Observations of Bassoon Playing in Malmö, Sweden and Copenhagen, Denmark

D.M.A. Document

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By
Kerry Ann Haberkern, M.M.

Graduate Program in Music

The Ohio State University

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Document Committee:
Professor Karen Pierson, Advisor
Doctor Jan Edwards
Doctor Russel Mikkelson
Professor Robert Sorton
Abstract

Over the course of two weeks in the spring of 2013, the author observed and interviewed bassoonists in Malmö, Sweden and Copenhagen, Denmark. The purpose of this research is to determine if unique pedagogical models exist in Scandinavia, and if they exist, do they contribute to the success of Scandinavian bassoonists. The author observed college age students enrolled in full-time university studies in bassoon, professional musicians, and artist teachers.

The findings of this research indicate that pedagogical models prevalent in Malmö, Sweden and Copenhagen, Denmark are not sufficiently unique to the area to explain a concentration of successful bassoonists. This research details the observations of bassoon playing and teaching in Malmö, Sweden and Copenhagen, Denmark, and makes comparisons to bassoon playing and teaching in the United States. In addition to observations, possible areas for further research have been identified in the final chapter.
Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge the time and efforts provided by my committee and my advisor, Professor Karen Pierson in particular. Without their support and careful guidance, this document would not have been possible. I would also like to acknowledge the musicians of Malmö, Sweden and Copenhagen, Denmark for their openness and collaborative spirit. Lastly, I would like to thank The Ohio State University for its financial support, without which I would not have embarked on this journey.
Vita

2010-2013……….Graduate Assistant, Department of Music, The Ohio State University
2010-2013…………………………….Doctor of Musical Arts, The Ohio State University
2007-2009…………………………..Second bassoon, Niagara Symphony Orchestra
2006-2008………………………………Artist Diploma, Glenn Gould School
2006…………………………….Master of Music, Louisiana State University, Graduate Assistant
2005-2006…………………………..Second bassoon, Baton Rouge Symphony Orchestra
2005-2006………………………………Second bassoon, Louisiana Sinfonietta
2004…………………………………Bachelor of Music, The Ohio State University

Field of Study

Major Field: Music
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Introduction

In 1999-2000, I was an exchange student at the University of Uppsala in Sweden. As an undecided student, I was taking all of the courses indecision affords. That is how I found myself in an introductory Swedish course with a handful of like-minded student wanderers. I enjoyed my studies and my classmates, and had a knack for pronunciation. I continued to take courses in Swedish language and added courses on the films of Ingmar Bergman and reading Scandinavian languages. Before long I had finished the bulk of a Scandinavian studies minor even before settling on a major. My studies culminated in a year abroad studying Swedish culture and literary theory.

A decade later, I began to think about what topics might interest me for my Doctor of Musical Arts research. It was an easy jump to incorporating my love of Sweden. In fact, in the years since my time abroad I had noticed excellent Scandinavian bassoon players in recordings and as noted teachers. Some of the most prominent bassoon players in Europe hail from Scandinavian beginnings. I wondered why a small region had produced so many excellent bassoon players, and if unique and undocumented bassoon pedagogy exists that could explain their success.
Purpose

Dag Jensen, Robert Rønnes, Per Hannevold, Ole Kristian Dahl, and Knut Sønstevold are some of the most noted artist teachers in the bassoon field, all of whom come from Scandinavia. I hypothesized that unique teaching plays a role in the success of Scandinavian bassoonists. The purpose of this research is to determine if unique pedagogical models exist in Scandinavia, and if they exist, do they contribute to the success of Scandinavian bassoonists.

Need for Research

Should there be undocumented pedagogy that has led to the large number of prominent bassoonists with Scandinavian roots, those teaching strategies may benefit musicians outside the region. There is a long history of borrowed teaching in music. For instance the Suzuki method has expanded far beyond its origins in Japan. Furthermore, many of the technical studies bassoonists use today were, in fact, written for the French basson.¹

Relevant Research

No previous literature exists describing advanced bassoon pedagogy in Scandinavia. However, at the time of the publication of this document, Ole Kristian Dahl released Drills, a text that details his philosophy of bassoon playing. Many of the interviews and observations contained in this document echo Dahl’s work. Drills is instructional in nature while this document is observational.

¹ Buffet/French system instrument
How to use this Document

The primary audience for this document is bassoonists. However, there are applications for other musicians, Scandinavianists, arts educators, and arts administrators.

The following diagrams are intended to aid non-bassoonists.
Figure 1. Parts of the bassoon

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Figure 2. The keys and toneholes of the bassoon

Protocol

Over the course of two weeks in May of 2013, I observed and interviewed bassoonists in Malmö, Sweden and Copenhagen, Denmark. The participants gave written consent to have all interactions video or audio recorded. The consent form reminded participants that they could cease participation at any point. Participants were given an opportunity to review their involvement and make changes before publication. There was no incentive to participate.

This research was granted IRB (institutional review board) exemption, and the Office of Responsible Research Practices approved the consent process. The consent form is included in appendix B. The participants’ privacy is not protected and their identity is disclosed in this research.

Participants were chosen based on location, age, and professional or academic affiliation. All participants are over the age of eighteen and professionally playing and/or studying the bassoon. In order to maximize research in the given time, all participants were located in Malmö, Sweden or Copenhagen, Denmark.
Primary Manners of Research

I was able to interact and observe participants in four primary manners: one-on-one conversations, roundtable discussions, lesson and coaching observations, and concert attendance.

One-on-one Conversation

All one-on-one conversations were audio recorded with the knowledge and consent of the participant. Although some questions were asked to all participants, the conversations were informal and had no time constraints. Recorded conversations ranged in time from 20 minutes to 2 hours and 40 minutes. I spoke about my own impressions and experiences, but refrained from making qualitative statements. The participants chose the location of conversations, which varied from sushi restaurants and cafés to the Copenhagen metro train.

A note about transcripts: abridged transcripts are included in appendix C, and short portions of transcripts are included in some chapters. Changes to the transcripts include words added by the author (indicated by brackets), changes and additions by the participant (not notated), removal of words that do not alter meaning (not notated), and removal of portions of the transcript notated with ellipses. All transcript changes were made to provide clarification and do not change the intended meaning. The abridged transcripts are organized by topic for ease of use. The original audio and video recordings, and the unabridged transcripts are not included or available for public use without permission from the participants and the author.
Roundtable Discussion

The roundtable discussion took place at an outdoor café in Malmö with the three bassoon students from the Malmö Academy of Music at Lund University. It was audio recorded with the knowledge and formal consent of the participants. I guided the conversation with questions and answered questions when asked. As with one-on-one conversations, I refrained from making qualitative statements and only reported my experiences and observations.

Lesson and Coaching Observation

All lessons and the coaching were passively video recorded with the knowledge and formal consent of the participants. I did not interact or ask questions during these observations and sat at a distance. All lessons took place in the same studio at the Malmö Academy of Music. The coaching observation took place in the concert house of the Danish Royal Symphony Orchestra.

Concert Attendance

During my visit, I was able to attend three concerts at the invitation of the participants. No recordings were made of any concert; however, photographs were taken of the venues. I was given a complementary ticket for the Malmö Symphony Orchestra and purchased a student ticket to hear the Danish National Symphony Orchestra. The bassoon studio recital was an un-ticketed event. I was able to interact with players after each event.
Itinerary

4/14/13

• Observed three private bassoon lessons taught by Annika Amundsen, bassoon instructor at the Malmö Academy of Music, Lund University and principal bassoon with the Malmö Symphony Orchestra (Location: Malmö Academy of Music. Malmö, Sweden)

4/15/13

• Gave audition lecture and answered questions regarding American bassoon audition norms and expectations (Location: Malmö Academy of Music. Malmö, Sweden)

• Observed rehearsal of Victor Bruns’s Kleine suite nr. 1 für drei fagotte und kontrabass, op. 55 for an upcoming concert (Location: Malmö Academy of Music. Malmö, Sweden)

4/16/13

• Observed audition preparation coaching by Audun Halvorsen, bassoon instructor at The Royal Danish Academy of Music and principal bassoon with the Danish National Symphony Orchestra (Location: Concert house, Danish National Symphony Orchestra. Copenhagen, Denmark)

4/17/13

• Conversation with Constantin Barcov, principal bassoon with the Malmö Opera (Location: Malmö Opera Grill)
4/18/13

- Observed Annika Amundsen’s students rehearse for upcoming studio recital (Location: Concert House. Malmö, Sweden)
- Round table conversation with students (Location: Café. Malmö, Sweden)

4/19/13

- Conversation with Sebastian Stevensson, principal bassoon with Danish National Symphony Orchestra (Location: Café. Copenhagen, Denmark)

4/21/13

- Conversation with Annika Amundsen (Location: Concert House. Malmö, Sweden)
- Attended bassoon studio recital (Location: Liljeforssallen. Malmö, Sweden)

4/22/13

- Conversation with Johnny Teyssier, principal clarinet with the Malmö Symphony Orchestra (Location: Café. Malmö, Sweden)

4/23/13

- Lunch with Constantin Barcov (Location: Restaurant. Malmö, Sweden)
- Attended Malmö Symphony concert (Location: Concert House. Malmö, Sweden)

4/25/13

- Conversation with Audun Halvorsen (Location: Metro and DR. Copenhagen, Denmark)
- Attended Danish National Symphony Orchestra (Location: DR. Copenhagen, Denmark)
Participant Biographies

All of the participants were asked to provide biographies. Only minor grammatical and spellings corrections were made.

*Caisa Adamek*

Caisa Adamek, born 1989, began to play the saxophone at the age of 7. At the age of 14 she started the bassoon. In 2005 she began her studies at Lilla Akademiens Musikgymnasium, with studies in saxophone with Kristin Uglar, and studies in bassoon with professor Knut Sönstevold, and later Fredrik Ekdahl.

After graduating she started to study music pedagogy at Karlstad University, Musikhögskolan Ingesund in 2008 with Martin Eriksson in saxophone, and Mikael Lindström in bassoon. After 3 years of studies there, she began bachelor studies in performing arts with bassoon as her main instrument at Malmö Academy of Music 2011 with Annika Amundsen, Henrik Blixt, and Christian Davidsson. She will finish her studies in the spring of 2014.

During that time she has played in various projects in churches and other venues, such as the Lyckå Chamber Music Festival and Strauss's The Bat with Linneateatern in Växjö etc. She has also participated in orchestra courses since the age of 11, including Blåsarlandslaget (The Swedish National Wind Orchestra) hosted by RUM, and Ungdomssymfonikerne (The Norwegian National Youth Orchestra). Caisa has toured in Norway, France, Germany, the Czech Republic and Brazil, and played in all the major concert houses in Sweden.
**Annika Amundsen**

Annika Amundsen made her debut as a soloist with The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in Stockholm in John Williams’ Five Sacred Trees after studies at the Royal Danish Academy of Music, the Hochschule für Musik, Mannheim, and The Royal College of Music, Stockholm. She has held the post as principal bassoon with Malmö Opera Orchestra and Gävle Symphony Orchestra and since 1998 with Malmö Symphony Orchestra. She has made recurrent appearances as a principal bassoon with The Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, and she has performed as a soloist on numerous occasions, in works dedicated to her by contemporary Swedish composers Erik Peters and Olof Lindgren as well as in works from the classical bassoon repertory. She holds a position as teacher of bassoon and chamber music at the Malmö Academy of Music and teaches recurrent master classes in Sweden and Latvia.

**Constantin Barcov**

Constantin Barcov was born in Romania in 1984 in Iasi, Romania, being the only musician in the family. He started the bassoon at the age of 11. He won first prizes in all major Romanian competitions, during middle school and high school. After finishing high school with Prof. Petrescu Valentin, and one year of Conservatory in Iasi with Dr. Dumitru Iosub, he got a full scholarship and stipend to study in the U.S., at Columbus State University, Georgia with Dr. Ronald Wirt. He graduated in 2008 with honors. During his time in the U.S. he won the Concerto Competition at CSU, won the Sewanee Music Festival concerto competition, the Atlanta Music Club, and was a winner of MTNA Georgia division. He also attended many festivals all throughout the U.S., and
Canada including Sarasota Music Festival and Domaine Forget in Quebec. After receiving the DAAD, the German Academic Exchange Service, scholarship, he pursued his graduate studies with Prof. Dag Jensen at the Hannover Hochschule für Musik. While studying there, he was a finalist and Honorable Mention for the Fox Gillet Competition in 2010, semi finalist and took 6th place at the Prague Spring Competition in 2010, attended the Schleswig Holstein festival in Germany, and the Pacific Music Festival in Japan. He is currently the principal bassoonist at the Malmö Opera, a position that he won in 2010. Since then he has played with other orchestras, as a principal bassoonist: Malmö Symphony Orchestra, Philharmonia and Royal Philharmonic, London, Danish Radio Symphony, Braunschweig Staatstheater.

Laura Clewer

Laura Clewer began her bassoon studies in 1998 at the Porvoo Music Institute with Mika Ylärakkola. She is a graduate of the Sibelius Upper Secondary School for Music and the Helsinki Conservatory where she studied with Harri Joy and Laura Mäenpää. In January 2010 Laura entered the Metropolia University of Applied Studies where she studied with Jaakko Luoma. In 2012-2013 Laura was an exchange student at the Malmö Academy of Music in Lund, studying with Annika Amundsen. Laura Clewer has attended master classes by Ole Christian Dahl, Mikko-Pekka Svala, and Jussi Särkkä. An experienced orchestral musician, Laura has performed with Symphony Orchestra Vivo, Helsinki Symphony, and Ylioppilaskunnan Soittajat (Helsinki University Symphony Orchestra). Laura hopes to continue her playing career as well as teach bassoon in the future.
Audun Halvorsen auditioned for and won his first position as Principal Bassoonist in the Norrköping Symphony Orchestra in 2001. During 2002 he also held the same position at the Norwegian Opera, followed by Rotterdam Philharmonic Orchestra 2005-06 and NDR Sinfonieorchester Hamburg in 2010-11. Recently Audun decided to return to his position as Principal Bassoonist of the Danish National Symphony Orchestra in Copenhagen, which he has held since 2006.

Audun has played as guest principal with, among others, London Symphony Orchestra, Mahler Chamber Orchestra, Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra, Swedish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra and Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra.

In 2011 Audun was invited to play with the Luzerne Festival Orchestra conducted by Claudio Abbado.

Audun made his solo debut in 2003 with the Stavanger Symphony Orchestra as The Young Musician of the Year, followed by solo appearances with Norrköping Symphony Orchestra, Norwegian Radio Symphony Orchestra, Danish National Symphony Orchestra DR in Copenhagen and NDR Sinfonieorchester.

Audun is an active chamber musician. He is a member of Diamant Ensemlet in Copenhagen, and he has participated in chamber music festivals in Risør, Stavanger, Oslo, Gloppen, Uusikaupunki og Korsholm(Wasa).

Audun is currently teaching bassoon at The Royal Danish Academy of Music in Copenhagen. In 2003 he won the Crusell Bassoon Competition in Uusikaupunki in
Finland, and was also given the Norwegian Shell prize.

Audun Halvorsen, born 1979, grew up in Haugesund on the west coast of Norway. He started his studies with Robert Rønnes and continued in the Norwegian State Academy of Music with Eirik Birkeland and Knut Sønstevold. Ole Kristian Dahl has been Audun's teacher and mentor since 2001.

Audun is playing on a Heckel no. 15109 (from 2005), and on "Halvorsen" reeds from Hans Wisse.

*Edgars Reimanis*

Edgars Reimanis began his studies as a pianist at the Emilis Melngailis school of music in Liepāja, Latvia. He continued to study piano through high school, but changed his focus to the bassoon at the age of 15. Reimanis has had the opportunity to play in Latvia, Poland, Germany, France, Brazil, Vienna, and throughout Scandinavia. In 2011 Reimanis travelled to Sweden to study at the Malmö Academy of Music at Lund University. His teachers include: Andris Arnicans, Dzintars Jurgelaitis, Janis Semjonovs, Asger Svendsen, Henrik Blixt, Annika Amundsen, and Christian Davidson.

