

## Contemporary Music

The music avangard Jörg Widmann and an analyse on his main work

*“The Fantasie for Clarinet Solo”*

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*This master's thesis is carried out as a part of the education at the University of Agder and therefore approved as a part of this education. However, this does not imply that the University answers for the methods that are used or the conclusions that are drawn.*

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# INTRODUCTION

Today it may be an ordinary day, but everyday I try to make it extraordinary, filled with sounds of my everyday friend, clarinet and full of love about music.

Firstly, I would say that I could not be here if I didn't love what I do and how playing music makes me feel. So what are you going to read in this essay will be a part of my soul, so try to keep it safe.

Like every other form of art, music is universal and can be enjoyed by people from all different backgrounds. It gives people a chance to understand the world differently rather than doing something that will bring no benefit. I cannot recall a time when music was not a part of my life.

Even though I was grown up in one of the suburbs of a small country like Albania, my family and my beloved ones were always there for me. My father, a hardworking man, he used to do all kind of jobs just for us to be fine and to have a good life. He is a wonderful husband and great dad as he always supported me in my path. While my mother, well, she is the source of warmth and kindness in our family. They both have been supportive, caring and I feel grateful to have them.

I hope they are proud of me, for what I have accomplish.

Back on the city where I was born in Albania, I remember as a little child that everything was related with folk music. It was sung about patriotism, about the beauties of the country even about love in the highest forms of it and this was a tradition from the ancestors. So popular song and folk music was very present in our life.

While I started the University of Arts in Tirana, Albania, I was very happy to study with one of the most talented professors and composers Fatos Qerimaj. He was one of the professors who left traces in my path and with his trust I played one of his works, Pa-Iso ( without drone). It was a contemporary piece and I loved every note of it. After performing this piece I realized this was what I wanted to be, the musician that keeps your heart warm in every single note.

For the first time I feel complete, relaxed and optimistic about the future, and this is the path I want to take. By playing contemporary music I discovered myself and in this essay I would like for everyone to find the meaning in every second that goes by. Right now, there are people all over the world who are just like you. They're either lonely, they're missing somebody, they're depressed, they're hurt, they're scarred from the past, they're having personal issues no one knows about, they have secrets you wouldn't believe. They wish, they dream and they hope.

And right now, they are sitting here reading these words, and I'm writing this for you so you don't feel alone anymore. Always remember, don't be depressed about the past, don't worry about the future, and just focus on today. If today's not so great don't worry! Tomorrow's a new day. And if there is something that can help you feel better is music. And with contemporary music, you automatically get connected. It connects you to the emotion of the characters.

***As Mozart said: the music is not in the notes but in the silence between.***

The term 'contemporary music' can mean a variety of things to a variety of people. Contemporary music is defined as music that is currently being written, recorded and performed. Its genres would include blues, country, electronic/dance, experimental, folk, funk, hip-hop, jazz, metal, pop, rock, roots etc.

Some characteristics, which are not always present and are not only specific to this period, include:

1. Fewer lyrical melodies than other periods.
2. Dissonant Harmonies
3. Complex rhythms
4. Percussiveness
5. Greater use of percussion, brass, and woodwind.
6. Uses synthetic and electronic sounds

While many clarinetists help developing new instruments, Widmann mostly plays on his Wurlitzer clarinet from his student time. "I also play on new instruments, but funnily enough, I always come back to this clarinet. I love it with all my heart and all its faults. I even love the faults."

**Jörg Widmann** (born 19 June 1973), is a German composer, conductor and clarinetist. He lives and works in Berlin. According to Bachtrack, Widmann was in 2018 the third most performed contemporary composer. He studied the clarinet at the Hochschule für Musik in Munich with Gerd Starke and later with Charles Neidich at the Juilliard School in New York. Widmann's great passion as a clarinetist is chamber music. Widmann has composed a trilogy of works for large orchestra on the transformation of vocal forms for instrumental forces consisting of the compositions *Lied* (2003/2007), *Chor* (2004) and *Messe* (2005). A second trilogy comprises the pieces *Labyrinth* (2005), *Zweites Labyrinth* (2006), *Drittes Labyrinth* (2013/2014). In all three works Widmann deals with experiences of losing and seeking orientation in musical spaces. Jörg Widmann has received numerous prizes for his compositions. And he is absolutely an avan-gard in the music he produces.

