

A New

One of the most important "exhibits" at Faszination Klarinette (the exhibition in Berlin that Paul Harris wrote about in the last magazine), was the Seggelke clarinet.

The days which followed the opening was the symposium of the German Clarinet Society. As with our own Clarinet & Saxophone Society gatherings, there were several displays; the makers Schwenk & Seggelke had a fine "collection" of both brand new and reproductions from the Baroque onwards including Mühlfeld's.

Alan
Hacker

I had come across Jochen Seggelke's work during my time as guest conductor in Stuttgart. Rainer Schumacher, the solo clarinetist of the opera and winner of the 1974 Munich Competition, showed me a classical basset horn made by Jochen. Unfortunately, it had to be built at the artificial modern old instrument pitch (!) of 430 Hz – with which I am fundamentally out of tune; otherwise I would have snapped it up.

A Brand New Clarinet 3000G

This is the most advanced clarinet I have come across. It solves problems of intonation and has the widest range of dynamics and tone colour.

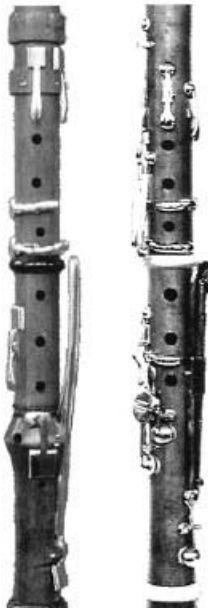
It is a very beautiful looking instrument with carbon fibre at the middle and bell joint. The bell has no metal ring at the end though the wood is generously turned. The four barrels of my pair have flush, silver plated rings. I noticed that


one of the clarinet players from the Berlin Philharmonic (who was playing in Paul Harris's *Happy Birthday* for me) had a barrel also with carbon fibre tips. Interestingly Jochen Seggelke told me that the metal rings can give the instrument more resistance. He is such a fine craftsman and player that I believe him! Pillars are gold plated in contrast to the silver plated nickel keys. These are lighter and more malleable than keys of other clarinets today.

Lower Joint


There are twin holes for low Gd//. The A ring key has an additional lower vent key soldered to it (although this can be mounted on the side). Bf### fork has a vent key operated by the RH index ring. I was pleased to hear Jochen call it the Acton vent. Geoffrey Acton worked for Boosey & Hawkes; some of the post war 1010 clarinets had this fitted. Although there is clearly







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Clarinet



more mechanism, it is very well designed and with adjusting screws. I can vouch for all this as I have taken things apart. My instruments also have F#C#// articulated in quite a simple way. You can hold down F# and add the E key with the other little finger without needing to raise the F#.

Upper Joint*

This is revolutionary. There is no linkage, no long b flat//. Instead, a forked b flat//. As a result there is a fuller and even tone throughout because the finger holes can be more appropriately sized; a bonus is more space between the holes which gives much better accommodation for cross Eb bflat//. The ring keys are mounted on the left which obviously allows them to move in the same plane as fingers. Open g/ is not tucked under the a/ key but is mounted on the side. Furthermore there is an assistor key which opens with the throat b flat/ allowing the speaker hole to be made smaller. It is from here that the good intonation partly derives.

The side keys are mounted and shaped in the German system way. Thus all these holes are nearer the front of the instrument (including the C#g#// hole) – and so no water.

When Kell was changing from the Simple System to the Boehm clarinet his teacher said, "How on earth are you going to play the solo at the opening of Beethoven's *Egmont Overture*?" In other words how would he slur comfortably from d// to c//. This thumb only fingering for Fc// is always a problem isn't it? On the Seggelke 3000G one can play both notes with all the right hand down (which includes the low Fc// key)

The Bore

I believe this is around 14.85mm. The bore of the rather short four barrel selection is conical but the other way round.

The short, more German flare at the bottom of the instrument gives an excellent tone, clear in both registers; the lowest notes are dark and woody but not quite like the more bass clarinet sound of the modern (blackwood) Oehler system

and the basset clarinet. This flare is close to the old Albert clarinet, ubiquitous in Britain from the 1850s, which eventually died out through the Boehm advent. Actually the Seggelke low register though even, is similar to the sound of the old boxwood clarinet.

It is incredible to have lowest notes that really are in tune; you can play them without having to "lip away" their quality; and they do not need the sharpening assistance of a thumb key currently fitted to German system clarinets.

Paths of Playing

In Britain the larger bore handmade clarinets of Howarth and Eaton have allowed the traditions of Draper, Thurston, Kell and Brymer to continue and to develop. Another more transatlantic and continental path has been the wish to combine French and German traditions. This has been served by the narrowing of bore and tone holes and the thickening of the walls of the French design. The German reform Boehm (nearly a century old) was another, more extreme, radical way. The Seggelke clarinet surpasses this.

Albeit amidst the throng of exclusively German system players in Berlin, Schwenk & Seggelke displayed their Boehm clarinet with a recent Vandoren mouthpiece which worked fine. I play mine with a deep throated mouthpiece. The lay of .7 x 20+ mm Jon Steward, Brian Ackerman and Edward Pillinger took from two 19th century wooden Rudall Carte mouthpieces and an old Boosey & Co mouthpiece which I still use sometimes on my basset clarinet. Jochen Seggelke tells me that the ancestor of a maker in Markneukirchen, a Herr Nurnberger, came to work for Rudall Carte in the late 19th-century, which reminded me that in the late 1950s I was told the same by Jim Howarth the London mouthpiece maker. This German has influenced British mouthpieces through the 1010 era to the latest Pillingers.

Being handmade, no doubt variations can be made to suit individuals. I think this clarinet will suit any style of player.

1 Model 3000G - showing key work

2 Model 3000F - showing key work

3 Model 3000G on the left and 3000F on the right

4 Model 3000G - showing key work



* The 3000F clarinet top joint is Boehm.