*Sebastian Stevensson*

The bassoonist Sebastian Stevensson was born 1987 in a musical family in Sigtuna, Sweden. He studied bassoon since childhood and by age 16 he was admitted at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm under Prof. Knut Sönstevold. From 2008 - 2011 Sebastian was a student of Prof. Ole Kristian Dahl at the Mannheim Musikhochschule, Germany.
He appeared as soloist performing both Fernstöm and Mozart bassoon concertos with the Nordic Youth Orchestra. Sebastian is an active chamber musician and regularly performs with Diamant Ensemble at the Royal Library in Copenhagen.

Since 2012 Sebastian holds the position as principal bassoon in the Danish National Symphony Orchestra and the season before he served as co-principal bassoon in Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra. He appeared as guest principal with the Philharmonia Orchestra London, Munich Philharmonic, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, Rotterdam Philharmonic and German Radio Philharmonic Saarbrücken.

*Johnny Teyssier*

Johnny Teyssier was recently appointed principal clarinetist of the Malmö Symphony in Sweden after serving as principal clarinet of the Minnesota Opera Orchestra. As a soloist, he has played recitals throughout the United States and Europe, and has played concertos with the Malmö Symphony, the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, the Irish Chamber Orchestra, and the Hilton Head Symphony. He is the 2007 winner of the Ico Ardán Award from the Irish Chamber Orchestra and the 2008 winner of the Juventus Prize. Johnny is also passionate about chamber music, and is a founding member of the Sixth Floor Trio. He began playing clarinet at the age of eleven, studying with Dwayne Van Wyhe, and attended the Interlochen Arts Academy as a student of Nathan Williams. At the age of seventeen, he was admitted to the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia where he studied with Donald Montanaro. In 2011, he completed an Artist Diploma at the Colburn School in Los Angeles, studying with Yehuda Gilad.
Part One: Playing

Part one of this document makes comparisons between the fundamentals of bassoon playing in Malmö, Sweden and Copenhagen, Denmark and bassoon playing in the United States. Conventional wisdom would suspect that globalization factors lead to similar practices of bassoon playing. However, I was surprised to observe significant dissimilarities in how bassoonists support the instrument, methods of projection, equipment preferences, and reed making practices.

Harnesses and Seat Straps

The most visible difference between bassoonists in Malmö and Copenhagen and bassoonists in the United States is their preference to stand while playing. Identifying types of suspension equipment, preferences for that equipment, and possible reasons for those preferences give us insights into both the mechanics and the philosophy of bassoon playing in Scandinavia and the United States.

American bassoonists traditionally use a seat strap attached to the boot joint\(^4\) of the bassoon and positioned across a chair. The weight of the bassoon is suspended by sitting on the strap. There are two major types of seat straps: the first type has an s-hook that attaches to the boot joint, the second type holds the boot joint with a leather or nylon

\(^4\) Refer to p. 4
cup. The s-hook style allows freer rotation of the instrument, while the cup style prevents rotation by holding the body of the instrument in a fixed position. The strap is positioned at the front of the chair to achieve a more vertical angle and prevent excessive weight distribution to the left hand.

American bassoonists perform seated for auditions, a large percentage of practice time, and orchestral playing. Lessons can be given seated or standing depending on the teacher and the material. Concerto and recital performances can be given seated or standing with a preference for standing during performances.

Figure 3. Traditional American posture with seat strap

Figure 4. Seat strap at back of chair illustrates additional weight in left hand
The bassoonists I observed in Malmö and Copenhagen stand while playing in nearly all instances except while playing in the orchestra. I noted three models of harnesses and one neck strap support used by the participants.

Figure 5. Standard neck strap
Figure 6. Zappatini harness

Figure 7. BG France harness

Figure 8. Kölbl harness
All of the bassoonists I observed continue to use a harness or neck strap for orchestral playing, despite sitting down. Several participants report using a seat strap with a harness or neck strap for seated playing. The use of a harness or neck strap positions the instrument closer to the body with the bell leaning away from the player. Director of the Alexander Technique Centre Vienna, Michael Parkinson notes, “Much effort is also needed by the left hand and arm to prevent the bassoon pitching forwards.”\(^5\) In order to lessen the weight in the left hand, nearly all of the participants use a balance hanger. A balance hanger raises the point of suspension on the bassoon and distributes the weight of the instrument more evenly.

![Figure 9. Balance hanger](image)

While standing, the rotation of the bassoon is freer and can negatively impact technical facility. In order to control the rotation of the instrument while standing, bassoonists may use a hand rest. In the United States, the use of a hand rest (also known as a crutch) is an issue of preference and hand size. Students make the decision to use a hand rest with input from a teacher. Both methods are well represented in players from school age through elite orchestras.

In contrast, all of the observed players in Malmö and Copenhagen use a hand rest despite hand size. They were also unaware of players who do not use a hand rest in their respective regions. The unanimous use of the hand rest is likely explained by the preference for standing and use of a harness instead of a seat strap.

Figure 10. Hand rest
Standing for Solo Performances

Standing for solo recitals and concerto performances is a point of contention in the American bassoon community. While most players agree that a standing performance conveys more authority and polish, many bassoonists are uncomfortable standing. If standing negatively impacts a bassoonist’s performance, surely that outweighs any prestige gained by standing. In either case, the fact remains that most American bassoonists perform relatively few recitals and concerti compared to other woodwind players. There are only a handful of solo competitions for bassoonists in the United States, and solo repertoire is more limited compared to flute or clarinet repertoires.

Historically there have been few solo bassoon competitions in Scandinavia. However, Scandinavia’s location gives bassoonists easy access to solo competitions throughout Europe. The exposure to competitions shapes the image of the bassoon as a solo instrument and bassoonists as soloists. Sebastian Stevensson is co-principal bassoonist with the Danish National Symphony Orchestra. He recalls, “I was very fascinated with Dag Jensen when I was a little bit younger. I knew that he won the ARD Competition (Arbeitsgemeinschaft der öffentlich-rechtlichen rundfunkanstalten der bundesrepublik deutschland) in Munich and I checked when I was a teenager when it was coming… But the last time was 2008 and I knew a long time in advance I wanted to go for the ARD 2008.”

How standing effects breathing and musicianship is a point of disagreement among players. When asked about his preference for standing and using a harness, principal bassoonist with the Malmö Opera, Constantin Barcov notes, “…you have to use
your whole body for resonance… It’s very important to keep your body sort of flexible to compliment what you do musically rather than sitting down.” Instructor of bassoon at the Malmö Academy of Music and principal bassoon of the Malmö Symphony Orchestra, Annika Amundsen questions, “If you are always sitting then it’s difficult to produce the air enough and that means that you never will have the feeling to blow out the bassoon…” To understand why Americans tend not to share these concerns, it is necessary to examine differences in sound concept and equipment preferences.

Projection and Sound Concept

The issue of projection is critical to bassoon players because of the demands of orchestral playing. While flute, clarinet, and oboe have evolved for maximum projection in terms of bore and materials, the bassoon has made relatively few design changes, making balance in the woodwind section a challenge. The means available to meet orchestral playing demands are limited to changes in reed style and bore type. Those changes alter how the bassoon is played and contribute to why American bassoonists may not share the same views about standing while performing. The following sections explore differing expectations from orchestras, projection achieved through reed making, projection achieved through instrument design, and how those choices effect sound concept and ultimately mold a population’s aesthetic.

Differing expectations

The current demands on the American orchestral bassoonist are severe. As musicians and instruments evolve, the range of possible volume expands at both ends of the spectrum. American orchestras now require extreme pianissimo dynamics, with
precise articulation, and a discernable sound. In contrast, dynamics in Malmö and Copenhagen were observed to be louder and the bassoon was more present in tutti playing. At the other end of the dynamic range, bassoonists in Malmö, Copenhagen, and the United States are all required to produce powerful and projecting forte dynamics.

Sound Concept and Projection through Reed Making

The current American method of projection is based on a sound concept achieved through reed making. A smaller, thinner reed allows for greater ease of response and stronger high overtones in the sound. American bassoonists Mark Popkin and Loren Glickman note, “The bassoon is an inherently muffled or dark-toned instrument, lacking in the higher overtones of the oboe, which is a bright, easily heard instrument. Therefore, in addition to using vibrato, the student is urged to brighten the tone in order to develop a sound that can be heard in the audience. This is primarily a problem of adjusting the reed, embouchure, and bassoon for maximum tone production.”6 The smaller reed and more audible high overtones allow the instrument to project with sound quality instead of volume. In addition, the smaller style reed gives American bassoonists the ease of response and clarity of articulation needed in the softest dynamics. This sound concept can be described as “brighter,” “more colorful,” and “focused.” (It bears mentioning that the terminology used to describe sound is subjective.)

Bassoon players observed in Malmö and Copenhagen have dealt with the projection problem differently. Balance in the woodwind section is achieved with

volume. The predominant reed style is larger, thicker, and less responsive. The sound is “rounder,” “darker,” and more “mellow.” According to Audun Halvorsen, “…the idea behind it is reeds that are resistant in terms of breathing, so you need a lot of air to make them ring. They don’t vibrate easily, but when you use a lot of air you get a very dense sound and maybe a rounder sound than with the lighter kinds of reeds.”

The need for more air could, in part, explain the preference for standing. A standing posture may aid in maximum lung expansion. Halvorsen adds, “The reeds are vibrating so little, if I have tension here [embouchure] it’s just dead sound. It’s just nothing. It’s actually less lip control than with the lighter reeds… It’s more control by the air than the lips.”

The rationale behind the sound concept I observed in Malmö and Copenhagen is that it maintains the “characteristic” sound of the bassoon in all ranges, at all dynamics, and can produce more volume. The rationale behind the American sound concept is that the player can balance in the woodwind section without the physical burden of creating more volume. It also allows the player greater control at the softest dynamics.

According to Constantin Barcov, changes to the reed result in sacrifices in the sound, “How far will you go to get the responsiveness of the reed? How much of your tone are you willing to sacrifice to get that reed really? How much are you willing to sacrifice your dynamic? The idea of the dynamic here [Sweden] is, from pianissimo to fortissimo, you need to keep the same tone.” American bassoonist, Christopher Weait argues, “Work first for response, then range, then pitch. Work on tone after you have
secured response, range and pitch.” This is typical of how American bassoonists approach reed making and reflects the need for flexibility and control.

This is not to say that American bassoonists tolerate sub-standard sound quality, nor do bassoonists in Malmö and Copenhagen have little regard for dynamic nuance. Bassoonists in both communities have cultivated different aesthetic preferences based on how their reed making has met the demands of the industry.

Reed Practices

The style of reed making is also affected by how bassoonists acquire reeds. Most of the professional participants I observed Malmö and Copenhagen do not make their own reeds. They order handmade reeds and, in some cases, have those tailored specifically to their playing. All of the participants know how to make reeds; however, some are more proficient than others. The student participants make their own reeds as a part of their schooling, and have a master class with a different reed maker each year to expose them to different methods. The craft of reed making appears to hold considerable academic interest, but less practical purpose for the participants. The Malmö Academy of Music owns an impressive collection of high-end machines and tools for reed making, figure 13.

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7 Christopher Weait, **Bassoon Reed Making: An Illustrated Basic Method** (Worthington, OH: Christopher Weait, LLC, 2008) 15.
Many of the professional participants in Malmö and Copenhagen purchase reeds from the same reed maker, which results in a limited variety of reed styles. Regardless of whether the participant makes his or her reeds, or buys them from a reed maker, the reed style is thicker, longer, and less responsive compared to most American reeds. The reed creates greater volume and weaker high overtones throughout all registers of the bassoon.

Conversely, American bassoonists consider reed making to be an integral part of the study and practice of bassoon playing. It is common for American bassoonists to tailor reeds to their own preferences, resulting in a larger range of reed styles in the
United States. Nevertheless, there is a window in which the majority of American reeds fall. The most current trend is toward smaller, thinner reeds that are responsive and accommodate pianissimo playing.

*Sound Concept and Projection through Instrument*

The issue of projection can also be tackled through instrument choice. The bore dimensions of a bassoon impact all aspects of how an instrument plays; including sound quality, resistance, pitch, and projection. The bassoonists I observed in Malmö and Copenhagen prefer modern bore bassoons, whereas American bassoonists have not reached a consensus.

Wilhelm Heckel GmbH

Although American bassoonists may not single-mindedly agree on bore style, the predisposition towards bassoons made by Wilhelm Heckel GmbH is as prevalent in the United States as it is in Malmö and Copenhagen. Heckel bassoons remain the choice of most professional bassoonists worldwide. However, American bassoonists regularly use instruments manufactured fifty and sixty years ago, while the players I observed in Malmö and Copenhagen seek out modern bassoons.

Heckel bassoons are referred to by the series number, or the first number in the serial number. For example, all instruments in the nine thousand series are colloquially referred to as “nines” and listed for sale as 9K. The bassoonists I observed reported playing instruments no older than the eleven thousand series, which began production in
1965, shortly after the change to thicker walled construction.\(^8\) In fact, most bassoonists in Malmö and Copenhagen are playing instruments from the later series, thirteen, fourteen, and the most recent, fifteen thousand series. The short bore bassoon (1922-1963) remains popular in the United States; particularly eight, nine, and ten thousand series.

**Why Differing Preferences?**

Differing preferences in instrument style may be explained similarly to differing preferences in reed style. American bassoonists continue to meet the projection challenge by cultivating a sound profile with more overtones. The older series bassoons are generally less resistant, more lyrical, and produce a “brighter” color. The newer Heckel bassoons are able to create more volume and are therefore able to balance in the woodwind section using a “darker,” “rounder,” and more “mellow” sound.

Halvorsen also notes the improvement in intonation, “I think the new instruments are just so much better for intonation, and they’re more equal in the sound so it’s much easier to bring the music out somehow.” Barcov agrees that the intonation in the newer instruments is improved, “Well the problem is that we’re advancing and the pitch in orchestra has gotten better and better and better than if you hear old recordings. The same thing goes for even bassoons. You hear the new bassoons and they’re absolutely fantastic. There’s not this sort of Stradivarius thing going on with the bassoon.” Although Barcov does not agree, the comparison to Stradivarius may be apt. Many American

bassoonists seek out specific vintages of Heckel bassoons for desirable characteristics they believe are not present in the modern models

Alternative Brands

Heckel bassoons are price prohibitive for many students in Malmö, Copenhagen, and in the United States. Fox and Yamaha bassoons are all well represented after Heckel bassoons, particularly in student populations. Some participants report that Fox bassoons are currently the second most popular brand in Scandinavia, a position once held by Püchner. In the United States, Fox bassoons are popular among students and professionals, while Yamaha has fewer distributors and less visibility. The student participants I observed owned Yamaha, Fox, and Fox Renard bassoons respectively.

Bocal Preference

The preference of bocal\(^9\) is similar in Malmö, Copenhagen, and in the United States. Heckel bocals are standard among professional bassoonists, and the most common model is the CC bore, in lengths 1 and 2\(^{10}\). Like in the United States, Heckel bocals are paired with all brands and models of instruments. Lietzinger and Yamaha bocals are popular for their high register playing, and most bassoonists have a variety of bocals for different situations. Bassoonists in Malmö and Copenhagen do not seek out pre-war Heckel bocals, which have recently become popular and expensive in the United States. This is likely due to their preferences for new instruments, which may pair better with modern bocals.

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\(^9\) see p. 4
\(^{10}\) According to Forrests Music and Edmund Nielsen
Part Two: Teaching

During my stay in Malmö and Copenhagen, I was able to observe lessons, an audition coaching, rehearsals, and a recital. I observed students at various points in their education and with various career aspirations. My conversations with artist teachers and students revealed learning strategies and teaching philosophies. Many of these ideas are not unique to Malmö or Copenhagen, although some may be unfamiliar to American bassoonists.