**Widmann's music** spins an intricate web of characteristic gestures, half-remembered quotations, respectful nods to the past, and sly references, ranging from Bach to his own contemporaries. It's all woven tightly into the fabric of a complex, adventurous soundworld in which standard instrumental techniques are only the starting point, where melodies are acutely angular one minute and blurred and dreamlike or generously lyrical the next. There's little anxiety about the encroachment of music's venerable history here.

In his own words...

"I'm humble," he says with an awkward grin. "As a player, I'm in touch with these masterworks every day. I love them! So I write pieces about my love."

<https://www.theguardian.com/music/2018/jan/05/jorg-widmann-german-composer-clarinetist-musical-anarchist-classical-history-sing-tune>

## ***Solo fantasie clarinet by Jörg Widmann***



Fig. 1. Jörg Widmann

[https://www.google.com/search?biw=1440&bih=740&tbm=isch&sa=1&ei=PY3RXJ2rMujkrgTmvlmwDQ&q=jorg+widmann&oq=jorg+widmann&gs\\_l=img.3...0.0..27074...0.0..0.0.0.....1.....gws-wiz-img.pFbb2zDSYwg](https://www.google.com/search?biw=1440&bih=740&tbm=isch&sa=1&ei=PY3RXJ2rMujkrgTmvlmwDQ&q=jorg+widmann&oq=jorg+widmann&gs_l=img.3...0.0..27074...0.0..0.0.0.....1.....gws-wiz-img.pFbb2zDSYwg)

Clarinetist, composer, and conductor Jörg Widmann is a world-class musician who is well known as a performer and composer. Widmann maintains a distinct compositional voice, utilizing all manner of extremes through dynamics, instrumental colors, tempo, and playing techniques. Full of contrasts, Widmann's works feature conventional pitches and frequent extended techniques and non-pitched sounds. His works for clarinet exhibit his creative and enticing use of non-pitched sounds and extended techniques.

One of his earliest composed works, the *Fantasie for Clarinet Solo* (1993) is an exciting, virtuosic work which is enjoyed by performers and audiences alike through frequent performances worldwide.

***The Fantasie for Clarinet Solo*** was composed in 1993 and is one of Widmann's earliest compositions. Written when he was just twenty years old, the *Fantasie* is filled with virtuoso flourishes and youthful exuberance. Even at this young age, Widman's compositional voice is apparent. He combines conventional playing with extended techniques, and non-pitched sounds, though not nearly to the same extent as his later works

The first section of the *Fantasie* contains a series of short motives separated by breath marks or breath marks with a fermata. Widmann's use of dynamics and silence gives this section a hesitant quality. Each small motive begins at a soft dynamic and quickly grows to a loud outburst before immediately subsiding. It is as if each statement ends with a question mark,

leaving the listener unsure of what is to come. Widmann references these short motives later in the *Fantasie*, often as fragments with small alterations in dynamics, articulation, or rhythm. The first two systems of the piece explore and expand on the pitches of the multiphonic. In particular, Widmann reiterates the whole-step interval Eb to F several times. Given the hesitant, question-like quality of the music in this first section, emphasizing the repeated Eb to F interval can help the listener connect these seemingly disparate phrases. The performer can accentuate this interval by placing a tenuto on the Eb each time it re-occurs. The opening multiphonic of the *Fantasie* returns several times throughout the piece at different dynamic levels. The fingering provided by Widmann works well at all dynamic levels on the Boehm system. Adding the right-hand pinky Eb key can help the multiphonic to speak easier.

