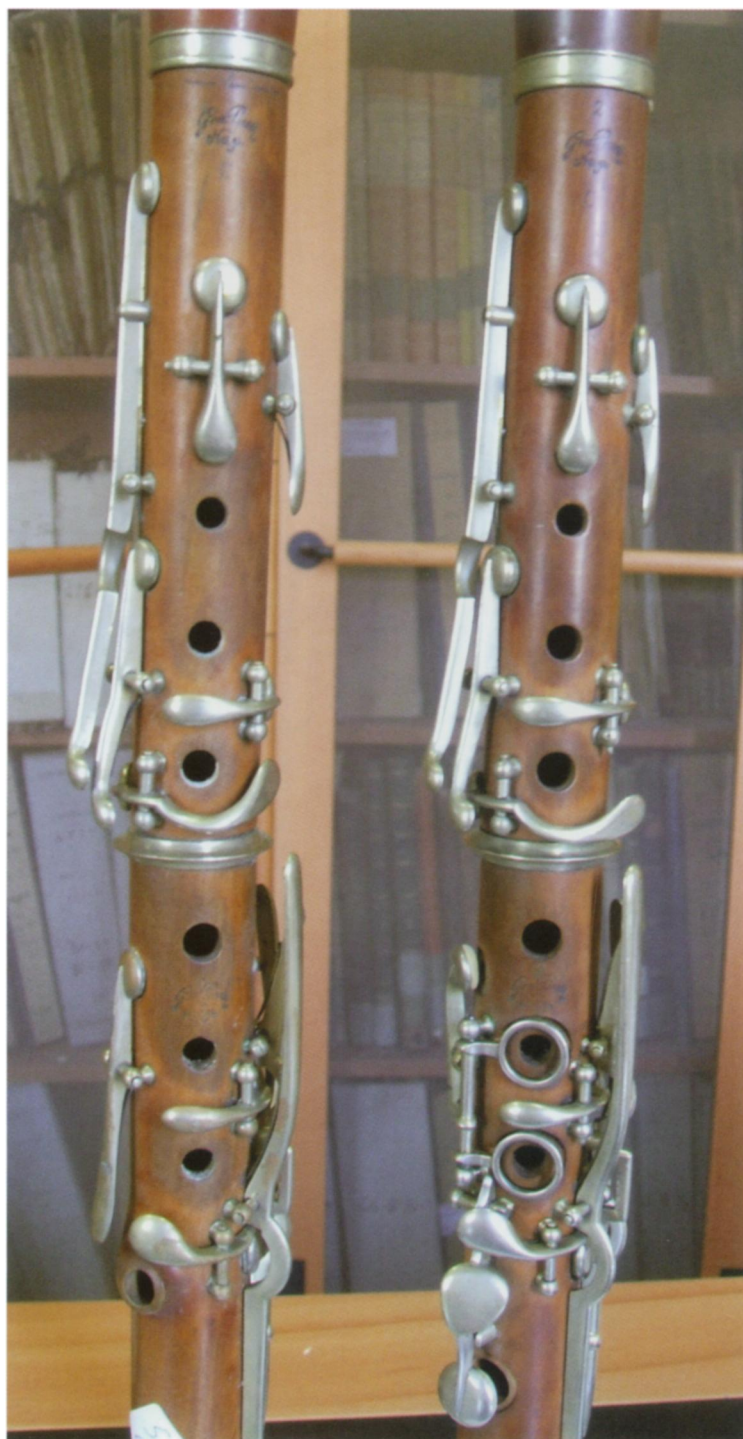


Figure 8. *L to R, Clarinets in C, nos. 530 and 531, comparing lower joint keywork.*