Teaching and Learning Technical Facility

Gaining technical facility is one of the challenges of studying an instrument. There are countless texts dedicated to learning how to play difficult passages fluidly and easily. It was a surprise to discover methods and materials that were largely unfamiliar to me. The following is a list of etudes and method books used by the participants:

1. *Drills*, Ole Kristian Dahl
2. *16 Studi giornalieri di perfezionamento*, Almiero Giampieri
4. *Rytlické etudy pro fagot*, Karel Pivoňka
5. *Virtuózní etudy pro fagot*, Karel Pivoňka
6. *25 Scale Studies*, op. 24, Ludwig Milde
7. *Gammes et arpèges: 480 exercices pour flûte*, Marcel Moyse
8. *24 Caprices for Solo Violin*, op.1, Niccolò Paganini
10. *16 Studies For The Orchestra Bassoonist*, Robert Rønnes
16 Studi giornalieri di perfezionamento by Almiro Giampieri and 25 Scale Studies, op. 24 by Ludwig Milde are both standard texts used in American teaching, while the other texts are used infrequently or not at all. The authors of texts 1, 8, and 10 (Rønnes and Dahl) are Norwegian bassoonists. While their playing is well known worldwide, their respective books have yet to gain popularity outside of Scandinavia. Rønnes’s Twelve Virtuoso Studies is available through TrevCo-Varner Music and 16 Studies for the Orchestral Bassoonist is available though Rønnes’s own website, robertronnes.com. Dahl’s Drills is available through olekristiandahl.net.

Learning Methods

One of the most revealing conversations I had was with Annika Amundsen, instructor of bassoon at the Malmö Academy of Music at Lund University and principal bassoonist of the Malmö Symphony Orchestra. Her method of learning technical passages is unlike the predominant method used in the United States. When confronted with technical challenges, American bassoonists decrease the tempo until they are able to perform the skill. Exercises such as isolation and rhythmic variation are used to improve facility and increase the tempo. Slow practice is the mantra of many players.

Amundsen uses a technique she learned as a student in Mannheim, Germany at the Staatlichen hochschule für musik und darstellende kunst mannheim, “We played everything 5 notes, stop. The same again but double tempo. Over and over again. In etudes: starting on the first note, playing four notes and end on the fifth note. Second time you start on the second sixteenth, playing four notes (ending on fifth note) half tempo, break, and then double tempo. Second step is to play 8 sixteenths ending on the ninth
note. Half tempo and then double tempo. Always with a quarter break in between.” The following is an example of the Mannheim technique using a C-major scale:

1.

\begin{music}
\begin{fsharp}
C4-G4-F4-E4-D4-C4
\end{fsharp}
\end{music}

*continue pattern*

2.

\begin{music}
\begin{fsharp}
C4-G4-F4-E4-D4-C4
\end{fsharp}
\end{music}

Figure 12. Mannheim practice technique

Amundsen further notes, “The brain remembers how you have practiced. It remembers that, so if you work very slowly your fingers remember it slowly.” Although this may seem contrary to many musicians’ experiences, the participants I observed perform with technical ease.

Flute players are frequently required to perform difficult passages in solo and ensemble repertoire. The Mannheim method of practice resembles what flute players refer to as chunking. Noted flute pedagogue, Patricia George, describes chunking:
The muscles learn in chunks---the eye/brain relationship is also in chunks; so the more chunking you do, the better the results. Chunking is playing about one inch of music and then resting afterwards. Play the chunks in a good tempo. For simple time ones (simple time means that the beat can be divided by 2s), a four note chunk would be played at 144 on up. For compound time ones (compound time--the beat can be divided by 3s); a six note chunk would be around 80 on up.\footnote{Patricia George, “Improving technique with Taffanel & Gaubert and Hugues,” johnranck.net, http://johnranck.net/studio/clinic/practice_corner/chunking.html (accessed August 8, 2013).}

Perhaps what is most unusual about this learning method is not the process itself, but the absence of slow practice. American bassoonists have yet to wholly embrace either the Mannheim method or chunking style of practice.

**Student Performances**

Amundsen teaches three students at the Malmö Academy of Music at Lund University. These students are working toward orchestral and teaching careers. Laura Clewer and Edgars Reimanis were finishing a year abroad from other schools, while Caisa Adamek is a continuing student at the Malmö Academy of Music. The end of the academic year culminates in *beting* (jury) performed for the woodwind faculty, just as it does in most American courses. *Beting* includes scales, orchestral excerpts, and solo repertoire, all of which are performed standing. The repertoire students prepare is similar to that prepared for American juries, both in terms of level of preparation and difficulty.
Beting Repertoire

Solo

- Konsertstykke, op. 2, Franz Berwald
- Concerto for bassoon and orchestra in B-flat major, K. 191, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
- Bassoon Sonata, op. 168, Camille Saint-Saëns

Orchestral Excerpts

- Symphony no. 41, K. 155, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
- Le nozze di Figaro K.492, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
- Boléro M. 81, Maurice Ravel,
- Sheherade op. 35, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov
- The Rite of Spring, Igor Stravinsky
In addition to preparing for betting, the students rehearsed for an upcoming studio recital. The recital was informal and attended by friends and classmates.

![Program for bassoon studio recital](image)

**Konsert med fagottklassen**

**MUSIKHÖGSKOLAN I Malmö | WWW.MHM.LU.SE**

**MUSIKHÖGSKOLANS FAGOTTKLASS**

Verk av V Bruns, WA Mozart, C Saint-Saëns, Berwald och Weissenborn

TISDAG 21 MAJ 19.00, LILJEFORSSALEN

**LÄRARE**: ANNIKA AMUNDSEN & TOMAS JOHNSON, PIANO

**Konsert med fagottklassen**

**PROGRAM**

**Victor Bruns (1904–1996)**
Kleine Suite, för fyra fagotter
I. Andante moderato – Allegro giocoso
II. Largo
V. Allegro animato

**Wolfgang A Mozart (1756–1791)**
Fagottkonsert i B-dur, KV191
I. Allegro moderato
II. Andante, ma adagio
III. Ronde: Tempo di Menuetto

Edgars Reimanis, fagott
Tomas Jonsson, piano

**Camille Saint-Saëns (1835–1921)**
Sonat i G-dur op. 168
I. Allegro moderato
II. Allegro scherzando
III. Molto adagio
IV. Allegro moderato

Caisa Adams, fagott
Tomas Jonsson, piano

**Frans Berwald (1796–1868)**
Konzertstück, för fagott

Laura Clewer, fagott
Tomas Jonsson, piano

**Julius Weissenborn (1837–1888)**
Trio för fagott

All three of the students have aspirations that include playing for professional orchestras. Clewer also wants to teach for **Musikkiopisto** (Finnish community music school).
Annika Amundsen

One of Amundsen’s semester goals was for her students to cover more material. They learned their betting material early in the year and came back to it only weeks before their exam. Her hope is that the material will be easier the second time, and that her students will ultimately learn more repertoire. It also more realistically prepares students for professional lives. Musicians often have a short amount of time to prepare new music, and will perform standard repertoire throughout their careers.

Amundsen is new to the Malmö Academy of Music and is building her studio and reputation. Although Amundsen is Swedish, her own advanced studies took place in Germany. She notices differences between studying in Sweden and her own studies, and is conscious of easing her students into her style of teaching, “Some things I take with me from Germany and in Germany it’s very strict… in Sweden we’re talking a lot and we’re very equal, teachers and students, and that is not the case in Germany. You go to your lessons and everything should work and you have to practice your things otherwise you go out or you say you are sick or something. You just do what you have to do, you know.”

I observed Amundsen teaching lessons at the Malmö Academy of Music and noticed the collegial discourse between student and teacher. Her students call her Annika and confess their dissatisfaction with reeds and practice to her. While Amundsen acts like a peer with her students, they clearly respect her. When I asked her about what she does when a student comes to a lesson ill prepared or with his or her instrument dirty (a pet peeve of Amundsen’s), she replied, “Yeah, but they don’t.”
Amundsen’s background is not uncommon. Most of the musicians I interviewed have had some training abroad. A common theme throughout my interactions was that the level of bassoon playing in Scandinavia is rising. Sebastian Stevensson, co-principal bassoon with the Danish National Symphony, notes, “I think the people who have only been studying in Scandinavia now have very little chance in auditions here because it’s so close and it’s very cheap to travel within Europe, so people come from Germany or somewhere for all of the auditions. I think now the Scandinavians who did study somewhere else as well have much better chances.”

A Coaching by Audun Halvorsen

In Copenhagen Audun Halvorsen is principal bassoon with the Danish National Symphony Orchestra and teaches bassoon at the Royal Danish Academy of Music. I was invited to observe him coach an advanced student in preparation for a second bassoon audition. Halvorsen is quick to credit his success to his mentor, Ole Kristian Dahl, so it comes as no surprise that his teaching is inspired by Dahl. Much of the coaching focused on vibrato, energy, and resonance. Halvorsen, himself a practiced and successful audition taker, pinpointed small items that the audition panel might notice.

Resonance

A key component to Halvorsen’s teaching is resonance. In fact, all of the players I spoke to in Malmö and Copenhagen are concerned with the concept of resonance. To Halvorsen, the idea of resonance is not as simple as good equipment with proper use of air. There are elements of intonation, evenness, and acoustics wrapped up in the goal of a resonant sound. I arrived at the Danish National Symphony Orchestra to find Halvorsen
and his student working in the concert house. Rehearsing in a space with excellent acoustics is important to Halvorsen, and allows him to work toward his high expectations regarding resonance.

The coaching was underway when I arrived and Halvorsen was listening to his student play Mozart’s Bassoon Concerto, K. 191. Halvorsen focused on the trill in the fourth bar of the bassoon entrance. Halvorsen commented that he was not able to understand the trill.

![Figure 14. Bassoon entrance in Mozart’s Concerto for bassoon and orchestra in B-flat major, K. 191, movement 1, measures 35-38](image)

The student clarified his intention, which was to linger on the principal note (E-flat 4) after the, often added, appoggiatura (F4) and then to build the speed of the trill. Halvorsen gave the suggestion to start on the principal note, but allowed the student to make his own decision. They worked for a considerable time on creating an organic quality to the trill.

After addressing the pacing of the trill, Halvorsen noticed an intonation and sound problem within the trill. The upper note in the trill (F4) was flat in context and, in Halvorsen’s words, dead in color.

Halvorsen used several techniques for establishing a resonant sound and improving the intonation of the trill. They first worked on finding the most resonance on
a given note by bending the pitch above and below while playing at a loud dynamic.

Halvorsen instructed the student to listen to the hall for a sound that surrounded him. Once they had found a resonant sound, Halvorsen asked the student to take note of the space in his oral cavity and throat. The student then worked to maintain that space while bringing the pitch back in tune and down to a softer dynamic.

Halvorsen incorporated a vocalizing technique in a similar exercise. He instructed the student to find the pitch where his voice was the most resonant. There was no concern as to vocal ability, and Halvorsen modeled with his own voice. Once the student had located that pitch, he took note of the space and position of his oral cavity and throat. By incorporating the same physical sensation into his playing, the student was able to achieve a larger, more resonant sound.

Focusing on the pacing and intonation within a trill may seem like micromanagement; however, the concepts Halvorsen used to improve those elements are ideas fundamental to his approach to playing the bassoon.

**Vibrato and Energy**

Energy is also a mainstay in Halvorsen’s vocabulary. He uses it to describe a forward and intensifying quality in the sound that is related to the treatment of vibrato, “The vibrato should always add something to the sound. It should be better sound coming out from the instrument. You’re not taking away from the energy when you’re vibrating, you’re just adding.” He spoke further about vibrato in our one-on-one conversation.
Audun Halvorsen. I think of it as breath. It’s not the jaw or anything; it’s just the air that’s stronger.

Kerry Haberkern. So if someone is having a problem would you start with…?

Audun Halvorsen. I would start with a breath builder\(^{12}\) and do some exercises with that and then apply it to the bassoon. I always think of vibrato, as the vibrato itself is better quality in the sound so it’s not like just dipping or pointing intonation. It’s the sound that from the base has to be very good and then you add something more that’s even more projective.

Kerry Haberkern. Do you want more and less dynamic or up and down [pitch variation]?

Audun Halvorsen. It is more and less dynamic… but I think of more and less as projection because I guess if you analyze it in a machine it might be both intonation and dynamic and projection, everything.

Kerry Haberkern. But you are starting from the idea of [variation in volume]…?

Audun Halvorsen. I think of it as a singer. I’m very concerned about resonance in the room then it makes sense to think of this like this.

Whether one conceptualizes vibrato as a fluctuation in pitch or volume varies from person to person. As Halvorsen observes, the end result is likely a combination of the two despite how one imagines or teaches the technique. Teaching using a breath builder is in keeping with his idea of vibrato as variation in volume or projection.

Energy and vibrato were the primary areas of concern while Halvorsen coached the bassoon solo in Rimsky-Korsakov’s *Sheherazade*.

\(^{12}\) Exercise equipment for lungs and diaphragm muscles
The student was putting a break at the end of the first measure of the bassoon solo and at the end of the parallel note in the second measure (E4). Halvorsen’s first objective was to have the student add vibrato to both of these notes and have them lead to the next gesture. The student added vibrato, but continued to release the tension at the end of both notes. While Halvorsen did not object to the break in sound, it was the release of tension that he continued to press. Adding vibrato had the unintended effect of relaxing the sound instead of energizing it. Halvorsen modeled the energy and intensity so that the student could mirror. Ultimately, they were able to improve the excerpt by examining the role of vibrato as well as the execution.
Conclusions

My research was unable to answer why many prominent bassoon players have Scandinavian roots. The answer to whether there are pedagogical models unique to the area that contribute to that paradigm, appears to be no. The teaching I observed was not unlike excellent teaching in any number of places. Teaching in Malmö and Copenhagen borrows heavily from German practices and aesthetics. Unique aspects of teaching and playing in Scandinavia are not dissimilar or unusual enough to have created a disproportionate number of successful bassoonists.

Student, Caisa Adamek notes, “Swedish bassoon is really influenced by the Germans’ playing. I think it’s quite similar the way you play in Sweden as the way you play in Norway and in Denmark because everything has gotten influenced by the German style and a lot of teachers have studied in Germany also.”

Further Research

What I found was that my questions cannot be answered without a complete understanding of each country’s arts policies, private funding, government funding, and education policies. Differences from nation to nation are striking and complex. Further research should consider individual countries instead of regions because of the likely influence of government programs and policies. In particular, further research is needed.
in Norway, as the majority of noted Scandinavian bassoonists are Norwegian.

My research identifies different methods of projection, which contribute to different sound profiles. Additional quantifiable research should be done to establish which sound profiles are better perceived by an audience, which produce the most volume, which produce the most pronounced overtones, and how volume, overtones, and perception relate to one another. My research does not make judgments about effectiveness of sound profiles, but acoustic research may be able to make these determinations.

Differing expectations are the crux of different playing styles. However, many conductors conduct multiple orchestras worldwide and maintain those ensembles’ unique qualities. How and why conductors may have different expectations for different orchestras is worth investigation. Observational research as well as interviews are needed to better understand the preferences from the other side of the podium.

Observations

There is a misconception among some American musicians that European players can be musically irresponsible, that they may make musical choices based on personal whims instead of respect for the composer or time period. My experience with bassoonists in Malmö and Copenhagen did not support that assumption. All of the musicians were well informed about the music they were performing. The liberties they took were conceived within the context of their own research and understanding of the music.
The students I observed in Malmö and Copenhagen are similar to the students I interact with in the United States. They are hard working and passionate about their craft. However, they differ in one significant way. These students are not being swallowed by debt, nor are they frightened about studying a lost art that may never pay the bills. Without those looming threats, they are free to be more creative and expressive. All of the musicians I spent time with spoke at length about musical expression. Amundsen muses, “I’d rather hear someone speaking with their instrument than doing it correctly.”

As American orchestras continue to suffer hardship and jobs become scarcer, American bassoonists may seek to become more marketable abroad. Cultivating a more German or global playing style could create more options in terms of performing careers. Certainly a flexibility of sound concept would allow for the most job opportunities. The question arises; can one be versatile enough to work in both arenas?

Constantin Barcov answers that question, “I’ll show you the differences when I play. I can play American and I can play European. I’m not being sarcastic about it. I really can do both because I have done both.”
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Appendix A: IRB Exemption

Office of Research
Office of Responsible Research Practices

Protocol Title: AN OBSERVATIONAL STUDY OF SWEDISH BASSOON PEDAGOGY
Protocol Number: 2013E0211
Principal Investigator: Karen Pierson
Date of Determination: 04/29/2013
Qualifying Category: 02
Attachments: None

Dear Investigators,
The Office of Responsible Research Practices has determined the above referenced project exempt from IRB review.