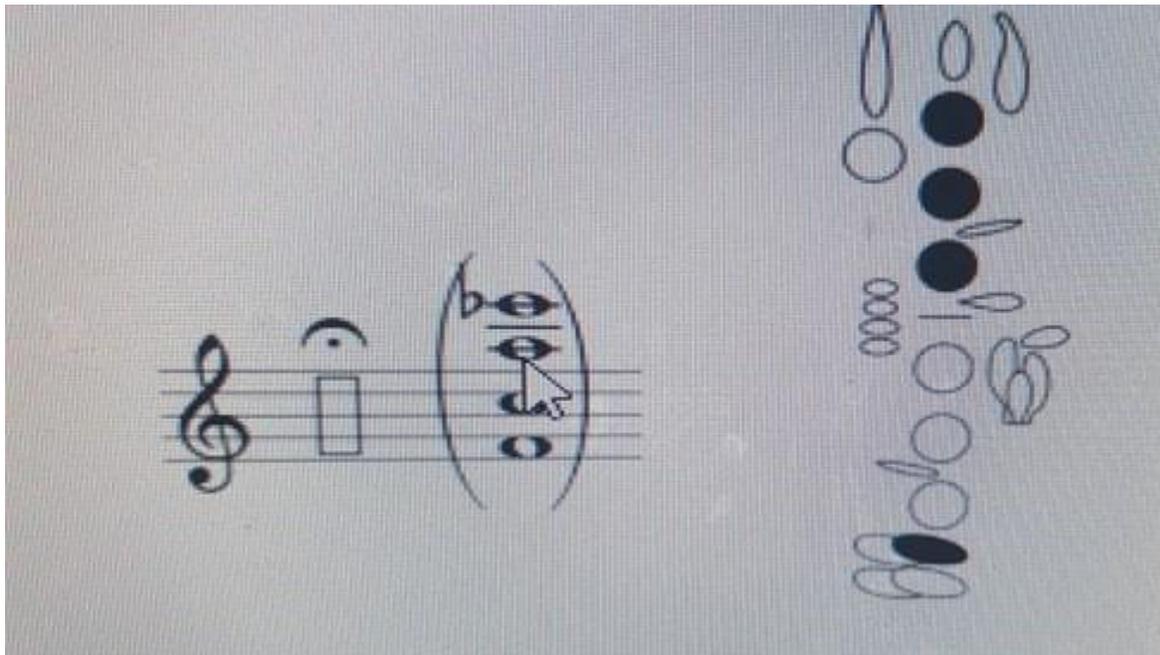


Fig. 2 . Multiphonic Fingering

The following section, marked “Tempo, grazioso, simple, quasi Ländler” presents a totally new character. In his *Fantasie*, Widmann’s use of the term *ländler* along with the included dotted bar lines clearly indicates that the music should feel like a dance in 3/4 time. Additionally, he provides crescendos and decrescendos around the “downbeat” to further emphasize the dance-like quality. The *ländler* section contains several interruptions, beginning with the forte sixteenth notes marked “frightened” in the fifth system, the opening multiphonic returning in the sixth system, the opening arpeggio and color trill in the seventh, and a final sixteenth note fortissimo interjection at the bottom of the first page

Figure 10. *Fantasia* Page 3, "Tempo, grazioso"

Fig. 3 . *Fantasia* Page 3

At the top of the second page, Widmann quotes portions of the opening material with important changes. Here, the rising pianissimo arpeggio moves ahead without 111 fermatas. Widmann adds an accent to the Eb5 to again emphasize the Eb to F whole step. The A5 to Ab5 interval that follows is an unexpected alteration from the beginning. This half-step serves as a bridge to the following sextuplet passage, a direct quotation from the third system of the opening. Again, Widmann alters the end of this quote by descending from chalumeau F3 to E3, setting up the following "misterioso" section.

The "misterioso" at the top of the second page brings with it an effect Widmann frequently calls for on the clarinet. Here, the player is instructed to play with "very low clarinet sound, but fortissimo key noise. The listener should clearly hear both the notated pitches along with the rhythmic click of the keys. The use of key-click sounds only appears in this one section of the *Fantasia*, but is used more extensively in his later 127 *Widmann, Fantasia, 4. 112* works, including *Three Shadow Dances* for solo clarinet. Using strong air support, the performer should play as quietly as possible, linking the fermata pitches with rapid chromatic scales. This passage should slowly accelerando with the first two fermatas being the longest, and each subsequent fermata gradually decreasing in length. The final chromatic motion from E3 to G5 should be the fastest yet, with no fermata on the clarion G5. Widmann returns to the opening arpeggio and altissimo F6 color trill in the fourth system. The subsequent arpeggios beginning on G3 and A3 should build both in volume and intensity. Although breath marks are indicated between each, the space between the arpeggios should be small.

## Second section – Schnell, brilliant

The sixteenth note arpeggio in the fifth system of the fourth page launches the music into a frenzied section with fast articulation and large register leaps. The descending sixteenth notes into “Schnell, brilliant” can gradually accelerando into the fast tempo. Group the first four notes together and rapidly accelerando beginning on the A3 through the remaining five chromatic pitches. The five-note chromatic should crescendo and slam into the following bar before suddenly dropping in dynamic. As Widmann indicates, the player must leave room in the tempo such that when this section returns on page 8, it can be even faster and more frenzied. As with the first two pages of the piece, the dynamic and articulation markings must be closely followed. Highlighting the accents and tenutos helps the music to groove while the extreme dynamics makes this section particularly exciting. Beginning with this fast section, the lack of bar lines introduces complex rhythmic challenges. Widmann beams the eighth and sixteenth notes in such a way that eighth-note groupings of two and three are implied. Whereas the first two pages of the piece can be felt in common time, here Widmann implies compound time. See Figure 12 and Figure 13 for recommendations on where to insert eighth-note groupings of two and three. Vertical lines indicate groupings of two whereas triangles indicate groupings of three.

The image displays a page of musical notation for 'Fantasie Page 4'. It features three systems of music. The first system includes a treble clef, a key signature of one sharp (F#), and a tempo instruction: 'Schnell, brillant (aber langsamer als auf S. 8) \*\*' followed by 'Fast, brilliant (but slower than on p. 8) \*\*'. Dynamic markings include *ff*, *p*, *ffp*, and *sim.*. The second system contains vertical lines and triangles indicating eighth-note groupings of two and three. The third system includes dynamic markings *f* and *mf*, and a triplet marking '3'. The notation is dense with sixteenth and eighth notes, and various articulation marks like accents and tenutos.