Please note the following:

- Retain a copy of this correspondence for your records.
- Only the OSU staff and students named on the application are approved as OSU investigators and/or key personnel for this study.
- No changes may be made to exempt research (e.g., personnel, recruitment procedures, advertisements,
instruments, etc.). If changes are need, a new application for exemption must be submitted for review and approval prior to implementing the changes.

- Per university requirements, all research-related records (e.g., application materials, letters of support, signed consent forms, etc.) must be retained and available for audit for a period of at least three years after the research has ended.
- It is the responsibility of the investigators to promptly report events that may represent unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

This determination is issued under The Ohio State University’s OHRP Federalwide Assurance #00006378. All forms and procedures can be found on the ORRP website: www.orrp.osu.edu. Please feel free to contact the Office of Responsible Research Practices with any questions or concerns.

**Cheri Pettay**

Quality Improvement Specialist | Regulatory & Exempt Determinations  
Office of Responsible Research Practices | The Ohio State University  
**T:** 614.688.0389  **F:** 614.688.0366  **E:** pettey.6@osu.edu  **W:** www.orrp.osu.edu
Appendix B: Consent Forms

The Ohio State University Consent to Participate in Research

Study Title:
An Observational Study of Swedish Pedagogy

Researcher:
Kerry Haberkern

This is a consent form for research participation. It contains important information about this study and what to expect if you decide to participate.

Your participation is voluntary.
Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to ask questions before making your decision whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and will receive a copy of the form.

Purpose:
We hope to discover pedagogical constructs unique to Sweden as well as some shared by other countries. An observational account of the pedagogical constructs at use in Sweden will generate greater international awareness of differing pedagogy.

Procedures/Tasks:
-Observe and record regular lessons. (1 hour)
-Group discussion among bassoon students. This will be a group discussion about personal experiences while studying bassoon in Sweden. Ms. Haberkern will facilitate discussion with guiding question. (Approximately 45 minutes)
-Individual interview. (Approximately 30 minutes)

All lessons will be video recorded, while interview and discussion will only be audio recorded.
Duration:
Total of 2-3 hours
You may leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision will not affect your future relationship with The Ohio State University.

Risks and Benefits:
Risks may include feeling embarrassed about performing poorly in a lesson, or feeling unknowledgeable about a discussion topic. While these are foreseeable possibilities the severity and consequences are minimal. If you give consent to have a lesson or interview recorded and later decide you do not want it to be used, that is your right and the recording will be destroyed.

Confidentiality:
Your recorded image may be used as a part of research and/or publication. However, you may ask that recordings not be used at any point and all recordings will be destroyed.

There may be circumstances where this information must be released. For example, personal information regarding your participation in this study may be disclosed if required by state law. Also, your records may be reviewed by the following groups (as applicable to the research):

- Office for Human Research Protections or other federal, state, or international regulatory agencies;
- The Ohio State University Institutional Review Board or Office of Responsible Research Practices;
- The sponsor, if any, or agency (including the Food and Drug Administration for FDA-regulated research) supporting the study.

Incentives:
There are no incentives to participate

Participant Rights:
You may refuse to participate in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you choose to participate in the study, you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. By signing this form, you do not give up any personal legal rights you may have as a participant in this study.
Contacts and Questions:
For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study, or you feel you have been harmed as a result of study participation, you may contact: Professor Karen Pierson pierson.93@osu.edu, Kerry Haberkern haberkern.4@osu.edu.
For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251.
Signing the consent form

I have read (or someone has read to me) this form and I am aware that I am being asked to participate in a research study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

I am not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. I will be given a copy of this form.

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**Investigator/Research Staff**

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Appendix C: Transcripts

Roundtable Discussion

On Technique

Kerry Haberkern. …How often and what sort of things are you practicing on a day to day basis?

Caisa Adamek. I usually warm up with scales.

Kerry Haberkern. Do you play the scales from memory or do you work from Milde or something like that?

Caisa Adamek. Before I used Oubradous, but now I do it from memory.

Kerry Haberkern. Oubradous, okay. Is it just that a different teacher prefers a different thing?

Caisa Adamek. My old teacher used Oubradous and now, because on the exams you are playing scales from memory so I’m trying to…to do it from memory.

Kerry Haberkern. …I like Oubradous but were you doing the full range because it only goes from like tonic and a little bit. Were you extending it so that it did the whole thing [range]?

Caisa Adamek. With my told teacher I only did what was printed, but now I try to extend.

Kerry Haberkern. Yeah. So do you start on the home [tonic] and then go all the way up to high, like maybe E or something and then all the way down to B-flat or B and then back up to the home [tonic]…?

Caisa Adamek. It depends…yeah. Like if I would do it on an exam I think I would do it like two octaves and up to the fifth, two octaves above and then one down.
Edgars Reimanis. But yeah, then there are many different scales. I’m trying to play it different ways. Not only just scales from the beginning to the end but just for example going up one octave starting from B-flat major going [sings] and like that, every scale. B flat, B natural, C, C-flat, and then you start playing a little bit faster, then to wake up the tongue staccato things, and tenuto things, and then when you go a bit through the first exercise then one is legato, one tenuto from B-flat first [sings] and then B natural [sings]. One legato, one tenuto, one legato, one tenuto and then you it depends on how fast you can play and then you go faster and faster and faster so that it how I wake up…

Kerry Haberkern. What etude books?

Caisa Adamek. Milde.

Caisa Adamek. Scales and chords.

Kerry Haberkern. Okay.

Caisa Adamek. But right now it’s mostly pieces for the exam and concerts.

Kerry Haberkern. So what about etudes that you did during the year? Are they mainly Milde or other etudes?

Edgars Reimanis. I haven’t done so many etudes this year.

Kerry Haberkern. And so how much are you trying to practice? If you had a really good day and you did everything you wanted how many hours? I know sometimes it doesn’t happen but if you had a good day and did everything you planned?

Caisa Adamek. Maybe four or five.
On Venting

KERRY HABERKERN. ... How do you use these keys, the vent keys?

CAISA ADAMEK. I just push them really quickly to get the right octave.

CAISA ADAMEK. Yeah, when I started to learn bassoon I had to push them down all the time and the next teacher I had he said that no, you just need to…

KERRY HABERKERN. Just tap.

CAISA ADAMEK. Tap.

KERRY HABERKERN. And only in legato or only with slurring or with articulation?

CAISA ADAMEK. I almost always tap.

…

KERRY HABERKERN. And so we do the A key for A and then the C key for B-flat, B, and C.

CAISA ADAMEK. Same. Same, same.

On Recital and Juries

KERRY HABERKERN. And do you have to give solo recitals?

CAISA ADAMEK. Like with only me in it?

KERRY HABERKERN. Yeah, or like with you and piano?

CAISA ADAMEK. Yeah. That’s the last year of your bachelor and the last year of your master’s you do solos.

LAURA CLEWER. And we have beiting like every half year.

CAISA ADAMEK. Yeah, but that’s not just me playing in concert. That’s the final exam.

LAURA CLEWER. Oh, yeah, yeah.

KERRY HABERKERN. So beiting is like you’ll play one piece, one solo?

CAISA ADAMEK. One piece and some orchestra studies and scales.

KERRY HABERKERN. So it’s not a solo recital, it’s just an exam.
CAISA ADAMEK. Yeah.

KERRY HABERKERN. And is there an audience for that.

CAISA ADAMEK. It’s a jury with the woodwind teachers.

…

KERRY HABERKERN. …Okay, and then what pieces are you working on? Solo pieces for beting?

EDGARS REIMANIS. You mean exactly which pieces?

KERRY HABERKERN. Yeah, yeah.

EDGARS REIMANIS. Now I will play Mozart concerto.

KERRY HABERKERN. With piano?

EDGARS REIMANIS. Yeah.

KERRY HABERKERN. The whole thing or just movement one and two?

EDGARS REIMANIS. I don’t know actually. Now I am practicing all of it because we haven’t chosen the concert.

KERRY HABERKERN. Okay.

EDGARS REIMANIS. So, all of it.

KERRY HABERKERN. How long is beting? Twenty minutes, half an hour?

CAISA ADAMEK. Twenty or so.

On Early Education

KERRY HABERKERN. … Laura, what etude books did you start studying with?

LAURA CLEWER. I started studying with something like Let’s Learn, Let’s Play Bassoon. No, play…

CAISA ADAMEK. Learn As You Play.

…

LAURA CLEWER. That’s the book that I started with.
KERRY HABERKERN. You know it, Caisa? Is it the one you also used?

CAISA ADAMEK. No, but when I studied music pedagogy I got to know some beginner’s books.

LAURA CLEWER. That was like the book that I started with, but then my teachers gave me some etudes or some other books. I don’t actually know where the most of them were from, but there was a lot of Weissenborn as well.

KERRY HABERKERN. Okay, yeah.

LAURA CLEWER. Yeah, but the book was where were all the fingerings and how to start, it was that as well.

KERRY HABERKERN. And [Caisa] how old were you? I think you told me before.

LAURA CLEWER. I was 12 years.

KERRY HABERKERN. And you started on saxophone?

CAISA ADAMEK. Yeah, and I started on saxophone and started…

KERRY HABERKERN. But you were young, 7, right?

CAISA ADAMEK. Yeah, exactly, and then when I was 14 I started the bassoon.

KERRY HABERKERN. Now when you started saxophone, did you start in a school band program or… No, that’s very young.

CAISA ADAMEK. I started to like… We were three students that played at the same time with a teacher and then like when I had played for maybe four or five months I started in an orchestra in the music school.

KERRY HABERKERN. With strings or with only winds?

CAISA ADAMEK. No, only winds and we played from Mussecomo. It’s a Swedish wind book that was used a lot in the 90’s.

…

KERRY HABERKERN. Okay. And so it’s something that your parents decided that you’d like to do?

CAISA ADAMEK. Yeah.
KERRY HABERKERN. Not through the school or…?

CAISA ADAMEK. When I was in first grade in school the wind band playing, and then I was like “Oh, I want to play flute!”

KERRY HABERKERN. Yeah, like all little girls want to play the flute, right?

CAISA ADAMEK. Yeah, but my parents knew the saxophone teacher and he taught saxophone and clarinet so I got to come home to try and he was like “Oh, you’re a natural on the saxophone. You have to play saxophone,” so I started playing saxophone.

…

KERRY HABERKERN. I see, I see. Did you [Laura] start in your school, like with the band program in your school or no?

LAURA CLEWER. No. In Finland we have a really, really good music school system. We have the normal schools, the everyday schools…

KERRY HABERKERN. Math and…

LAURA CLEWER. Yeah, stuff like that, but then we have the hobby music schools and it’s different.

KERRY HABERKERN. What’s it called? In Finnish.

LAURA CLEWER. Musiikkiopisto.

…

LAURA CLEWER. Musiikkiopisto and that’s the system in Finland. I think it’s really good.

KERRY HABERKERN. Does everyone do it or is it just if your parents and you have an interest?

LAURA CLEWER. It’s if your parents have an interest but it’s not so expensive. It’s open for everyone so that’s the place. If the parents want their children to start to play something they put them in the music school because in normal school we have music lessons, but they are just like one lesson a week or something like that, but in the normal school you can’t have [private] lessons. We have some special music schools, like normal schools, but they have the specializing in music and they are the different thing but normally it goes like the children study in normal school, and then if they want to do hobby music they have the different music schools and those schools you can start. They
have music lessons for really, really small children like then we were just clapping hands and singing songs and then later on you can start playing some instruments and then there comes some theory and it’s a really, really good system. So when I started I actually took some piano lessons before. I was born in a really, really small village so we didn’t have any music things there but there was church, the cantor, the church player and he taught me piano, the basic things, but then I decided to try to get into music school.

KERRY HABERKERN. Like a music high school or a college?

LAURA CLEWER. No, this Musiikkiopisto, like the hobby music school.

KERRY HABERKERN. Okay, yeah, got it. Yeah.

LAURA CLEWER. And then I didn’t get in with piano but our family friend said that maybe I should choose some orchestra instrument or something not so common, not so familiar of an instrument so it’s easier to get in if I just want to do music like just for a hobby. Then I listened to different kinds of instruments and I was interested in bassoon and then I got in with bassoon to that school. It was like I was in normal high school but then in the evenings during the week I would have one lesson with bassoon teacher, one lesson with theory, and one evening with orchestra.

KERRY HABERKERN. Okay, yeah.

CAISA ADAMEK. That’s quite similar to the Swedish system but then you have your music lessons at the music school like instrumental lessons and then you play orchestra but if you want to have theory it’s usually in high school.

LAURA CLEWER. Ah, because we really have to do theory.

CAISA ADAMEK. No, it’s like if you’re good at it and you have applied for a special program at the music school, then you can get into theory or else it’s in high school, or gymnasiet.

KERRY HABERKERN. So do you go to gymnasiet that’s music focused, arts focused, or is it just regular?

CAISA ADAMEK. I went to a really special music gymnasiet like with a special program for classical music.

KERRY HABERKERN. Okay, yeah, and then what age does that start?

CAISA ADAMEK. When you have finished 9th grade you start at gymnasiet and I was…
KERRY HABERKERN. Do you have to audition?

CAISA ADAMEK. Yeah, it was auditioned.

…

CAISA ADAMEK. I think you are choosing different programs when you are going to gymnasiot so you can choose to study music or you can start to study natural sciences or anything but then you have like really, really special music programs or really, really special sports programs just for specially interested people.

…

KERRY HABERKERN. Have you worked with the little tiny bassoons?

LAURA CLEWER. Not so much. I have seen them and I have tried them but I haven’t really worked with them.

KERRY HABERKERN. Do you think that it would be successful to start someone really young on these? We don’t do it at home.

CAISA ADAMEK. I had a student who I think started when he was 8 and he started with quint bassoon and then when he was 10 he had to move up to a large because then he was too big for the little bassoon and I think it worked fine. The only thing was that the week after he changed he was like “Oh, this is so hard; it’s so big!”

KERRY HABERKERN. Was this your student?

CAISA ADAMEK. Yeah, it was my student.

KERRY HABERKERN. And you started him on the quint bassoon?

CAISA ADAMEK. Yeah. At my old school when we were in the music teaching program we had practicing students so I had two bassoon students and two saxophone students.

KERRY HABERKERN. Okay.

CAISA ADAMEK. And I also taught two hours a week at the music school like woodwind things for eight year olds, so then they had five times to try woodwind instruments. I think it was really good because when I taught at the music school I had a little quint bassoon because then I could show them that this is a bassoon and you can try to play it and it’s not really huge so they know that the instrument exists and I think that’s important.
KERRY HABERKERN. So is it more common here to start on something different like clarinet or saxophone and then change?

CAISA ADAMEK. Yeah, I think so.

On Goals

KERRY HABERKERN. …If you could imagine that you finish here and you can get whatever job you want, whatever you were to try you would be successful, right? What would it be? What’s your ultimate goal?

CAISA ADAMEK. I would like to have a job in an orchestra like a symphony orchestra.

KERRY HABERKERN. Like solo [principal] bassoon?

CAISA ADAMEK. That doesn’t matter.

KERRY HABERKERN. That doesn’t matter to you.

CAISA ADAMEK. I think it’s as fun to play first in an orchestra as I think it is to play contra so it really doesn’t matter.

KERRY HABERKERN. Sure.

CAISA ADAMEK. But I’m not sure if I want to play in an opera house or if I want to play in just an orchestra.

KERRY HABERKERN. I see.

CAISA ADAMEK. As long as I get a job in an orchestra, I’m glad.

KERRY HABERKERN. Yeah, okay. Edgars, for you, what would your ultimate dream…?

EDGARS REIMANIS. After studies?

KERRY HABERKERN. Yeah.

EDGARS REIMANIS. Also probably a job in the orchestra.

KERRY HABERKERN. Orchestra. And for you?

LAURA CLEWER. I really would like to play in orchestra as well, but I have noticed that I really need a lot of different stuff around me and I really would like to teach as well.