Fig. 4 . Fantasie Page 4

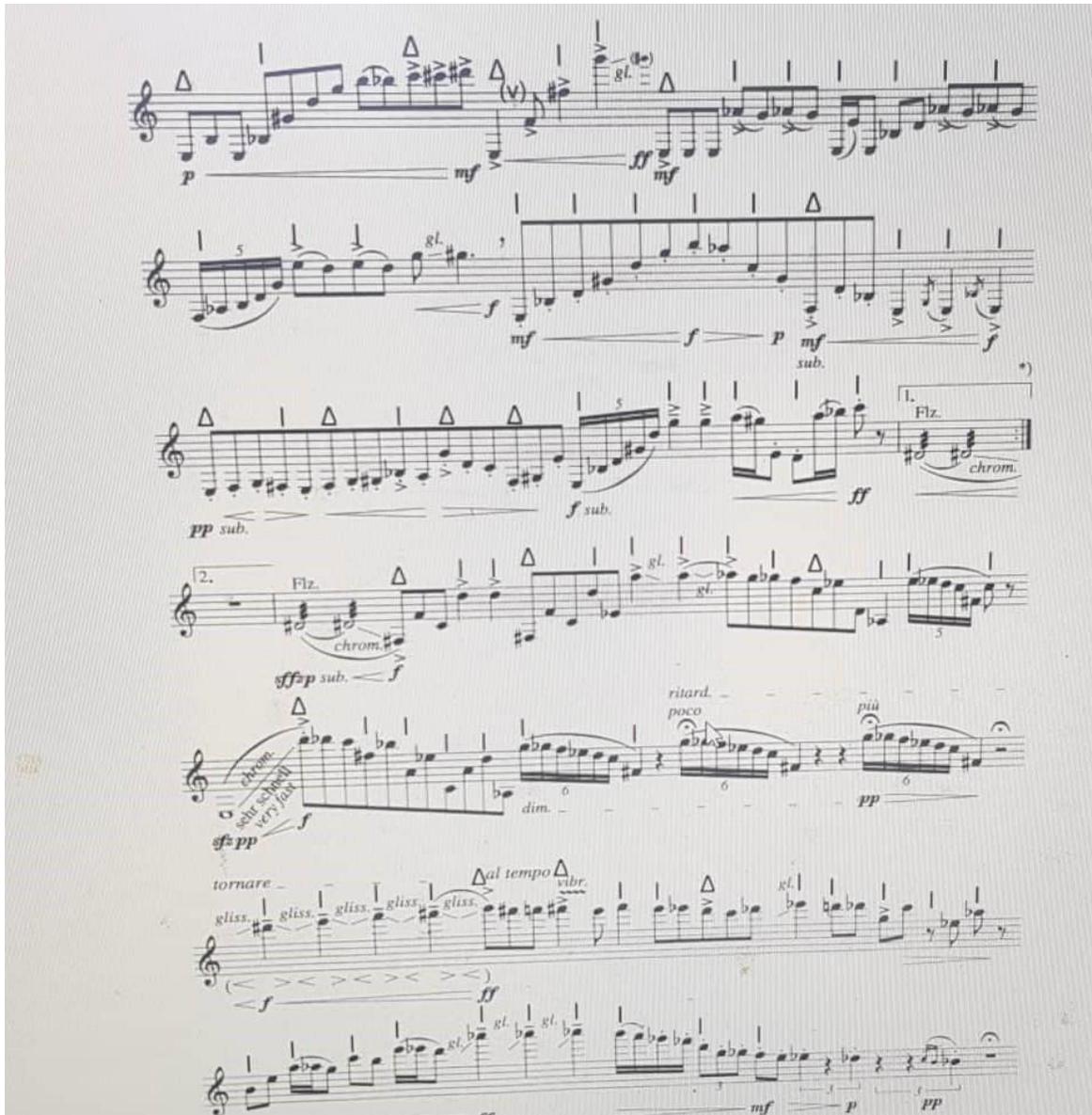


Fig. 5 . Fantasie Page 5

Breaths must be carefully planned this section. The first opportunity for a breath comes in the eighth rest of the sixth system on page four. The dynamic change on the following beat can be emphasized by inserting a decrescendo on the last four eighth notes preceding the breath. The following eighth and two sixteenths can then crescendo down to the chalumeau E3 to announce the change of dynamic and intensify the passage. The next opportunity for a breath comes between the two beats of eighth note triplets on the final system the fourth page. Similar to the first breath, adding a decrescendo preceding the breath and a crescendo following it is effective.

Two other possible breaths are after the accented tenuto chalumeau F3 four beats from the end of page four and after the accented chalumeau E3 at the top of page five.

The beats preceding the flutter-tongue in both the first and second ending (page five, system three) should crescendo to the loudest dynamic of the entire section. The music intensifies and loudens to this point before it suddenly stops. The performer should suspend the energy and tension of the final beats through the silence before landing on the flutter tongue. Regarding the first and second ending, Widmann indicates that it is “ad libitum,” or as desired. Regardless of whether the first or second ending is taken, the flutter tongue should be rapid and intense and should continue through the swiftly descending chromatic. This effect is shocking and unexpected. Following the flutter tongue, the music of the previous section continues with added glissandi in the fourth system of page five. In the case of these glissandi, the performer can articulate the first A5 and slur through the following A5 and Ab5 with a downward scooping glissando between each pitch. Again, the music comes to a screeching halt at the end of the fourth system. As with the flutter tongue in the previous system, Widmann again uses a straight line in system five of page five to indicate that the player should perform a rapid ascending chromatic over nearly three octaves. The three repetitions of the descending sextuplet that follows should gradually become slower, softer and more dolce; a true contrast from the preceding lines. After a long silence, the music begins to wind up again on the sixth system of the fifth page. Widmann instructs the performer to “tornare al tempo,” (return to tempo). Observing the graphical notation, there should be a scoop glissando between each pitch along with an accelerando and crescendo. The vibrato on the altissimo F#6 can be accomplished by using adjustments of air or jaw pressure (the latter of which is called lip vibrato).<sup>128</sup> At this point, the music has a ridiculous and absurd quality much like the harlequin character of the commedia dell’arte. This comes to a head in the final system of the fifth page where the music drives up to three altissimo Ab6 pitches. Due to the extreme range of these pitches, rather than articulating each Ab6, the performer can slur across, using scoop glissandi in-between. Just as quickly as the moment comes, the music quickly loses momentum and deteriorates to silence at the end of page five. With the listener left unaware of what could come next, the music again roars back in the first system of page six as if the deterioration to silence had never occurred. As with the previous section, the challenge of implied compound meter presents itself.