KERRY HABERKERN. Teach privately or…?
LAURA CLEWER. In the music school like we have in Finland, in the system there. It’s like private lessons.

On Perceptions

KERRY HABERKERN. …Edgars, so you’re coming from outside of Scandinavia. Is there something that you… Like if you had to describe to people at home bassoon in Scandinavia, do you have in your mind ideas about it, like how it seems? The sound, the studies, the style, reeds…

EDGARS REIMANIS. I don’t know. Yeah, probably. There are many differences. In Latvia we kind of have just a few bassoonists and it’s like one of them has studied in Germany… and that is one way of playing and the other way of playing, which was my first bassoon teacher, he was working many, many years in the Moscow Philharmonic and it’s a totally different sound and a different style and those are two totally different things.

KERRY HABERKERN. So what does it sound like to you here? Does it sound very German?

EDGARS REIMANIS. It sounds more German, yeah.

…

KERRY HABERKERN. If you [Caisa] had to describe Swedish bassoon, the sound, the style, what’s it like, do you have anything that you are “Yeah, definitely this is really the way it is here”?

CAISA ADAMEK. I don’t know really. I think Swedish bassoon is like really influenced by the German’s playing and I think it’s quite similar the way you play in Sweden as the way you play in Norway and in Denmark because everything has gotten influenced by the German style and a lot of teachers have studied in Germany also.

KERRY HABERKERN. If you could go anywhere and study where would you go? Would you go to Germany?

CAISA ADAMEK. I think I would go to Germany.

KERRY HABERKERN. And who would you study with?

CAISA ADAMEK. I don’t know. I think I would want to try out teachers first before…

KERRY HABERKERN. So [Laura] coming from Finland do you find some things different or do you feel like there’s a Scandinavian style, not just…
LAURA CLEWER. I feel like it is depends… Like it’s about your own teacher and I think like nowadays in Finland as well almost all of the best teachers in Finland have studied abroad… I feel that all the Scandinavians they have learned the things in Germany and then they made their own style and it depends on the professor you have.

KERRY HABERKERN. Yeah.

LAURA CLEWER. But like we used to have one really big bassoon name in Finland and he was the man who taught at Sibelius Academy because maybe 40 years ago the bassoon was really, really seldom in Finland and so he raised all the bassoonists in Finland but nowadays I think all the professionals have studied abroad as well so now they know more and they know more about European style and stuff like that.

KERRY HABERKERN. Now tell me what your opinions are of American bassoon playing. You won’t hurt my feelings. I know it’s very different. It’s much lighter. We think of it as more focused, but I mean it’s different.

CAISA ADAMEK. I think that most American woodwind players, they are like really good in technical parts and stuff but they don’t focus as much in sound as we do in Scandinavia

KERRY HABERKERN. Okay.

CAISA ADAMEK. But that’s just how...

LAURA CLEWER. Or I think they just have a little bit different idea about the sound.

KERRY HABERKERN. About the sound.

CAISA ADAMEK. But when I met exchange students from America they are always saying “Oh, you have such good sound here,” so.

KERRY HABERKERN. And then of course we’re not as focused on solo and competition and so we don’t stand very much. It’s actually very strange to me that you will stand to play excerpts, like orchestral excerpts. It seems really strange because I think “But in the orchestra you won’t stand,” you know? That’s very different.

LAURA CLEWER. For me, actually, I always practice almost only standing. I have sometimes like for me it was so different to stand or sit so beforehand I practiced quite a lot the orchestra things with sitting but now I don’t feel the difference so that’s why I always stand. If I’m really, really tired or if I just want to I’m always almost done with the practicing and I’m like no, I really need to read some orchestra parts or something
then I’m okay, now I’m sitting, just to read that through but normally when I’m practicing I’m always standing.

On Standing

KERRY HABERKERN. … Do you all wear a harness, some kind of harness to play in the orchestra, or do any of you wear the seat strap?

CAISA ADAMEK. Sometimes I use both.

KERRY HABERKERN. But never only the seat strap?

CAISA ADAMEK. I used to only the seat strap but then when I started to use that I noticed that it’s too heavy for my left hand if I had only the seat strap.

KERRY HABERKERN. … I mean you always, Edgars, you only use the harness.

EDGARS REIMANIS. Yeah.

KERRY HABERKERN. It seems like it’s the most common here to just use the harness. I think it’s very American to use the seat strap. At least that’s what I’m finding.

CAISA ADAMEK. [Student name] used only a seat strap when he was here. He was a French exchange student.

KERRY HABERKERN. French, okay.

LAURA CLEWER. But I think quite many here and in Finland use as well the seat strap.

KERRY HABERKERN. To use both? That makes sense.

On Reed Making

KERRY HABERKERN. … So reed making. How old were you when you started doing reed making?

LAURA CLEWER. I was really old, because when I started to play bassoon I was so excited like “Yay! It’s so nice! I can make reeds and that’s cool!” but then my teacher had so many students that he never taught me to make reeds and he always gave me reeds so we never had any reed workshops. I was in some summer camp the first time I tried to make reeds. I think that I was 16 years old but I started to make reeds by myself when I was 19.

KERRY HABERKERN. … How old were you Caisa when you started?
CAISA ADAMEK. It was when I started college, but I made some bad reed so I was like “Oh, no, I won’t make more because they sound so bad.” It’s just now that I’ve started to be able to play on my own reeds.

KERRY HABERKERN. Edgars?

EDGARS REIMANIS. When I came here actually, last year.
Annika Amundsen

On Early Training

KERRY HABERKERN. So when did you start to play the bassoon?

ANNIKA AMUNDESEN. 17, it was very late.

KERRY HABERKERN. Were you playing something else?

ANNIKA AMUNDESEN. Saxophone.

…

ANNIKA AMUNDESEN. I was in this improvisation course in jazz and at the same time the youth symphony orchestra was practicing in the same school and they did not have any bassoons in the orchestra and then the conductor came into our room and kindly asked, “We don’t have any bassoons and we really miss the bassoon part, could one of your saxophonists just come and play the bassoon part with your saxophone because we need it?”

On Instruments

KERRY HABERKERN. Who was the first maker of your first bassoon? My first bassoon was a Kohlert.

ANNIKA AMUNDESEN. What was it? I think I had an Adler.

KERRY HABERKERN. Okay. I think somebody else’s… oh, Sebastian, his first instrument was also an Adler.

ANNIKA AMUNDESEN. Because at that time I just bought my Selmer Action, the best saxophone you can have at that time. I thought with this Adler it was difficult to tune and then I thought “hmm.” Like in everything you do, you cannot drive fast without a fast car and you cannot win with your horse if you have a bad horse.

KERRY HABERKERN. It’s very true.

ANNIKA AMUNDESEN. You can’t even cut hair if your scissors are dull, you know. I kindly asked my father to loan me 50,000 kr and he did and I paid it back and then I bought my first Moosmann, so that was better. I just felt that when you are playing there are these walls in many bassoons. You are playing and then you can play more but the bassoon cannot. There’s the limit in the bassoons so… Yeah, so I got my first Heckel in 92.

KERRY HABERKERN. 92, okay. What was that? What series?
ANNIKA AMUNDSEN. Oh, God, what series was it? Would it be 14, maybe? It was not good. At that time I thought that all the Heckels were good but then I realized they are not.

KERRY HABERKERN. It’s really true.

ANNIKA AMUNDSEN. And I struggled for many years.

On Teaching

Annika teaches her students a lesson in how to clean their instruments and the importance of always keeping the bassoon in a good shape. She also teaches some basic repair. At this point of our interview, Annika was cleaning her own instrument.

KERRY HABERKERN. … So this is part of you want, your students to come with a clean instrument to lessons?

ANNIKA AMUNDSEN. Yeah. Yeah, I want it, and to be on time and prepared.

KERRY HABERKERN. And what if they don’t?

ANNIKA AMUNDSEN. I think it is working very well. Students should learn how to keep their instruments in good shape, come on time for lessons, and be well prepared. When I arrived as a teacher, there were some students that did not really work. I’m quite new in the school. I haven’t worked for many years and it takes time to build a bassoon class…

KERRY HABERKERN. Yeah, absolutely.

ANNIKA AMUNDSEN. And it also takes time for people to know what it is expected and some things I take with me from Germany and in Germany it’s very strict.

KERRY HABERKERN. Where did you study in Germany?

ANNIKA AMUNDSEN. Mannheim.

KERRY HABERKERN. Okay.

…

ANNIKA AMUNDSEN. The difference, as I see it, between Germany and Sweden is that the relationship between teacher and student is different. That is good and can be bad, depends on the teacher and the student.

…

ANNIKA AMUNDSEN. And in Sweden we talk a lot and we’re very equal, teachers and students, and that is not in Germany. You go to your lessons and everything should work and you have to practice your things and otherwise you go out or you say you are sick or something. You just do
what you have to do, you know.

**KERRY HABERKERN.** I see.

...  

**ANNIKA AMUNDESEN.** But some things are good. Being on time, being prepared, you have to be that way when you work. This is your work, your professional work; take care of it. It's no idea to try to play *Sacre* on a reed that does not work because then I can't tell know how much you can play because the notes will not come. It's easy you know, anyway to choose with your reeds as if it is a concert in the lesson, because then I know what you can do.

**KERRY HABERKERN.** So what if someone comes to a lesson not prepared or the instrument looks really dirty or what if it doesn’t...

**ANNIKA AMUNDESEN.** Yeah, but they don’t.

...  

**ANNIKA AMUNDESEN.** …For how long should you play a piece that was my question, for how long do you play a piece before you give a concert? When you are a student.

**KERRY HABERKERN.** I suppose it depends on the piece really.

**ANNIKA AMUNDESEN.** It depends on the piece and it depends on the bassoonist.

**KERRY HABERKERN.** Yes.

**ANNIKA AMUNDESEN.** But also I want to have a little bit more tempo [learning pieces more quickly].

**KERRY HABERKERN.** Okay.

**ANNIKA AMUNDESEN.** Yeah, because things will come back, and also to work with the nerves, and to work with playing concerts. So we had a new plan for this year so they started in January with this piece they [wanted to play] and they played it for four weeks and then a new program and they had concerts in the middle of the season and then again this Mozart, Berwald, and Saint-Saëns.

**KERRY HABERKERN.** Oh, yeah. Actually, I think that’s a really good idea.

**ANNIKA AMUNDESEN.** Just to put it down for a while and then come back to it again. It will be easier when it’s the second time.

...  

**KERRY HABERKERN.** So when students come to audition for you…
ANNIKA AMUNDSEN. Auditions? Yeah, okay.

KERRY HABERKERN. To come to the school. What do you listen for? How you decide whether someone gets into the school or doesn’t get into the school?

ANNIKA AMUNDSEN. The jury listens to their musicality, technique, and sound. We also have a short interview. One can hear how much work it is. It’s difficult. You sort of have a feeling. If it’s not in tune, and it’s not rhythmic, and you are blowing like that... And actually, in the school there are not many bassoonists. What I’m thinking is that they should be able to play in the orchestra when they come, and that is in the first week they are playing in the orchestra and if you have a lot of issues or problems then I feel, “No, that won’t work.”

…

KERRY HABERKERN. So this upcoming exam [jury] is with you and other faculty members?

ANNIKA AMUNDSEN. Yeah, all the woodwind teachers are in the exam.

KERRY HABERKERN. Is it very critical or does it tend to be rather friendly?

ANNIKA AMUNDSEN. The exams for the students are friendly. I think it should be! It is important they have a good feeling when playing exams, concerts, and auditions.

KERRY HABERKERN. I think so.

ANNIKA AMUNDSEN. When listening to all woodwind players in Academy, it is important to remember how they are progressing. I write everything down and can check what I thought last exam.

KERRY HABERKERN. And then this [jury] is it a grade? Do they get a percentage grade or just a pass/fail or…?

ANNIKA AMUNDSEN. A grade and the chance if you’re allowed to continue in the school. But I’m not mean to my students. I tell them that it should be fun, doing the [jury]. You should feel if I know there is a difficulty with one scale or whatever, “Why should I choose that?” I want them to have a good experience.

…

KERRY HABERKERN. Let me ask you about instruments. Does the school own any instruments, any bassoons?

ANNIKA AMUNDSEN. Just recently I suggested that I would like to buy bassoons and they cannot buy Heckels, but I don’t know. There is so many [makers]… Yamaha? It is too expensive to buy Heckels, but we (me and Henrik Blixt) are looking for other instruments. I like Yamaha and Rudolf Walter.
KERRY HABERKERN. Yamaha, they’re very good.

ANNIKA AMUNDESEN. And I would like to have three good bassoons for students. The administration had this idea that the student who plays best should get the instrument and no, the one who plays best maybe does not need it but the one who has a bad instrument really needs it, and then the one with sort of a quite good instrument has to be just so good that you can earn a lot of money and buy yourself a better instrument. I don’t know when it will come but I have made contact with someone because if we buy three bassoons we maybe can pay less or something.

…

KERRY HABERKERN. Have you taught with the little bassoon, the little quint bassoon at all?

ANNIKA AMUNDESEN. No, but one my very best friends is working in Germany with that.

Technique

KERRY HABERKERN. …So with your students, during the year do you also do etudes as well as pieces? Like Milde or Piard or… Which books do they work from?

ANNIKA AMUNDESEN. Yes, the students are playing etudes. The etudes depend on the students. Technique practicing from “Gammes et Arpeges” by Marcel Moyse (written for flute), “One way of starting your day” by Ole K Dahl. I mostly use Milde, Pivonka, and Robert Rønnes etudes. Giampieri has good etudes for drills. From the Clarinet repertoire I have very nice staccato etudes, good to work with tenor key in low register as well. For playing small pieces by heart I use, among others, Paganini etudes.

Reeds

KERRY HABERKERN. …Most of [your students] seem like they’re making their own reeds or trying to make their own reeds. There’s quite a lot of very good equipment in the reed room. That’s really nice.

ANNIKA AMUNDESEN. Yeah, I ordered a lot when I started.

KERRY HABERKERN. And the school was happy to pay for it?

ANNIKA AMUNDESEN. Not that happy. When they asked me if I wanted to start I was thinking and then I said that I need this and I need… I actually did reeds again this week but you (the students) should meet somebody that is very good at it, doing it all the time and that I cannot give because I’m not doing the reed from the beginning all the time and the students need that. I think it’s minimum once a year [reed making master class] but I can see some of them even Caisa that always bought [reeds] before is starting to make her own after [the master classes] so that’s good. I’m wondering which one I should invite for next year.

KERRY HABERKERN. I think that’s really good. Even if you choose to order, to buy reeds, I think
it’s still important that you can make adjustments, you know?

ANNIKA AMUNDESEN. But you have to do that for many years. I didn’t learn that when I studied in school. It took a long time before and then you have some reeds and you have bought them yourself that are quite expensive. You do not want to try it out on them…

Perceptions

ANNIKA AMUNDESEN. When you say that you are always sitting then it can be to produce the air enough and that means that you never will have the feeling to blow out the bassoon, really, but then I also think that some years ago that this list they were changing all the basson in Paris, in France to Heckel and I was writing on the list “Keep the basson,” (french bassoon) because I do think it’s okay to sound different and I think it’s interesting that we meet and that we have different sounds. I think that’s great and I do not think, “Oh God, that is bad.” No, I’m not thinking like that. I think it’s interesting.

History

ANNIKA AMUNDESEN. … but I think there were fewer bassoonist for many years in Sweden, in Scandinavia and in Europe and they were screening England for bassoonists because there were fewer there as well. Yeah, I think it’s a little bit better and in Sweden about 10 years ago they changed the music school. They took away all music schools in Sweden and all the small quintets. There were a lot of ensembles working full time in Sweden and their work was to play for kindergarten and schools and making concerts in the small village and they took it away. Too expensive, they said, and they put money for the symphony orchestra and then suddenly there were no music schools and they changed the name to kulturskolan, School of Culture school and there’s not classical ballet anymore that much. It’s this jazz dance and you can go to hip-hop. I think that’s in this modern time to go away a bit, but anyway you have to be careful about the classical school, because that takes many, many years to learn. Yeah and that’s why where some live there are no bassoons and no oboes anymore in Sweden and of course there’s no teacher in the country side.