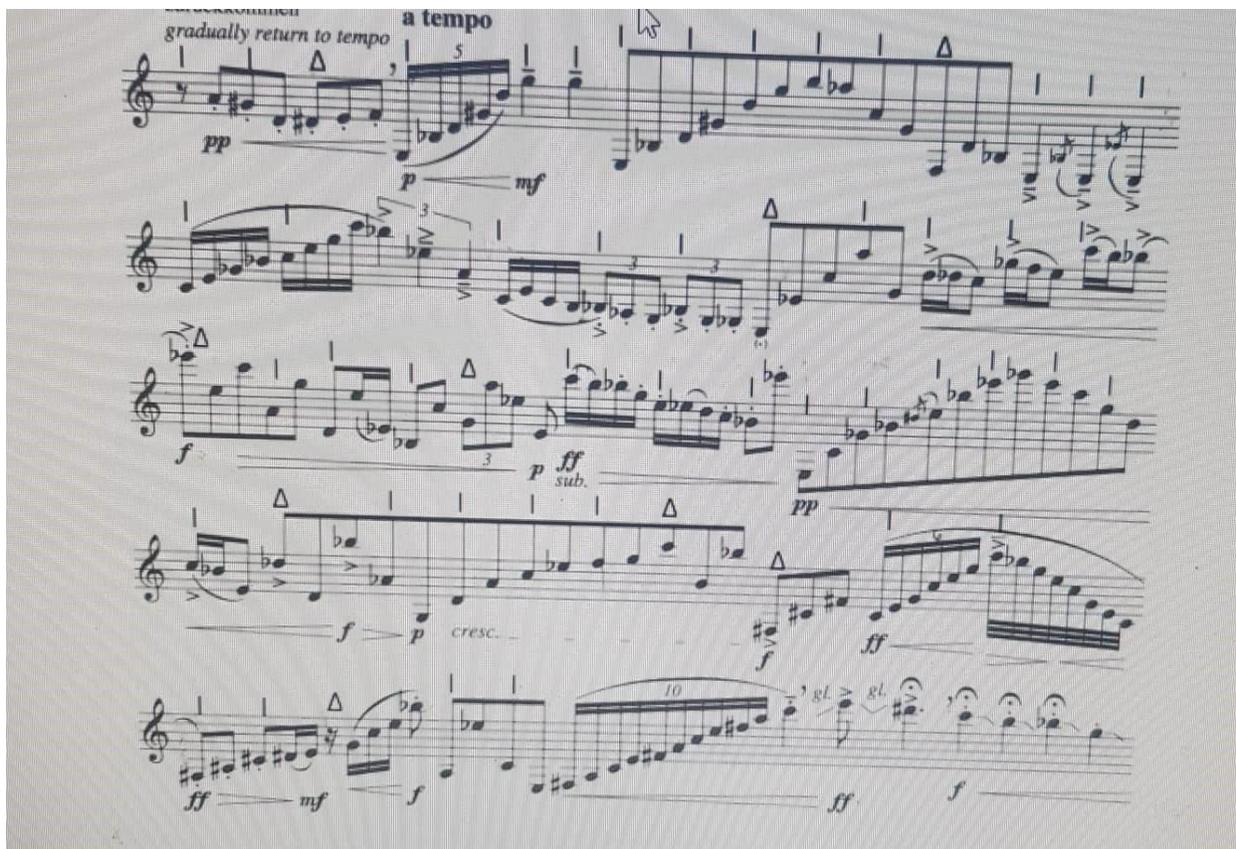


Fig. 6 . Fantasie Page 6

At the end of the fifth system on page six, beginning with the forte C6, Widmann notates pitch bends, also called falls, after each pitch. This should be done primarily with alterations of tongue position and oral cavity, though some loosening of the embouchure can help. See “Glissando and Portamento” in Chapter 5 for a more in-depth description.

### Third Section – Presto possibile

The section titled “Presto possibile subito” on system six of page six should be the fastest, wildest part of the piece. The performer can experiment with double tonguing on the articulated sixteenth notes throughout this section. Using a double articulation enables the performer to vastly increase the speed, giving the music a frenetic quality. Unlike the previous “Schnell, brilliant,” this section can be felt entirely in common time. “Presto possibile subito” can be divided into three subsections: (1) presto possibile in the sixth system through the breath mark in the eighth system, (2) the following mezzo-piano A#3 through “exaggeratedly jazzy” at the top of page 7, (3) and the return of “presto possibile” through the multiphonic in the second system of page seven. Each of these subsections builds to a fortissimo at the end, like waves crashing onto a

beach.

The image shows a page of musical notation for 'Fantasie' pages 6-7. The score is written in treble clef with a key signature of two flats (Bb and Eb). It consists of several systems of music. The first system begins with 'accel.' and 'ritard.' markings, followed by 'Presto poss. sub.' and dynamics of *ff* and *mp*. The second system includes *mp*, *f*, *ff*, and *sub.* markings, along with a 7-measure rest. The third system features 'cresc.' and 'gl.' markings, with dynamics of *ff* and *mp*. The fourth system includes 'gliss., chrom.' and dynamics of *f*, *p*, and *mp*. The fifth system has 'plötzlich viel langsamer, übertrieben jazzig' and 'suddenly much slower, exaggeratedly „jazzy“' instructions, followed by 'Presto possibile subito (plötzlicher Charakterwechsel) (sudden change of character)', 'accel. poss.', and dynamics of *ff* and *mp*. The sixth system includes '(accel.)', 'Tempo come prima, ma poco più mosso Alpenländisch, tänzerisch with an Alpine feel, like a dance', 'Multiphonic come prima', and dynamics of *mf* and *ff*.

Fig. 7 . Fantasie Page 6-7

Due to the large leap preceding the altissimo Bb6 to C7 two beats later, selected fingerings should tend slightly sharp. As discussed earlier, choosing a slightly sharp fingering prevents the need for unnecessary adjustments in the embouchure when leaping multiple octaves into the altissimo, which can be flat when approached by a leap of this magnitude. See Figure 17 for recommended fingering options for the altissimo Bb6 to C7. The breath mark following the altissimo C should be observed, allowing for a brief silence before continuing. The clarion A#5 in the final system of page six can be played using an alternate fingering. At the bottom of page six, Widmann instructs the performer to glissando from the upper chalumeau F#4 to the clarion A#5. This glissando slides into the subsequent measure, marked “suddenly much slower, exaggeratedly ‘jazzy’.”<sup>130</sup> This interruption measure should starkly contrast the sixteenth notes that precede and follow. As with the interruptions discussed in the preceding sections, the following bar should immediately change character as if nothing had changed. Widmann

instructs the performer to accelerate even more at the top of page seven. In his own performances of the piece, Widmann truly pushes himself to the limit of his articulation. The “presto possibile” continues to build with accelerando and crescendo into a sudden silence in the second system of page seven.