On Learning Methods

ANNIKA AMUNDESEN. Do you know learning methods?

KERRY HABERKERN. No. Tell me about them.

ANNIKA AMUNDESEN. … If you have a problem with something, let’s say your staccato and then I tell you, “Think of your tongue like this,” then you think of your tongue and your staccato will never be free, you know? So if we do like this [tapping] and then think of your foot as you’re doing it do you feel how much harder it is? Then if we just turn and look at the yellow bus then it goes easier because then we are free so how to learn to go into the problems and not the issues, so I took a lot of classes. I find that very interesting and of course in the traditional bassoon playing what I have learned is to do like that, think of that finger and you think of that finger and it will
always be stuck until you sort of accept it and you have learned it so it’s different steps

KERRY HABERKERN. And so how is it different? Let’s take Beethoven 4th. How do you teach to learn it?

ANNIKA AMUNDESEN. Yeah, that’s interesting because I think that different students learn in different ways and so many things… because I had this Mannheim method. We played everything 5 notes, stop. The same again but double tempo. Over and over again. In etudes: starting on the first note, playing four notes and end on the fifth note. Second time you start on the second sixteenth, playing four notes (ending on fifth note) half tempo, break, and then double tempo. The second step is to play 8 sixteenth ending on the ninth note. Half tempo and then double tempo. Always with a quarter break in between.

KERRY HABERKERN. And just up little tiny bits. Okay.

ANNIKA AMUNDESEN. In Stockholm in my diploma class we didn’t work like that. I just had to play everything, but then learning methods is to work with the brain. The brain remembers so if something happens in the audition, that a bassoonist comes and plays Mozart too slow or too fast or whatever. The brain remembers how you have practiced. It remembers that, so if you work very slowly your fingers remember it slowly… Do as you want to do from the beginning, playing everything in tempo and that means with a good air working with everything and the first thing before a bit is to be prepared.

…

KERRY HABERKERN. So taking small pieces but always at tempo? That’s interesting. I haven’t heard these different learning styles describe to me this way yet.
Constantin Barcov

On Studying in the United State

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. Yeah, Columbus, Georgia. This guy, Ronald Wirt, Dr. Ronald Wirt, he was a Julliard, Manhattan graduate and he was a professor at Columbus State and he still is, and he was so kind to me. I wrote him and five minutes later I had a reply from him. He helped me with entire process. I had initially wanted to only go do one semester in Romania and then go and start in January but he said, “You know, if you want to apply for the Woodruff Award,” which is the scholarship that I got, he said, “It’s better that you try until March and then you get the Woodruff Award and that would guarantee you a visa.” I was like “Okay, I’ll try,” so I applied for that and on my birthday I got the response. He told me, “You got in.”

KERRY HABERKERN. Did you audition or did you send recordings?

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. I sent a DVD. I sent a Hummel concerto, the Vivaldi concerto, the Mozart concerto, and the Andante and Rondo.

KERRY HABERKERN. Vivaldi, like E minor?

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. No, no, the C major one. [Sings.]

KERRY HABERKERN. At this point you’re 18, 19?

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. I was 19.

KERRY HABERKERN. 19, so it’s very high level.

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. Yeah, in Romania it’s incredibly important that you do competitions and you play everything by heart. I played Hummel, Vivaldi, Mozart, and…

KERRY HABERKERN. And, you know, in the States the bassoon is not a competition instrument at all, right?

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. I know, I know. That’s a bit of a pity

KERRY HABERKERN. Yeah.

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. So I did all those and they told me, “Yeah, you’re the first one to get it. We had 60-I don’t know applicants.” I was like “Yeah!”
On Studying in Germany

KERRY HABERKERN. So when did you come to Germany?

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. 2008. I got the DAAD scholarship.

KERRY HABERKERN. What does DAAD stand for?

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. DAAD is the Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst.

KERRY HABERKERN. To study with Dag Jensen?

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. With Dag, yeah. It was like a one-year scholarship. You could possibly make it longer but by the first year I got a practicum. It’s like an internship in the orchestra. It’s like a half-time job.

KERRY HABERKERN. So is he the person you…?

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. Dag Jensen is the most sought after professor in Germany.

…

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. It depends. If you go to Germany for instance, I know this is about Scandinavia but you know, Dag is Scandinavian, he’s from Norway, and one thing that he will talk about is, of course, you have to make a certain type of sound. Not very edgy, not piercing, not that kind of piercing, it’s like this, it’s not like this for us. It has to be a warm sound. It’s a very warm sound but he will talk about music quite a lot. The way you move on stage, the way you breath, it’s a very sort of analyzed way but in the end the product is very musical. It’s very inspiring…

On Technique

KERRY HABERKERN. So when you were studying with Dag at this point what sort of foundational work or any foundational work like etudes, scales, long tones, all of it, and what books?

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. All of it. At first we used Milde, Bozza.

KERRY HABERKERN. So Milde, the scale studies and chords?

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. Yeah.

KERRY HABERKERN. And then also the Concert Pieces?
CONSTANTIN BARCOV. Yeah.

KERRY HABERKERN. Bozza?

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. Bozza, Bitsch.

KERRY HABERKERN. Bitsch.

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. Yeah, Bitsch. That’s it.

KERRY HABERKERN. That’s it, these three.

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. And scales.

KERRY HABERKERN. And scales. Scales from…

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. All of them.

KERRY HABERKERN. All from memory or from…?

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. From memory, of course, and I can give you some of the things like [sings] the seven chords in the scale.

KERRY HABERKERN. But not like Oubradous, no?

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. No, no, he doesn’t do Oubradous. No, no, no.

KERRY HABERKERN. So all of that is from memory.

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. And if you do these things of course, you know, then…

KERRY HABERKERN. You get better.

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. Dag talks about the piano fingers, you know, the further you go away the more it takes you to back so it’s a very kind of close fingers and at the same time it has to be like piano mechanic fingers. Legato is not done with the expressive fingers. Legato is done with air. It was a very interesting concept. Air is constant, it’s like water that you turn on and then you do everything with exact fingers, extremely exact fingers.

KERRY HABERKERN. And close.

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. Very close. So the legato comes only from your sustaining whatever the phrase is and also of course you have to voice, certain notes have to be voiced a bit different like the D is a bit flat, the F is a bit flat so you voice but everything
has to be like you turn on a like faucet and articulation comes like with the faucet you
don’t turn the faucet on-off-on-off-on-off the faucet, it’s like you put your finger in the
water.

…

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. The important thing, like my teacher said, is that your hands have
to have a lot of tension, your arms don’t and your body, no tension. Just from here to
here.

KERRY HABERKERN. Really? Okay.

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. Tension but not from here everywhere. Everything else is very…

KERRY HABERKERN. Relaxed.

On Reeds

KERRY HABERKERN. Are you making your reeds now or are you buying them?

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. Yeah, yeah. I actually bought 15 reeds now because I’m so busy
right now and I know that these reeds are really good for orchestra.

KERRY HABERKERN. You buy from this guy, the same guy that [Hans Wisse]…?

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. No, no, no.

KERRY HABERKERN. A different guy?

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. Well, I’m completely a different type of soup from Audun and
Annika. I make my own reeds. I am the Dag Jensen school. They’re a bit Ole Kristian
Dahl sort of school. Although Ole was a student of… but I think Audun is becoming his
own school with the heavy reeds and the big reeds.

KERRY HABERKERN. It’s heavy?

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. Yeah, for me. I actually have my reeds…

KERRY HABERKERN. I mean it sounds beautiful. It’s funny. I think if I were to play it that
it wouldn’t sound like that because I can’t get any life out of it.

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. Yeah, but the thing with these reeds, you know, I meet with
Audun all the time and Sebastian is one of my best friends and I meet with him and we
play the Devienne duets and after one duet, two duets he’s already done. I was telling
him, “With this reed it would be impossible for me to play at work.” At the time I was thinking that Parsifal is five and a half hours. I was like, “You can’t do that.”

KERRY HABERKERN. Well opera is another thing. First of all, I so admire you playing opera because I don’t have the mental longevity. I can’t do it. Can I see [your reeds]?

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. These are the three used reeds that I’m using now. These are the two that I’m working on now and these are almost completely blanks.

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. It’s still a heavier reed than most people would use [in the United States].

KERRY HABERKERN. It’s heavier but it looks much more similar…

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. Playable.

KERRY HABERKERN. Much more similar to it and like the tip opening looks more similar to what I’m used to.

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. My teacher [Dag Jensen] said that it doesn’t matter if… You know, he makes a brighter sound in a way for German players. But the important thing is to have smoothness in your playing and a smooth attack. Never “ka” it’s “ah”.

…

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. What I found of a lot of the players in the United States they make the reeds in a certain way that it just speaks, and not work so much with the support and this makes sort of sometimes a bit of an edgy sound… What I noticed in the United States also is that people rely on edginess to cut with the orchestra.

KERRY HABERKERN. For projection?

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. Rather than support and body resonance…but that’s one of the differences.

…

KERRY HABERKERN. Do you start with tubes or what do you start with?

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. This is from tube, but this is from all the cane, and these are all Danzi GSP but they’re a really large shape so I try to get them to Rieger 2A. Everybody uses in Germany or Scandinavia, they use Rieger 2A.

KERRY HABERKERN. Rieger 2A.
CONSTANTIN BARCOV. No, no, just 2, just 2.

KERRY HABERKERN. So you’re taking the Danzi GSP and so it’s the Danzi profile…

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. Yeah.

KERRY HABERKERN. And then you’re reshaping on a 2A?

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. On a Rieger 2, yeah.

On Standing

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. Another aspect is that you have to use your whole body for resonance and another thing is we play standing a lot. Whenever we play we play standing.

KERRY HABERKERN. I’m so jealous of it. I think I want to learn.

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. It’s very important to keep your body sort of flexible to sort of compliment what you do musically rather than sitting down... There’s a different way of thinking about the bassoon here than it is I think in the United States the bassoon has to be heard. It has to be heard for the rest of the woodwinds. It’s the support of the woodwinds. The second bassoon is probably the loudest instrument as opposed to the softest instrument as it in the United States

On Using a Hand Rest

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. And that’s so weird. Like my teacher in the United States tried to make me not play with a hand rest but I was like playing and I was like, “How am I supposed to support this? How am I supposed to balance?”

…

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. It’s important that when you don’t hold the bassoon that it still sits like this, it doesn’t tip over. I mean I’m very set in my ways, because I’m very stubborn. I’ve already been through three different changes. From Romania going to the United States I made changes and then when I came to Germany I had to readjust my way of playing.
On Bassoons

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. That’s another really, really, really big difference and I never understood that. I actually talked to my teacher, Dag. He said he can count on one hand how many good old instruments he’s played. Well the problem is that we’re advancing and the pitch in orchestra has gotten better and better and better than if you hear old recordings. The same thing goes for even bassoonists. You hear the new bassoons and they’re absolutely fantastic. There’s not this sort of Stradivarius thing going on with the bassoon. In the United States I never understood this and their inclination….

KERRY HABERKERN. Well, the clarinet players, they never think about it.

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. Yeah, they buy new instruments. Oboe players it’s the same thing.

KERRY HABERKERN. And a new one every so many years. So your instrument, what is it?

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. It’s a 15000.

KERRY HABERKERN. And how long will you play it?

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. I’ve had it since December, but I played a 14000 before that and I played a 12000. The 12000 was too old for me.

KERRY HABERKERN. Now how long will you want to play on this 15000? Will you want to play it forever or will you want to play it for ten years and move on?

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. Oh no. I’m probably going to put an order for a new [Heckel] bassoon. It’s been a year now and I think the waiting period has gone up from five to seven years. I don’t know if you know about that and the contrabassoons, the contrabassoon maker retired and now it went from 11 years to on a waiting list.

…

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. I know the Yamahas are not very popular in the United States but here they’re extremely popular. My second bassoonist plays a Yamaha and the third bassoonist plays a Heckel 14000, 14999.

…

KERRY HABERKERN. I’d love for you to play my instrument. My instrument is a 201 so it’s basically like a rip off… Like if you tried to buy a 9000 from Heckel today.
CONSTANTIN BARCOV. Yeah, but because it’s a new bassoon it’s going to be better. In this case newer is better.

KERRY HABERKERN. You could be right because the scale is very good and it still has the sound that I was looking for, this very fresh kind of sound, the mechanism is good, you know, so I like it. It’s terrible being here, you know it makes me want to change everything but I know when I go home it’s a different playing world. I don’t play with the hand rest. [Laughing] So Constantin’s eyes just got three times as big.

On Competitions

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. The Gillet-Fox is good, but the thing is you have to understand about the international competitions in Europe for like Geneva, Prague, Crusell, you get concerts after this and this is very important on top of the monetary provisions. You get to perform with different orchestras afterwards so you might even get a manager from that.

KERRY HABERKERN. Is that common to have a manager?

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. No, my teacher Dag doesn’t, but Azzolini does, yeah, he has a manager. Looking at the Gillet-Fox competition, you see we don’t think as orchestra – of course there are certain attributes that you have to work on and improve – we don’t think of orchestra, and solo playing, and chamber music as completely different entities. In the United States I found that they are, “Oh, we don’t really focus on solo” but we feel like if we don’t play a lot of repertoire and get a lot of musical ideas when we go into orchestra then the orchestra playing is not going to be all that imaginative if that makes any sense.

On Vibrato

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. …We think, for example, and maybe you’ve noticed, we don’t use as much vibrato as bassoonists use in the United States because we try to think like singers. You know, non-vibrato means tension. As a singer when you don’t use vibrato you actually tense your vocal chords. Vibrato is the release of tension, it’s a relaxation, so when you do vibrato all the time it’s like you’re relaxing the whole time. When you do tension [sings] it’s like this. It’s very important. It’s a very important sort of tool for expression for us. It’s not vibrato all the time and you can use different types of vibrato of course but you can make different sounds with non-vibrato.
On Expression

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. …I was first on the waiting list and somebody dropped out and I could have gone but I said, “I don’t want to go. I’m going to Germany.”

KERRY HABERKERN. At [a prominent music school]?

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. Yeah and the comments I got was that it was too crazy, doing too much music and all that. This was in February or March. I go to Dag and I took a lesson with him one day before my audition and he says, “You need to play with more imagination. You need to play with more dynamic. You need to really bring yourself out and see what you’re all about. You need to experiment. You need to know what’s too much, what’s too little so you can find your common ground.”

…

KERRY HABERKERN. What kind of things were you doing when you were like, “oh, the Americans will do it this way”? What sort of things were you like, “this sounds American to me”?

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. Freedom, lack of. Doing things a bit like metronomical and not allowing yourself to have that natural pulse of going back and forth. I think there are certain preconceived ideas in the United States that are long forgotten here and actually there’s this one musician in the United States that I like, Robert Levin, and he said our tendency these days for some reason, because it’s been so long since Mozart’s been dead, is to embalm Mozart rather than enliven him.

KERRY HABERKERN. That’s pretty funny.

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. You know, so I think Mozart should be enlivened. It should be very exciting. Of course, you know the appropriate articulation and so on that pertains to that particular kind of music.

On Sound Concept

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. Yeah, but like I said you can to do this with your embouchure and with your support. It’s something that we learn here to play with and even if it’s… It’s how far will you go to get the responsiveness of the reed? How much of your tone are you willing to sacrifice to get that reed really? How much are willing to sacrifice your dynamic? The idea of the dynamic here is like, you know, from pianissimo to fortissimo you need to keep the same tone.
Kerry Haberkern. The same tone, okay.

Constantin Barcov. It’s never edgy. Sometimes I go for the edgy sound on some things if I want a really screaming sound, but still not edgy but just really heard and really vibrant.

…

Constantin Barcov. This is also a personal issue for me. The bassoon should sound beautiful and you say well, what is beautiful? It’s something that’s very vocal, very warm.

…

Kerry Haberkern. And you feel like your reeds allow you to get…

Constantin Barcov. Yeah, flexibility is the most important thing, but at the same time it has to work really high, really low, pianissimo. Especially for opera it is really difficult to get those kinds of reeds. You kind of need a perfect reed more so than symphony.

On Period Practice

Kerry Haberkern. So in terms of old music, you know, Bach, Mozart, how much are you thinking about the historical playing, historical research, historical aspects?

Constantin Barcov. Only the things that you do. For instance you can’t do certain dynamic things on the modern bassoon that naturally comes out on the baroque bassoon. I don’t know if you’ve ever played a baroque bassoon but it’s a pretty quiet instrument. It’s sort of… so like a bass line and very sotto voce. It’s very, very, very, very easy to do as the modern bassoon is made to play a bit louder, more like towards the last row of the hall, so in terms of articulation though, we are very keen on having certain editions like Bärenreiter but there are certain editions that you try to go by, by the scholars that made these editions.

Kerry Haberkern. So it’s not filled with weird slurs and legato…

Constantin Barcov. No, no, no. It’s as clean as possible and you can add to it of course, you know, that’s the skeleton but there are certain things we do with Bach here. You play with very minimum vibrato because you’re trying to emulate. Of course, as I said, you can’t do certain things that you could do with bassoon then and you can for like for example Mozart [sings]. It’s like you’re trying to emulate the classical bassoon. The B
flat was the highest note of the instrument so you can’t play [sings]. You can’t do it. [sings] Because it’s very hard for them. It was like a high F for us now.

On Auditions

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. I play the Mozart and Weber by heart because they ask for Mozart and Weber most of the time in auditions here.

KERRY HABERKERN. Which Weber? Concerto?

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. Concerto, yeah. In Scandinavia most of the time it’s…

KERRY HABERKERN. Saint-Saëns?

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. Saint-Saëns, yeah, but sometimes they ask for Weber as well. When the Danish Radio audition was last year in June you could choose Dutilleux, Weber…

KERRY HABERKERN. You could do Dutilleux?

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. Yeah.

KERRY HABERKERN. That’s a fun piece.

On Orchestral Roles

KERRY HABERKERN. Do the co-principals have a lot of concerto playing also?

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. No, no, we don’t have that. I know what you mean like the first half the co-principal plays and the second half the principal… No, the principal plays everything.

KERRY HABERKERN. You don’t do that here?

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. No, the principal plays everything.

KERRY HABERKERN. Obviously in the States, a big orchestra might have an associate or assistant and it’s usually the person who plays principal, but they’re going to play like the concerto, the premiere, the overture, stuff like that.

CONSTANTIN BARCOV. Not here.
Audun Halvorsen

On Technique

Kerry Haberkern. When you were studying what kind of etude books did you use? Did you use etude books and methods?

Audun Halvorsen. Yeah, with Robert Rønnes we also did the *Twelve Virtuoso Studies* of Robert Rønnes, which are really some pieces of challenge.

Kerry Haberkern. Any others like Piard or not really?

Audun Halvorsen. No, not really, no but Milde, yes, and also Bitsch.

…

Kerry Haberkern. Everyone here, to me it seems like they have really fluid technique, but you guys don’t seem to be working [on technique]. When I ask people about technical studies and etudes, it’s really only Milde so how are you building this kind of facility?

Audun Halvorsen. The technical, at least how I do it, is very much based on just very simple drills. One I use a lot is Ole Kristian Dahl’s. He has a book that’s on the market now that’s called *Drills*. You can buy it on the Internet and there are some patterns there. [Sings.] All the combinations with three notes and this one we use with the metronome on 60. That’s one and I do Clark’s.

Kerry Haberkern. For us we know it really just for trumpet.

Audun Halvorsen. Me too.

Kerry Haberkern. But it works for you, of course.

Audun Halvorsen. Over the whole register. That would be one thing. I’m very strict about the student making their practice organized and that they play 20 minutes and have a 5 minute break, play 20 minutes and have a 5 minute break, play 20 minutes and that maybe longer.

Kerry Haberkern. It’s much better for your body.

Audun Halvorsen. Yeah and for the head to always be concentrated and then maybe have 20 minutes of technical drills, 20 minutes vibrato. I’m very much into vibrato, singing in general. That will always be the main thing that I go for when I teach.
**On Vibrato**

**KERRY HABERKERN.** How are you teaching vibrato?

**AUDUN HALVORSEN.** I didn’t talk in the coaching about that?

**KERRY HABERKERN.** You talked a little bit.

**AUDUN HALVORSEN.** I think of it as breath. It’s not the jaw or anything; it’s just the air that’s stronger.

**KERRY HABERKERN.** So if someone is having a problem would you start with…?

**AUDUN HALVORSEN.** I would start with a breath builder\(^\text{13}\) and do some exercises with that and then apply it to the bassoon. I always think of vibrato, as the vibrato itself is better quality in the sound so it’s not like just dipping or pointing intonation. It’s the sound that from the base has to be very good and then you add something more that’s even more projective.

**KERRY HABERKERN.** Do you want more and less dynamic or up and down [pitch variation]?

**AUDUN HALVORSEN.** It is more and less dynamic… but I think of more and less as projection because I guess if you analyze it in a machine it might be both intonation and dynamic and projection, everything.

**KERRY HABERKERN.** But you are starting from the idea of [variation in volume]…?

**AUDUN HALVORSEN.** I think of it as a singer. I’m very concerned about resonance in the room then it makes sense to think of this like this.

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**On Instruments**

**KERRY HABERKERN.** Have you thought more about the older Heckels and the newer Heckels and what it is that attracts playing here to the modern instruments, and why we’re so opposed -- well, not opposed but…

**AUDUN HALVORSEN.** I don’t know but for me with my set of reeds I never felt that I was able to make the same big sound on an older instrument. I can make a very beautiful sound, and a very compact sound up to a certain level but then it gets difficult. I think the new instruments are just so much better for intonation and everything, and they’re more

\(^{13}\) Exercise equipment for lungs and diaphragm muscles
equal in the sound so it’s much easier to bring the music out somehow. That will always
be the base of my teaching. I am very into basics but that’s because it’s kind of serving
the music. It’s not just because it has to be good but it has to serve the music, you know?

Kerry Haberkern. I think now having heard two concerts. One in Malmö and one here
[Copenhagen], although lots of things are very different between the orchestras, I do
think that American orchestras, we’re more concerned with obsessively small dynamics
so I think there might be more comfort in the small reeds.

Audun Halvorsen. What you hear now is very loud… we play also very soft, very soft.

Kerry Haberkern. And you’re able with the modern instrument and the bigger reed
you’re still able to have the control in the really soft dynamics?

Audun Halvorsen. Yes, most of all I can have the same cantabile singing in the sound
and the same ring in the pianissimo or even softer. That’s the most important thing for me
because I’ve also been playing on lighter reeds but I always find it’s much more sensitive
to small things and then you can suddenly hear it, but because of the high resistance in
these reeds you always put out a lot of air so that makes it kind of safe even when you go
really loud.

On Reeds

Kerry Haberkern. … in terms of embouchure, obviously I need to use like nothing
really, because it’s such a light reed so how do you think of the [embouchure]…?

Audun Halvorsen. I think of sections like [points to mouth]…

Kerry Haberkern. Corners?

Audun Halvorsen. muscles that are kind of over the corner teeth like in-between the
middle and here… They are the muscles that actually do the [crescendo, diminudeno] that
makes the flexibility to cushion the connection with the reed so in the middle I am kind
of [sound effect] I am kind of very loose. The reeds are vibrating so little so if I have
tension here it’s just dead sound. It’s just nothing.

Kerry Haberkern. It’s nothing.

Audun Halvorsen. The reed is very free. It’s not a lot of lips on them actually.

Kerry Haberkern. That’s really interesting. I hadn’t thought of that.
AUDUN HALVOREN. It’s actually less lip control than with the lighter reeds… It’s more control by the air than the lips.

KERRY HABERKERN. More control by the air. That’s really different.

KERRY HABERKERN. … When did you start making reeds? I know that you don’t make [reeds currently]…

AUDUN HALVOREN. Well, when I started at the academy in Oslo. Actually, before that I started making reeds when I was 17 or something like that, and I did play on those for a while and I even played on those a little bit when I joined my first job, but quite quickly I started getting reeds from the contra player in the orchestra in Norrköping and then when I got my job in Norrköping, this was a very important thing in my life and I started taking lessons with Ole Kristian Dahl. He just got the job that I have now in Copenhagen and that’s the same point as I got my job in Norrköping, so I went down there and I was his first student actually. From then on I saw him every second or third month and we did chunks of lessons. I basically had been going through the whole repertoire with him, at least the repertoire that I have.

KERRY HABERKERN. Solo repertoire or orchestral?

AUDUN HALVOREN. All excerpts but also the solo repertoire, yeah.

KERRY HABERKERN. And he’s really sort of shaped your sound concept, playing concept, right?

AUDUN HALVOREN. Yeah, he’s a big inspiration. After a couple of years I kind of took his ideas of reeds and started playing on similar reeds as him and when I got to Rotterdam in 2005 the contra player there, Hans Wisse, he insisted on making reeds for me and I was very distanced in the beginning, but he convinced me after a couple of weeks that he could actually do even better reeds than I had ever tried before, for me.

KERRY HABERKERN. He’s who you get your reeds from now?

AUDUN HALVOREN. That turned into the Halvorsen model that he’s selling today as well. We have been developing this model more and more so the latest change was in the beginning of 2013. I mean people change so I will always change my taste so I guess this model will always kind of follow my taste a little bit. I think what we have achieved now is very good for me at least. Since he’s sold so many of them they must be something good for other people as well. But the idea behind it is reeds that are resistant in terms of breathing so you need a lot of air to make them ring. They don’t vibrate easily but when you use a lot of air you get a very dense sound and maybe a rounder sound than with the
lighter kinds of reeds. I mean these reeds are not better for everybody but it’s good for the people that want to go to the next level sound wise, I think. If you play on light reeds and you have a small sound and if you want a bigger sound it could be a good idea to think of the material, you know.

KERRY HABERKERN. I wanted to know some of your measurements but you can just e-mail me that.

AUDUN HALVORSEN. I think it’s 28 to 29 blade but that’s for a 442. I don’t know, maybe even a little bit longer blade. Maybe it’s actually changed a little bit. I’ll have to check it. Do you have a reed?
Sebastian Stevensson

On Early Schooling

KERRY HABERKERN. So you started to play when you were 10?

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. Yes.

KERRY HABERKERN. What kind of books did you use, etude books? Did you start with Weissenborn?

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. Yeah, I did, yeah.

KERRY HABERKERN. I think it’s the same all around the world. We all start with Weissenborn, right?

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. Probably, yeah. Weissenborn and I played a few pieces. I think I practiced a lot when I was 10, 11, 12.

…

KERRY HABERKERN. Did you go to an arts high school or…?

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. No, because I come from a little bit smaller city. I had the choice to either go all the way into Stockholm, which is an hour one way or to stay with my normal school so that was the decision for me but I decided to take the normal high school, but then I started privately with a professor from the conservatory.

On Teachers

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. And I thought okay, I can have a very comfortable life being a student and playing as a substitute some places and it was… I said okay, if I don’t leave now it will be very difficult to leave at some point because I will have such a stable life.

KERRY HABERKERN. Okay, yeah.

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. Because I always wanted to leave for Germany to study, because for me Germany was the country of the bassoon and I wanted to go there when I was 15. I already knew I wanted to study in Germany at some point. I was fascinated with Dag Jensen but then I ended up I wanted to study with Ole Kristian Dahl. I don’t know if you [know who that is]…
KERRY HABERKERN. And they’re both Norwegian, right?

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. They are both Norwegian, yeah. Knut is also Norwegian, yeah.

KERRY HABERKERN. Okay, so they’re all Norwegian? Yeah.

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. And Audun is also Norwegian, I mean it’s…

KERRY HABERKERN. Yeah, it’s really interesting. Okay.

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. Audun and Ole Kristian come from the same teacher when they were teenagers.

KERRY HABERKERN. And who’s that?

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. Robert Rønnes.

On Competitions

KERRY HABERKERN. …So tell me about the competition scene here, like have you competed and won many competitions?

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. Like solo competitions? It’s very… maybe now it’s a little bit more but at the time when I was a student, I mean until high school level, it was more or less nonexistent.

KERRY HABERKERN. Really?

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. I didn’t do a single competition, solo competition. I don’t know. I think I would have done it if there were competitions around but there wasn’t. I think I applied to one but I was 17, 18 but that was nationals for all instruments and only four candidates were chosen and I wasn’t chosen, so, yeah.

KERRY HABERKERN. That’s a little more like at home. The bassoon at home is really not a solo instrument. I mean the solo competition there is like Gillet-Fox and then there’s one called Meg Quigley…

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. So it’s also non-existent more or less.

KERRY HABERKERN. Yeah, really, very much so. It doesn’t exist.

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. Yeah but I was very fascinated but Dag Jensen when I was a little bit younger and I knew that he won the ARD Competition in Munich and I checked
when I was a teenager when it was coming so I already had…. But the last time was 2008 and I knew I long time in advance I wanted to go for the ARD 2008.

KERRY HABERKERN. Okay. And did you?

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. I did, yeah.

KERRY HABERKERN. And how did you do?

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. I think I did alright. It was the same year right before I moved to Germany and I went on to the second round and I was very proud about that.

*On Reeds*

KERRY HABERKERN. When did you start making reeds? Never?

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. More or less never.

KERRY HABERKERN. Okay.

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. I started making reeds when I was 19 and I started in the conservatory but I never got to a satisfactory level of reed making and I kept on buying from different people and I still do.

KERRY HABERKERN. Yeah, and you think that’s more typical here to buy or is it…?

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. I think it somehow became a standard because... I don’t know. When I started in the conservatory my teacher Knut didn’t do the reeds anymore and then also some students started buying and I had an idea, okay, because I got so confused when I was making the reeds because I didn’t really know what I wanted – what kind of resistance, what kind of sound. I decided okay, I’ll stay with reeds that other people that I think play good play then I can develop my own playing skill and I don’t have to be so confused about searching because once I saw some other people when they were searching and they went such strange directions I thought, “Okay, I’ll leave that until later.”

...

KERRY HABERKERN. ...Where do you buy your reeds from now?

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. From Hans Wisse. It’s the same as Audun if you interviewed him.

KERRY HABERKERN. The same reed?
SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. The same narrow shape, yeah, the same one, which it’s a model that he developed because Audun was a colleague with this guy in Amsterdam before he came to Denmark… So they developed that shape together.

KERRY HABERKERN. When they come are they done or do you do work to them?

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. I find I do less and less work.

KERRY HABERKERN. Less and less work, okay.

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. But lately since I changed the bassoon, this bassoon is very open and I don’t need them to be lighter, and if I don’t want them to be very much lighter then it’s only a few possibilities I have to change then.

On Bassoons

KERRY HABERKERN. Okay, yeah. So you just changed bassoons you said?

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. Yes. I got an 11000 Heckel a long time.

KERRY HABERKERN. An 11000 Heckel, okay.

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. Yes, which I played from when I was 18 until last year.

KERRY HABERKERN. Is that considered an old instrument here or middle or …?.

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. Yeah. I mean when we say old instrument I think people still mean the 7-8-9000 Heckel, but it’s definitely not a new one, somehow anyway old in people’s minds, yeah, but especially in Germany. Here it’s alright but in Germany everything before 13000 is old I think.

KERRY HABERKERN. Less common then, also.

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. Yeah, but among the professional players I would say it’s an uncommon one, but many students play this kind of instrument because…

KERRY HABERKERN. Like 10, 11, 12?

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. Yeah. Me, personally, I never found a 13000 or 14000 – 14000 a few, but 13000 I could never find an instrument I liked.

KERRY HABERKERN. Really? Okay.
SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. I like them very much, the 11000 that I had. I was completely in love with that instrument but it had maybe… it was very special. It had very high resistance and was… maybe for the big symphony orchestra it would be good to have something which is a little bit more projective, more open.

KERRY HABERKERN. More power, yeah, and what did you have before that, before the 11?

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. I had an Adler, Adler Sonora, yeah.

…

KERRY HABERKERN. …So the Adler, then the 11000...

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. Then I changed one year ago to a 12000 Heckel.

KERRY HABERKERN. Okay.

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. Which I was very happy about, actually, and then I just went over the 15000 which I thought was amazing so I decided to change again.