#### Fourth section – Tempo come prima, ma poco più mosso

The return of the opening multiphonic in system two of page seven launches the recapitulation of the opening material. Here, Widmann has inverted the order, instead beginning with the alpine ländler. Note that there is no break indicated between the multiphonic in system two of page seven and the fermata Gb5 that follows. These two gestures should be performed without space between. The alpine dance is a direct quote from the first page until the unexpected multiphonic in the fourth system. Here, Widmann alters the opening motive by adding a trill to the multiphonic.

— (accel.) —

Tempo come prima, ma poco più mosso  
Alpenländisch, tänzerisch  
with an Alpine feel, like a dance

Multiphonic come prima

Multiphonic come prima

ord. \*\*\*)

doloroso

glissando viel flüchtiger als zuvor  
glissando much hastier than before

viel flüchtiger als beim ersten Auftreten  
much more fugitive than in the first appearance

staccatiss.  
presto possibile

rit. molto

\*) quasi Synchronvertiefung nach unten mit 2. Hand

Fig. 8. Tempo come prima, ma poco più mosso

The final system of the seventh page carries the instruction, “much more fugitive than in the first appearance.” The performer can perform this passage in a more angular manner to bring out this character change. Finally, the repeatedly articulated G that closes the section is extended, with the instruction to shift to “very percussion like, quasi pianissimo slaps”<sup>132</sup> in the last three beats. In his own performances of the Fantasie, Widmann does shift to a soft slap tongue here. The final page of the Fantasie is a return of the “Fast, brilliant” section from page four. As discussed earlier, this section should be even faster than on page four. Widmann includes a note at the bottom of the page that this section should “generally intensify and crescendo up to the penultimate line.

The unexpected dynamic and tempo change sets up the final multiphonic of the Fantasie, this time marked forte. Widmann concludes the Fantasie by quoting the alpine theme, this time with the instruction to perform it in a “grotesque, comical”<sup>134</sup> manner. The final gesture from chalumeau A3 to clarion Bb5 should be performed as a rapid chromatic and should not be played as a portamento. Decrescendo as much as possible to the Bb5, leaving it with an upward inflection as if it has a question mark. This sets up the grace note gesture, letting it sound decisively final. Considering all of the unexpected twists and turns of this piece, the final gesture should be played in such a way that it clearly signals the end of the piece for the audience.

# Conclusion

The purpose of the research was to investigate and to learn more about contemporary music and the musical output of Jörg Widmann in order to arrive at an assessment of his compositional style and to identify his uncommon distinction as a musician equally recognized as a professional clarinetist, composer, and conductor. Specific focus was placed on his FANTASIE CLARINET SOLO in order to reveal his compositional style.

And I believe that each student should have the opportunity to do such a research work because music is everywhere, just close your eyes and listen!

## Reference List:

\*Biography <https://en.schott-music.com/shop/autoren/joerg-widmann>

\*Fantasie clarinet solo analyse

[https://etd.ohiolink.edu/!etd.send\\_file?accession=osu1523963496247166&disposition=inline](https://etd.ohiolink.edu/!etd.send_file?accession=osu1523963496247166&disposition=inline)

\*Biography <https://www.joergwidmann.com/vita->

[en.html?fbclid=IwAR1g04gj5o6ZAGV2CZJjRXY6FAaqRmqhi-ALFytdZPt-eMeAUdsMOY\\_rcNw](en.html?fbclid=IwAR1g04gj5o6ZAGV2CZJjRXY6FAaqRmqhi-ALFytdZPt-eMeAUdsMOY_rcNw)