KERRY HABERKERN. And when you changed did you sell them or do you have many bassoons now?

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. No, no, no. I sold the 11.

KERRY HABERKERN. Sold the 11.

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. And I have half-sold the 12000.

…

KERRY HABERKERN. So now you have, you said the 15?

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. Yeah. 15008.

KERRY HABERKERN. Yeah, okay, yeah, and how does it feel different from the 13? I mean, I guess it will feel very different.

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. From the 12 and the 11, not the 13. You know what, it’s not very, very different but of course, I cannot say some typical things about every series. A few, but this one is more open and has less resistance but it still, I think, is a warm sound but in comparison with Audun’s 15000 is a little bit brighter, even maybe more shiny in
my ears. Also I think you mentioned when he played, because we talked about the sound.
It’s a little bit more, I don’t remember what word you used but something.

KERRY HABERKERN. Yeah, no, I know it’s a little more fresh.

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. Yeah, exactly.

KERRY HABERKERN. That’s interesting.

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. But I like it. The resistance is less and somehow, I didn’t think so, but it makes good projection in the pianissimo was much easier than with the 11000 and 12000, but the 11000 makes life in orchestra very easy because it can play so mellow, so blended sounds very easily.

…

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. I think one of the possibilities is I was limited with my sound with the 11 and 12000 Heckel was that since the resistance in the instrument was high I had to play lighter reeds and that made… I couldn’t make the sounds that I wanted because anyway the sound is very much in the reed and the instrument is just helping that sound. If you have a bright reed the sound will be bright even though the instrument is a little bit on the dark side, I think.

KERRY HABERKERN. Yeah, I think so.

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. The instrument is brighter, more open, maybe this one is extremely open. I searched – I remember playing a number two bocal it’s like most people would think it’s for playing second in the orchestra but I play that for the pianissimo. If I give it to Audun, “it’s good for second bassoon, this bocal.”

KERRY HABERKERN. But with your new instrument it helps to kind of make it a little…

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. Yeah to make it even out the tendencies of the instrument and I play heavier reeds than I did before.

KERRY HABERKERN. What bocal is it? Heckel something or…?

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. Heckel CC-2R

KERRY HABERKERN. CC-2R. I play CC-1R.

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. Okay, okay, good!

KERRY HABERKERN. Yeah, I think the CC-1, right, or 2?
SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. Yeah, the 1 is superstandard, or no? And the R is just because without the stamps.

…

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. With my 11000 or 12000, which was more resistance, a little bit more stiff instruments, I was searching for a CC-1 or something like that for a long time because it’s a little bit darker sound as well, I think, but it was too rigid for me and then I played on the CC-1XL for a very long time.

KERRY HABERKERN. Okay. So there are all sorts of bocals. Everybody has like Leitzinger and Moosmann and Yamaha, but are people mainly playing Heckel bocals?

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. I think if people play a Püchner bassoon or a Fox bassoon people tend to also play bocals from the same maker.

KERRY HABERKERN. Really? Okay, it’s totally different. At home if you have Yamaha or Püchner they’ll still play the Heckel bocal.

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. Here people also but if you have the same make I don’t know anybody who plays a Fox bocal or Yamaha bocal, you know?

KERRY HABERKERN. I hardly know anybody who plays a Fox bocal. I have a Fox high note bocal.

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. I also have a Yamaha high note bocal but, yeah.

KERRY HABERKERN. But I wouldn’t play, you know, I would always play my Heckel bocal. I think that’s the standard.

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. Yeah, yeah, maybe. I think it’s the same here.

KERRY HABERKERN. Similar?

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. Sometimes they play the same make.

KERRY HABERKERN. But across the board are people mainly playing Heckel instruments or…?

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. Yeah, I think. Of course, for students in the colleges it’s expensive so many people play other brands. In Germany Yamaha is very popular. Here Püchner was popular, maybe now Fox is more popular, I don’t know, Yamaha. It’s quite equal.
KERRY HABERKERN. Yeah. Obviously in the States the Fox is the most popular. Maybe Heckel and then Fox because it’s made in the States.

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. I also think they are the second best actually, so.

On Playing in the Danish National Symphony Orchestra

KERRY HABERKERN. What are you playing in the orchestra right now? What part are you playing?

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. I’m playing first mostly and a little bit of second.

KERRY HABERKERN. Okay.

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. I mean Audun and me, we have equal positions. Both of us play a little bit second opposed to first.

KERRY HABERKERN. Okay and so do you rotate or…?

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. Yeah.

KERRY HABERKERN. Yeah, okay.

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. But if I play second I always play second to Audun and the other way around. If he played second he would only play second to me, so. But we are not always on break the same and when we are maybe I play first after intermission, he plays before, or the other way around.

On Perceptions of American Playing

KERRY HABERKERN. …So like, you won’t offend me at all, but what is the perception of American bassoon playing?

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. I mean, by stereotype I think it’s not super highly regarded.

KERRY HABERKERN. In terms of sound or the musicianship?

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. The sound because it’s very… The thing is it’s isolated. I think it’s isolated and it’s just, you know, American is bright, is very hard to say but I just say I like the famous American players a lot now.
On Auditions

KERRY HABERKERN. ...How have auditions that you’ve taken – are they usually screened?

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. Yes. First round has always been screened auditions, yes.

KERRY HABERKERN. Then does it usually start with the concerto?

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. It’s always starts with concerto.

KERRY HABERKERN. Always starts and then how much will you play?

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. Until the recap.

…

KERRY HABERKERN. How many people are usually coming to auditions?

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. I think for the principal. I did the principal here and then co-principal in Stockholm the year before and we were a little bit less than 30. We were 28 or something.

KERRY HABERKERN. Still good-sized auditions.

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. Yeah, but I mean for Norrköping maybe we were 14 or so because it was half then, it was a smaller orchestra. That’s not so much, but yeah.

…

KERRY HABERKERN. Yeah, but to make a tape? I’ve never had to make a tape but I know for clarinet sometimes and for flute sometimes there’s a taped round if it gets really big, you know, if you get hundreds and hundreds of people they can’t handle that, of course.

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. But I think also for example now Norrköping they did it because they want applicants from all over the world and it’s expensive to travel to Sweden to look at Norrköping and if people first make a taped audition and they know they’re one of eight people invited it makes more sense to make the travel and it could be more attractive so that’s also there.

On the History of Playing in Scandinavia

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. Yeah, I think in Scandinavia there haven’t been so many very good players before. There have been a few. Maybe the principal of that orchestra or this orchestra and all these people are more or less, you know, they had some lessons even
before, the people who are now 60 or 70 or something, but they’re almost more or less self-taught so they develop very individual styles so I think Scandinavia was always… people just played very, very differently and Norway was quite influenced by American playing, maybe Per Hannevold he’s bringing American people. In Bergen there is American bassoon section, more or less.

KERRY HABERKERN. See, I think because he teaches at Aspen, the summer festival there.

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. Exactly, yeah, and he plays Fox. I don’t know actually.

KERRY HABERKERN. I think he does play a Fox, like a 601, I think. It’s like the big Fox.

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. And the Rønnes guy is “Mr. Moosmann” and he has a very special idea and he studied in Russia and my teacher, he was studying in Vienna and he came…

KERRY HABERKERN. Sønstevold?

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. Sønstevold, exactly. It was very…

KERRY HABERKERN. So you had like a handful of really good players but not…

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. Very, very different. I don’t think there was one direction but that also meant that… I can also hear Sønstevold has had some really good students over the years but people play very, very different. It’s not like there’s one style. You can’t tell they’re from the same teacher.

KERRY HABERKERN. Sure. And then what about now?

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. Now I think the competition is definitely rising and I think the people who have only been studying in Scandinavia now have very little chance in auditions here because it’s so close and it’s very cheap to travel within Europe, so people come from Germany or somewhere for all of the auditions. I think now the Scandinavians who did study somewhere else as well have much better chances.

KERRY HABERKERN. Probably Germany, right?

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. Yeah. So now, because I think with Audun and another Swedish guy, they are the same age, they were the first students of Ole Kristian and Audun is the principal here on the radio and that Swedish guy, Fredrik Ekdahl, I don’t know.

KERRY HABERKERN. Okay.
SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. He’s the principal of Swedish radio so they are now teaching a little bit and they’re spreading the same school as Ole Kristian. Ole Kristian is becoming this guy.

KERRY HABERKERN. Okay, yeah.

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. This Yoda guy. Everybody wants to go to him.

KERRY HABERKERN. Bassoon Yoda.

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. Now that’s very successful but I don’t think it’s one school alone but I think the people who have only been studying with Knut in Stockholm or who have only been studying in Oslo with somebody has less chance, yeah.

KERRY HABERKERN. So it’s probably most common for people to go to Germany, right?

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. But it wasn’t so much. It just started I think.

KERRY HABERKERN. If you didn’t go to Germany where would you go?

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. I don’t know. Maybe Italy?

*On Perceptions of Bassoon Playing*

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. We say that Germany is bright and America is dark, or the other way around, whatever, but it’s not as simple as that. I also think the bassoon, the schools all over the world are not as developed as for clarinet, for example.

KERRY HABERKERN. Of course.

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. Bassoon is still very much a homemade style and a homemade technique.

KERRY HABERKERN. It really is.

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. Because ultimately there’s so many possibilities about the reeds so instead of really “how do we play” we always tend to “okay, maybe if I play this I should have a reed like this” and we’re trying to adjust and very few people I think came to the level who can play the same style in pianissimo and fortissimo and the whole register.
On Sound Concept

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. I think what one is learning if you study with Ole Kristian as Audun and I did, is it’s very much air pressure and air speed. I think it’s much more work that way than many other people.

KERRY HABERKERN. What is this? [Inhalation exercise with hand in front of mouth] What is this? I don’t know what this is.

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. This is just to make sure. The goal to do that is to make as deep a sound as possible and if you have a deep sound it means you are very open so you get a big resonance and then you can fill up your lungs very deeply. It goes [breath] like this and then you only fill and then it’s difficult to make the proper support but then you fill a little bit lower maybe and then…

KERRY HABERKERN. When you’re thinking about breathing how are you thinking about breathing? Are you thinking about filling it here [Abdomen] or here [Chest] or…?

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. The other side is that we want a very stable support which equals out the unevenness of the bassoon so some notes are very open, some are very closed, and if we have even support we can make an equal amount of air go through even though something is open, something is less open. We try to blow the same amount of air in the notes to be able to have that very stable support independent of the unequalness of the instrument. The A is an open note but the G is a closed note so if we play with little support then the G will naturally be softer and more dark than the A, but if we very much try to blow the same amount of air then it will be more equal. Not 100% but that’s kind of the style and to be able to make that high pressured, even support we need to breathe a little bit lower because you’re a little bit more control of the muscle here than you have up here.

On Venting

KERRY HABERKERN. How do you use these keys, the vent keys?

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. Maybe I am extreme but I play everything always in.

KERRY HABERKERN. Always in, all the time, to articulate and for legato also.

SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. Yeah, for legato, pianissimo, always in. The A in pianissimo, I will play it with this pinkie and…

KERRY HABERKERN. With the A key. Okay.
SEBASTIAN STEVENSSON. Audun, he doesn’t, but I think maybe with his reeds you lose a little bit of focus so don’t play with it. Audun used to leave it like this in the orchestra.

KERRY HABERKERN. It’s changing in the United States now. I think it’s changing more to this style all the time.
Johnny Teyssier

On Yehuda Gilad

JOHNNY TEYSSIER…then I went to Colburn in LA. Do you know Yehuda Gilad?

KERRY HABERKERN. Yeah.

JOHNNY TEYSSIER. He’s probably an interesting person for you too because he has lot of ties with Scandinavia also.

KERRY HABERKERN. Yeah, which I didn’t know until I started to talk to people here and I was like really?

JOHNNY TEYSSIER. Yeah, he knows like all the clarinetists here so it’s almost like the new school playing is like bridged playing, the U.S. and Scandinavia, sort of.

KERRY HABERKERN. Like pipelined, yeah.

…

KERRY HABERKERN. And so what’s Yehuda’s connection to Scandinavia?

JOHNNY TEYSSIER. I think he just started coming here to do master classes every year and sort of had a following. There are so many awesome players around here who have studied with him.

KERRY HABERKERN. Not just Americans but also…

JOHNNY TEYSSIER. Yeah, also Scandinavians.

On Playing in Rotterdam

KERRY HABERKERN. … You said you had played also in some European orchestras?

JOHNNY TEYSSIER. Yeah, I’ve played a little bit. I’ve played in some trial things I did with Rotterdam Philharmonic in Holland, which was interesting and that’s even different from here also.

KERRY HABERKERN. How?

JOHNNY TEYSSIER. They have like a very specific style of playing there.
Kerry Haberkern. How so?

Johnny Teyssier. Which is like very extroverted.

…

Johnny Teyssier. Yeah and so I worked for a while with Yehuda, my teacher in LA, before I went there [Rotterdam] to sort of…

Kerry Haberkern. Feel confident?

Johnny Teyssier. Yeah, and he knows some people who play there and they’re sort of going with this sort of a different approach, playing everything very exaggerated and probably louder in general than you play in the U.S.

*On Equipment*

Kerry Haberkern. And what about equipment? Did you have to make any adjustments?

Johnny Teyssier. No, never. It’s kind of funny because I play very traditional American equipment.

Kerry Haberkern. Yeah. What do you play?

Johnny Teyssier. I play a Vandoren M13 Lyre which almost no one plays in Europe I don’t think, with R13 clarinets which nobody plays here either.

Kerry Haberkern. Really? What do people play?

Johnny Teyssier. No. People here play Festival RCs I guess, mostly Festival.

Kerry Haberkern. Not like Selmers or something?

Johnny Teyssier. No, not so much.

Kerry Haberkern. Not Yamaha?

Johnny Teyssier. Still Buffet, mostly Buffets.
On Sound Concept

JOHNNY TEYSSIER. And my teacher is this old guy from Philly Orchestra and very set in his ways and one correct way which is very much sort of brighter sounds. I would say smaller without edge to it to project that sort of ring or…

KERRY HABERKERN. Well, I mean that’s... You think about…

JOHNNY TEYSSIER. Or focus.

KERRY HABERKERN. Yeah, like Bernard Garfield. I guess…

On Playing in Malmö

KERRY HABERKERN. So playing in the orchestra, how does it feel different than playing in an American orchestra? Does it feel different or does it feel…?

JOHNNY TEYSSIER. Possibly it’s just a slightly louder volume, I think, than a lot of American orchestras probably.

KERRY HABERKERN. I’m curious to see how much people move just because like when I’ve been observing students…

JOHNNY TEYSSIER. I think people move more in Europe in general.

KERRY HABERKERN. Yeah.

JOHNNY TEYSSIER. But some players in the U.S. move a lot too.

On Auditions

KERRY HABERKERN. Who’s winning jobs in Europe?

JOHNNY TEYSSIER. I mean Germany is closed off because their auditions are German only, German system only, so they’re their own world. Yeah, actually, I don’t know of that many. There might be enough orchestras in France to… I don’t know if that many French clarinetists that I know go play elsewhere. I guess Italians and stuff go study in France. There have been a few that I know of. I don’t know. Scandinavians all go to study with Yehuda in LA or he comes here also a lot.

…

KERRY HABERKERN. Is it isolating [living in Sweden] in terms of taking auditions? I assume so.
JOHNNY TEYSSIER. No, I don’t think so. I mean it’s much easier to do European auditions so…

On Competitions

KERRY HABERKERN. …What’s the competition scene here, like for clarinet? Huge?

JOHNNY TEYSSIER. Of like…?

KERRY HABERKERN. Solo competitions.

JOHNNY TEYSSIER. Solo competitions? Yeah, I guess it is pretty big here, which I guess it wouldn’t be traditional in U.S. That’s one thing Yehuda really pushes everyone to do.

KERRY HABERKERN. Really? I think that’s good because we have so little of it at home. I think that’s…

JOHNNY TEYSSIER. Yeah, I think it’s actually really good. Not that you have to win or anything but just to reach… I’ve only done one competition so far. To have to prepare so much music to be ready at one time when you have…